

The Secrets of SPANISH history

By Padma Lim

If you think Spanish history is boring and simple, scroll down – and think again!



This book will guide you through the exciting drama of the Spanish Civil War. You'll discover many intriguing facts about General Franco, propaganda, photography, women, silence, Historical Memory, exile... and much more surprises!

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Edited by Ellis Schriefer from Stanford

About the author



As an eleventh grader learning Spanish for my second year in Hong Kong, I was absolutely oblivious to the Spanish history and its culture. Being around Ellis, I can't help but feel excited whenever we meet. Ellis has the most cheerful, wonderful, and lively personality in the whole wide world. She simplifies the concepts by providing tons of examples and stories, and provides me with tons of college-level academic articles (which I have requested for) as

well as digestible comics, arts, and photographs for deeper analyses. These all enabled me to delve deeper into the complexities of the Spanish Civil War through different perspectives. Polygence is by far the most unique experience for me to truly immerse myself in something entirely new to me and have the opportunity to work alongside with a graduate from one of the most prestigious schools in the US.

Through questions, in-depth analysis, and hours of hard work, I have also cultivated better time management and studying skills that I will carry for life. This project not only reinforced the major themes I have learned in a total of ten 1-hour sessions, but also broadened my horizons on the value of history. Specifically to Spanish culture, the outbreak and dictatorship following the Spanish Civil War had tremendous lasting impacts in the modern world and in Spain that only few people understand. That is why I present to you today my very first book on this fascinating and mysterious topic. Please enjoy!

Dialogue starts now

*José = left side; Agustín = right side

Causes

Good day, my dear friend!

It was such a pleasure to finally see you in person. Me llamo José.

¡Salud, José! Me llamo Agustín.

I'm also excited to teach you what I know. Seems like nobody cares about what happened to us.

Oh no, don't say that. I'm sure once I'm finished with my research paper about the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), people will start to become more aware!

Ahh! That goes a long way but the good news is, I still remember everything as clear as day.

Let me start by introducing you to the major types of people involved. What do you know about *Los republicanos* and *los nacionales*?

Oh I know that Nationalists are the ones Related to Francisco Franco.

Sí. Francisco Franco was the leader during the bulk of the Civil War. He came in after the victory of the controversial Frente Popular and when Primo de Rivera resigned as a result of his people's disappointment.

Really? I thought Primo de Rivera was rather successful in starting various infrastructure programs for railways, roads and electrification, as well as irrigation schemes. The overall

industrial production developed at three times
the rate of output before 1923.

You're right! As a matter of fact,
He also ended the war in Morocco in 1925! But
You have to remember how he got his power
In the first place.

Did he lead a coup d'etat?

Precisely. Prior to the Second Republic, he had
a coup d'etat, which means an attack on the government
where seizure is forced and often backed by violence.

That's exactly what the dictionary says!

I beg your pardon but I was in the war. It is only
common sense to us old lads. Anyway, you get the point.
King Alfonso XIII gave him the title of prime minister
reluctantly to ameliorate the intensity of the coup.

Ohh that's why he was such an
unpopular figure then! My guess is
most civilians would think he'd gone mad!

Precisely. Later, Rivera ran up massive debts
that put Spain in a dreadful situation when
the Wall Street Crash came. He disappointed
many people and resigned while
Alfonso went into exile.

So, now that I know plenty about Rivera,
but I still don't understand what Nationalists
truly mean or what they stood for.

Oh yes. The nationalists consisted of
wealthy people, aristocrats, land owners or terratenientes.

Of course, there were also plenty of people
from lower social classes too -- all church supporter
tended to be in favor of the nationalist plight.

You see, I was once a worker for a landowner
who owned an immense estate

in Spain.

What?! How is that even possible?

That was reality. And it was quite common actually.

What about Republicans?

Republicans, like me, are often referred to as liberals as well. We represent a diverse group with *sindicatos* (workers who aim to advocate for more rights like higher wages, longer resting times), socialists and communists, (people who like the idea of equality for all). Oh and there's the government as well.

Wow! So many different associations.

Don't forget about the anarchists though...

Well, in a nutshell, Republicanos and nacionalidades are two are main forces in the war. Both sides have such different ideologies and aspirations for Spain.

I've read that during the Second Republic, not long before the war broke out, there were drastic reforms either put into action or planned, relating to women's rights, land distribution, and the separation of church and state.

Not bad! Those agitated the nacionalidad mainly because those measures would harm them. For example, a separation between church and state would mean that church would have lost power over how state or government institutions were maintained.

Oh I see. And churches were once directly linked to education right?

With the changes, the church might play a less important role in designing

school curriculum etc.

The separation of church and state was thanks to the Frente Popular, the liberal, anti-fascist government which had a short window of control prior to the war, which separated the two because they felt the Catholic church was becoming too powerful.

I can see how these tensions must have led to a bloody conflict between the two parties.

Yes. To complicate things further, the civil war meant that families were often divided. A mother who is religious might be more in favour of the Nationalists, as opposed to an educated father in support of fairer land distribution rights etc.

That really sucks!

So, what happened afterwards with all this?

Ah! So, as you know, the second Republic was such a mess. The growing support for both sides became so hard for people to empathize with each other.

Each side lacked confidence within the democratic system.

This was when Franco Francisco came into the picture.

Who was Franco?

The enemy of the Republic! Damn him! He came from a military background, and had begun his career in the navy.

However, as Spain's empire declined,
the navy was cut down in size and
he joined the army instead.

I guess the birth of Second Republic
must have led to his success, then?

Haha! Not that simple. So anyway,
he became a general after demonstrating
great leadership skills fighting in Morocco.
In early 1930s, before the war, he was already
active in suppressing anarchists and anti-government
forces.

Anarchists are people who hate
government control, right?

It's complicated, but they ended up
rallying for us Republicans.
They always caused such a nuisance
on our side though.

Oh I remember! Anarchists do not
believe in coercive forces in the government
and encourage civilians to be active in settling
things by themselves.

It was common for anarchists to burn
churches and even set fire to priests.
Very gruesome, isn't it?

Wow!
So... we have unequal distribution of power
(with the Catholic Church),
political instability, and
heavy economic problems.

Sí. Also, we had desperate economic problems.
The agriculture prices were tumbling,
wine and olive exports fell,
land had gone out of cultivation,

peasant employment was rising.
There were also poor conditions
for lower classes working for these
terratenientes.

Yes, the industrial effects were even worse!
I heard that iron production fell by one-third
and steel by almost one-half.
How dreadful!

Yes indeed. In 1932, a law enabled state
to take over estates and redistribute land to
peasants. But guess how many people
had benefited from the program by 1933?

Um...100,000?

Only 7,000 families.

SERIOUSLY?! That's not a lot!

Yes. And although 7,000 families
wasn't seen as very many, it was
still worrisome to landowners.

Now I see how the right
saw this as a threat to its interests.
They thought this was an attempt to
copy the Soviet system.
But people were dying, no? How could they be
so selfish!?

(sigh)

Civil unrest continued under the left
Republic. It's not like our side was doing
any better. The government introduced
the Assault Guard to produce a more
left-wing military force.

And the right resisted against the reforms.

Precisely. Looks like you already understand
a lot! But, there are also some regional issues.

Regional Issues...

Catalonia and the Basque Country, huh!
They had their own unique culture and
languages, right? My Spanish friend told me that
she did not understand a word of Basque
when she was visiting there.

Wow! Very unique!

Because they're a part of Spain isn't it?
Wait a sec. If they became independent,
that means they had power to make their
own decisions and laws!

They could enforce land reform within
their area, which was something
the large terratenientes feared, isn't it?

And, both regions, especially Catalonia,
are wealthy-- Spain would lose
a lot of wealth if they lost Catalonia!

Cataluña y País Vasco.
The two major regions which
were striving for independence
ever since the beginning.

She'd understand a bit of Catalan (written),
but NOTHING of Basque...
it is what is called a language isolate,
meaning it doesn't have its roots in
any other language family.

Yes. Why do you think the government
did not approve of their independence?

Y?

¡Sí! Remember, the wealthy does not want
the workers like us to come up with their
own set of rules since
more regional control meant a higher
chance of laws being passed that favoured
workers over the wealthy!

Hmm...not bad, not bad!

But these are more like long term causes,
aren't they?

Ah! You've got a point. I totally missed out
the short term causes! ¿Quieres saber?

¡Cómo no!

Well there were dos matanzas, or murders that occurred
right when Franco was starting to become popular.
On July 12th, 1936, a Socialist police officer was killed.
Prior to his death he had received una carta de amenaza,
a threatening letter, but he did not do anything about it.

¿Cómo se llama?

José Castillo.

Hey! Es mi nombre, ¡tambien!

It is important to remember though, that
Franco started his coup from Morocco on July 17th.

Wait...that's literally 5 days after the murder!

I'm glad you notice things so quickly.
It was unclear if the murder had direct
relation to Franco, but it was certainly
a nationalist supporter.

The socialists or republicans must have been
furious with the nationalists and took their revenge!

I see there's no point fooling you!
Why else would there be two murders?
The socialist party did exactly that.
On July 13th, they killed Calvo Sotelo.

Ahh that one. I remember him. The one
who was a huge supporter of the monarchy.

Jaja. He was indeed a powerful leader who
absolutely adored King Alfonso.

So, these deaths were the immediate causes
for the war, sí?

Yep! That's pretty much it for now.

I'm guessing you're kind of overloaded
with information.

Quite right!

Propaganda

Wow! Look at this! A woman with a lion and
Olive branch!

Ohh you're looking at the propaganda posters?
Which newspaper? Republican *La Voz*?
Nationalist *La Ametralladora*? Communist
El Mundo Obrero?

La Voz. The ones from Republicans are
all about women! Why's that the case?

Not all are about women I'm sure. But that's
A good point! Women, especially during the war,
stood out by participating in battalions and risking
their lives, just like the men.
They're the heroes of the war and are depicted
As a glorious and caring figure.

I see! Usually, each side would
depict the other side as violent beasts.
I can see a monstrous bloody figure here,
Ew!

Yes. Demonizing the opposing side justifies
violence towards them and thus glorifies
Their side.

This photo with the Swastika symbol,
and words within it "misery", "destruction",
"Persecution" and "death" is so powerful!

Yes! The dark and gloomy colours

also evokes this sense of a future without hope
with the Fascists around, don't they?

Oh look! Here's a green and white propaganda
Poster which contrasts with the one we just
Looked at! The tone is not as bright with red blood all
Over the place. But the striking image of a
Roller and the words beneath speaks for itself!

Yes! That is very analytical of you!
Do you happen to know the most common
Phrase we Republicans used in propaganda?

¡NO PASARAN! ¡NO PASARAN!

¡Muy bien!
We used it when Nationalist troops
first threatened Madrid.

But according to *La Ametralladora*,
A Nationalist newspaper, the phrase
Was already used in WWI when “a
Legion of foreign combatants used it to
Defend Verdun, blocking the entrance
To Paris”.

¿En serio?
Do you also happen to know
The context of the fiercest propaganda battle?

Hmm....

The Catholic Church!

No madres?

Republicans exploited the conservative character
of the Spanish Catholic Church, while the Nationalists
spread the news that we were murdering priests,
violating nuns, and burning churches.
Damn *La Ametralladora*, exposing us like that!

Do you hate it? Oh well, I can imagine why.
“Franco is the caudillo of the war.

Franco will show how to guide us in
every moment through the difficult ways
of peace...”--*La Ametralladora*

¡Cállate!

Lo siento, ¡senõr!

NO SEÑOR or anything stupid...

If you were a Republican, you'd never
address others as señor. We are all comrades.

But anyway, you know what's funny?

Republicans also use Jesus iconography for their side
despite their disagreement with the church .

¿Qué? Did they show Jesus with a rifle pointed
at bishops or something?

What? How did you know??

Seriously...I was just jok-

No! That was true! *El Sol*, for example, did
exactly that! And some lower Catholic
hierarchy, like the Priest of Dolores in
Alicante Province, joined the Communists.
Another priest even got married, just to
demonstrate his displeasure!

JAJAJA! Bold for them!

It's true!! Are you mocking me or what?

No, no. Anyway, was there also
a quote that Nationalists commonly used?

¡Arriba, España!, the voice of Falange,
founded in 1933 by Prima De Rivera
and appropriated by Franco
as an ideological base.

Blah...

But, as Republicanos, *decimos*,

“No Pasaran!”

Our goal was not to let the Fascist enter

our battalion and greatest reserve!

Ohh! I've recently watched a
Documentary on Dolores Ibárruri!
She also stood with the Republicans
and chanted the exact quote!

Ibárruri...one of the finest women in the war
I know! She was determined and brave...
went all the way to France
to give mind blowing speeches in desperate
hopes of weakening the French's
non-intervention stance.
Truly extraordinary.

But, propaganda does not only involve
posters, ¿sabes?

Oh! Really? Let me guess...how about
podcasts? Or radios?

Yep! Do you know TVs only started
becoming popular in Spain in the 1950s?

Oh, that I've heard! Radios are cheap and
entertaining.

Of course! Soap operas also
formed a large part of Peoples' social lives.
Families and neighbours would gather in the evenings
and bond with each other through
listening to those channels.

Of course! They also used the radio
to listen to the news.

Ahh yes. Listening to the news was very common.
We were all forced to know what was going on.
Also, since the bulk of Spain's population lived
in rural areas, we really had to rely
heavily on the radio.

(busily rummaging through
his notes)

Oi! ¿Estás escuchando? ¿Qué estás leyendo?

Wow, is that the case?

The article I'm reading says that "56%
of the population" was literate, so that
explains why radio was one of the most
common communication tools.

Sí...pero

¿Qué?

I must admit our side lost in the radio war.

Radio war? As in...

Mira, the Nationalists used
the medium more effectively than us.

Oh! I remember reading something about it.
Did some General regale his radio listeners
nightly with ribald and terrorist propaganda?

Sí...y General Emilio Mola spoke
incessantly on Radi Navarre, Castile
and Zaragoza.

Control of the press must have been more severe
in the zones under Nationalist domination...

Can't argue with that. Our Republican
Party consists of myriads of organization.
This must've resulted in a fractionated
propaganda effort.
(deep sigh)

Well... I was hoping to end on a good note!
"NO PASARÁN!"

¡Sí! ¡NO PASARAN! ¡NO PASARAN!
¡NO PASARAN! ¡NO PASARAN!

¡Cállate, hermano!

¡NO PASARAN!

Guernica

¿Qué tal, Agustin?

Bien, ¿y tú?

Muy bien, ¡gracias!

What's our topic for today, comrade?

It's Guernica!

(silent)

Is anything wrong?

Oh, no. Sorry I was lost in my thoughts.

Mira...you see...

Oh. I understand. Hmm...

It's fine if you don't wanna talk
about it. Let's just talk about
something else.

What? No, no. We MUST talk about it.

I insist.

But –

History is forever scarred by that incident,
but avoiding it just means we're more likely
to repeat it. And for goodness sake,
please don't let that ever happen again.

(loudly moans)

You know, why don't *you* tell me what *you* know.

Por supuesto. On April 26, 1937,
Germans aerial army dropped tonnes of
bombs, around 10,000, on Guernica.

Do you know what time they started to bomb?

I believe, 4PM?

And which day of the week?

On a Monday?

Precisely. Now, why do you think I'm asking you this.

Hmm...

(silence, loud gasp)

THEY TARGETED
THE BUSIEST TIME AND DAY
OF THE WEEK?!

Yes. They knew their bombing would kill the most during market day. Public squares were crowded with women, children, men alike. There were also large number of outsiders visiting the town.

(dead silence, appalled)

Who... who was behind all this...
Francisco Franco...?

During the war, Facist leaders such as Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy were great supporters of los nacionales. When Franco needed aid, Hitler put Condor Legion, an adjunct of the luftwaffe, in charge of the military attacks.

So... Germany was very powerful at the time right?

The Luftwaffe used this as an opportunity to develop and perfect their tactics of aerial warfare, which became prevalent during WWII (1939-1945).

Seriously?! They treated the bombing of a city as a practice? What were they thinking?!

Yes. German air chief Hermann Goering said, "The Spanish Civil War gave me an opportunity to put my young air force to the test, and a means for my men to gain experience," after his trial shortly after WWII.

And yet this experimental horror resulted in about 1,600 deaths among the estimated population of 5,000 at the time of attackwith the town of Guernica completely destroyed within a day.

Noel Monks was the first reporter to arrive on the scene after the bombing. He said that there were “a flock of planes” flying over small hills, “a dozen or so bombers” flying high, and “six Heinkel 52 fighters.” He and another reporter hid and trembled inside their bomb hole and Monks described this as “the first real fear [he’d] ever experienced”.

Oh no! They must’ve been dead inside!
So, what happened afterwards?

Well, they ran back to their car and tried to get away immediately. On both sides of the road, men, women, and children were sitting, dazed. There was a priest in the group, who pointed to the flames, still about four miles away, whispering “Aviones...bombas.. mucho, mucho.”

It must’ve been a real shock. I can’t imagine how I would have been able to overcome this trauma if I had been one of the citizens.

In the plaza, surrounded almost by a wall of fire, were about a hundred refugees. They were wailing, weeping, rocking to and fro. One middle-aged man, who spoke English, said that many aeroplanes came when markets

was starting to close at 4pm. There were bombs
dropped from above and bullets shot into the
streets from low planes.

So, what was left of Guernica?

Nothing. Soldiers were sobbing like
children. There was a nauseating smell of
burning human flesh. Horses were collapsing
into the inferno. The only things left standing were
a church, a sacred Tree, a symbol of the Basque people,
and, just outside the town, a small munitions
factory, according to Monk and his fellow reporters.

OH MY GOD that's utterly
inhuman! I can't ... it's...

I get it, I get it. Monk said at the end, the sight
that haunted him the most were the “charred bodies of
several women and children huddled together
in what had been the cellar of the house”.

Charred bodies...can you imagine?
Humans fried like barbeque...

No! Stop it! Please! I don't
wanna know anymore!

I haven't finished yet!
The fires that engulfed the city burned for
three days. 70% of the town was destroyed.
One-third of the population were killed or
wounded.

Why did Franco go against his people?
I just don't get it!

He obviously wanted to defeat the
left-wing Republicans and silence
the country who wanted independence
more than ever. To the Germans, it was also

a fine opportunity to put its aerial army
and bombs to the test.

Did Francoists apologize?
Please tell me they did!

Ah good question. When the news of bombing
spread like wildfire, the Nationalists immediately
denied any involvement, as did the Germans.

WHA—

Don't interrupt while I'm speaking!
This is history, nothing we can change, OK?
Anyway, few were fooled by Franco's
protestations of innocence.

What were their excuses?

Von Richthofen, Nazi commander, claimed
publicly that the target was a bridge
over the Mundaca River on the edge of
the town, chosen in order to cut off
the fleeing Republican troops.
But, not a single hit was scored
on the presumed target, nor on the
railway, nor on the factory nearby.

Huh! Condor Legion, with
the best airmen and planes of Hitler's
developing war machine, totally missed
their target?

Yea, and some time later, a secret
report to Berlin was uncovered. Guess
what Richthofen stated?

Was it a "Yay! We bombed
them!," sort of thing?

Sí. He said, "...the concentrated attack
on Guernica was the greatest success".

Well, at least people now know

that the all-out air attack on Guernica had been intentional, and that was ordered on Franco's behalf to break the spirited Basque resistance to Nationalist forces.

For goodness sake, nationalists, stop the bullshit!

Ohhh!
I have a question.

Do you think this incident is related to WWII?

Actually, wouldn't it have been great if the British and French had immediately stepped in and stopped Germany from becoming powerful? WWII might have been stopped that day!

Exactamente. It was a man-made holocaust. Some nationalists even came up the excuse that Guernicans bombed themselves, etc.

Well...it's not like they had a choice. They were damned to support Franco for life, or else...I'm not sure what would have become of them. Anyway, this bombing of Guernica was significant from other bombings because it was the first huge attack aimed specifically at civilians.

¿Sí?

Well, of course! I'll bet WWII started on this date to most Spanish citizens.

Quite right indeed!
Some experts believe that had Britain and/or France decided to break the

Non-Intervention Committee during this period,
Germany would not have felt confident
enough to initiate their imperialist
goals and thus start WWII.
You're quite smart!

Do you mean that this bombing
of Guernica provided the green light that
Hitler needed for WWII?

Aha! It depends upon the person, but
for me, yes. I think the war could've
stopped that day, if only stronger
countries chose to put an end to the
rising greed and Hitler's confidence.
But, who knows? Maybe nothing could
have been done. We can only speculate.

I agree...perhaps if Britain
and the Soviet Union had established an early
alliance against the Fascists, the invasion
of Poland on 1 June 1939 could've
been prevented...
What a wasted opportunity
to turn the tide against Hitler!

Yeah... but it's also because of this
that many artists became famous.

OH you mean PABLO PICASSO?!

Not bad, kid! He was my favourite painter
of all time!! I wish I'd had tonnes of
his paintings at home.

Pablo Picasso was my grandmother's
absolute favourite of all time también!

Really? That's great! Because I'm going
to share with you one of his paintings —

Guernica!

Guernica? *The* Guernica?

Why... Do you not know about that?

No! I was just too excited to talk about it!

OH! ¡JAJAJA!

Picasso's great "Guernica" is both an art and a symbol.



During the dictatorship of Franco, the artwork was temporarily stored in the US. It was considered a national treasure to many Americans!

True. The huge mural had an extraordinary influence on American artists, especially the abstract expressionists and its distinct tube of cadmium yellow.

Guernica was being transferred to a lot of places in America, France, etc.

and was only returned to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid following the dictatorship (in the eighties).

But why is it such a famous piece in

the first place?

Great question!

It was particularly famous because
the painting was symbolic for all wars,
not just the events in País Vasco.

It also garnered support from all over the world
to fight for the Republicans' cause.

Oh! How did the painting become
a symbol, and not just related to Guernica?

What do you see in the painting?

Hmm...a light bulb, a mother holding her child
with despair, women screaming, a dove,
a woman holding a kerosene lamp,
a horse, a cow, people lying on the ground...

Yes, that's a great start! Each element
suggests something about the war.

In other words, each is a symbol.

For example, the bulb on top is the bomb,
the dove is a representation of peace, screaming women
represent the horrors of war, and dead animals
stand for the numerous casualties, etc.

There are many ways you could interpret
this artwork!

Wow! Now, I get it! His painting
inspired lots of people to protest against
Nationalists because it showed the
destruction and unfair targeting of Guernica
(or "Guernika" in Basque) and its civilian
population.

Precisely! I'm so proud of you!
So, while he did not claim to be a huge
supporter of the Republicans,
his painting showed how cruel

los nacionales had been, and that showing of injustice inspired many people to fight against Fascism.

Picasso was initially not interested in politics, was he?

¡Exactamente! Until the the war broke out in 1936, he had never shown any real interest in politics. His activism only took the form of financial and personal support for the Republican cause, but he was reluctant to mix politics and art.

What happened afterwards?

He was called by the Republican government to paint for the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Fair in 1937. Initially, he couldn't think of anything to draw and was worried he couldn't present anything by the deadline. However, once he got news of the bombing of Guernica, he immediately got to work. He was furious and appalled to see Guernica being reduced to ashes.

He must've been quite triggered since it resulted in such a huge mural (349.3 cm × 776.6 cm)!

Yes. He wanted to emphasize the huge extent of casualty of wars in general, so we couldn't see any elements distinctive to the bombing of Guernica specifically.

I saw a lot of anti-war protestors holding up banners of Guernica

everywhere they went too, not just in Spain,
but in other parts of the world!

Yes. It is a symbol of peace
that will stay in the hearts of
many civilians in Spain, and in
other areas of the world.

International Brigades

¡Hola, Agustín!

¿Qué tal?

Have you met any friends from
other countries while you were
fighting in the war?

¡Por supuesto! Three of my best
buddies were British in fact!

Wow really?

¡Sí! The international brigade was a great
part of the Spanish Civil War.

Yes! It must have been.

There were about 35,000 volunteers
from about 50 countries in total!

That's quite right!

And there were American volunteers
who made up the Abraham Lincoln
Brigade.

Hmm...Now that I think of it,
I have a really great African American
friend from that organization as well!

Really? How awesome!

Why do you think people all over
the world come to support the Republicans?

Our cause was centered around
basic freedoms, such as freedom of speech,
women's rights, land redistribution, etc.
Only bastards like Franco would deny
those rights.

You've got a point...I think people must
have been worried about the domination
of Fascism in their own countries.

It's obviously not that simple, kiddo.

Please tell me more about it then!

Sure! Mira, this civil war was different
in a sense that it created broad ideological
dichotomies that could be interpreted
in many different ways.

Hmm...so you mean people have
generalized the war in many
different representations?

So good vs evil, Communist vs Nationalist,
government vs dictatorship, and...

Yeah, you got it, things like democracy
vs tyranny, progress vs tradition,
Church vs secularists, and so on.
According to Andrew Giles, these
“international extrapolations of
existing domestic dichotomies...
motivated international volunteers
to fight in the Spanish Civil War.”

By “international extrapolations”,
as an example, do you mean how
Germany and Italy supported
Franco's Spanish Nationalists

because they wanted to internationalise the Nationalists' fascist character?

Sí. Fascist countries clearly viewed the nationalists' standpoint as fascist in nature which furthered their intentions of connecting with the Nationalists and spread fascism across the world.

I got it! So where were the volunteers mainly coming from?

Most volunteers were French, Italian, German, and Austrian. But there were also Americans, British people, Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders...

I heard that Republican volunteers were only supported by a Russian Communist organization...what was it called again?

Oh you meant Comintern! It totally played a huge role in enlisting and transporting thousands of volunteers to Spain. Without them, we'd never have been able to fight on the same level as the Nationalists.

Oh yes. Nationalists did have lots of support from Fascist Germany and Italy at the time. They must have had great weaponry and advanced technology.

Yes! Have you read George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*?

Yes, I did! It was funny when he wrote that a lot of the volunteers did not even know how to take aim and use a gun. Without guns,

materials, and knowledge, how did they even stand a chance?

Exactly. Our officers' motto was "mañana," which literally means "tomorrow." In Orwell's case, when he asked for a gun, the officers just said, "mañana," which never came.

I suspect this is also why we were doomed to lose to the Fascists. We were insufficient in our battle knowledge.

Yes. Franco's army also had fresh recruits, but they had plenty of experience in the Moroccan war, and thus enough supplies and training I suppose.

We Republicans were somehow a bit chaotic and haphazard.

Also, remember how we as a party had absorbed diversity in ideological ideas too? So, I was not the least surprise when we ran out of German Mausers dated 1896.

Woah, hold up. You had guns forty years old and you weren't surprised?

Well... having a gun is better than not having anything at all, right?

Oh my goodness! (cackles loudly)

I am rather disappointed in you!
Ashamed!

Lo siento, jajaja...

Anyway, moving on...
some more characteristics about the international brigades.

Sure!

One great thing about our community
was how it was made up of many
different nationalities. This means
we were united, not by race, language
or nation, but by class and politics.

Oh! I once came across a great
graphic novel called *Robeson in Spain!*
Paul Robeson was a famous African American
athlete, singer, actor, scholar, and
supporter of social justice.
He even visited the volunteers in
Spain during the war in 1938.
His visit must've meant a lot to many
African Americans volunteers who
could only see his shows in radio or TV,
but never in person.

Yes, out of the 3,000 American volunteers,
90 of them were African Americans.

The Abraham Lincoln
Brigade was the first fully integrated army,
where volunteers could put aside their
race altogether and mix in with the crowd.

Tom Page, a soldier, once said,
“Spain was the first place I ever felt
like a free man” . .

But unfortunately, during WWII,
African Americans served in the
U.S. units that were segregated
by race, right?

Indeed.

Other than African American
men, were there African American
women fighting?

Great question! Yes, there was one.

Salaria Kea.

Was she the Ohio nurse?

Yes! She was the only African American woman who helped as a nurse.

Oh now I remember! She was such a remarkable woman! Did you know she came up with an ingenious solution, filling bags with hot soup for the sick and wounded?

Precisely. The conditions at the hospital were risky, and it was freezing for most of the soldiers there. Without her, many could have died from the cold.

Was there also a famous African American Battalion leader named Oliver Law?

Yes! He was a the very first battalion leader chosen as an African American.

It must've been quite stressful for him!

I couldn't agree more. Anyway, back to our discussion. We've talked briefly about international dichotomies, right? You understand how the Civil War offered a reductive, dualistic representation to complex political ideologies, correct?

Sí.

Now, let's get into the personal and political motivations for participating in the war!

Sure!

A lot of volunteers helped solely because of their belief in fighting against Fascism. For example, one American volunteer explained that “the victory of the system of oppression known as Fascism would make my life meaningless.” In other words, to some people, fighting against Fascism was everything.

Others, like Robeson, focused on preventing Fascism from spreading to other countries. He said, “I belong to an oppressed race, discriminated against one that could not live if Fascism triumphed in the world.” He must have understood that Fascism could destroy his race and potentially endanger people like him.

¡Exactamente!
Others even stated that by fighting alongside us, they were crushing Fascism and saving people from “vicious persecution, wholesale imprisonment and slaughter which the Jewish people suffered and are suffering under Hitler’s fascist heels.”

That’s horrible!
What are some other personal reasons?

Lardner, who came up with a point form list of reasons to fight against Fascism, added additional personal reasons like “wanting something ‘remarkable’ in his personal background, wanting to ‘impress various

people’, getting in ‘good physical condition,’”
etc.

All valid reasons indeed...

Borrowing from Andrew Giles’ research paper,
my favourite quote that describes this war is this:
“international in nature, a fight between two
mutually exclusive opposing political ideologies,
but also a struggle that was worth joining for
domestic and personal reasons”.

Wow! That totally encapsulates
everything we’ve been talking about!

Of course! But that’s not it.
Many who fought in the war
produced famous pieces of poems.
Could you think of such famous poets?

Are you kidding me? Of course I can.
Two of the most famous poets are
Miguel Hernández and Federico
García Lorca.

Not bad! Poetry was an important
part in the Civil War because it
shaped the way people think,
either using imagery or aural
representations.

I’m pretty sure that both sides, not just
Republicanos, produced extraordinary works
at this time, correct?

Yes. But they focus on different themes.
Republicans focus on deaths, courage,
bravery, and the glory of their cause;
Nationalists focus on religion, nationalism,
and their mythic past to name a few.

What’s the mythic past?

Aha! During the 16th century,
Spain was a world power as it
claimed colonies around the world
rich in resources like gold, making them
unbelievably wealthy and powerful.

Wasn't it a terrible time for the
indigenous people whom the Spanish
dominated? These communities suffered
through the brutality of many
Spaniards, right?

Yes. According to Spanish Dominican Friar,
“it is of public opinion and knowledge
that no end of deception is practiced and
a thousand acts of robbery and violence
are committed in the course of bartering
and carrying off Negroes from their country
and bringing them to the Indies
and to Spain”.

The Atlantic slave trade was
horrible... I once watched
a documentary about it.
Ethiopians embarked on a
journey, without food and
suitable spaces to stretch
their arms and legs.
That was painfully disgusting!

To the Fascists, the mythic past
was the greatest period of the Spanish
history, so it was no surprise that
themes such as this were referenced
frequently in some of the poetry.

Urgh brutal!

Of course, not all poems were written

There were also many poets from the International Brigades too!

Wasn't there a famous song called the Battle of Jarama sung by the international brigades?

There were also other poems, like "Heap of Ruins", "Letter of Aragon"...

There's also a poem called "the Dressing Station," written by a driver. It was my personal favourite.

Aragon shows a more peaceful side of the war, using sensory and aural details about the deaths of militiamen. The quiet fronts, the graves, the spiritless atmosphere.

by the Spanish themselves.

Wow! You're killing it!
Tell me about them!

Haha! My three friends were always singing that!

Ahh! The part where it says "I'd rather die than live under the umbrella of Fascism" was brilliantly written, wasn't it?

Oh really? Haven't heard of it.

Right. "You could tell from our listlessness, no one much missed him".

Man, this is such a great quote that I could totally feel when my brothers were buried.

Not actual brothers, mind you. But comrades very very close to me. I couldn't even mourn their deaths because

I was totally exhausted and lacked
the energy to...

(begins sobbing)

Oh no! Don't cry! Here... have my tissue.

Gracias...

Anyway, the Dressing Station, on the other hand, touches all of our senses using striking imagery and aural details to show how bloody, noisy, and chaotic the scene was. Some great details include "falling masonry," "whistle of death," repetition of "here, here, here" foreshadows the countless deaths covering the streets where the driver had to suffer through. It was a completely different approach compared to Aragon's poem, but they both showed the horror of the war...

Wow, that was something I didn't even know! Nice summary there! I can already sense how breath-taking it feels to read each line so full of powerful diction which hammers down mercilessly to the human soul. I can imagine the drivers' hopelessness when he sees all those corpses lying on the ground.

Wow, seriously?! That's awesome! I think poetry differs from other modes of art. It allows the imagination of a person to run free and dive into

the scene itself just with the
stroke of the words.

¡Exactamente! That was great!

Men Photography



Ooooooh look at this!!! Tha—

Ahhhh Robert Capa!

You know him?

¡Por supuesto! He was a American-Hungarian
photographer, and one of the very best-known
photographers in Spain! Don't tell me *you*
don't know him...

Of course I do...

I was just testing to see
if *you* knew him...

A likely story (sarcastic voice)!
Well, tell me who Robert Capa
was then, big brains.

Capa was one of the most famous
male photographers of the Civil War.

Duh...

I haven't even finished!

Oh *really*...

He was a photojournalist who arrived from Paris as a correspondent and a reporter, just like many others.

He also worked under the control and censorship of the authorities, and had to respect and adhere to the laws enacted by the government.

Wow, now *that's* a lot.

Of the dozens of foreign and Spanish professionals, Robert Capa, whose real name was Andrei Friedman was the only one who became well-known.

Yep! Towards the end of 1938, the English *Picture Post* even proclaimed him “the world’s best war photographer!”

What’s his most famous piece?

“The Fallen Soldier” – in which a soldier is shown moments after being shot, with his arms flung back in motion, a pained expression across his face, and body tilted backwards, preparing to fall to his death.

Yes! Do you know how many technological limitations photographers were facing? Those slow leica cameras were not only super time-consuming to wind up, but also extremely sensitive to light. Yet, the photo Capa

took was extraordinary, which shows
how adept he was in photography.

Capa's photography also rose to fame
because it provided a deeper understanding
of the brutality of war to those who stayed
at home. The "Fallen Soldier" was one of
his many works which permeated the minds
of people everywhere.

Generally speaking, it is worth noting
that the Spanish Civil War was the
"first war to be witnessed ('covered')
in the modern sense."

¿Qué significa esta expresión?

It means , in Susan Sontag's words,
that the works of photographers
who were engaged in the military lines and
towns under bombardment were "immediately
seen" in newspapers and magazines in Spain
and abroad .

Really? That's really advanced,
isn't it?

That's why I said "modern" in the first
place...

Wait... America's Vietnam War
also introduced tonnes of close-up
pictures filled with death and destruction
in the TV every day during the
war. Did they get the inspiration
from the Spanish?

Probably. I'd also say that
advances in technology
also played a huge role.
So, this shift was automatic.

But why's photography such a big deal? Everyone can sort of imagine the scene based on the testimonies of soldiers who survived.

As the famous writer, Virginia Woolf, indicated, photographs of mutilated bodies “vivify the condensation of war, and may bring home, for a spell, a portion of its reality to those who have no experience of war at all.”

Wow! I've been surrounded by all sorts of photographs from the internet nowadays that I easily forget how photography could be so impactful among individuals who grew up with limited photography!

¡Sí! I think this is the problem with you and other young kids nowadays, taking everything for granted.

Hey...

Anyways,
what was I saying?

How important was photography?

Oh, before that, we talked about how Capa rose to mythical status.

Hold up! Mythical status?

Ohh sorry I went too far ahead. There's another very famous photographer you must know – Agustí Centelles, from Cataluña.

Yes! I've went to his Spring 2010 exhibition put on by the Arts

Santa Mónica in Tarragona!

What?! How lucky?
¿Como fue?

It was mind-blowing! There were images of his time in the concentration camp which were blown up and and well-lit in the dark rooms with his letters and journal diaries in bright white letters.

Correcto. His photographs were particularly interesting because he had been a resident of the concentration camp, and not just an outsider looking in.

He was also famous for his suitcase filled with his lifelong collections of film negatives, in which he kept beside him and even used it as a pillow!

Ahh good point!

I even saw an article that stated how Centelles was “forced to swear to the Francoist government that he would not take any more journalistic pictures.” Such determination and boldness to be able to ignore those orders!

The suitcase is definitely one of his main symbols in reaching his mythic status.

So what’s this whole mythical status about?

A mythical status is kind of similar to the greek heroes that go out on quests, overcome great obstacles, and in the end become triumphant.

I see. So, people who are legendary?

In Centelles' example, he was able to create his own story and determine, through his own voice, how people interpreted him. His suitcase, and the fact that he was able to sneak out so many negatives and later have them processed into photos was a great deal!

So it is because of this suitcase that he was able to escape with the protected negatives which became so famous in the future.

¡Exactamente! Centelles' work was incorporated into the Spanish Ministry of Culture's published catalogue and his name became known in formal institutions, like the government. This proved he had truly become successful as a documentarian.

It was, however, disappointing that Centelles' sons sold the Catalan figures documents and negatives to Spain's central government (*el Ministerio de Cultura*) instead of the Generalitat (*the Catalan regional government*).

Wait a second...

They sold the works of Centelles,
a passionate Catalan detained in
one of Franco's concentration
camps, not to Generalitat, but to
the central government?
¿Están locos?

But, this is a piece of Catalan cultural
heritage that many people must've felt
belonged in Catalonia.

Yeah... so what about Capa?
He also reached mystical status, right?

Wait WHAT?

Well... All along I thought it was
actually real!

The controversy also became known
as 'casa Centelles.'

The central government was willing
to pay more for his works than
was possible for the Generalitat.

Couldn't have put it better myself.
(sigh)
Greed is always an undeniable
fact of life, I suppose.

Por supuesto. He was also famous
because after he died, many people
started spreading the news that
his famous "Falling Soldier" was
staged!

You do look surprised, don't you?

He was such a skilled photographer
whom nobody dared to challenge until
he died. Can't believe a simpleton like you

got tricked.

Hey excuse me?!

How do you know this anyway?

Photography experts have proved it somehow,
something to do with the angle of his fall...

Wow, *very* convincing indeed.

¡Cállate! With a leica camera,
capturing a moment like this
was nothing less than impressive.

Now that I think about it...

This is also why it's essential for you
to understand not all photographs are
real. In a sense, even though a camera
does not have the brain to alter the
scene in front of them, the cameramen
may have individual motives.
Photographs are never unbiased.

I know that. But wouldn't that be
kind of stupid if we all suspected photos
of being inherently biased? Photos, regardless of
whether they've been staged, are real
in a sense that they capture the surroundings
and a cameraman is there to take them.
Come on, do you mean Centelles' famous
photo with dead horses and soldiers
is staged as well? Hahaha...

I don't want to break it to you, but
you're right.

What?!

You see, Centelles uses reframing
as a technique, varying the
number of subjects

and the depth of the field, etc.

ARE YOU SERIOUS?

Of course I am. Why would I lie?

Mira,



This is his staged photograph initially. What do you think of it?

What? That's not the one I've seen before!
This seems so fake. Just look at
the awkwardness of the man at the left
and his tiny pistol compared to the others!
The space on the left was huge!

How about this?



Woah! This is entirely different!
It seems like he is actually in the
middle of a chaotic and bloody war!
It feels to me that many people
are rushing in. Cropping the man and the
space on the left out really do make a huge
difference!

See the power of just cropping the image?

The horses are also expanded and
make up over half of the composition.

Very majestic view, isn't it?

¡Estupendo!

So, do you understand the importance of

But, these are fake photos, right?
So they aren't real, are they?

Sí.

I guess time could be a factor too.
Perhaps I don't feel too much
excitement seeing photographs
because I am just bombarded
with those each day through my
social media platforms.

I never registered such
complex reflections within

photographs?

Aha! Great question! I take it as,
“Does it make a difference for
someone in Spain to think that
a photograph is staged or real”?

Mira,
there are many interpretations of this.
Some think like you do, saying
that these are fake and thus unimportant.
But for others, photography means
a great deal to them, regardless of
whether it is staged or not.

But, photography cannot be regarded
as “pure objective historical truth,” nor can it be
perceived as “pure subjective artistic
experience.” The photographer chooses,
actively, what they want the viewer to
see or not to see, making it not “objective;”
it also cannot be purely artistic because
presumably, a photographer
takes pictures they came upon or
is witnessing themselves.

the world of photography!

Wow! I get it! It's saying how media could potentially affect us more than we think.

For example, if all we see are atrocities of Nationalists, we might think that Republicans never committed a single crime or killed a single person.

Woah now *that's* more interesting than ever! What a funny analogy!

Well, it wouldn't make sense if he didn't. Their works both included staged photographs...

¿Perdón?

And, as Sontag suggested, the war could be won or lost by what happened in the media.

Very nice! Borrowing from my friend Ellis' quotes, she said "If all we have access to is the idea that President Trump, for example, is a saintly figure, we might end up believing such nonsense!"

You know Centelles was in support of Capa's staged photograph, don't you?

Yep, that's a valid point. But it is also due to this that we accept, as future generations, that the balance of the aesthetic and historical photograph validates the use of staged photos.

In Sontag's article, you're exactly referring to her phrase of a photograph

giving “mixed signals.” With this, she is referring to the beautiful photographs of atrocity. If a photo that depicts something horrible is also aesthetically lovely or well crafted, just like those of Centelles and Capas’, it creates a double-edged reaction where the viewer thinks simultaneously, “stop this,” (because it’s an image of something terrible), but also, “what a spectacle!” (because it’s a beautiful or aesthetically pleasing photo).

Ahh! So you’re saying since both photographers produced such “balanced” photographs and became famous, most people were likely to accept their photos regardless of whether they were staged or not.

Neatly put.

Do you know what else made them successful photographers? Aside from the fact that their most iconic photographs were staged?

Generally speaking, these two figures belonged to the category of the “self-made man” who “rises through the social ranks on his own merit, representing the triumph of the working in the same place at times during the war, such as on the Aragon front or in Barcelona.” Of course, aside from them, I think others should have been on the same stage as them too, such as Gerda Taro, whose real name was Gerta Pohorillye.

That name sounds familiar!
Was she the colleague of Capa?

Yes. She produced many works
as great as those of Centelles’.

I see. Haha! I wonder why they both
changed their names...

Oh good question!
They thought that by using the names of
fabricated North American photographers,
they would be able to sell their photos at a
better price!

That’s very smart of them!

Women Photography

¿Mujeres?

Aha! This is my expertise!

I’m not sure if I can trust you a hundred
percent.

¿Qué dijiste? (threatening voice)

Nada nada. Sigue.

Let’s start off with the women photographers!

I’ve no idea. Completamente
ni idea.

Listen up, would ya?

Vale.

Bueno, the two famous women photographers
whom I’d like to introduce are Margaret
Michaelis and Kati Horna.

Right.

Both had lived in Berlin during the end of
Weimar Republic, where democracy
and women’s rights were still flourishing.

What were their backgrounds?

Both were born Jewish and women,
and made themselves photographers and
anarchists during the 1930s. Migration
was a key aspect of their lives.

Oh! So they escaped Berlin
during the war?

Sí. But before that, I'd like to
add in a little about their backgrounds:
Michaelis was born in a Austrian town
at the time in 1902, and her work focused on portraits,
which carried aesthetic characteristics
in traditional drapery, pose, and the presence of *flou*
(soft focus). Rudolf Michaelis, a militant
of the anarcho-syndicalist group FAUD and
husband of Michaelis, was arrested once by
Hitler and once by Stalinist purges.

Oh no! Eso es terrible.
But not that new to me
anymore.

Horna was born in Szilasbalhás,
Hungary in 1912 and moved to
Budapest when she was very young.
She left home early for her education
in Berlin in 1930 when unfortunately
Nazism and anti-Semitism was emerging.
When she returned to Budapest
in 1933, she took an intensive course of
photography at the Studio of József
Pécsi (1889-1956), where future photographers
like Robert Capa –

ROBERT CAPA?

and Eva Bensusan went.

After that, she moved to Paris and started her photographic work. Simply put, she generated images with surrealist-like qualities. At the same time, the abundance of mannequins, dolls, statues, and paintings of people, which were largely favoured by surrealist photographers, helped convey a fantastic or dreamlike atmosphere.

Bueno... pronto lo veremos. Anyway, both put their photographic work to the service of the fight against fascism.

The work of these women stood out from that of other photographers because of their unique perspectives as women and anarchists during the conflict.

Here are what Michaelis' works look like:

Sounds kinda creepy.

How remarkable!
I express my appreciation
to them.



And here are Horna's:





This one is weird.

It seems like the man isn't the focus of the piece since he's blurred. He seems to be thinking quite hard about something.

Exactly. See how their photographs differ entirely from the works of men?

This could be explained by the fact that women's education focused on treating photography as a craft, different from that of men's.

In the first decades of the 20th Century, photography was one of the few socially accepted professions for women. There were photography schools for women in Vienna, Hamburg, Dresden, Berlin, and Paris. However, that training was market oriented which means they worked a lot in studios and labs.

The men's photographs are more violent and dramatic in nature.

Really? Por qué?

It was considered an art form,
so women were allowed to do it.

(sigh)

During the Weimar Republic,
women were technically able, by law,
to work in the same industries as that of
as mens'. However, even though the laws
were more accomodating,
the social perception of acceptable
gender roles failed to change and
it was rare to find women practicing
non-traditional professions.

And, even worse, women who studied
other forms of art, like watercolour,
had to resort to photography if they
wanted to earn a living with their skills.

What do you mean?

¡Gran punto! Michaelis
also captured ordinary womens' lives
not shown in men's photography and
became famous by providing us with

Why was photography only allowed?

What if some women trained to become
a doctor, or a nurse, or a lawyer?

I feel so bad for them.

Aaaah how could that be?
But then, Horna was a remarkable
person, wasn't she? She took a step
further.

Aside from merely capturing stuff,
she used her knowledge of surrealism
and made her own photographs unique.

another side of war, not just violence.

These women were wonderful!
It's a pity that they're not more
well known or recognized.

Well... now you know about them!
That's all it matters.

Memory and Photography

What on earth is this memory thing?

Really? I found it easy to comprehend.
Perhaps because I've had experienced the
war myself and never wanted to let
go of these memories.

Oh... I guess that makes sense.

Historical memory has a lot
of jargon. Lieux de mémoire,
following the model of Pierre
Nora for example, refers to
the "role of national symbols
and cultural artefacts in historical
or collective memory."

Uhh...

Basically, the purpose of the place
of memory is, of course, to remember.
And places of memory are founded when
people are in danger of losing its
lived cultural and oral traditions.

By those people, do you mean those
Republicans who went into exile
following war?

Precisely! Even during the start of
the war in 1936, some people had feared
the spread of the extremist Francoist ideology

and had started to cross the border to
France and flee to places like Mexico and
Africa, etc. in anticipation for what was possible.
The Spanish refugees were forced to reconstruct their
identities in these new locations.

Yeah, they must have had to convince
border guards and officers
that they were especially qualified
because they did not have legal
documentations to showcase
who they were.

Great point! So, back to this,
the history of memory means
a history interested in memory.
That could range from collecting
symbolic things, art pieces or narratives,
with the purpose of preserving
memory, or to keep memory alive.

Wait. I'm confused.

Ok. I'll start again.
First off, do you understand
how people use photographs
to construct their idea of history?

Hmm... Whenever I look
at the photos from the past,
I recall things that I had previously
forgotten.

Exactly. Photography is powerful
as it brings people back to the past.
French author Marcel Proust references this in his novel,
Remembrance of Things Past,
where he made this analogy of the
how a Madeline cookie

immediately brought him back to
memories of his own youth.
What you were referring to just
then was a ‘Proustian moment.’

Oh! Sounds pretty interesting! Why not
a macaroon or chocolate chip cookie?

That’s beside the point!
You could think of these historical remnants
as ways for younger generations
like you to engage with our past,
thus cultivating the ability to grieve
for us, the fallen Republicans, in the
modern age.

Wow... So how exactly was
memory preserved?

Well... first and foremost, photographs.

Centelles’ photographs, I suppose,
are used to illustrate
the narratives of proletariat
Catalan heroism and
counter the Francoist regime, right?

Right. It also shows the fight
for an identity, and connects the
past national tragedy together with the present.
The exhibition on the concentration camp
in Bram, for example, allows an individual
to both emotionally and intellectually
engage with the past, deeming it
one of the most successful exhibitions.

Veó. What was Bram like?

It was a concentration camp
that targeted outspoken Republicans
and Catalans in France, but the goal of

these camps was not one of extermination, like many of Hitler's camps, for example, but rather they served as holding camps with grim conditions. Certainly no vacation.

Ah, vale.

Another example of photography that connects the past and present is the Arqueologia del Punt de Vista, a very interesting concept of re-photography.

Re-photography?

It is a type of art that brings old photographs into the present with the hope that the viewer will consider the space between the past and the present. These so-called "Bullet Holes" installations are prevalent on streets for people from, say Barcelona, to view.





Woah! ¡Eso se ve realmente genial! The past totally blended seamlessly with the present! I guess the reason it's called "Bullet Holes" is because these pictures really shoot a blast of reality into the present.

So there are downsides too to these memorials huh!

Nice! Not only that, but it serves as a reminder of how recent these painful events were. The war actually happened less than a century ago. At the same time, these "Bullet Holes" could be a threat too. As Xavier Antich pointed out, these flashy historic photographs might encourage the spread of new myths to replace the old ones, simplifying the past.

Yes. It's crucial to analyze things in depth and not be brainwashed by what you see in front of you. Recuerda esto, my young padawan!

Yes, Ben Kenobi!
But apart from photography,
what else has been done to preserve
these memories?

Yikes! I totally got caught up
in talking about photography!
Well... people retrieved items that
could be found.

Exhumation in battlefields
and mass graves?

Exactamente. Exhumation is a great example
of how people have been grappling
with historical memory: to retrieve the past
and seek truth. In 2004, por ejemplo,
a team led by Francesc Torres successfully
recovered forty-six male bodies through digging,
unearthing and recovering graves in Villamayor
de los Montes. They even went back two
years later for a proper burial. Though I
must say I am still rather disappointed
with the government.

¿Por qué?

¿Qué piensas?

Hmm... perhaps the government
did not do the same things for
other victims? They kinda neglected
the heroic past of these Republicans?

¡Muy listo!
The new, democratic Spain hasn't been
fair to all who gave their lives for
the Second Republic, nor has it acknowledged
the hardships of their immediate
relatives. The clearest example is

Was that passed by the Spanish Parliament
in October 2007?

I know that it planned to deal with the
unfinished business of the country's
recent past.

Oh... something bad's coming!

¡Qué decepcionante! How could they?

The fact that Franco never even
apologized is already unacceptable.
But treating these atrocities as
“illegitimate” really gets to
my nerves, sabes?

the Law of Historical Memory.

Yes! I'm glad you knew something
about it. What else do you know?

(moans)

Uh... yeah. But that's less than
half the picture!

The new law has failed, for example,
to “declare null and void the verdicts
of all political trials conducted under the
Franco regime.” In other words,
no justice has been shown to victims
and no punishments have been
brought down upon the attackers.

The trials have been declared
“illegitimate,” an unclear term.
This leaves “tens of thousands (of)
people” guilty of either defending
a fascist coup or having fought
for a democracy under threat.

Lo sé. My veins are always
pumping when I get to this part of

Spain's "new democracy."
What kind of a democracy is that?!

But I guess there are reasons
why these things happened, right?
My humble guess...

What do you mean 'humble,' eh?
We are comrades! ¡MISMO NIVEL!

Bueno. I guess although Franco
is dead, Francoist ideology is
still alive in certain forms. Also,
since the political left had "deeply
internalized (their) defeat in the war,"
they're probably unable to recover
emotionally and can no longer
stand up for justice.

That sounds depressing. It tears my heart!
It really hurts right now!

OH MY GOD! Do you need help?

(stops breathing)

I really feel my heart contracting
now. It feels like someone is
covering my mouth, oh no!

Creo que estoy bien. Pero,
¡maldita sean los nacionales!

I feel terrible for the Republicans
like you. First exile or living under the
brutal dictatorship then tormented
by right-wing Spanish people, and finally,
by yourselves.

Whenever I think of these painful
thoughts, I reference my favourite quote:
"What we know in our heads must
become something we know in our guts;

what we know in our guts must become
something we know in our heads.”
To fully recover, one has to understand
that the past is past, which then heals
and brings the body and mind together.

You sound like Yoda.

But still... It's *so* hard to
think that all we've fought for
is lost. I just...
I just *can't* accept it.
(begins weeping)

You're saying all these quotes
but never applying it to yourself.
How about listening to that advice
and giving it a shot?

(deep inhale)
OK! Lo intentaré.

Women - *Milicianas*

You know, women were not only limited
to photography.

¡Por supuesto!

They were leaders,
heroes, and battalion fighters in
the army too!

Yep. Many women
fought alongside with us men.
They were absolutely marvelous!

I thought you didn't know about
women initially!

Well... not the photographers.
Ask any Republican man and

almost no one would deny how powerful women were during the war.

Fascinante. I read a journal of international women's studies issued by Lisa Lines where it talks about female *milicianas* on the front lines and in the rearguard.

Do you know the several distinctions between the *milicianas* who fought in the front lines and in the rearguard.

Most front line *milicianas* fought in mixed-gender battalions while *milicianas* in the rearguard were large largely organized into women-only battalions.

¡No está mal!

Another distinction was that women on the frontlines moved around Spain depending on the needs of conflict, whereas the ones in the rearguard played more of a defensive role in securing their homes and cities.

Bien.

In general, many women suffered a double burden.

Aha! ¡Muy muy importante!
We call it "gender consciousness."

Haven't heard of it.

Basically, women understood their expectations in domestic roles, such as sewing, cooking, washing, etc.

But, at the same time, they also were aware of their role in combat.

That's the same thing as double burden! I just can't believe they had to carry out both combat

and supportive tasks!
It's so unfair for women,
to be honest.

I must admit I hated it when higher ranked officers pushed us men to help clean and cook. I guess it must've been extremely tough for women.

Aiyayay... perhaps womens' roles were not as hard as mens'!

No, that's absolutely not true. Women participated in combat equally with men. In fact, their work was as dangerous and as light-threatening as that of ours!

Oh yea it's easy to forget.
I can't believe I said that even after reading the article...
Look here.

"In an interview that was printed in the independent newspaper *Crónica* in December 1936, he stated, '[They are] three comrades who, rifle in arms, have come to fight with us. I have to say that they are brave, and that, like the men, they carry out their mission. They stand guard, go to the trenches, and finally, the fight like any one of us.'"

Exactly! Lina Odena was perhaps the best-known *miliciana*, becoming famous after dying early in the Civil War.

She led militias into battle,
was in command of a militia unit,
and even achieved the post of commandant.

Unfortunately, when she was outnumbered, she used her last bullet to shoot herself in the head. Her instincts told her of the horrors

of rape and mutilation that certainly
awaited her upon her capture.

What a Republican war legend!

Frenándex de Velasco Pérez
was also known for her dangerous
actions.

Was she the one taking part in missions
behind enemy lines? In shock troops?

Precisely. She had to sleep in the mud
and snow standing up. There was
no food. Life in trenches was unbelievably
hard. Yet, she was able to endure all of it.

You know there's this woman as well
who drove the Fascists away!

What was her name?

Margaret Ribalta.

Not satisfied with work at headquarters,
she volunteered immediately to go out
with an advance party. Her group climbed
to the top of the hill when saw a group of fascist
shooting a machine gun. The Republicans
opened fire, and shot and killed the man handling
the weapons.

Hahaha! That's something!

Ribalta and her party seized the machine gun,
and returned to the Republican line.
Unfortunately, a Republican plane mistook
the group for fascist and dropped a bomb on them!

Arghhhhh!!

There were women as young as 17, like that of
Julia Manzanal, who even became the
Political Commissar for the *Batallón Municipal de
Madrid*.

Seventeen?!

Oh yes. But women had some difficulties handling heavy weapons initially.

¡Por supuesto! The guns were absolutely cumbersome!

Carmen, who had been a seamstress's assistant, was shocked about her transformation with her gun.

She said, "I can manage a gun with the ease that I used to wield a needle".

Not only that, she claimed that when trampling up and down the hill, she felt that "the gun was carrying her along!"

¿Qué demonios?

I also know of a woman called Etchebéhére, who escaped a church full of fascists "shooting cannon balls," "firing... through a rain of machine-gun bullets." She went on for 4 days, without food, and was finally promoted to Captain of Second Company of the POUM's Lenin Battalion due to her bravery and decisiveness.

Woah! I can't even live without food for less than 24 hours.

Many testimonies from foreign observers highlight the courage displayed by the *milicianas* in battle, demonstrating that in some cases, women exhibited even more valour than the militia men.

¡Totalmente!

Borkenau, in his entry, witnessed

while troops from Jaén and Valencia
“ran away before our eyes,”
two *milicianas* “stood the
bombardment ... with the proudest
gallantry and unconcernedness. ”

Some militia men even admitted
how they felt women were ashamed
by their lack of bravery.

Women were also brave in a sense
that they risked their lives to the Republic.
Do you know that women were not
pardoned from execution by the Nationalists?
Not even pregnant women!

Nationalists are demons.

A German ambassador was shocked that
General Franco “continued to eat his lunch”
when he “ordered the execution of... *milicianas*.”

Yea, that dude didn’t give
a damn about anyone.
¡Es un Bastardo!

How about the non-combat roles
in the front lines?

The double burdened folks?
Yeah... They were amazing too.
Communist Josefa Rionda, for example,
served as a nurse and *miliciana* at the same time.

¡Imposible!

Check *Mujeres*. I wasn’t lying. She
“served as a nurse ... at Colloto, and
routinely fired upon the enemy whist in the
trenches aiding the wounded.”

Oh my goodness!

Do you wanna hear a story?

¿Cómo no?

A true story, mind you.

Yeah!

I was in the POUM unit captained by Etchebéhére. Remember the one who went for four days without food?

¿Sí?

Under her unit, auxiliary tasks were distributed equally between male and female fighters.

Uhh...

And of course, some men refused. They claimed it was “women’s work”. I was one of those. Guess what she said to me?

(Cackles loudly)

She asked if I expected her to wash our socks. I was totally screwed, mate.

Hahahahaha...

Serves you right!

You know this was my greatest nightmare!

Nada nada.

How about women’s battalions in the rearguard?

¿Perdón? ¿Qué dijiste?

Among women who took an active part in defending Madrid, the Unión de Muchachas (Girls’ Union), a communist youth group of 2,000 women aged 14-25, provided arms training and target practice.

It was really famous!

Cool! Were they prepared just to go to the front lines?

No. This has always been a misconception.

Only in emergency situations did they participate in the front lines. Their main purpose was to defend their own towns or cities. The Lina Odena Battalion in Madrid was formed with this specific purpose.

What did they do there?

Louise Gómez, the organiser of the Women's Secretariat of the POUM in Barcelona, formed a women's battalion. She reported that they participated in drills, practised marching, received weapons training, etc. Again, it was difficult for them to use the machine guns, but they overcame it in the end.

Wow!

Low said, "In the end, I think that we could have assembled the parts of a machine-gun in the dark, without a clank to show the enemy where we were hidden, and fired it off as a surprise." This showed their extraordinary skills after having practiced putting "hard and heavy" separate pieces of the machine back together again.

I remembered reading about how someone "couldn't bear parting' with her revolver."

Haha! Female combatants were totally skilled in handling weapons. I wouldn't be surprised if they

felt that way at all!

Solidarity

Women were also intelligent in other ways. Since they had this double burden, Republican women from pueblos or rural areas, for example, worked together with Nationalist women alike.

Haha! You absolutely should!
As Gregoria Esculta said,
“the neighbor would always give us salt if we didn’t have any.”
At least some humanity and some empathy existed amidst this chaotic and brutal war.

¿Qué es eso?

Oh yes!
Franco’s ideal, the *perfecta casada*, was that women should not do unnecessary things, which consisted of staying up late and singing. This was a total contrast with the more egalitarian model of mothering put forth by Republicans.

Woah! Really? I must ask my wife!

I heard from my wife that they did have solidarity within their female community. But, she was not satisfied with one thing.

She told me that singing in *los cabarets*, or nightclubs, was not allowed for women.

No wonder she felt that way!

Under Franco and the power of Catholic Church, women were forced into traditional roles for wife and mother. The Fascist even used a special group, called the Woman's Section to "instill domestic values" in Spanish households.

Women were also not allowed to wear "inappropriate" clothing, participate in "any dance that came out in this century," wear make-up, or engage with entertainment in any form.

That pisses me off!

Babies

Do you know how they treated babies?

Sí. In order to ensure the health of Fascist child, they created Infant care centers which "promoted 'physical and moral' education."

In a sense, the fascists wanted to remove the influence of motherhood, and replace it by the good state.

(sigh) This also explains the motivation behind the stolen babies.

What do you mean?
What stolen babies?

I knew it. This is information Francoist supporters want to keep hidden... are you sure you want to know?

¡Sí! ¡¡¡Dime!!!

It's ok. I can handle it.

It's not going to be pleasant news.

To be honest, I've only come across this from my relatives. My aunt, for example, never saw her own child after she was born. The doctors refused to present her the baby's corpse and claimed that she was dead before anyone could verify.

Sounds quite fishy to me.

Yeah. And my aunt wasn't the only one either. In fact, I know of three close relatives who happened to go through similar things.

Don't tell me...

Franco ROBBED babies?!

In 2018, NPR had a news segment entitled "How Spanish Women were Allegedly Targeted in 'Stolen Babies' cases for Decades."

A potential victim, Pilar Navarro, thought her daughter was dead until 2011, when thousands of stories about Spain's "stolen babies" spread like wildfire. It was believed by lawyers and advocates that between 1930 to 1989, newborns were "placed into a sprawling clandestine adoption network." Many children were placed in the care of families deemed loyal to dictator Franco.

Wh... WHAT THE HECK?!

That's totally inhuman and outrageous!!!

Could you guess why Franco did that?

Well... he wanted to wipe out
dangerous Communists
again, I suppose?

Exactly! It later turned into a “money making”
business that supposedly lasted into
the 1980s with the help of the Catholic Church.

A money making venture?!
Oh my goodness!

It’s not just Franco doing all these dirty works.
Spanish psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo-Nájera
was the “leading figure behind the idea that
a Marxist ideology was inherited and that
Republican women carried what he called
a ‘red gene.’ ”

That’s totally biased and barbarous!

Those targeted were mainly
working-class women, single women,
young women and women who were
socially and politically active.

That’s basically all women! That’s
utterly unbelievable!

Obviously, those who carried out
the act were nuns and conservative hospital
workers who came up with all sorts of
reasons: respiratory problems and
other dodgy excuses. And, there are
excuses of fires having burned
birth documentation so it’s very difficult
to find the truth!

I still can’t believe Francoist leaders
came up with these petty excuses just

to keep strong women from educating their kids
to become Republicans. What kind of
an excuse is this?

Later, they made a law so that only
kids who *suspect* themselves as
genetically different from their mothers
could take a DNA test to see if
they were in fact stolen babies.

What if the kids didn't even
know such a possibility existed?

I'm afraid this is exactly what conservatives
would have wanted. They must've known that
not many kids, let alone adults, know of this case
and simply created law so that they could
be seen as caring officials.
But of course, in some cases,
DNA tests proved that
the children were in fact genetically
related to their mothers. So, not all
people are in agreement with the idea
that babies were stolen.

Those DNA tests could also
have been biased, man!!
I can't imagine a mother
not being able to at least see
their 'dead' children.
I still don't understand how right-
wing people could be so stupid as to
carry out these types of plans, completely
blinded by evil. I mean,
Franco was in support of Church,
wasn't he? People would know that
God would not dare do such a thing!

Francoist leaders demonized the enemy, remember? They framed child-stealing as protecting the child from communist ideology, which was seen as a greater evil.

That's also why you see all those banners of protests on June 26 saying "¿Jesús robó bebés?" and "¡Justicia!" and "El robar bebés por un dios cruel doble crimen es," etc.

(shakes his head miserably)
Unbelievable.

It's kind of painful to know all this, isn't it?

Absolutely nerve-wracking!!!
Far from pain... this whole scandal!
I wish I'd known this, though.
This injustice needs to be known to the general public, honestly.

Silence

Oh! I believe we've only talked about solidarity but not silence.

Well... you talked about how women worked together regardless of political views, so yeah...

Nice. But silence is just as importante.

You mean how women were not able to sing their melodies in *cabarets*?

Sí. But, there's also this stoicism among men which creates this pervasive silence.

Men were seen as emotionless and tough. Thus, many of them remained silent in public squares under fear of being

So silence was just the best key
to protect themselves and
their families. How sad!

Yes. I can't imagine!

What?!

That's really sad! I feel so angry
about the government! This
is so unfair. The world is so unfair...

attacked by the enemy, Nationalists
and Republicans alike.

Yes. It was the safest strategy to avoid
being seen or interpreted as an enemy.

Of course, talking about the war
is also nearly impossible, based on
how painful and exhausted these
soldiers felt at the time.

Can you imagine just keeping our
mouths closed and not being able to
mourn and talk about these tragedies?

It's a horrible feeling to have.

The "pact of silence," established
by the Spanish policymakers
(also known as Amnesty Law of 1977),
granted amnesty to political prisoners.

Francoist officials destroyed thousands
of written documents pertaining to
the implementation of repression both
during the war and the dictatorship.

The result is that many stories of
mothers from the Spanish Civil War
will be forever untold. But, aye,
no point in complaining.
Past is past remember?

Urgh...

But at least, there is still tons
of evidence of how terrible los
nacionales has been in the war.
People are working to pass laws
and make changes to honor
and better acknowledge the past.

Whew! Go fight for justice!
Go Republicans, Go!!!

Joan Miró

Have you heard of Joan Miró?

As if I'm dumb enough not to!
The whole world knows him.

My grandmother is a huge fan of him!
In fact, we always visited his artworks
at the Joan Miró Foundation in Barcelona.

He was my idol as he represented
Catalonia and the force emanating
from its soil. Miró is literally everywhere today,
in every bank's logo in Barcelona,
government offices, even in
the symbol of the 1992 Barcelona
Olympics. His favourite colors,
black and primary colors, never fail
to appear in the most crucial of
places indeed.

He was always extolling Catalan
culture, promoting the Catalan language,
a new Catalan newspaper and even
Barca, the Barcelona soccer team!

Yes. Remarkable man, he was.

There goes Yoda again.

Hmm... not sure.

What do you mean?

Then, he had his first trip in March 1920,
when he was nearly 27, to France.

He admired Pablo Picasso
so much that he said “A visit
to Picasso is like visiting a
ballerina with a number of lovers!”

It was splitted into two parts:
Paris and a Catalan farm.

But, did you know of classic Miró?
His paintings in the 1930s and ‘40s?

Most people, like you, only know of
his bold strokes and bright colours which
he used in his late paintings, but never
understood the “tortuous paths he took
to achieve this,” acknowledged by
Lanchner aside from me.

Miró grew up in a period of
intense Catalan nationalist feelings,
surrounded by Catalans who revived
historical memories and myths of Catalan
medieval greatness and expanse.

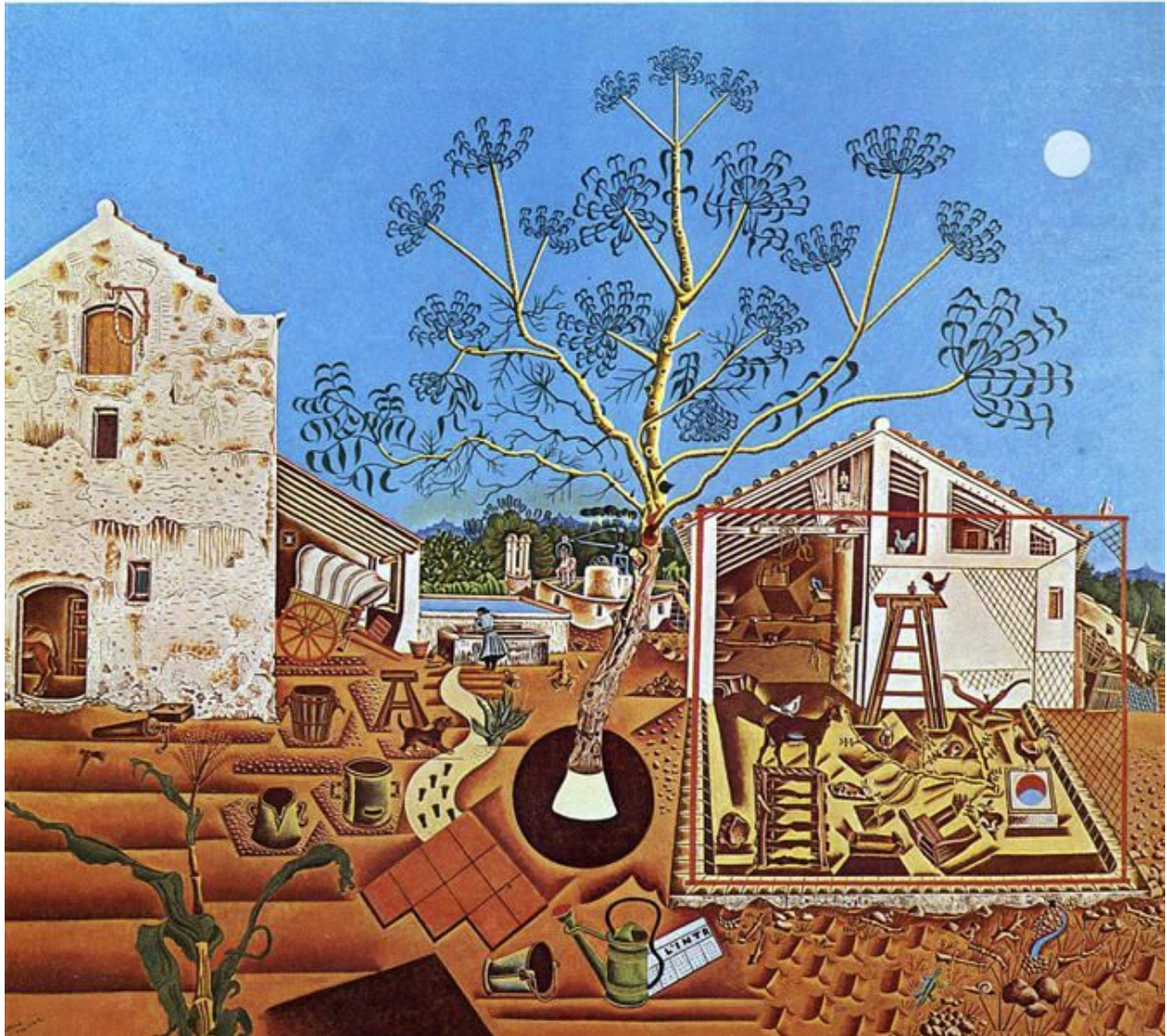
Yes?

Totally! I’m glad you pointed
this out. Do you know where
he spent the next decade?

The farm in Montroig, correct.
It was his way of staying
connected with his roots in Catalunya.
“The Farm,” for example, with its
meticulous and tiny symbols like

the snail, really showed how much
he cared about details.

Mira,



This is Miró's painting?! Woahh!
Where is the snail?

Bottom right, haha!

What's so special about it?

The symbol of "grounded in the soil".

Oh wow.

I love this painting! It makes me
feel at home!

¿En serio?

I know we've been talking about surrealism in Horna's photography earlier, but what does that mean?

So, what poetry did he love?

Wow!! I never knew he had such love for poems!

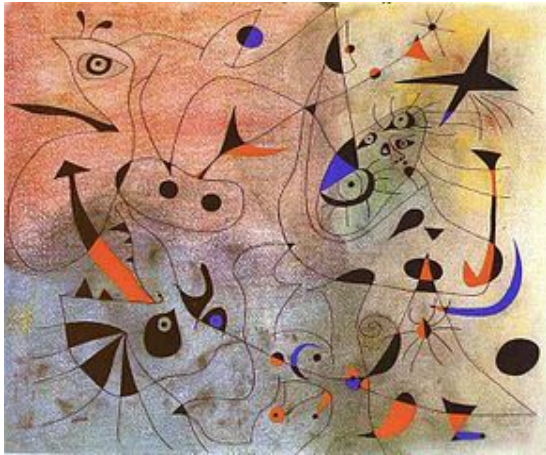
Ernest Hemingway bought it, ¿sabes?

¡Sí! Miró was influenced by many poetry and paintings of Surrealism.

It's an art form based on the subconscious. For example, if I were a surrealist writer, I might draw inspirations from the images that appeared to me in my dreams, or I might engage in something called, escritura automática or automatic writing where I just write whatever comes into my head... letting my inner thoughts flow. You should look up Freud's connection to this movement... fascinating stuff!

Aha! He was a voracious reader of Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Alfred Jarry, and Guillaume Apollinaire. Surrealist writers like Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard interested him even more than surrealist painters.

These artists glorified his ideals of symbolism and metaphor, contributing to his early works.



The *Carnival of Harlequin* (on the right) is one of my personal favourites! It is about his feelings of hunger.

A ladder signifies escape, a black circle represents Earth, a black triangle stands for the Eiffel Tower! The notebooks shows that he planned his work carefully and composed it upon a grid background.

Wow! Such organized works!
I really didn't know he was such a meticulous painter before!

Exactly!

So what happened then?
What caused him such a dramatic change in his art?

The Spanish Civil War of course!

Argh, I should've known!!

¡JAJAJA!

With a mood impending disaster, just before the war broke out, he painted "Man and Woman in front of a pile of excrement"

and other dark comedies that show his
“heaviness” in the head.
Most famously, he painted
“Still Life with Old Shoe”
when he was in exile.



Wow! Is it an oil painting?

Yes.

The mixed colors seem so penetrating
against the dark background
and it makes me dizzy!

Critics have hailed it as an allegory
of the horrors of war, as powerful
in its own way as Picasso’s Guernica.

Really? How?

The fork plunging into an apple,
for example, signifies “the soldier

sticking his bayonet into the enemy's body"; the burning bottle, the dried-out bread, and the abandoned shoe also seemed to reflect the cruelty and despair of Spain.

Woahh! I get it now! I thought the piece of bread was a skull!

HA! Now that's a whole new interpretation! Funnily enough, Miró confessed that he wasn't aware that he was painting his *Guernica*. He drew the apple because he'd asked his wife to buy it, and included the fork as a utensil on a whim.

What?! That's even more interesting then, to be able to leave it to others' interpretations!

The greatest thing was that he completed this over a period of 5 months crammed in a tiny work corner in a gallery.

And he still managed to paint this marvelous thing?

Precisely. But before that time, during the 1937 Paris World's Fair, Josep Luis Sert commissioned Picasso and Miró to create murals for it.

I really want to see Miró's painting! What's it called?

El Segador (The Reaper),
(18 ft by 12 ft)
The large mural utilizes symbols

such as a sickle, a crude weapon,
a clenched fist, and the salute
of the Republicans to depict an
anguished but defiant farmer.
So, while Picasso depicted a tragic
and horrific vision of the war,
Miró had a vision of defiance
and strength, and ultimately
optimistic vision of the Spanish
people and humanity.
Unfortunately, this painting
got lost after the war.



That's truly mind-blowing!
But to be honest,
I really couldn't see the farmer.
It seemed to me that a bird is
resting on a twig.

Isn't it fun, though,
that we get to guess using
symbols? It's more like
a puzzle than an artwork,

Was he still able to paint?

¡JAJA! The *symbols* are what
matters most. But I agree with you.
It totally does not look like a farmer
at all!

When Franco occupied Barcelona,
Miró went with her wife, Pilar, to
her ancestral island of Mallorca.

Obviously. But at the time, he was
absolutely worried about his future.
He said, "I felt that everything was

lost” and was fearful of forever losing
the chance to draw ever again.
But ultimately, he was able to work
in secret.

That’s lucky!!!

Sí. He spent his time producing
new works, which soon took on another
form – bold splashes of colours.

I always love his seemingly innocent,
child-like drawings. But now, I
can totally understand how his
early experiences in life created
the modern Miró we see today!

¡Fantástico!
Me encanta el arte de Miró
mucho mucho mucho.

Salvador Dalí

Are we forgetting the last of the three most important artists
during this war period – Salvador Dalí?

Por supuesto. Have ya seen “Soft Construction
with Boiled Beans (Premonition of
Civil War)?”

Ew! This looks
grotesque! I’ve always
wanted to vomit when I
saw this!



Well *somebody* asked for it.
This is a gruesome depiction of
a geometric monster destroying itself.

Dalí painted this prior to Franco's
invasion, but he was correct in
predicting the violence, anxiety,
and doom many Spaniards felt
during his dictatorship.

It is also ranked the most compelling
portrayals of the unconscious mind.
And of course, desecration of the human
body was a great preoccupation
of Surrealists in general, and of Dalí
in particular.

His artwork around this time must've been motivated
by his loss in the war, with
his experience of being trapped in a general
strike, his house Port Lligat destroyed,
his friend executed, and his sister imprisoned.

Yes. But these tragedies still enabled
Dalí to produce such aesthetically
gruesome paintings, similar to the
double-edged reaction we mentioned
earlier on photographs of the war period.
¿Te acuerdas?

(cough)
Aesthetic?

Exile

No doubt, exile is one of the most interesting
aspect of wars in general, but *even more so* for
this Civil War.

Yeah haven't we talked about

about exile before?

Well... not too much.
But just to refresh your memory,
people began going into exile
super early on, maybe
even a little prior to 1936.

Woah, really? Initially I thought
it only happened after
Republicans lost... in 1939.

Most people started going into
exile later, of course.
In 1938-1939, over 450,000
Spaniards had had an idea
to leave their home country,
especially during the time when
Nationalist troops entered
Catalonia in January 1939.

Could you give me some numbers as
to how many Spaniards went into
exile in Spain? No me acuerdo.

Sure thing! In 1940, 280,000 Spaniards
were imprisoned in Spain, not including
those in France. From 1939-1945, it is
estimated that 50,000 to 200,000 people
were executed under the Francoist regime.

But why's the range so broad?

Historical memory...
People were still struggling to
get the facts right. And, unlike Hitler
who documented everything,
Franco did not care about those
who got killed. That's why everything's
still a mess to this day.

Oh... I see. That's such a pity.

Do you know, I realized there's almost always a new mass grave uncovered every six months? I always noticed that there are new things to be found from time to time while reading the newspapers.

Ooh really?!
But why exactly would people leave? I mean, nobody wants to go into exile unless they absolutely have to. It's totally different from, say, a vacation.

People who went into exile, or *retirada* anticipated reprisals for supporting the Republic and were afraid of being caught in a battlefield.

Francoist leaders must've treated them extremely horribly.

Correcto. But there's more to that. Refugees were deprived of the power to define themselves, becoming instead "objects" labelled by the Spanish victors. That's what Soo calls the "unravelling" of "rights and identities."

¿Perdón?

But we'll get to that later.

Aw, come on!

During the course of exile, many had to evacuate hurriedly as navy crews were limited.

This displacement led to tremendous losses,
including those of valuable properties,
sources of income, loss of pride,
and professional status.
It was believed that Franco denied
Republicans' legal documentations
even after 1939, but I honestly can't
say for sure.

In "An Uncertain Future,"
I read that some refugees
used words like "incalculable"
(*perjuicios materiales*) to describe
the materials losses. Ramón
Tarrago Xanxo stated he had
"lost everything apart from his life",
and Ramón Gaya said he had
lost "too much."
Of course,
some went into the specifics.
Rosendo Carrasco y Formiguera
stated he had "lost 9000 pesetas of
annual income and a small hotel he
owned," while Antonio Zozoya claimed
he had lost "more than 500,000 pesetas."

These were totally considerable
sums of money at the time.
Refugees left behind business,
lost their status, and had to rebuild
everything from scratch, relying on
cohorts.

Cohorts, as in people they knew?

Exactamente. Spanish refugees
relied on 'recommendations',

‘guarantees,’ and ‘references’ (words that often show up in documents relating to refugees trying to leave) as an alternate resource for connection.

Were they successful?

Some were. Jose Marull, for example, suggested that a friend’s recommendation is what secured him passage on the boat Sinaia to Mexico. Juan Vidarte received the help of Mexican diplomat after writing a letter.

Was writing letters the only option to get help?

No! Free Masonry, an international system whereby “refugees were able to cling onto the status they had possessed within Spain,” also helped many families avoid concentration camps.

Haha! I remember that! It was hated by Franco!

Thank God it was established. But, this wasn’t the only network. In Mexico, for example, the SERE, an agency founded by ex-president of the Republic, Negrín, nearly always accepted past SERE workers, allowing those refugees to gain passage to Mexico.

Wow! VIP for SERE workers!
But what about those who did not have powerful friends, families, or powerful agencies?

Ah! Guess!

Umm...

Letters. Letters are requests or “*solicitudes*.”
Do you know that over 7,000 letters were sent
from French concentration camps to Mexico
according to state archives?

Oh that’s quite a lot!
But wait... What French concentration
camps?

Oh my! I totally forgot to talk
about it. ¡Lo siento! Basically,
many people crossed the border
to France, mostly through the North West
(the Basque country, Asturias)
and the North East (Aragon), only
to be detained in concentration camps.

Just to give you some idea,
approximately 189,000 people
arrived in France in 1936-1938
and 475,000 people arrived in 1939-1945.

Woah! That's an awful lot of people!

Sí.

Why were they detained?!

According to Soo, refugees
were viewed as a serious threat
to French political stability, often
perceived as dangerous “Reds.” These
camps were designed to concentrate
the refugees in isolated areas for
easier management, or to “assuage
the ‘great fear of 1939’” and confine
us “hordes of dangerous radicals.”

That still doesn’t justify the

huge amount of people for
residing in camps in mid-winter,
with almost no shelter,
food and sanitation!!!

Yeah! I know right?
Although some charitable
assessments of French policy
claims that the “sick, the wounded and
disabled... were put in hospitals and other
institutions,” people rarely had a good
word to say about the attitude of the
government, including me.
Man, we were tortured and
discriminated against!

It said here that refugees were subjected to
discrimination after Daladier’s
administration issued a decree
in November 1938, which
placed heavy surveillance measures
on those “undesirable” foreigners.

Sí. This limited the little freedom
we had. By February 1939,
Republican soldiers were required to
give up their weapons and all objects
of value.

I can’t imagine how they overcame the
material and emotional losses
they suffered through.

Hmm...

¿Qué?

It’s interesting to note that Mexicans
treated Spaniards so differently than
the French.

Now that I think about it, it seems that Mexicans really were more willing to offer help to Spaniards through SERE and the Free Masonry, etc.

Yes yes yes. The Spaniards were viewed as a “potential driver of economic growth”, and possessed the “right ‘sangre’ or ‘blood.’”, as stated right here on this article.

Mira.

But they rejected the Jewish refugees!

Exactly. So, I guess it’s partly religion-driven as well. Here’s another fact to blow your mind.

During the 16th century until independence (in what Franco considered this “mythic imperial past”), the Spanish treated indigenous people in what is now Mexico very brutally to say the least, remember?

¡Ay, sí!

But isn’t it ironic that they were so kind to us after all we’d done centuries prior??

Yea! It doesn’t seem they’re treating the Central American refugees as kindly though, nowadays.

Maybe the government has changed. And in terms of government, here’s a fun fact: Mexico never truly recognized the dictatorship of Franco.

¿En serio? ¡Muy bien!
How many Spaniards ended up going to exile in Mexico again?

Over 25,000!

Woah! ¡Muchos!

So, back to our discussion about letters. There are some examples

I'd like to share with you.

“Do not believe that we plan to live as parasites in the country that you represent, nor that we have ideas of adventures” was written by Gabriela Carabias.

¿Qué crees?

Woah! That's so powerful!
I love the personification.

She also emphasized the need for qualified workers later on.

Oh yes.

“We are honest workers that are persecuted for disagreeing with [this new] Inquisitorial, retrograde and miserable Spain. Nothing more, nothing less.”

She seems totally fired up!

Another example, that of Maria García's, was similar, but it even added some distressing accounts. She wrote, “I am the oldest of seven orphaned siblings, [our father] was shot in Pamplona in the first days of the war, I, and the majority of my siblings, are subject to being tried in a tribunal as a result of our political and union activity,” then she went on flattering Mexico.

I'd like to hear what she said! Oh, I mean wrote!

Ok ok. “Under [constant] fear of forced repatriation to Spain, I want out good Mexican brothers to take

our case into account, and for you to know that our greatest desire would be to live side by side with the people who have felt our own tragedy as their own, and with whom we are united by bonds of gratitude.”

Is that it?

No. She did a similar thing as Carabias.

Showcasing her top qualifications?

¡Exactamente! She wrote about her job as a teacher, and an accountant later on.

Vale, vale.

Qualifications, as Bourdieu claimed, was an example of “an ‘entitlement’ or *titre* that is ‘valid on all markets’ (...) that rescues its holders from the symbolic struggle of all against all.” It was crucial for a refugee to state their professions in order to get admitted into foreign countries.

Sí. I could totally see the burning desires of refugees to be recognised as who they had once been through these letters. Being displaced from one’s social place must’ve drastically changed in their lives. Can’t imagine someone robbing me and telling me to leave Spain.

I couldn’t agree more.

Remember the part I talked about the “unravelling” of “rights and identities?”

Yes. I’ve been meaning to ask you all this time!
Deprived of power to define

themselves? Why do refugees have
to define themselves?

You'll see once I tell you the true
story of San Agustín, whose husband
worked for the the Republican war effort
in Asturias. When Nationalists troops advanced
on Gijón in 1937, her husband left by boat
without her knowing. She then got imprisoned
countless times due to a “man who was
the *novio* of her friend's sixteen year old daughter.”

The boyfriend of... what?
What a convoluted relationship!

Mira, the point is, this fellow allegedly
claimed that Agustín was involved in a crime
and that her ideas would rub off
on his girlfriend. Do you see where
I'm heading?

Ohh. He must've been a Nationalist
or someone loyal to Franco.

¿Por qué lo crees?

Because he would be seen as
a “better” nationalist by
turning in people who were not
faithful to Franco, even if their
stance was one apolitical.

I never would have expected
that much from you.
¡Muy bien!

Damn that man! He must've wanted to
gain more power.

And, sadly, every time Agustín
became more subjected to imprisonment,
the more she became a liability to

the dictatorship, despite her confession
that she had nothing to do with the
Republicans.

Flashbacks to Harry Potter...
and Snape!

¡JAJAJA! That's exactly it!
San Agustín became "red"
because of her repeated confinement,
not because of what she believed.

¡Qué horrible! Being treated like
defenseless object in the eyes of the
nationalista standpoint. No wonder
they had to quickly reconstruct their
identities before it was too late.

Valencian writer, Vicente Llorens
Castillo, could shed light
on the difference between the pragmatic
beliefs held by someone and the its meaning
by external actors like Franco's state.
Llorens was a member of the PSOE, and
was enlisted in the Republican army
during the war. After failing his attempt
to migrate to Mexico, he had to revalidate
his marriage in order to enter Argentina.
Unfortunately, he couldn't and his validation
got annulled due to the fact that he was
non-religious and had been one of those
who worked in the Republican zone, terms
that were established by Franco.

¿En serio? ¿Cuál era su problema?

So, in the end, belonging to
a privileged section of Valencian
society and being the son of a

conservative man did nothing to prevent Llorens' prolonged absence from Spain. Worst still, his brothers were held guilty of a crime because they were affiliated with an officer, Llorens himself, in the Republican army.

That's utterly nonsense.
How could they do that?
But, I guess it makes more sense now. Franco also deemed lots of official qualification documents invalid for Republicans, making them even harder to secure a job after leaving the country, right?

¡Sí!

I realized we haven't talked much about why Spaniards went into exile in the first place. It's best if I give you real-life examples.

Sure! I absolutely love stories!

Great! Let's now take a look into the way refugee women described their political beliefs and how that motivated their decision to leave.

I can think of one!
Carmen de Bahi.

Carmen de Bahi! ¡Sí! Bien.
A Catalan resident who joined the Marxist Party (BOC) at age 17, she described herself as committed to improving social equality, not just Catalan independence.

She left Spain because she believed that she would be persecuted under Franco.

Absolutely!

Carmen Dorronsoro was another woman who was eager to learn about politics from her prominent communist husband. She was a prominent example of “Spain’s new middle class,” which represented people who saw Soviet modernity as “social aspirations,” not merely “political ideas.”

Ooh, interesante.

Dorronsoro left the country, however, not because of her “deeply felt commitment to Marxism,” but because she was “imperiled” by how she would be perceived by external actors, or... Franco in this case.

I see. So these two women both hinted “politics” as a reason to leave, but they expressed it in different ways.

Muy interesante, ¿no?

One thing to note, however, is that Carmen de Bahi was also more than just a highly politicised woman. She was willing to place these beliefs aside in order to “assist a member of her extended family”, who happened to be an injured Fascist.

That’s something else! I really admire her ability to sympathize with enemies and yet remain unfaltering to her faith for Marxism.

Of course, these are only incidents of successful refugees. Many others, who were not

documented, were unable to gain access to help and died in concentration camps. Llorens was deeply depressed, almost suicidal, at the prospect of more years of drudgery in exile. This reflects the situation of thousands other Spanish refugees, or millions of European victims under the Nazis.

That's ... that's scary when you come to think of it.

It has always been.
At least to me.

Leaders who aren't confident in their seizure of power usually are ones who impose the strictest and the most outrageous regimes.

Fascist dictator Franco initially was a navy general, but yeah, after granting himself supreme power, he started feeling insecure and eventually got rid of anyone who got in his way.

Urgh...

You know, there are still other interesting cases of women who fled during this time. But I figured you might be already bored out of your mind.

Really? Who?

Isabel Richart Sotes was one of the boldest and craziest women I could think of.

¿Que pasó?

Well... for one, she managed to convince the border guards in her heavily-tinged-with-Spanish French by claiming that she was “very important, very influenced, a great diplomat.”

Oh yes! Lots of Spanish people aspired to become Frenchified in order to hide their identity and walk in the streets in France without being suspected by officers. So she just went on her way through the frontier?

She and her baby, yes.

She was carrying a baby? Woah!

When she decided to return to Barcelona to find her husband, she took a small suitcase along with a fur coat.

She risked her baby and herself to return to Spain?!

Yes. In the freezing cold, she walked the rest of the way to France after a French soldier requisitioned her car. She took the uniform and shoes from a dead Republican soldier and wrapped her baby in the fur coat to save her from the cold.

What? Walked the rest of the way?!

Later, she was captured and forced to board a train with other women

that took them to concentration camps.
At this point, she was afraid to lose
her daughter and carried out a dangerous
plan.

What was it?

I think it would be best to
quote straight off from
the source.

Argh, tell it already!

Patience, my friend.
“Amid a sea of disbelieving women,
she jumped off the train, took her baby and ran.
The guards at the train platform saw her and shot at her, forcing
her back into the station to wait for another train. Using her wits again, she
managed to convince them that she needed to walk to help ease her pain in the foot
which had been shot. Waiting for the right moment,
she disappeared into the town, rang her French friends who wired her money,
bought some clothes to transform herself into a respectable French woman,
returned to the platform and bought a ticket for the next train, all without being
caught and effectively in disguise. Eventually, she, along with her daughter,
arrived at her friends’ house where they both recovered and were reunited with her
husband.

What a happy ending!

You’re sure she’s not making this up?

It said here, “according to
the transcript, she described in
breathless phrases,”
which probably suggests
she really was caught up
by her memories during
the interview.

Ahh. Such a risk-taker.

I wonder how she got in touch with

her French friends, though.

I'm not entirely sure. But there are newspapers circulating around France at the time, although it was technically not allowed.

What about it?

You see, *La Voz de Madrid*, for example, a newspaper distributed by Spanish refugees in France camps, contained a section at the very end, "Paraderos," where people who were looking for their family and friends could include their locations, names and contact information. This allowed them to get in touch with one another.

That's a marvellous idea!

¡Sí! This also explains how exile does not mean estrangement or a lack of communication.

But, what did concentration camps look like?

Well... as I said earlier, some were only set up to avoid the Spaniards from exposure to the outside world.

What about camps in, say, Oran or Algeria? Those in Africa?

I've recently watched a disheartening documentary about camps in Africa, in fact. It upset me when a woman talked about how her father was condemned to stay in a dark hole, a literal hole, for 15 days because he didn't have the strength to complete his task of lifting heavy rocks,

Fifteen days?! For not completing
work and singing? Why
does everything relate to singing?!

Ooh that rhyme!

They had to leave again?!

What's that documentary called?

I'll look into it!

Republican Spain!
I absolutely love this quote.

and because he sang a song about liberty.

Others described the experience
of waiting in the rain for hours
on the harbour, not having food
during the ship rides, and the confusion
that comes with knowing nothing about
where you were heading. It was a
chaotic scene, with people hurrying
back and forth, all desperately waiting
to get aboard.

Worse still, a lot of Spanish in Algeria
had to leave again when racism
heightened afterwards.

Yes. It was touching to see people
coming back to their home country,
for the first time, with fist clenched
and tears streaming down their faces.

“FROM THE SILENCE. Spanish
Republican Exile At North Africa.”

Yes, do take a look at it. It's great.
In the end, some refugees who left Spain
saw themselves as “representatives
of an alternate Spain.”

Yo también.

To say the exile was tough would
be an understatement, wouldn't it?

Yeah.
That's something I'll never forget.