Transcription in Twenty-First Century Peninsular Narrative Fiction

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TRANSCRIPTION IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PENINSULAR NARRATIVE FICTION

by

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This thesis entitled:
Transcription in Twenty-First Century Peninsular Narrative Fiction
written by Meredith L. Jeffers
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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above-mentioned discipline.
In my dissertation I examine transcription as a rhetorical figure in six contemporary Peninsular novels: *La voz dormida* (Dulce Chacón, 2002), *Los girasoles ciegos* (Alberto Méndez, 2004), *Soldados de Salamina* (Javier Cercas, 2001), *La mitad del alma* (Carme Riera, 2004), *Llámame Brooklyn* (Eduardo Lago, 2006), and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* (Kirmen Uribe, 2008). My analysis is built around one central question: what does transcription add to a work of literature? Literary transcription appears to be a simple means of copying actual and notional source texts and testimony within a work of fiction. But it is a complex, meaningful process. Transcription co-opts and interrogates the conventions of historiography and thus critiques the notion of recovering both history and memory. To demonstrate this, I consider the following: how transcription violates the ethics of politically motivated historical fiction, how transcription signals the lucrative possibilities of representing historical ruin, and how transcription enables characters to simulate a response to absent people and traditions.
Writing my dissertation has proven to be the most challenging endurance race that I have ever attempted. It has also been the most rewarding. I view my dissertation as the culmination of all of my experiences at CU-Boulder. Everything I learned inside and outside of the Rose Room contributed to the completion of my project. For this reason, I find it impossible to articulate the gratitude I feel towards all of the faculty members, staff, fellow graduate students, and undergraduates who have helped to shape me as a student, a teacher, and a scholar. So here goes my best effort.

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Last but not least, I would like to thank all of my family and friends. In particular, my parents encouraged me to pursue my interest in literature and education at the graduate level despite the fact that it meant moving across the country. They put my goals in Boulder over their wish to have me closer to home and I thank them for their sacrifice and their unfailing support. My sister, Melissa, I thank for her “opaque” advice and for always making me feel like I never left. To my friends, especially T, B, and D, I cannot thank you enough for being there at all hours of the day and night. I have smiled and laughed throughout this process because of you. I also need to acknowledge the spirit, companionship, and diversion that Daisy offered. She was truly there for every minute of writing and revision, and she motivated me to take breaks and maintain perspective. Finally, Josh, you are the best. There’s no other way to say it: I dedicate this dissertation to you.
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INTRODUCTION

The last several years have witnessed a boom in the publication of Peninsular narratives dedicated to history, memory, and the process of preserving both in print. Within this large narrative corpus, there exists a subset of novels that seeks to explore such issues through the process of transcription, representing both the act of writing down oral testimonies and of copying what is written elsewhere. On the surface transcription would appear to be a straightforward narrative technique, a manner for getting actual and notional antecedent documents and testimony from one location to another. This is what binds transcription in literature to transcription as a procedure utilized in professional fields, the social sciences, and even genetics: the allure of creating an exact copy. However, on a more profound level transcription is a rhetorical figure, one that exposes the impossibility of fulfilling said wish. Not unlike Pierre Menard precisely recreating the Quijote, line for line, into a new version, transcription as a rhetorical figure shows that the desire to replicate is really a fatal attraction. Rather than reproduce, literary transcription situates texts in new contexts and prevents them from ever again existing in the same light.

The literary effects of transcription as a rhetorical figure have added significance within the context of Spain in the twenty-first century, which thus far has been consumed by social and ideological debates about historical memory and the exhumation of mass graves from the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the ensuing Franco dictatorship (1939-1975). Although transcription has been present as both literary trope and real-life practice since at least the medieval period, it is no coincidence that both literary transcription and exhumation have re-emerged at once and with such momentum in recent years: they are related in the search to uncover hidden meaning and bodies, both textual and physical, and they are similarly interested
in relocating these hidden bodies and meanings in newer milieu. In other words, if the mode of Spanish historiography in recent decades has been to unearth, to exhume, and to reveal, it becomes clear that this type of historiographic practice connects literary transcription to the recovery of historical memory taking place in Spain.

Another significant connection between transcription and the recovery of historical memory is what drives the discovery process. Since both seek to expose the unknown, we may understand them to be symbolic, or perhaps symptomatic, of a more universal need to uncover that which is sacred or secret. The difficulty posed by this endeavor, as exemplified by literary transcription and the recovery of historical memory in Spain, is that the secret, or the sacred, is a moving target. Just as the *Quijote* authored by Pierre Menard does not reveal the meaning of the *Quijote* authored by Cervantes, the reproduction of real and fictional texts and testimony within contemporary Peninsular novels does not reveal the promised “truth” or secret. Like everything that has been literally and figuratively buried, trying to bring it back only pushes it farther away. What was once real vanishes into concept, interpretation, and representation. We cannot pin down truth, history, or original meaning, and this, in turn, is the paradox and the allure of both transcription as a rhetorical figure and the recovery of historical memory.

Transcription reveals the deceptive nature of literature, which promises the discovery of meaning through the acts of reading and writing yet ultimately exposes a variety of interpretations for any given story—a process that is amplified by reproducing the same story (or text) in new contexts. Similarly, literary transcription points to the promiscuity of supposedly faithful copies produced outside the realm of literature. It impersonates history and historiography, showing that any recreation of a supposedly original event is specious in nature. It also shows that the further we go in that direction the further we shall be from the secret and
the pleasure of both. My dissertation will show that by co-opting and interrogating the conventions of history and historiography, transcription as a rhetorical figure critiques the notion of recovering historical memory.

To demonstrate this, I will examine transcription as a rhetorical figure in six works of contemporary Peninsular narrative fiction: La voz dormida (Dulce Chacón, 2002), Los girasoles ciegos (Alberto Méndez, 2004), La mitad del alma (Carme Riera, 2004), Soldados de Salamina (Javier Cercas, 2001), Bilbao-New York-Bilbao (Kirmen Uribe, 2008), and Llámame Brooklyn (Eduardo Lago, 2006). Each, in its own way, uses transcription as a rhetorical figure to assess the attempts of literature, history, and historiography to unearth, relocate, and recreate meaning. Furthermore, all of these works explicitly connect to the actual recovery of historical memory taking place in contemporary Spain, which has enabled me to focus my project considerably. Here it is worth mentioning that the use of transcription in literature is not limited to the twenty-first century, since examples appear over the course of the last several hundred years. Nor is transcription limited to literature produced in Spain, since examples may be found throughout Europe, Asia, and Latin America. The volume of instances and the scope of its appearance warrant a lengthy and comparative analysis, one that exceeds the limitations of my study. For this reason, although transcription has appeared in world literature throughout many centuries, my project is restricted to Peninsular narrative fiction and, specifically, to these six selected novels, because they best illustrate the contributions of literary transcription that I have outlined thus far.

In each chapter, I will examine a principal feature of transcription. To do so, I will analyze two novels through the lens of a distinct theory. In Chapter One, I will employ the theoretical frameworks of Paul Ricouer and Dominick LaCapra to demonstrate how transcription
contests the ethics of fiction: the real and fictional transcripts present within *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* result in a non-neutral recreation of the past, primarily by co-opting the conventions of historiography. Ricouer’s tripartite model of the historiographic operation in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) establishes a basis for examining the ways in which the fictional transcripts mimic the procedure of writing history. Similarly, LaCapra’s discussion of the cause and effect of representing the past in *Representing the Holocaust* (1994) and *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (1998) offers an avenue toward considering what he would refer to as “uses” of real and fictional transcripts connected to historically traumatic events. In Chapter Two, I will analyze how transcription reveals the questionable personal and professional motivations of the fictional narrator-transcribers in *Soldados de Salamina* and *La mitad del alma*, whose success hinges upon the intrigue of historical ruin. Here I will follow the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production*, particularly the notion that each agent engages in a “field of struggles” in order to advance his or her position with respect to other members of the same group. Linda Hutcheon’s discussion of historiographic metafiction will also be relevant to my discussion of these two novels, since they are both self-referential works that represent the fictional process of (re)writing curious historical events. In Chapter Three, I will focus on how the excessive use of transcription within *Llámame Brooklyn* and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* responds to absence and nostalgia.

Before entering into an analysis of the primary texts, however, it is necessary to elaborate the theoretical and practical dimensions of transcription, the history of transcription as a rhetorical figure in Peninsular literature, and how transcription as a rhetorical figure relates to the context of twenty-first century Spain.
2. Theoretical and Practical Dimensions of Transcription

In all of its theoretical and practical dimensions, transcription promises the creation of an exact copy. Originally, the verb *transcribere* referred to the processes of generating a written record of speech and also copying a text from one location to another. Over time, the word has adopted new meanings, such as transliterating foreign characters into ordinary ones (particularly with computer programming), making a written arrangement of music for an instrument, and duplicating genetic information by using a template of existing DNA or RNA. However, what remains constant even amid these new definitions is the desire to replicate. The same desire has prompted the development of technology intended to perfect the process: if in the past transcribers copied texts and recorded spoken interaction by hand, the present-day human scribe has been partially replaced by electronic devices and software capable of doing the same. There are free online programs that transcribe audio into text, and also software that aids in the transcription of recorded music. Television and film provide closed captioning and subtitling, and most smart phones offer applications that transcribe voicemails or other audio files into readable text.

From these few examples, it is clear that transcription has come to infiltrate many facets of daily life, from business to biology to recreation. In legal settings, both human and electronic courtroom reporters are employed, and in medical settings, physicians are able to record voice notes, which later may be converted into text. Transcription offers a written document, one that may be consulted at a later time precisely because it provides a fixed, permanent record of the spoken word. For the purposes of these fields, transcription fulfills the promise of creating an exact copy.
Since often the transcribed information is involved in high stakes cases, whether judicial, corporate, or medical, it is imperative that the transcribed data be verbatim and verifiable. For this reason, in many professional settings transcription has become a standardized practice. One chief example is the use of highly trained stenographers to record courtroom proceedings. The training and certification programs for these positions are rigorous and regulated, teaching stenographers to follow specific methods in order to produce consistent, uniform records. In medicine and business the very nature of the process has become automatic and homogenous. The need to homogenize the transcription process in professional settings has even led to the establishment of non-profit organizations such as The International Alliance of Professional Reporters and Transcribers, which works toward the ongoing development of all methods of reporting and transcription and helps guide public and private court reporting professionals worldwide toward the common goal of producing a verbatim and verifiable record.

While in these professions transcription functions as a standardized means of producing a fixed written record, such is hardly the case with transcription in the social sciences. Transcribing spoken interactions has been an essential part of the methodologies of many so-called “soft” social sciences, particularly linguistics. The sub-fields of phonetics, conversation analysis, dialectology, and sociolinguistics all practice transcription in order to collect, organize, and analyze data. Transcription also plays an important role in speech technology, speech pathology, and speech-language therapy, appearing in software designed to convert speech into written text and in other programs designed to recognize and respond to the human voice.

At first glance, it would seem that linguistic transcription is capable of producing a regulated copy, since in many domains of the social sciences dedicated to human interaction, the research method of choice involves making observations and audio- or videotaped recordings of
social and communicative contact (either in authentic or interview settings), followed by verbatim transcription, coding, and analysis. According to social scientists Judith C. Lapadat and Anne C. Lindsay, this approach to qualitative data collection and analysis has been used and refined for over 40 years in linguistic studies, and it has been widely adopted by researchers in disciplines as varied as developmental psychology, sociology, and anthropology (3). Methods of recording, transcribing, coding, and analyzing language interactions have also been utilized by practitioners of speech-language pathology, education, and counseling.

However, unlike in the legal or medical professions, linguistic transcription is not yet as regulated or standardized. In fact, it is only relatively recently that social scientists, namely linguists, have begun to study transcription itself as a research method. As Lapadat and Lindsay observe, “An inspection of writings on transcription as a research method reveals the following progression of perspectives: neglect of transcription as a topic, the search for conventions, acceptance of a multiplicity of conventions, and abandonment of standardization in favour of contextualized negotiation of method” (5). Since its inception as a practice in the social sciences, then, transcription has often taken a backseat to the coding and analysis that follow. In many cases, researchers viewed transcription as a mundane, unproblematic step in the study of human speech and interaction, and they seldom made mention of transcription processes “beyond a simple statement that…data was transcribed” (Lapadat and Lindsay 4). Nonetheless, as research on the transcription process continued, it became clear that there were many variants, among them the following: how to organize the page; whether to use orthographic or phonetic transcription; what paralinguistic and nonverbal information to include and what conventions should be used to symbolize or present the information; whether and how to transcribe prosody; and what constitutes the basic units in the transcript. Without the standards common to either
the legal or medical field, linguistic transcription found itself ungrounded. This realization led to a new period in transcription research, one characterized by a devotion to developing and sharing strategies for standardization, as well as to publishing sample transcripts and “how-to” lists (Lapadat and Lindsay 6).

Over time, attempts to develop a “fixed menu” of standards have given way to a “buffet” of transcription conventions (Lapadat and Lindsay 8). Yet although multiple conventions now co-exist within the linguistic discipline, the common denominator among them is the demystification of transcription as a transparent research tool. In other words, rather than understand transcription as a direct reflection of the “hard reality” of the actual interaction, as captured on audio- or videotape, the most dominant trend in current scholarship on transcription is to view it as both a method and a craft, an inherently theoretical process that is “dependent on the theories the researcher holds” and influences the analysis and interpretation cycle (Lapadat and Lindsay 8). For this reason, transcription is now being examined as a theory-laden methodology, with each researcher making choices about “whether and what to transcribe” and “how to represent” it (Lapadat and Lindsay 4-5, underlined in the original).

If, in keeping with current linguistic scholarship, the transcription process is understood to be both interpretive and constructive, it becomes clear that each transcriber holds considerable power over the process and the product. The transcript is data “constructed by a researcher for a particular purpose, not just talk written down” (Green, Franquiz, and Dixon 172). The transcribers author a new text and shape the recipient’s interpretation of that text, not unlike the relationship between a writer of fiction and his or her reading public. Although many social scientists still may value and use transcription as a transparent, verbatim, and verifiable copy of original speech, a direct link to the lived, “hard reality,” much of the research done in the last
twenty years underlines that what is central to these newer conceptualizations of transcription is the understanding that a transcript “is not the event itself” (Green, Franquiz and Dixon 172). Just as the past cannot be created anew in the present, transcription does not recover the original interaction.

Here again linguistic transcription distinguishes itself from transcription in the professional fields, suggesting profound effects more in keeping with those of literary transcription. As Mishler concludes, “Different transcripts are constructs of different worlds, each designed to fit our particular theoretical assumptions and to allow us to explore their implications . . . They have a rhetorical function that locates them within a larger political and ideological context” (271). Neither literary nor linguistic transcription is merely a technical procedure. To reduce them to such would be to admit a perspective of “naïve realism” (Mishler 260). Both models have the potential to create new transcripts, new texts, new “worlds,” and, thus, new meaning. My analysis of the six novels included in this study builds entirely upon this premise: transcripts signal new meaning.

3. Early Examples of Transcription in Peninsular Literature

Having shown how transcription functions in other fields and disciplines, we may now consider its place in literature. As I have begun to suggest, the role of transcription in literature differs somewhat from that of transcription in the professional fields and even in the social sciences. If actual transcription presupposes the existence of a real antecedent testimony or document, notional transcription, more common to literature, claims no such existence of an original except as a narrative device. Although actual transcripts may be used, and quite often
fictionalized, as part of the narrative, more often notional transcripts are implicated to enrich the story.

Both actual and notional transcripts contribute to a text’s intertextuality. Graham Allen reminds us that a text is, if we remember its original meaning, “a tissue, a woven fabric” (105). Intertexts occur as texts within texts that create connections between the source and the new location, bonding together multiple writings. Text-to-text transcripts are, thus, the most explicit and literal form of intertextuality. When transcripts appear in literature they simultaneously signal original documents and recreate them in a unique form. By calling attention to the text and its relationship to other texts, transcripts also augment the self-reflexive nature of the novels that utilize them.

Particularly when literary transcripts are prefaced by statements that directly acknowledge their intentional inclusion and/or the act of transcribing them, they call attention to the writing process and add the further dimension of metafiction to the story. Patricia Waugh explains that metafiction is a term given to a type of fictional writing. She states that metafiction self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. (2)

In all of the works included in my study, transcripts act as catalysts for interaction between the text and the reader, signaling the writing process and showcasing its product. I will discuss these issues further in my analysis of the novels themselves; however, for now it is important to
conclude that by engaging in intertextual, self-reflexive, and metafictional practices, transcription is at the heart of current trends in Peninsular narrative.

To understand how transcription has become a prominent strategy in recent Peninsular fiction, it is useful to consider relevant examples throughout Spain’s rich literary history. Before embarking on this task, however, one must acknowledge that the literary history of transcription is itself long and complicated, so much so that a complete review, even one limited to the Iberian peninsula, would take up excessive space. For this reason, I have chosen to include select examples of narratives that will enable me to highlight certain functions of transcription that are consistent with the six primary texts featured in the analysis chapters of my dissertation. To begin, I will consider the role of transcription as a rhetorical figure in three works from the Early Modern period: *El conde Lucanor* (1335), *Amadís de Gaula* (1508), and *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605).

The best early example of literary transcription is Juan Manuel’s *Libro de los enxiemplos del Conde Lucanor et de Patronio*. *El conde Lucanor* is a collection of exemplary tales, structured around a conversation between Count Lucanor and his advisor Patronio. In the first section, every exemplary tale is prompted by Count Lucanor, who poses a question or problem so as to receive Patronio’s counsel. Patronio responds (in each of 51 cases) by telling the count a story and advising him to follow in the footsteps of the tale’s protagonist. Each tale ends in like fashion: «Et entendiendo don Johan que estos exiemplos eran muy buenos, fízolos escribir en este libro, et fizo estos viessos en que se pone la sentençia de los exiemplos. Et los viessos dizen assí» (60).

The repetitive conclusion to the *exempla* included in *El conde Lucanor* demonstrates how the act of transcription creates distance. This occurs through the separation of participants into
different roles: Don Juan hears the stories, deems them worthy of record, has someone write
them down, and also composes the verses that summarize the moral. Within *El conde Lucanor*,
then, don Juan appears as an interlocutor, judge, and catalyst of the transcription process and the
adaptation of Patronio’s stories. By appearing within the narrative, don Juan also complicates our
understanding of the boundaries between actual/real author, narrator, transcriber, and character.
The distance between these roles is magnified by the fact that don Juan is not the original author
of the tales, nor is he the implied transcriber within the text, both of whom remain anonymous.
Not being able to trace the chain of alleged copies back to a primary source constitutes another
type of distance, or perhaps distancing: hyperreality. In other words, each recreation contributes
to an aggregate of simulations that either distorts the reality (the original source) it purports to
depict or does not in fact depict anything with a real existence at all; yet it nonetheless comes to
constitute reality. The hyperreal effect is amplified by the nature of literature, which seeks to do
the same.

The use of transcription in *El conde Lucanor* also shows how the meaning of the work
changes over time. According to critic José Romera Castillo, by deeming the stories “good” and
worthy of record, the count utilizes them as exempla intended to illustrate “una tesis
moralizadora” and thus puts them at the service of the Christian ideology common to the time
(32). In this way, the notional transcription of Patronio’s stories serves what José Manuel Cacho
Blecua explains to be the overarching didactic purpose of the work (28). However, if we
understand the moral or the didactic purpose of the work to be its meaning, or perhaps its
“secret,” it becomes clear that this transforms with time. The readers contemporaneous to *El
conde Lucanor* were meant to learn a particular lesson, but by reading it some five hundred years
later, we as contemporary readers inevitably come away with an understanding mediated by our
own environments. This is not to say that we are incapable of ever learning the “tesis moralizadora” of *El conde Lucanor*, but rather that we will understand it differently. Transcription similarly highlights our inability to access former meaning in the contemporary novels I will discuss at length.

If the notional transcription of Patronio’s stories shows that their “meaning” is malleable, Juan Manuel’s actual transcription of other texts takes it one step further. Juan Manuel borrows heavily from several sources, including Aesop’s fables, the Hindu cycle *Panchatantra*, classical writers and ancient Arabic lore (Flory 12). Cacho Blecua in particular acknowledges Juan Manuel’s special debt to “el mundo oriental, de donde proceden no solo materiales de buena parte de los ‘exemplos,’ sino componentes lingüísticos e, incluso, transcripciones de frases árabes” (xxxvi). In one way, Juan Manuel’s actual transcription of Arabic phrases from an original location to *El conde Lucanor* provides a link between the real and the fictional, establishing a degree of verisimilitude within the work. It also roots both *El conde Lucanor* and the count’s fictional text to a broader (and older) literary tradition, granting them, and their author(s), authority.

In another way, Juan Manuel’s actual transcription of real antecedent documents and phrases takes them out of context. Rather than reproduce the Arabic phrases, Juan Manuel impregnates them with new meaning. The process of transcribing real antecedent documents also leads to significant variants and errors. In her linguistic study of the transcribed Arabic phrases, Lamine Benalbou documents the variants between the “original” (or what is understood to be the original) Arabic version and subsequent editions of *El conde Lucanor*. She concludes that many of the spelling errors and so-called erroneous or unintelligible phrases are the result of the transcription process, likely stemming from human error—either unfamiliarity with the language
or failure to produce an exact copy (230). Similarly, reputed copies of *El conde Lucanor* produced since its original publication have proven to diverge considerably from manuscript to manuscript. Laurence DeLooze notes that the *coblas*, or couplets, which appear at the end of each exemplary tale are the most noticeable and significant variants (18). For example, changing one letter in “figos” to “fijos,” can greatly alter the meaning of a single couplet: “He who advises you to conceal from your friends/ know that he wishes to trick you more than two figs” versus “He who advises you to conceal from your friends/ know that he wishes to betray you more than your sons” (DeLooze 19). In this way, the human factor inherent to the transcription process not only leads to different couplets, the *sentencia* (meaning) quite literally changes from one manuscript to another (DeLooze 18). The scholar’s observation coincides with other critical studies of *El conde Lucanor* that move beyond the exemplum-ideology link, instead focusing on the exemplum as “an ambivalent sign” whose meaning is wholly dependent on its reader (Burgoyne 11). Thus each codex and early print edition, as well as the early modern manuscript “copies,” become “purposeful rewritings” of the work, recycling it in various forms for specific audiences and needs (Burgoyne 17). Transcription underlines the same outcome in all of the novels included in my study.

If *El conde Lucanor* shows how transcription as a rhetorical figure creates distance, establishes hyperreality, and changes meaning over time, Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo’s version of the epic *Amadís de Gaula* builds upon these effects and also implicates the mode of historiography.15 Published in 1508, the bulk of *Amadis* centers on the epic quest of the titular knight-errant. However, transcription is key to the prologue. Here Montalvo (as the implied author) alleges that an original manuscript was found in a tomb below a hermitage near Constantinople and was brought to Spain by a merchant, where Montalvo first encountered it.
He states that the original document was written in Greek, badly composed, and corrupted by incompetent writers; he therefore transcribes the work “al romance” so that it might reach Castilian readers and, thus, a larger audience, and also so that he could mend and correct the flaws of the original (I, 225). For example, Montalvo admits to altering the structure of the previous versions by dividing the original three-part scheme into a four-part new edition and by adding a new section titled *Sergas de Esplandián*.

The prologue highlights the rhetorical nature of transcription in literature. The act of unearthing the manuscript from a tomb below a hermitage and transporting it to Spain serves as a metaphor of unearthing and relocating meaning through transcription. It calls attention to the process of removing an original from its context and to the consequences of later reproductions. Montalvo’s explanation for transcribing the work “al romance” emphasizes as much: the readers in the new environment are incapable of understanding Greek, so its original meaning is concealed from them. By linking the transcription process to the notion of mending the previous version, Montalvo also demonstrates the temptation inherent to the transcription process: transforming the original and creating a new and improved product.

Montalvo also recasts the role of the transcriber. If in *El conde Lucanor* the transcriber is an implicit, anonymous participant, in *Amadís* Montalvo-transcriber forms the heart of the process. He is not a typical medieval *copista* but rather a “re-writer,” a multi-tasking “traslador, intérprete o traductor” (Gómez Montero 127). He assumes an editorial function, surpassing what one would expect his role to be in the transcription process. In this way, Montalvo’s mediation of (or perhaps interference in) the original text emphasizes the transformative potential of the transcription process, as well as the role of the transcriber. We see a similar effect in the novels
of the twenty-first century, and particularly in *Soldados de Salamina, La voz dormida*, and *Llámame Brooklyn*.

Montalvo’s prologue likewise connects transcription and historiography. While Montalvo’s actual reasons for writing himself into/onto the prologue will remain unknown, James Donald Fogelquist suggests that they might related to the time of writing, which corresponded to shortly after the triumph of the Reyes Católicos, Fernando II of Aragón and Isabel I of Castille, in the re-conquest of Granada (1492). During this period, historiography became particularly popular, with a large part of the populace looking to leave records of their success for posterity (Fogelquist 9). Fogelquist’s hypothesis coincides with Montalvo’s prologue, in which he claims to assume the task of transcriber so as to leave a text for “perpetua memoria” (I, 219). Although Montalvo iterates that his text is based on a *historia fingida*, a false history, he nonetheless mimics the practice of historians at that time, presenting himself in the prologue in hopes that “de [él] alguna sombra de memoria quedasse” (I, 223). By adopting the conventions of historiography in the transcription process, Montalvo parodies the practice of writing history and of leaving a written record for future generations.

Miguel de Cervantes’s novel *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* is the last Early Modern Peninsular example I will discuss concerning the uses of transcription as a rhetorical figure. In the *Quijote*, the titular protagonist becomes so entrenched in his reading of *libros de caballería*, and among them *Amadís*, that he determines to transform himself into a knight-errant and travels the countryside with his sidekick Sancho Panza in the name of his beloved Dulcinea. Unfortunately for don Quijote, the story is less about his success as a knight-errant and more about the triumph of fiction. Several scholars have commented on the relationship between *Amadís* and the *Quijote*, and even Cervantes’s lovable hero considers
Amadís to be his personal role model. However, the most noted difference between the two works, as explained by Cacho Blecua, is that the plot and techniques used in *Amadís* are “embrionarios,” budding cells of what later, in Cervantes’s hands, “constituirán algunos de los ejes fundamentales sobre los que se articula la novela moderna” (95). Gómez-Montero concurs, arguing that Cervantes freed chivalric romances such as *Amadís* from their poetic confines by ironizing their production (133).

Transcription connects to the narrator, to the protagonist, and to the actions of minor characters that appear within the novel. With respect to the first, again the story revolves around the premise of a found manuscript, which the narrator must translate and transcribe to reach a new audience. Yet, unlike the prologue narrator of *Amadís*, who directly acknowledges the false nature of the *historia*, the *Quijote* narrator jumps through hoops to feign the documentation of its existence. In doing so, the narrator only reiterates the impossibility of the text having any “true” and fixable origin: he simulates a reality, and creates distance through each act of re-copying the text. Edwin Williamson explains that many writers of *libros de caballerías* were reluctant to admit that they were actually writing fiction, and so they resorted to “stock devices” such as the found manuscript and feigned transcription in order to “pretend that their narratives were true histories” (xiii). Cervantes, however, dispatched with these pretenses to historicity, “transforming all of the metafictional paraphernalia of the *libros de caballerías* into a wonderfully ludic mediation of the text to its readers” (Williamson xiii). Cervantes’s playful use of notional transcription, which included grounding the narrated events through witnesses, documentation, and the hard work of scribes and translators, underscores the fact that the work “is entirely, and gloriously” fictional (Williamson xi). By involving the transcription process in
the writing of an ironic, self-conscious narrative performance, Cervantes anticipated the use of transcription in literature some four hundred years later.

Within the novel, don Quijote epitomizes the paradox of transcription. He believes that the libros de caballería are true, that the characters existed, and that the events transpired. He models his own life after fiction by means of repeated attempts to superimpose a copy of the fictional world onto his own. If this creates tension between his efforts and the pressure exerted by the “real” world around him, it also shows the impossibility of re-producing an exact copy, replicating meaning in a new environment, and simulating an inauthentic reality. Going a step further, we may also consider the character of don Quijote as a critique of history and historical memory. He does not recognize the past as past nor does he attempt to use the past as an example, as Nietzsche might prescribe. Instead, don Quijote tries to revive, or perhaps recreate, what he views to be “history” in the present. The challenges with which he meets are the same challenges signaled by transcription as a rhetorical figure.

The last way in which Don Quijote plays with transcription is by representing the very act in progress. The Quijote is one of the earliest works to do this, keeping in mind that El conde Lucanor only describes don Juan ordering a scribe to write down the tales and that the prologue to Amadís explains that Montalvo has already completed his transcription of the original manuscript. By contrast, the Quijote follows the process as it unfolds between characters. A good example is when don Quijote sends Sancho to deliver a letter to his beloved Dulcinea. Sancho mistakenly leaves the letter behind, and since his own illiteracy prevents him from re-writing the epistle, he enlists the help of the priest and the barber. The plan depends upon Sancho using his highly fallible memory to recite don Quijote’s original letter so that the former’s words may be transcribed by his erudite companions. Sancho’s recitation completely misses the mark,
and this comical failure summarizes the conclusions about transcription that we have seen thus far: the impossibility of reproducing an exact copy, the distance and hyperreality produced by such an attempt, and the difficulty of uncovering and relocating meaning elsewhere.21

To conclude this section on the early examples of transcription in Peninsular narrative, it bears restating that transcription as a rhetorical figure is old. It has a history in Peninsular and world literature, which justifies its study. The fact that so many of its early features are still relevant in contemporary literature encourages further comparison and analysis.

4. Transcription in Twentieth-Century Peninsular Literature

Although considerations of time and space prevent a close analysis of each of the subsequent examples, it is worth mentioning that throughout the later Renaissance and into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, transcription prevails as a rhetorical figure in many of the most popular and canonical works. For example, Juan Valera’s novel Pepita Jimenez (1874) begins with the discovery of letters and a manuscript, which the narrator then decides to transcribe, and in several of Gustavo Adolfo Becquer’s Leyendas (1835) transcription appears as a means of writing down a story that had previously been transmitted by word of mouth.22

In the twentieth century, transcription is a recurrent phenomenon, appearing in novels as diverse as Camino de perfección (Pío Baroja, 1902), La voluntad (Azorín, 1902), Sonata de otoño (Ramón del Valle-Inclán, 1902), Jardín umbrío (Valle-Inclán, 1903), Abel Sánchez (Miguel de Unamuno, 1917), San Manuel Bueno, mártir (Unamuno, 1931), La familia de Pascual Duarte (Camilo José Cela, 1942), Cinco horas con Mario (Miguel Delibes, 1966), La verdad sobre el caso Savolta (Eduardo Mendoza, 1975), El cuarto de atrás (Carmen Martín Gaite, 1978), and Obabakoak (Bernardo Atxaga, 1989). In all of these works, the types of
transcripts differ, as do their functions. However, at this juncture it is important to consider them as a corpus, one that spans the entire century and includes writers associated with different styles, generations, movements, and regions in Spain. Transcription thus serves as a common denominator for many works that might otherwise resist comparison.

Despite the suggestive recurrence of transcription in so many important works of fiction, the specific roles of transcription and transcriber have received scant attention in modern Peninsular literary studies, except, perhaps, in the case of Cela’s *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, Mendoza’s *La verdad sobre el caso Savolta*, or Atxaga’s *Obabakoak*. In all three novels, transcription functions in ways similar to those of the six novels that form the basis of my study. *La familia de Pascual Duarte* centers on the memories of protagonist Pascual Duarte, who has been condemned to death. An anonymous transcriber claims to have discovered the memoirs in a pharmacy sometime around 1939 and he stresses the need to transcribe the illegible text. Pascual’s memoirs recount his many crimes, which include killing his dog, a prominent citizen named don Jesús, and even his own mother. However, the transcriber adds to Pascual’s memoirs six paratexts: a prefatory “Transcriber’s Note”; part of a last will and testimony; a letter written by Pascual to Joaquín Barrera López, a close friend to don Jesús; a second letter written by Pascual’s confessor; a third letter written by one of the guards in the prison; and, finally, a second “Transcriber’s Note.”

*Pascual Duarte* offers important new features of transcription as a rhetorical figure, all of which pertain to my analysis in the first chapter of *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos*. If the early examples of transcription as a rhetorical figure show how it may be used to create distance, establish hyperreality, and expose the impossibility of recovering and relocating meaning, *Pascual Duarte* goes one step further by using transcription as a means of critiquing
authority. Here transcription questions who has control over the recovery and recreation of Pascual’s memories and personal history and why they have chosen to involve themselves with the manuscript. At times the transcriber alleges objectivity—“no he corregido ni añadido ni una tilde”—yet at other times subjectivity prevails, as he claims to have removed certain “indecorous” passages (16). He also leaves a silent trail of ellipses throughout the paratexts and the memoirs, which denote passages that he has censured. Rather than “copiar” or “dedicarse (al texto),” the transcriber describes his work with verbs such as “entretenerse” and “traducir.” For these reasons, we understand that the transcriber of Pascual’s memoirs goes well beyond the call of duty: he does not stop at re-copying the text, he makes significant editorial changes, and he even goes so far as to censor Pascual’s original version.

For some critics, the changes made by the transcriber underscore the ironic basis of the reader’s experience with the text. Robert C. Spires explains that contradictions such as those found in the Transcriber’s Note highlight the way in which the reader “se ve metido en un mundo absurdo de contradicciones, donde el concepto de autoridad y confianza ha dejado de tener vigencia” (La novela 30). By the time the transcriber concludes the note, declaring “pero dejemos que hable Pascual,” the reader is already suspicious as to whether or not the ensuing text consists of Pascual’s words (16). The transcriber’s contradictions and overarching presence make us suspicious of transcription and its effects. The same effect is created by the use of transcription as a rhetorical figure in both La voz dormida and Los girasoles ciegos.

The transcriber’s modifications, magnified by his ambiguous motives, relate to the censorship policies of the post-war Franco regime. As Hans-Jörg Neuschafter notes, “la censura dejó sus huellas en muchos aspectos del discurso narrativo, y así lo prueba La familia de Pascual Duarte” (88). The novel thus underlines the potentially negative side of transcription—one that
turns the temptation of altering the original text into the threat of silencing the original altogether. This relates the act of transcription to power, ideology, and the desire to create one cohesive (albeit modified) version of the past, similar to the process used by historiographers of the Franco regime. The historiographers of the Regime, David K. Herzberger tells us, sought to “squeeze history into a tightly constructed and monologically defined set of narrative strategies” (18). In *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, transcription is the narrative strategy of choice, reinforcing the transcriber’s definition of what transpired. The theme of silencing personal memories and privileging official discourse reappears in contemporary Peninsular narrative, and it assumes center stage in *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos.*

The inclusion of multiple transcripts concerning the same topic is a final way in which *Pascual Duarte* offers a critique of authority. Specifically, the transcription of two letters, one written by a priest and the other by a guard, offers juxtaposed versions of Pascual’s character. Whereas the former letter paints Pascual as a model of good conduct who accepted his fate as a devout Christian, the latter has nothing but negative comments about Pascual and tells of his cowardice and vice. Upon presenting the two opposite opinions of Pascual, the transcriber prevents the reader from coming to a conclusion free of “extrinsic evidence” (Spires, *La novela* 31). He then caps off the section by smugly questioning, “¿qué más podría yo añadir a lo dicho por estos señores?” (20). The two competing memories of Pascual, coupled with the transcriber’s ironic intervention, raise questions pertaining to history, memory, accuracy, and truth (Busette 48). The same themes are re-examined by way of multiple, competing transcripts in all of the novels included in the primary chapters of my study.

Transcription reappears as a central issue in Peninsular fictional narrative in 1975 with the publication of Mendoza’s *La verdad sobre el caso Savolta.* The chronological gap between
1942 and 1975 may be partially attributed to the rise of social realism, which dominated the novel in Spain during the late 1940s and 1950s. The so-called experimental novels of the 1960s offer some examples of literary transcription, such as Delibes’s *Cinco horas con Mario* (1966). However, it was not until 1975, significant both for Franco’s death and the start of Spain’s formal transition to democracy, that transcription resurfaced as a significant figure in literature.

*La verdad sobre el caso Savolta* plays with the notional transcription of personal memory and official judicial testimony related to the “Savolta Case,” set during the labor unrest in Barcelona between 1917 and 1919. The novel begins a decade later, in 1927, with the courtroom transcript of the testimony of the first-person narrator Javier Miranda Lugarte before a New York State judge. In addition to Javier’s oral testimony, evidence regarding the case appears in the form of written transcripts, including the following: facsimiles of a newspaper article published in 1917; reproductions of a stenographer’s notes taken during Miranda’s testimony; an affidavit dated November 21, 1926 and sworn by the former police inspector in charge of the case at the time; letters exchanged between ex-chief inspector Vázquez, one of his sergeants, and their informant; and a letter sent to Miranda from the deceased magnate’s daughter.

In one way, the fragmented nature of the *La verdad sobre el caso Savolta* parallels the fragmented recreation of the past that takes place throughout the novel: just as there exists a variety of texts and transcripts in the narrative, there are also multiple verisimilar explanations of what happened, as opposed to one true version of the events. In another way, the combination of personal testimony and official government documents questions the way in which objective fact is derived from subjective memory. The fragmented recreation of the past and the tension
between subjective memory and supposedly objective historical data continues to resurface in contemporary Peninsular fiction, as demonstrated by all of the novels included in my study.

_**La verdad sobre el caso Savolta**_ also utilizes transcripts as part of an investigative process. The presence of so many transcripts gives the impression of puzzle pieces, both visually and figuratively. A sense of mystery ensues, challenging whether the truth about the Savolta case might ever be known, or if it even exists. In the works of contemporary fiction chosen for my dissertation, transcripts are used in much the same way. In _La voz dormida_, they appear as part of the real author’s investigation into and fictionalization of the past; in _Los girasoles ciegos_ they are used as part of four separate yet related events set at the end of the Spanish Civil War; in _Soldados de Salamina_ they form part of the narrator’s personal quest to discover the identity of a heroic soldier; in _La mitad del alma_ they serve as the narrator’s only hope in locating a mystery man who has important information about her family; in _Llámame Brooklyn_ they contribute to the search for a character’s origins and to the completion of his masterpiece; and in _Bilbao-New York-Bilbao_, the transcripts aid the narrator in preserving regional folklore, history, and language.

If in _La familia de Pascual Duarte_ and _La verdad sobre el caso Savolta_ the transcription process is connected to multiple, competing versions of the past, the ideology of representing the past, and also the investigative process, Atxaga’s novel _Obabakoak_ engages in excessive transcription. The general plot of _Obabakoak_ follows the return of the primary narrator (one of multiple narrators on multiple narrative levels) to his hometown of Obaba in País Vasco. He and his friend are set to partake in a reading organized for his uncle, but along the way they come into contact with images, stories, and faces from their youth, which trigger a seemingly never-ending train of tales.
The narrative tapestry incorporates the notional transcription of letters, diaries, and stories, along with the alleged translation of several stories from English and sundry other languages. The combined effect is a feeling of superfluity, overindulgence, and even “hyper”-transcription. The hyper-transcription of testimony and documents, as seen in Obabakoak and exacerbated in Llámame Brooklyn and Bilbao—New York—Bilbao, complicates the lines between past and present, origin and transcript, narrated “reality” and narrative reconstruction. Particularly in the first and third parts of the narrative, a story is introduced on one narrative plane and then transcribed directly into/onto another. At times, it becomes difficult to discern where one story ends and another begins, as the narrative planes and lines become blurred by the act of transcription. Such evolution in the use of transcription as a literary tool, which changes the way reader and text interact and de-centers supposedly real and textual boundaries, closely relates to the role of transcription in the last decade of Peninsular Spanish fiction. In both Llámame Brooklyn and Bilbao—New York—Bilbao, the narrators weave together a seemingly infinite number and variety of transcripts, which range in origin from print sources, spoken word sources, and even digital or electronic sources. As with Obabakoak, the incessant transcription of such a variety of textual media creates a sensation of excess that points toward the complex constructed nature of the story it seeks to represent.

To conclude, the use of transcription as a rhetorical figure in the novels of the twentieth century brings us closer to its uses in the twenty-first century. In large part, this is because the novels of the twentieth century often address the weight of the Spanish Civil War and post-war, questioning fact and fiction, history and memory, and the “official” and the personal. The twentieth century novels also critique the need to unearth or discover the secrets of the past, making us suspicious of who has control of that process. The same issues become even more
significant within the context of Spain in the twenty-first century, as I will discuss in the following section.

5. Spain in the Twenty-First Century

Perhaps the most important catalyst of transcription as a rhetorical figure in literature is the current mode of Spanish historiography, which, of late, has sought to uncover complex notions of truth, history, memory, and the past. In Spain, the phrase “recovering historical memory” has become an obsession, sparking a number of controversial debates. A large group of intellectuals, among them historians, anthropologists, philosophers, and literary critics, believe that this recent push toward historical memory occurs as a backlash to decades of quiet compliance with what they consider to be the long-silenced stories of the Spanish Civil War and the ensuing Franco regime. For example, in her critical study *El mono del desencanto* (1998), Teresa Vilarós explains that during the transitional period from dictatorship to democracy, Spain entered into “un pacto de silencio,” in which the public, the political parties, and even the mass media preferred not to mention the historical past (10). Following Vilarós, the crimes against and suffering of the victims of Franco’s take-over and fascist regime went unmentioned, left out of the history books and the public dialogue. Since many Spaniards still feared the regime and the threat of its reappearance, the general desire to move forward overpowered any lingering need to directly confront what had happened during the war and the dictatorship. In *La cultura herida: literatura y cine en la España democrática* (2002), Cristina Moreiras Menor coincides with Vilarós’s reading and explains that if Spain preferred to leave the Francoist past out of its transitional undertaking, “también es cierto que los restos dejados afuera articulan una narrativa en la que se puede leer una historia que no ha sido contada” (29).
This idea of an untold narrative has spread throughout the intellectual community, as evidenced by multi-discipline anthologies such as *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory* (2010), edited by Carlos Jerez-Farrán and Samuel Amago. In the introduction to their collection, the editors note that the ongoing resolution to come to grips with Spain’s national past has generated much interest among historians and journalists, politicians and political scientists, writers and film producers, and even church representatives and ethicists, all of whom are represented by different contributors to the collection (4). Similarly, they state that it is only over the last ten years that Spaniards began to “discuss openly the consequences of their turbulent past and recognize the long, silenced suffering shared by thousands of countrymen” (4). Citing Adorno’s famous treatise, “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean,” the editors conclude that Spaniards are now living up to the claim that “enlightenment about what happened in the past must work, above all, against forgetfulness that too easily goes along with and justifies what is forgotten” (4).

However, many scholars, and foremost among them Santos Juliá, strongly object to these claims of forgetfulness and silence, stressing that information about the war and the postwar period has proliferated within and outside of Spain for decades. Juliá recalls that as early as April of 1975, Raymond Carr commented on Spain’s “obsession” with contemporary history in *The Times Literary Supplement*, citing the dozens of titles related to the Second Republic and the Civil War visible in storefronts and on sale along Las Ramblas in Barcelona. Less than ten years later, historian Paul Preston believed that some 15,000 books about the Civil War had been published, and by 2002 Michael Seidman had set the total at over 20,000 (Pérez Ledesma 129). For Juliá, then, the recent obsession with history and memory is nothing more than “una nueva oleada de libros” (15). He notes:
Se habla cada día, en cada ocasión, de pacto de amnesia, de tiranía de silencio, de conspiración contra la memoria, de sintaxis de la desmemoria, del tabú de la Guerra, de la catarsis necesaria, y no hay libro sobre cárceles, fusilamientos, trabajos forzados o fosas comunes que no se presente como un intento de romper la historia oculta o reprimida por una maquinación contra el conocimiento del pasado o por una historia oficial interesada en silenciar o pasar por alto los aspectos más traumáticos de ese pasado. (15)

The problem with the belief that current scholarship is breaking through to a hidden, repressed history is all the physical evidence to the contrary. Despite the amnesiac pathology that was said to have afflicted the Spaniards since Franco’s death, Paloma Aguilar Fernández notes that in the decades following his demise “[l]o que resultaba un tanto paradójico era que, mientras menudeaban aquellos que denunciaban en la prensa diaria la amnesia colectiva de los españoles respecto a la contienda civil, se producía, al mismo tiempo, tanto en el ámbito literario como en el cinematográfico, una situación de auténtica saturación de obras referidas a dicha contienda” (Memoria y olvido 20).

Responding to the notion that the transition created a pact of amnesia, Juliá instead refers to “un pacto de amnistía,” one that enabled the transition to democracy by promoting closure in order to move forward (24). Although legal decrees such as the 1977 Ley de Amnistía (Law of Amnesty) were incapable of pleasing everyone, and actually disheartened or offended many, they did little to impede a dialogue about the war and the regime. As Juliá observes, “amnistiar el pasado y no utilizarlo, por norma general, como argumento en el debate político no lo retiró del debate público, del trabajo de historiadores, ni de las crónicas de los periodistas o de los artículos de opinión” (57, emphasis in the original). Aguilar Fernández coincide...
this point, explaining that the so-called “pacto de silencio” was nothing more than an agreement “de no instrumentalización política del pasado,” which, in spite of being imposed upon a society “traumatizada por el mismo, temerosa de las consecuencias de volver sobre él y deseosa de mirar hacia el futuro, nunca fue respaldado en el ámbito de la producción cultural” (“La evocación” 315). In short, the fact that so-called pacts were negotiated among institutional elites did not mean that the general public ignored the topic. Instead, cultural and non-political popular magazines such as Interviú published series of reports, photographs, and testimonies about the Republic, the Civil War, Franco, repression, and censorship, and several novels dealt with the same themes. There were histories published inside and outside of Spain, most notably Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi’s España. De la dictadura a la democracia (1978) and Manuel Tuñón de Lara’s tenth volumen of Historia de España, entitled España bajo la dictadura franquista (1980). There were also books about anti-Franco opposition and the role of women, such as Juana Dona’s Desde la noche y la niebla: las mujeres en las cárceles franquistas (1977), Lidia Falcón’s Viernes y 13 en la calle del Correo (1977), and Teresa Pàmies’s Dona de pres (1979), and also collections of transcribed oral testimonies such as Ronald Fraser’s Recuérdalo tú y recuérdalo a otros (1979). Writing about the transition period and against the pact of silence, Juliá concludes: “Por supuesto, se trataba de un comienzo, y quedaron muchos temas pendientes. Pero si alguien se animara a emprender una investigación exhaustiva sobre todo lo hablado y escrito…durante aquellos tres o cuatro años quedaría impresionado por la enorme cantidad, calidad y variedad de lo publicado” (68).  

If, following Juliá and others, what has been happening in Spain in the last ten to fifteen years is not an essential break in a chain of silence and/or willful amnesia lingering from the old repressive dictatorship, what then has prompted the recently enhanced interest in exhumation,
unearting meaning, and, in turn, the transcription process? If the recovery of historical memory is not new, what has contributed to its renewal? Historian Michael Richards argues that late twentieth century global events set the stage for the revamped attention to history and memory both in Spain and around the world. Citing the 1989 collapse of Communism, the post-Cold War triumphalism heralded through the mass media, and the many global anniversaries celebrated toward the end of the twentieth century, Richards explains that such momentous events encouraged the production and dissemination of images about the past (125). Juliá concurs and observes, “las relaciones de la memoria y de las representaciones del pasado con la historia o búsqueda de la verdad... se han visto profundamente afectadas por la internacionalización de esta política de reparación, extendida a todo el mundo tras la caída de los regímenes comunistas en Europa del Este y de las dictaduras militares en América Latina” (22). This global reckoning with the past is particularly felt in Europe, where unabated interest in the past indicates that “the time has come for Spain to publicly confront Franco’s legacy,” just as the people of Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands confronted and condemned the repressive regimes of the first half of the twentieth century, as well as the roles played by citizens in those regimes (Jerez-Farrán and Amago 5). Similarly, specialists in Latin American history and anthropology have compared the different ways that countries such as Argentina, Chile, and Spain have (or have not) attempted to confront their dictatorship pasts.30

In Spain, the founding of groups such as the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory), also known as the ARMH, both respond to and fuel the renewed interest in recovering historical memory. Led by journalists Santiago Macías and Emilio Silva, the organization unofficially began its work by exhuming a mass grave in Priaranza del Bierzo, León, in October of 2000. For Silva, the task
was personal: his grandfather was one of the people believed to be buried at that site. Since the first exhumation, the group has grown exponentially.\(^{31}\) However, it remains dedicated to collecting oral and written testimonies of and about alleged victims of the Franco regime, as well as to excavating and identifying the bodies left in mass graves around the country.

Actual transcription is an integral part of the work of the ARMH, both in collecting and in disseminating information. In nearly all of the reports published on the group’s website, success is attributed to testimonies, both first- and second-hand, recorded by ARMH volunteers.\(^{32}\) As only one among many examples, the ARMH’s recent excavation in León would never have occurred were it not for the testimony of Abilio Mata Álvarez, born in 1932, “a quien sus mayores le enseñaron el lugar exacto de la fosa” (Campelo). The enormity of the transcription process is underscored by the sheer number of burial sites and bodies exhumed in the last decade. A report published by *El País* correspondents Natalia Junquera and Luis Gómez revealed that as of July 14, 2008, 171 burial sites had been excavated and a total of 4,054 bodies disinterred (“Juicio” 2-4). Following the acknowledgments on the ARMH website, this means that hundreds of testimonies have been given, taken, transcribed and used as part of the exhumation process during the last ten years.\(^{33}\)

The actual testimonies transcribed by groups such as the ARMH have also been compiled into a growing number of anthologies. Particularly between the years 2000 and 2003, this number spiked.\(^{34}\) The testimonial collections focus principally on wartime and postwar atrocities, and they have been compiled by journalists, historians, and social anthropologists, all of whom are concerned with “the truth value of these testimonies as historical evidence” (Labanyi, “Testimonies” 195).\(^{35}\) However, as Labanyi is quick to point out, many of these testimonial anthologies regurgitate the problems of transcription. For example, in Ronald Fraser’s *Blood of
Spain (1979), it is often unclear who is speaking, and he fails to tell the reader “anything about the circumstances of the interviews or about the relation of the excerpts cited to the whole transcripts” (Labanyi, “Testimonies” 196). In other popular anthologies published between 2000 and 2003, the testimonies are ordered either chronologically or thematically, but they leave out the context of the testimony and fail to include the transcript in its entirety. Finally, and in the most problematic cases, the interviews are chopped up into snippets and sound bytes, which are spliced together with those of other interviews to better outline the tragic nature of the topic. Labanyi argues that such anthologies privilege the mode of tragedy, “mixing testimonies from a number of narrators in each chapter in order to construct a composite account of a particular category of atrocity” (“Testimonies” 200).

In contrast, Tomasa Cuevas’s three volume collection of testimonies of women incarcerated following the war offers full life histories, one per chapter. Her method seems more comprehensive, allowing a more complete story to stand alone as it was told by the interviewee; however, it would be even more useful to print the interview transcript in its entirety, or at least with minimal editing. Issues such as editing, framing, and reformulating testimonies into transcripts are at the core of the six novels included in my dissertation. Particularly in La voz dormida, actual and notional transcripts and testimonies are re-presented and recreated within the novel, thus assuming new meaning and complicating the recovery of personal memory that was allegedly silenced and lost for so long. The novel adopts the conventions of testimonial anthologies and transcription to interrogate the ways they are involved in recovering history and memory. Furthermore, as with the real-life transcripts and testimonies, on some level all of the novels deal with the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. In each, the narrators, protagonists, minor characters and/or implied authors are concerned with
capturing supposedly official history and personal memory in print. Transcripts are involved as a means of providing a direct link to (or exact copy of) the original event, but their rhetorical function encourages us to recognize the inherent complications of this process.

The revamped preoccupation with the recovery of historical memory is also prompted by a sense of urgency—not just personal but temporal. In Spain, the progressive loss both of firsthand witnesses of and participants in the Spanish Civil War and of those who lived during the Franco regime has put pressure on the need to collect testimonies and information from that time period. According to Juliá, “la memoria de aquellos tiempos se ha modificado a medida que los abuelos que hicieron la guerra morían, los padres que tuvieron su gran momento en la transición se hacían mayores y los nietos que despertaron a la conciencia política en la democracia iban ocupando los primeros puestos en la escena” (17). The coming-of-age of the first generation to grow up in democratic Spain has led to renewed interest in a period that seems distant, if not foreign. Aguilar Fernández argues that the intensified interest in these topics, of late and on a national scale, is largely due to the fact that the new generation is free from fear and feelings of guilt (“La evocación” 311). Not having experienced the war or the dictatorship, these grandchildren of survivors want to learn about the past, and they are able to do so in a way that their predecessors were not. Juliá agrees, showing that the rise of the “generation of grandchildren” has had an impact on the number of investigations dedicated to the relevant period (73). The younger generation has taken up the task of transcription to record and learn about the past.

The novels included in my project represent the desire of the younger generation to uncover history and memory—along with their inability to succeed in this endeavor. In Soldados de Salamina, the narrator-protagonist goes to great lengths to uncover the truth about a specific
event from the Civil War, meeting with a variety of older people who were involved at the time, and receiving encouragement from his younger peers. In *La mitad del alma*, the narrator-protagonist is faced with the challenge of learning the secret of her dead mother’s involvement in underground Republican activity after the war, and she must piece it together through the remnants of her correspondence and conversations with the remaining members of her mother’s group of confidantes. A similar generational theme runs through *Llámame Brooklyn* and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, which reinforces the connection between the recovery of historical memory and the rising preoccupation with the loss of the generation involved in the actual events.

Several political and judicial developments have also precipitated the recent trend in history, memory, and transcribing the past. In 1996, José María Aznar became the first non-military right-wing leader in Spain since the early 1920s. During his first term, Aznar needed the support of other groups to ground his re-election; however, as journalist Giles Tremlett notes, by the beginning of his second term Aznar had begun to distance himself from his opponents (329). The desire of opposition parties to find political ammunition against Aznar’s Partido Popular (PP), in conjunction with the founding of the ARMH and the first excavations of mass graves in Priaranza del Biero, brought the historical memory debate to a head in Parliament (Tremlett 329). On November 20th, 2002, opposition parties succeeded in convincing the PP to sign a declaration condemning the military uprising of Franco and other generals which started the Civil War. However, a bigger step towards recovering the past took place with the March 14th, 2004 election of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) candidate, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. For both transcription and historiography, the 2004 elections marked a change in climate, one that left pro-Franco authors “sin sus protectores politicos” (Pérez Ledesma 130). In his acceptance speech, Rodríguez Zapatero outlined his personal history as a descendent of Civil
War victims, paving the way for other descendants to take up the task of investigating their origins and to share their own personal relationships with the past.

During Rodríguez Zapatero’s first term, the PSOE made strides toward promoting the study of the past. For example, on September 10th, 2004, just months after Rodríguez Zapatero’s election, the Comisión Interministerial para el Estudio de la Situación de las Víctimas de la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo was established by royal decree and Deputy Prime Minister María Teresa Fernández de la Vega was assigned to oversee the organization. Although the commission was later criticized for a lack of progress, it nonetheless served to fuel the debate over historical memory.38

Yet despite the PSOE’s attempts to study and commemorate the past, the idea of really doing something about the past, and particularly transcribing the past, did not become a national, legal reality until October 31st of 2007, when the Spanish Congress of Deputies approved the controversial Ley de la memoria histórica.39 The law opens with a general acknowledgement of “un derecho individual a la memoria personal y familiar de cada ciudadano,” which reads as a state-sponsored legitimization of each person’s right to their personal past (“La ley” 53410). Each article then contains a separate provision related to the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. The first ten provisions address more broad-scale concerns, such as the general recognition of the victims of political, religious, and ideological violence on both sides of the Spanish Civil War and of Franco’s regime, and a declaration of illegitimacy of all trials, juries, and other penal and administrative bodies that, during the Civil War, “se hubieran constituido para imponer, por motivos políticos, ideológicos o de creencia religiosa, condenas o sanciones de carácter personal, así como la de sus resoluciones” (“La ley” 53411).40
However, the next four articles are more closely related to transcription, establishing measures for the identification and localization of victims of Francoist repression, including the administrative authorization of said activity and access to land where mass graves were found. These articles directly address the controversy surrounding the work done by groups such as the ARMH. In his article “The Return of Civil War Ghosts,” Francisco Ferrándiz states that a number of manifestos, circulated on the internet, suggested that “the exhumations were being done for media attention and personal profit, undermining the powerful denunciation of justice inscribed in the buried bones” (3). The ARMH and others maintain that the graves should be left untouched, silent symbols of the atrocities of the past. Similarly, the family of Spain’s treasured poet Federico García Lorca has fought to keep his remains in situ, rather than remove them to an alternate location, either a marked grave or a memorial. By authorizing such investigations the law subsequently authorized (and promoted) the work done by transcribers of the ARMH and similar organizations, all of whom record testimony and transcribe documents as part of the investigative process. In a related way, it has encouraged the mode of unearthing and exhuming present in Spanish historiography and in literature.

If Articles 15 through 19 deal with more symbolic and commemorative tasks, the last three articles of the law directly relate to transcription. Article 20 calls for the “creación del Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica y Archivo General de la Guerra Civil,” the functions of which are the following: to maintain and develop the General Archive; to recover, organize, and make available of “los fondos documentales y las fuentes secundarias que puedan resultar de interés para el estudio de la Guerra Civil, la Dictadura franquista, la resistencia guerrillera contra ella, el exilio, el internamiento de españoles en campos de concentración durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial y la transición;” and, lastly, to foster historical investigation
and offer help to investigators through scholarships and grants, “para que continúen desarrollando su labor académica y de investigación sobre la Guerra Civil y la Dictadura” (“La ley” 53414). Similarly, Article 21 ensures the acquisition and protection of documents about the Civil War and the dictatorship, “que obren en archivos públicos o privados, nacionales o extranjeros, ya sean en versión original o a través de cualquier instrumento que permita archivar, conocer o reproducir palabras, datos o cifras con fidelidad al original.” Finally, Article 22 discusses the right to access public and private archives, “la obtención de las copias que se soliciten,” and “las medidas necesarias para la protección, la integridad y catalogación de estos documentos, en particular en los casos de mayor deterioro o riesgo de degradación” (“La ley” 53415). These three articles are significant because they address concerns faced by investigators and transcribers in their shared quest to help to establish and organize archives, “reproduce” words, facts and data by means of any necessary instrument, provide copies, and preserve the integrity of documents against the threat of deterioration.42

Transcription highlights similar issues within works of literature. In several novels published since the turn of the century, explicit references are made to official archives and documents, and, in some cases, those documents are even photocopied directly in/onto the text. Efforts made to reduce prior restrictions to accessing materials are reinforced by the use of transcription in literature, which calls attention to the divisions between what is official or unofficial, public or private, part of history or part of memory.

All of these factors—social, cultural, generational, ideological, and judicial—have played a role in the renewed interest in history, memory, and testimony.43 In so doing, they have created a need for actual transcription in order to record testimonies, to provide copies of important or damaged documents, and to disseminate information. However, by promoting the
exhumation of bodies, the revelation of secrets, and the recovery of lost meaning, they have also inadvertently re-kindled the appearance of transcription as a rhetorical figure.

To conclude this section on the context of twenty-first century Spain, I would like to consider where the process is leading. In Working through Memory (2007), Ofelia Ferrán suggests one direction, stating:

If the exhumations of mass graves, and all the work being done around this process such as the recollection of oral testimonies, historical investigation, and archival research, are to be effective in Spain, they must help contribute to an ongoing process in which different and opposing memories are allowed to enter into conflict within a healthy process of dissensus that can ultimately be taken up by society at large. . . . For there is no memory or history that is simply being “recovered” from the past in this process. There are multiple memories and histories that are emerging, and, more than being “recovered,” they are being produced within competing discourses in the present. (44)

Ferrán’s mention of the type of work being done in contemporary Spain rings true for the fictional narratives included in my investigation: fictional transcribers seek out oral testimony, historical documents, and other pieces of the past and then reproduce them in fictional, textual archives as part of an ongoing dialogue. Ferrán’s observations on the place of dissent and competing discourses in contemporary Spanish society also connect to the tension between different transcripts, different meanings, and different versions of history and memory seen in each of the novels chosen for my study. The use of transcription allows us to examine these confrontations and to establish a more complex picture of the past and the present, which, in turn, enables us to explore the future.
CHAPTER 1

REMEMBERING THE DEFEATED: TRANSCRIPTION AS HISTORIOGRAPHIC CLAIM IN LA VOZ DORMIDA AND LOS GIRASOLES CIEGOS

In the introductory chapter, I explained how literary transcription co-opts and interrogates the conventions of historiography, thus prompting a critique of the notion of recovering historical memory. The two works I have included in Chapter One foreground attempts to represent (or perhaps reproduce) the experiences of those considered to be the defeated of the Spanish Civil War and postwar eras. *La voz dormida* (2002) is largely based on Dulce Chacón’s much publicized and often commented historiographic process, which consisted of visiting archives, interviewing witnesses, and recording testimonies connected to Madrid’s infamous Ventas prison, an emblematic site of suffering under the Franco regime. Yet rather than write a traditional history about the events she investigated, Chacón fictionalizes the source material as part of a literary enterprise. Chacón dedicates the work to the “sleeping voices” referenced in the title, “los que se vieron obligados a guardar silencio,” which means that her fictional(ized) narrative intends to privilege the stories of those marginalized by history and the writing of history (1). In *Los girasoles ciegos* (2004), Alberto Méndez presents four individual *derrotas* that are supposed to have taken place between 1939 and 1942. Unlike Chacón, Méndez claims no pretense of authenticity or even of historical research. Instead, he fictionalizes the transcription process within the narrative, which results in a highly verisimilar representation of fictional events. In both works, the transcribers advocate the story of the defeated and prescribe a similar position for the reader.
A brief example from “Segunda derrota,” the second short narrative of *Los girasoles ciegos*, will provide some context for my argument. In 1940, we are told, “en una braña de los altos de Somiedo,” a shepherd discovered the physical remains of an adult male and child, along with a handwritten diary presumably belonging to the deceased man (39). Rather than simply tell the story of their demise, the narrator, who remains anonymous, goes on to aver that some twelve years later he rediscovered the manuscript in the General Archive of the Civil Guard, where it lay forgotten inside a yellow envelope classified as “DD (difunto desconocido)” (39). Intrigued by a reference to celebrated Golden Age poet Luis de Góngora, the narrator elects to transcribe the whole diary, which begins, “Elena ha muerto durante el parto. No he sido capaz de mantenerla a este lado de la vida” (40). None of the elements of “Segunda derrota” are real in a historical sense, although they easily could have appeared in any number of recent news articles in Spain. The characters, the common grave, the twice-found manuscript, and the narrator-turned-transcriber are all fictional creations. The effect of transcribing the notional manuscript, however, is to connect the reader to the reconstructed past events. Transcription plays a fundamental structural role in the apocryphal narrator-transcriber’s efforts to revive and recreate since the narrative is ordered around the transcripts. Although the transcriber and transcripts appear to authenticate the narrative product, making it seem like a credible, verifiable account of certain past events, the story is neither historical nor “real” in nature. Instead, as we discover throughout *Los girasoles ciegos* and *La voz dormida*, transcription strategically manipulates the narrative and aligns the reader with the defeated protagonists.

Making a case for remembering and empathizing with the victims of Franco’s regime is necessary and commendable, for which reason very few people have criticized or would criticize the political ethics of either work of fiction. Yet although the two books may be politically
ethical, they are based on violations of literary ethics. Politically motivated historical fiction such as *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* involves a claim that is historiographic rather than literary: to recount the history of those subjects allegedly unavailable to historiography. Thus, it treats fiction as an amplification of the powers of history instead of a distinct regime within its own objects and ends. The result is not a poetics of “what might be” but of “what was and could not otherwise be told.” In texts such as *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos*, the historiographic premise has the added effect of prompting many readers to seek out true or historical information about the protagonists. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the aesthetic from the political since each act of transcription not only enriches the fiction but also shapes the reader’s response toward the presumed reality of the *vencidos*.

The way in which the fictional transcribers of *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* corrupt, censor, and ultimately control the transcripts is disturbingly similar to the way in which the Franco regime used rhetorical strategies to misinform and to mislead the public. Transcription becomes an act of distortion; control of documents and testimony becomes a way of controlling the narrative and the reader’s reception of it. The two books may awaken sleeping voices and also the reader’s interest, but transcription reveals that the works of fiction largely succeed in doing so by reproducing the discursive techniques used during the dictatorship. This is an unspoken paradox of the recovery of historical memory as represented in contemporary Peninsular fiction: the figurative voice given to the victims is modeled after the stylized story-telling of those who silenced them.

To demonstrate this paradox, my argument will be informed by the work of Paul Ricouer and Dominick LaCapra, both of whom have made tremendous contributions to theories of narrative, history, and memory. Although neither scholar foregrounds literature, their
epistemological arguments may be adapted to the two primary works of fiction I will analyze in this chapter. Both Ricouer and LaCapra identify narrative as a form of representation that maintains a delicate relationship between history, memory, and the writer charged with telling the story of a particular past event. Specifically, Ricouer provides a model of the historiographic operation, the same process that is co-opted by fictional transcribers in both *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos*. His work highlights how the presence of a narrative product paradoxically signals the absence of the past, the narrated event, and experience and invokes the need to balance forgetting with remembering and (often) forgiveness. In both *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos*, transcription likewise marks the distance between fictional re-presentation and allegedly verifiable past events and provides a believable format that promotes the reader’s empathy towards the fictional protagonists. LaCapra stresses the historian’s motives and responsibility with respect to the narrative reconstruction, arguing that what one says about the past and how one goes about doing it reveal much about “present” challenges and interests. In the two works of fiction included in this chapter transcription illuminates the transcribers’ alignment with the perceived victims of the Spanish Civil War and of the subsequent dictatorship. It exposes how the transcribers not only use but also manipulate the past as they represent it, therefore promoting and legitimizing the reader’s response to and interpretation of the protagonists.

1. Paul Ricouer and Dominic LaCapra: How We Represent the Past

   In *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) Ricouer theorizes the reciprocal relationship between remembering and forgetting, showing how it affects both the perception of historical experience and the production of historical narrative. His thesis is appropriate to a discussion of
fictional narratives like *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* because both novels foreground how transcription manipulates memory and historical sources throughout the textual representation of particular moments of past defeat. Ricouer’s text, following its title, is divided into three parts. In the first Ricouer takes a phenomenological approach to memory, contemplating how memory, which exists in the present, consists of and refers to an absent past. Ricouer defines memory through “sets of opposites,” of which the most relevant to my study is evocation/search (25, italics in original). Evocation, the unexpected appearance of a memory, which involves affectation and pathos, differs from memory as search, a type of recollection (anamnesis) that signifies “returning to, retaking, recovering what had earlier been seen, experienced or learned—getting back what was temporarily forgotten” (Ricouer 27). Although he does not directly mention transcription, Ricouer’s postulation nonetheless underlines the primary tenets of transcription as seen in *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos*. The transcription process works like a figurative re-collection (return to and recovery) of the traces of particular past experiences. It forms part of the transcribers’ search to convert absence into presence, forgetting into remembrance, and memory into narrative, and it does so by writing and even rewriting the memories of selected subjects as part of a larger textual depiction.

Ricouer also establishes the fundamental importance of temporality to the understanding and narration of the past that is reproduced. He argues that if memory, as a capacity or an effectuation, is linked to the perception of the passage of time, it is oriented in two senses: “from the past to the future, by a push from behind…but also from the future toward the past . . . across the living present” (97). The use of transcription in *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* similarly plays with time, at once looking backward and forward. The result is an anachronistic exchange: projecting the present onto the past and the past onto the present all with an eye
toward regulating how we proceed to perceive *los vencidos* in the future. Time also marks the polarity of primary and secondary memory, which Ricouer identifies as retention and reproduction. Whereas retention clings to the perception of the moment, reproduction assumes that the primary memory has temporarily “disappeared” and will return (35). Transcription is symbolic of disappearance and reproduction: the original document or testimony has been temporarily forgotten and is revived in the form of the transcript. Secondary memory, as experienced and recorded by the fictional transcribers of both novels, thus constitutes a literal and a figurative re-presentation that occurs in the form of transcripts.

Ricouer’s second section provides a tripartite model of the historiographic operation, showing how the work of the historiographer ultimately condenses memory, testimony, and archival documents into his or her own representation of the past. The same process is reappropriated by the fictional transcribers in both *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* to represent the plight of the protagonists. Ricouer’s model begins with a documentary phase, which consists of determining what happened, taking eyewitness declarations, and constituting archives of information. For Ricouer testimony is always the cornerstone of historical writing because it is through the very voices and the memories of the witnesses that the historian is then able to record the past. He reminds us, “Everything starts, not from the archives, but from testimony, and that, whatever may be our lack of confidence in principle in such testimony, we have nothing better than testimony, in the final analysis, to assure ourselves that something did happen in the past, which someone attests having witnessed in person” (147). As both *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* demonstrate, transcription likewise starts with testimony: either the spoken word is written down or a document is transcribed within the larger narrative. Ricouer’s reference to our potential lack of confidence in testimony is magnified by the practice
and the necessity of putting words to the inexplicable, such as a national trauma or civil war. Yet as both novels demonstrate, the direct transcription of testimony, as well as the references to testimony as a source for the final product, help shape the reader’s response to what is said to have happened.

The second phase of Ricouer’s model is an explanatory and understanding phase, which responds to the question of why events happened and inevitably involves the historiographer’s own interpretation. In one way, Ricouer’s theory overlaps with my observations on transcription in *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* because it is impossible to transcribe every testimony or to collect every document about an original event of the magnitude of the Spanish Civil War or the Franco dictatorship—whether the narrative product is fictional or historical. For Ricouer, selection is essential: without it there would be a seemingly endless fount of information, a “hemorrhaging of meaning” (228). Selection means that each voice, testimony, and document included in the final product hints at another, or many others, that are not included; essentially, a select few come to represent a larger whole. The added significance paradoxically signals some loss of each story’s particular, personal value and reinforces the distance between past and present. By attempting to bring back the voices and memories of a few, most are pushed farther away, ignored, silenced, unknown, and unknowable. Yet again, presence invokes absence and stresses the contradiction that writing and transcribing history are acts of re/construction.

The use of transcription in *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* also challenges the role of the transcriber, whose personal motives and interpretations of the events in question mold the final product. This leads to the final phase of Ricouer’s historiographic mode, representation. Representation is the most relevant phase to my argument because it considers how to organize
the gathered information, puts the documentation and explanation phases into written form, and offers the final product to readers (Ricouer 136). Ricouer describes the representation phase as “the moment of expression” when one re-presents the past “in truth” (228). Yet the very fact that the past may be (and almost always is) represented in different ways by different historiographers reinforces the notion that historical “truth” can be and is as fictional as literary “truth.” The fictional transcribers of *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* avail themselves of select sources in order to promote their interpretations of the protagonists’ moments of defeat. They likewise take advantage of the conventions of historiography to offer us a seemingly verifiable version of what (may have) happened and to encourage the reader to identify with that account.

The third and final section of *Memory, History, Forgetting* considers the necessary balance between forgetting and remembering in any historical enterprise. Here Ricouer explores institutionally mandated and personally driven “forgetting,” a topic that relates to what many view to be Spain’s transitional “pact of amnesia,” a phenomenon that is said to have taken place during the country’s push toward amnesty. Ricouer writes that the proximity between amnesty and amnesia, which is more than phonetic or even semantic, “signals the existence of a secret pact with the denial of memory” (453). Although it may simulate forgiveness, such forgetting “touches the very roots of the political, and through it, the most profound and most deeply concealed relation to a past that is placed under an interdict” (Ricouer 453). Ricouer’s belief that forgetting must be balanced, at some point, by some form of recollection resonates with the recent push to recover historical memory in contemporary Spain. The politically and ideologically driven “pact” to promote certain versions of the Spanish Civil War and postwar, at the expense of denying and even silencing others, is likewise central to both *La voz dormida* and
Los girasoles ciegos. If the actual historian is driven by a need to remember, to record, and to represent a particular past, the fictional transcriber found in recent works of Peninsular narrative fiction like La voz dormida and Los girasoles ciegos not only exhibits said need but also legitimizes and transfers it to the reader.

Whereas Ricouer elucidates the process by which we attempt to represent the past, LaCapra focuses on the cause and effect of this process and emphasizes human agency. In Representing the Holocaust (1994) LaCapra examines recent representations, or what he repeatedly refers to as “uses,” of the Holocaust in history and theory. Not unlike the Spanish Civil War, the Holocaust exemplifies a massively traumatic socio-cultural event that has been alternately repressed and canonized in Western literature and culture, and that has been the epicenter of bitter controversies regarding narrative, truth, and memory. LaCapra states that our exchange with a past event such as the Holocaust is related to more general questions of interpretation and argument that become specified “not as one plays imaginary God or just judge vis-à-vis others in the past but as one confronts different challenges in the present and future” (Representing 11). For LaCapra, such challenges consist not of determining guilt or innocence, but of making a case for what should be remembered—a responsibility that converts all judgment into a judgment on the person who makes it (Representing 11). Understood this way, we “awaken the dead in order to interrogate them about problems of interest to us, and the answers we derive justifiably tell us more about ourselves than about a context we could not fully recreate in the best of circumstances even if we wanted to” (Representing 33). In La voz dormida and Los girasoles ciegos the fictional transcribers “awaken” the defeated in order to make a case for remembering them. LaCapra would have us question what the desire to
remember the defeated says about the fictional transcribers and, by extension, what it says about
the reader who engages in the novels.

LaCapra begins *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (1998) by questioning what aspects
of the past should be remembered, how they should be remembered, and whether art has a
special responsibility with respect to traumatic events that remain invested with value and
emotion (1). His response considers the role of testimonial witnessing and the connection
between testimony and transference. In keeping with Ricouer, LaCapra observes that the primary
memory transmitted by survivors through testimony becomes, through narration and
codification, secondary memory, a “replacement” imparted to others (*History and Memory* 21).
However, he goes on to state that such information is imparted only after the historiographer has
interpreted and estimated its value and meaning. Testimony transforms the historian, or other
analyst, such as the fictional transcriber, into “a secondary witness” who undergoes a
transferential relation and must work out an acceptable subject-position with respect to the
witness and his or her testimony (LaCapra, *History and Memory* 11). The transferential relation
involved in such transmission commonly consists of “the tendency to become emotionally
implicated in the witness and his or her testimony with the inclination to act out an affective
response to them” (*History and Memory* 12). The fictional transcribers of *La voz dormida* and
*Los girasoles ciegos* similarly weigh the value and meaning of different transcripts, and their
interpretation and selection are clearly affected by their emotional responses toward the *vencidos*
and the testimonies of the *vencidos*. Although the presumed benefit of transcription is that of
increasing proximity to and knowledge of the past, in these two works of fiction proximity and
knowledge are mediated by the transcriber’s pathos and power over transmitting only those
elements capable of evoking pity or compassion for the defeated.
LaCapra expands upon several of the aforementioned themes and also calls for a reconsideration of disciplinary enclosures in his later work *History and Reading: Tocqueville, Foucault, French Studies* (2000). Specifically, he promotes the need to test or even periodically transgress commonly perceived boundaries between fields such as history and literature, explaining that newer modes of narrative expression may prove “more suitable for addressing issues that themselves cut across disciplines” (*History and Reading* 28). *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* epitomize a mode of narrative expression in which fiction assimilates historical sources and appropriates the conventions of history and historiography. In doing so, transcription enables fiction to take advantage of history with the goal of offering a novel representation of seemingly historical events. However, both *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* illustrate the risks inherent to blurring the lines of fiction and history: conflating transcription with historiography contests the ethics of fiction and legitimizes an affective response toward the defeated that is predicated on similar discursive strategies used by the victors.

2. *La voz dormida*

*La voz dormida* was Chacón’s fifth and final novel, and it met with tremendous critical and public success.⁴⁷ Current scholarship on *La voz dormida* focuses on one or more of the following: the novel’s aim to unearth the voices of women and of the defeated during the Spanish Civil War and postwar eras, the novel’s blend of memory, history, and fiction, and the presence of more formal, paratextual elements. In the first and largest group one finds Kathryn Everly’s article “Women, War, and Words,” which praises Chacón’s work and highlights the necessity of recovering “the legacy of unsung female heroes of the Spanish Civil War” (77). José F. Colmeiro likewise promotes how the novel is written “forcefully and movingly from a double
position of otherness, the point of view of women and the defeated during and after the war” (193). Such reactions are unsurprising; by focusing on the testimony of the vanquished, “las gentes que no tuvo la oportunidad de contar su historia,” Chacón based her novel on an arguably less popularized version of the war and postwar era (Crespo). In the second group, scholars such as Antonio Gómez López-Quiñones place La voz dormida within what they observe to be a recent surge in a literary trend, in which fiction has never seemed so historiographic nor historiography so fictional (La guerra persistente 16). Gómez López-Quiñones remarks that Chacón’s concern for explaining to the reader “cómo, quién, dónde y para qué se logra un determinado dato posteriormente incluido en la trama” contrasts with the way in which traditional historians wrote about the past (La guerra persistente 16). Similarly, Colmeiro characterizes Chacón’s novel as a “hybridization of memories,” a form that transforms the raw materials collected into a new creation (191). The final group of critics analyzes the importance of intertextual documents and paratexts included in the novel without mentioning transcription. Whereas M. Edurne Portela traces intertextual and paratextual links, Pablo Gil Casado argues that reproduced documents and paratexts are the “most egregious” of the novel’s elements, abusing what should be a genuine and verifiable relationship between the recuperation of memory and the historical authenticity of the events (92).

All three groups indirectly draw attention to transcription, but they do not examine it as a central element of the novel. By focusing on transcription as a rhetorical figure, my study engages with the primary trends in current criticism while contributing a new perspective. Chacón’s fictionalization of source materials and the transcription process produces a story that is more “real” and accessible to the reader than the history she pretends to represent. My analysis shows how fiction exposes the challenges of historiography and of the recovery of historical
memory: bringing back the past (or trying to bring it back) only pushes it farther away. Testimony and the presumed original truth it promises to reveal are malleable, moving targets. And past events and experiences, which cannot be re-accessed, become productively displaced by narrative representation. The transcripts embody fictional representations of allegedly historical sources. Yet although they serve as false substitutes for supposedly real events, they provide an illusion of verifiable historical accuracy that helps to legitimize the reader’s sympathy for the protagonists.

La voz dormida centers on a group of women incarcerated together in Madrid’s infamous Ventas prison, alternating the story of their confinement with the limited freedom of their friends, family, and fellow resistance members. The novel spans over twenty years, from the start of Franco’s dictatorship until shortly after the regime’s 1963 publication of a general reprieve for subjects of certain death sentences. La voz dormida is divided into three readily identifiable parts, not including the initial dedicatory paratext or Chacón’s list of acknowledgements following the conclusion of the storyline. All three parts follow the same formal sequence: they begin with a transcribed poem which appears on a separate page, continue with the third-person omniscient narration of the characters inside and outside of Ventas, and end with a facsimile of an official-looking document that also appears on a separate page.

The narrated portions of each section of the novel consist of an ebb and flow of transcripts, which take the form of letters, diary entries, songs, and governmental communiqués. The transcripts are interspersed throughout the narration in two ways: as seemingly complete documents that have been copied in full, and as fragments of documents that are interrupted and mediated by an anonymous, omnipresent narrator-transcriber. In total, there are eight full-length transcripts, or transcripts that do not appear to have been edited or shortened in any fashion, but
the vast majority appears to be partial, or perhaps censored, reproductions. The differential of information between the narrator-transcriber and the reader demonstrates the former’s control over the narrative. The way in which information is disseminated through partial transcripts puts a reader at a disadvantage: he or she only has access to the mediated, narrative product.

In order to structure my analysis of the transcripts present within La voz dormida, I will examine the transcripts in two sets. First, I will analyze examples of transcripts that most clearly demonstrate the paradox of modeling the figurative voice given to the victims after the rhetorical strategies common to the victors. Most notably, this set includes transcribed fragments of notional letters written to the incarcerated women and by resistance fighters, in addition to fictional notes exchanged between an estranged couple. I will then consider real historical and literary sources that are transcribed within the novel in order make purely notional transcripts appear more verisimilar. This group includes letters written by real women incarcerated in the actual Ventas prison, letters written by family members of those women, official government documents published in Spain’s Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE), a war dispatch, a maquis photograph, and epigraphs pertaining to published works of literature, all of which converge with fictional dedications, litanies, death sentences, diary entries, and prison release papers to promote empathy toward the protagonists.

Because the narrative revolves around a number of major and minor characters, it is useful to outline the basic plot points before examining specific transcripts. The four female protagonists confined in the same cell at the start of the novel form the lynchpin that binds all of the other characters, plot lines, and transcripts. Hortensia, often referred to as “la mujer que iba a morir” or as the woman writing in her diary, is in prison for her alleged involvement with the Republican resistance movement. She is the wife of Felipe, one of the leaders of the Agrupación
Guerrillera de Cerro Umbría, and their correspondence connects the prison to the outside world on a personal and political level. Hortensia’s imprisonment similarly implicates her non-captive sister Pepita in the drama surrounding Ventas. Pepita’s sense of family duty gradually overcomes her fear of the regime and involves her in the resistance machinations. She delivers messages to the guerrilla fighters, visits the women in prison, befriends their family members, and even convinces her formerly Nationalist patron, Don Fernando, to save Felipe’s life. Pepita falls in love with Paulino, best friend of Felipe and also the enigmatic “Chaqueta Negra” who leads the guerrilla forces of Cerro Umbría. Pepita also raises Tensi, Hortensia and Felipe’s daughter, after the former is executed and the latter sacrifices himself to save the other guerrilla fighters.

Elvira, the youngest of the women being held with the group, is rescued from jail by Paulino (who happens to be her older brother). She then joins him and the resistance fighters in the woods and eventually escapes to Prague to work for the ex-patriot movement abroad. Reme, the oldest of the group, is imprisoned for her support of the Communist party and serves as a maternal figure for the other women in the cell. Upon her release, she learns that one of her daughters has taken up the same cause as a result of her interaction with the family members of other incarcerated women on visitor days. Tomasa, the last of the four main prisoners, spends much of the novel refusing to accept that the war is over or that her dead family members “forman parte de la Historia” (32). Tomasa repeatedly provokes the female guards, for which reason she spends several periods in isolation “sin comunicar,” the worst of the punishments. She also asks the other women about the sea, and it is only towards the end of the novel that she tells, indeed yells, the story of having had to watch her loved ones thrown from a bridge into a river—one that she dreams has carried them safely to the sea.
The time frame of Part One is the end of the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent start of the Franco dictatorship. The section captures the environment of loss and suffering, focusing on the mistreatment of the imprisoned women as well as the fear and abuse experienced by their loved ones outside of the jail. Part One is preceded by an epigraph that consists of verses of a poem by Paul Celan. The verses pertain to Celan’s collection *Amapola y memoria* (1952), which is commonly noted for its treatment of death, life, memory, forgetting, and time. According to Edurne Portela, “no es casualidad que Chacón elija a Celan como epígrafe . . . fue uno de los escritores que más importancia le dio a la pérdida y recuperación del lenguaje después del Holocauusto” (53). By transcribing his verses as the introductory paratext, Chacón lends the emotional and historical weight of the Holocaust to *La voz dormida*. With very few words, the poem sets the stage: “En vano dibujas corazones en la ventana: / el caudillo del silencio / abajo, en el patio del castillo, alista soldados” (10). The first verse anticipates the sense of despair experienced by all defeated people: the loss of love, of hope, and, figuratively, of one’s heart. If such topics resonate on a universal plane, the second verse plants them more firmly in the context of the Spanish Civil War and immediate postwar: the “caudillo del silencio” symbolizes Franco, the “caudillo” responsible for the silence, or perhaps the silencing, of “the sleeping voices,” those who lost the war. The castle conjures a fortress, and the act of enlisting soldiers therein reinforces the strong presence of the caudillo and his troops. In this way, the military allusion anticipates both the Ventas prison and the influence of the regime outside of the jail. Taken as a whole, the verses symbolize the narrative that is about to unfold: the women are being held for their alleged crimes against the Franco regime, they are silenced by guards, and, though they attempt to provide hope to one another and to their loved ones, they recognize that their situation is ultimately hopeless—much like the hearts drawn in vain on the windows. The poem
conditions the reader’s immediate empathy for the defeated, for those who continue to suffer in silence.

The placement of these particular verses within *La voz dormida* is also significant because, as LaCapra notes, Celan himself affirmed the value of texts that question and respond to one another (*Representing* 16). Reflecting on his writing, Celan remarked that “the poem intends another, needs this other . . . It goes toward it, bespeaks it […] The poem becomes a conversation—often desperate conversation” (qtd. in LaCapra, *Representing* 48). Although Celan clearly makes use of a metaphor, the transcript of his poem enables a dialogue between his work and Chacón’s novel. Transcription allows the ensuing narrative to respond to the quiet desperation, hopelessness, and silence of the poem and encourages the reader to do so as well.

The first transcripts included within the narrative of Part One are fragments of a letter smuggled to Hortensia from her husband, Felipe. The transcribed sections contain emotionally charged instructions from Felipe to Hortensia: “No lo rompas, podrían encontrar pedazos . . . No lo quemes, podrían sorprenderte antes de que hubiera ardido por completo . . . Cómetelo, no sabe mal, y piensa en mí . . . Aguanta, vida mía” (31). The reproduced passages are interpolated directly into the scene without the use of italics, quotation marks, or another font. Felipe’s words evince a fear of being caught, a need to destroy every last trace of their secret communication, and a strained effort to survive against all odds. In this way, his letter seems to provide a glimpse into the intimate and forbidden nature of the relationships between prisoners and fugitives such as Hortensia and Felipe. However, consistent with Ricouer’s definition of recollection, the presence of the letter evokes a prior absence; it hints at the personal stories of the defeated that have been forgotten and should be recovered. By choosing to represent the letter and the story of Hortensia and Felipe, the narrator-transcriber effectively executes LaCapra’s notion of
transference: she implicates the reader in the characters’ intimacy, draws on the reader’s emotional response, and makes him or her feel like an accomplice to the covert correspondence.

However, just as the regime would edit and censor personal correspondence, the narrator-transcriber modifies and eliminates part of the notional original text. Rather than limit herself to providing a clean copy of the full, original text, she breaks up the letter into pieces, interrupting it with ellipsis and with comments about Hortensia’s feelings and emotions: “No quiere tragar . . . Quiere saborear su nombre, escrito por la mano de Felipe . . . No quiere tragar, pero los pasos de la guardiana se acercan” (31). The interruptions highlight Hortensia’s personal suffering, but they also disrupt the flow of the presumed source. Framing the contents of the letter in this fashion heightens the reader’s sympathy for Hortensia and Felipe at the cost of altering the presumed source.

The emphasis on Hortensia’s urge not to swallow the letter is equally significant. Before she ingests the epistle, Hortensia reads it “más de veinte veces” in order to memorize Felipe’s words (31). The letter must be destroyed so as not to incriminate the pair, but eating every last piece eliminates all physical, textual traces. Memorization and consumption thus signal the opposite of transcription: rather than reproduce, they erase the physical text. The act of eating the letter suggests to the reader that the words will become a literal and figurative part of the interlocutors and that their memory of the words will be the only remnant. Viewed this way, Hortensia’s retention of the words transforms them into a secret, which, as both Ricouer and LaCapra agree, should only be knowable through her active transmission of the primary memory. The notional transcription makes some of the secret knowable to the reader, which allows him or her to feel more connected to the characters. It also underlines the irony of the transcript: the reader becomes part and party to someone else’s secret correspondence. On a
broader scale, the transcript questions whether an “outsider” has the right to the private information or to become emotionally invested in the experience of others. The tension between the ingested letter and the fragmented transcript points at a central concern of the current mode of Spanish historiography: does giving voice to the secret story of the victims justify the use of similar editing and censorship practices common during the dictatorship? The transcript, chopped into pieces and spliced up by the narrator-transcriber, becomes more palatable for the reader, but it does so vis-à-vis similar strategies that were promulgated by the victors of the war.

Other transcripts found throughout Part One are mediated by a subject position that LaCapra refers to as a “prophetic voice” (History and Reading 141). In such instances, the narrator-transcriber’s interruptions are written from a position of futurity, which anachronistically indicates a vision of the future from the past of the characters and also a reflection on and of the past from the narrating present. Not long after the scene in which Hortensia consumes the letter from Felipe, we learn that Don Fernando, Pepita’s employer, formerly worked as a medic for the Nationalists. He became overwhelmed with guilt and repugnance after witnessing up close and in person the massacre of prisoners, “casi mil muertos,” and chose to resign his post (118). Because he took a less prestigious job, and because she never knew why he really resigned, Don Fernando’s wife, Doña Amparo, stopped speaking to him, and as a result the two communicate via notes left on their shared kitchen table. Although Don Fernando and Doña Amparo are not in prison, their notes, similar to the smuggled notes between Hortensia and Felipe, demonstrate that tension and silence prevail in everyday postwar lives.

Also similar to Felipe’s letter to Hortensia, the notes appear interspersed throughout the relevant paragraph and are broken up by the omniscient narrator. However, this time the narrator
employs the future tense: “Ella escribirá esta misma noche una nota: No sé con quién has estado, ni me importa. Y él la leerá mañana…dejará en un platillo del aparador el dinero que doña Amparo le reclama en un papel: No me dejaste lo de Pepita, ni para el pavo, y tus padres vienen a comer en Navidad” (117-19). The prophetic voice returns when Paulino, hiding in an unknown location, writes Pepita a letter, which ends with the following observations: “Y escribirá que desea casarse con ella el mismo día que vuelva. Volveré, escribirá” (177). Following Colmeiro, these flash-forwards represent “an overt intervention of the invisible hand of the narrator” as someone who clearly identifies with the characters of the defeated (200). Extending his observation, the use of the future tense likewise transfers the narrator’s empathy to the reader. The prophetic voice mimics the gaze of the historiographer, underscoring the way in which s/he engages in an exchange with the past. As the representation of the transcribed notes demonstrates, the narrator-transcriber, like the historiographer, already knows what will happen. Thus how she chooses to represent it is equally if not more significant because it tells us as much about the narrating present as it does about the “past” in question. The privileged position of the narrator-transcriber legitimizes the transcript as well as the reader’s identification with the characters.53

A final example of how transcripts demonstrate the paradox of giving voice to the victims vis-à-vis the discursive strategies of the victors occurs early in Part Two. Paulino sends Pepita letters in which he substitutes their true identities and relationship with a false cover story. The narrator explains that “nadie podía descubrir al leer aquella carta que Jaime ocultaba a Paulino. Nadie, excepto Pepita. Ahora sabe por qué utilizó unas claves que sólo ella podía descifrar” (198). The police suspect that Paulino has sent Pepita the letters, so she is questioned about the content and sender. However, the letters recount the trivial happenings of a fictional train
mechanic alter ego that Paulino has created so as not to betray his whereabouts or to implicate Pepita. The use of the code protects Pepita, enabling her to solidify her false explanation. The letters distance everyone but Pepita and Paulino from the truth and establish a constructed reality that becomes so ingrained in Pepita that it replaces the reality that she and Paulino need to conceal. Paulino’s invention of said alter ego, Jaime Alcántara, mimics the fictionalization of history promoted throughout Chacón’s writing of the novel: just as she bases her work on historically sound sources, Paulino’s “history” of Jaime Alcántara builds off of “actual” events that were experienced by Paulino and Pepita. However, the way in which the lie substitutes for reality, veiling the undesirable truth with a more desirable falsehood, is not unlike the way in which the regime recast the history of Spain with a glorified, less volatile version of the past. The transcribed fragments demonstrate the potential of fiction, replacing a “true story” (which is, after all, fictional) with an invention that proves even “truer” for the receiver. They also exemplify how the secret they hold is inaccessible: the truth is hidden from those who are not directly involved and from those who try uncover it at a later time.

The second type of transcripts consists of real sources that have been transcribed alongside notional sources, thus contesting the boundary of fiction and reality as well as the ethics of the former. The first significant example appears at the end of Part One. On the final page of the primary narrative, the most hated of the Ventas guards passes through the prison visiting room, “murmurando en voz baja una letanía” (154). Although several of the incarcerated women and their visitors believe that the guard, La Zapatones, is reciting a prayer, she is actually repeating the words included in the final war dispatch issued by General Franco, which she knows by heart: “En el día de hoy, cautivo y desarmado el ejército rojo, han alcanzado las tropas Nacionales sus últimos objetivos militares. La Guerra ha terminado” (154, italics in
original). The scene concludes with La Zapatones staring down the prisoners and their relatives, repeating the phrase “Cautivo y desarmado.”

Although the recited words of the war dispatch are transcribed directly into the scene in an italicized font, a facsimile of the entire war dispatch is reproduced on the following page. The reproduction looks official: it is printed in a font reminiscent of a typewriter; its header, entirely written in capital letters, refers to the “Cuartel General del Generalísimo, Estado Mayor, Sección de Operaciones;” it is dated “Burgos 1º de abril de 1939, Año de la Victoria;” and it is signed by “El Generalísimo” (155). Whether or not the reader recognizes that the document states, word for word, the actual parte oficial de guerra that concluded the Spanish Civil War, sections of it happen to coincide exactly with La Zapatones’s repeated words. In this way, the visually “official” government document reinforces the way in which La Zapatones uses the same words to mock, to control, and to humiliate the characters in the novel, which marks her as an antagonist.

The juxtaposition of the scene with La Zapatones and the facsimile generally has been viewed as a way of creating a multi-layered, complex representation of the Spanish Civil War, one that incorporates spoken words and written words, personal and public, official and unofficial, story and history (Everly 78). Colmeiro refers to the technique as a “literary collage,” one that creates a hybridized text and transforms the original pieces into a new form (191). In a similar way, the dual versions of the war dispatch exemplify LaCapra’s call to reconsider disciplinary boundaries, showing how fiction (la Zapatones) and history (the war dispatch) come together to form a more seemingly authentic narrative. The presence of both versions in the novel reinforces the idea that “history” and its texts are malleable, and that the “reality” of the past is foremost a form of fiction, an illusion of truth.
The transcript of the guard’s recited lines paradoxically makes the storyline appear more authentic by fictionalizing the original text. Although the supposed copy of the dispatch on the separate page seems to offer the reader the actual source it nonetheless resides in a fictional setting and lacks the trappings of a truly authentic government document. It is neither a “real” copy nor a “real” photocopy of the original document. Instead, it is a double recreation that helps construct a fictional narrative. Allowing the facsimile to stand apart from the primary text also lends it a false sense of symbolism, as if the copy were somehow separate from the fictional plight of the characters. The (re)presentation of the facsimile suggests that the “official” transcript is conclusive and unmediated, unlike the letters and notes transcribed and mediated throughout Part One. Such distinction between types of transcripts likewise suggests that while some are untouchable (the facsimile), others (the personal letters and notes) invite the transcriber’s intervention. If, as we have seen, the modification of the personal transcripts conditions the reader’s response towards the characters, isolating the official government facsimile situates it as a textual “other” and heightens its cold, harsh, inflexible impact on the characters’ experience. The situation underlines the transcriber’s control over what is remembered and how. If Ricouer and LaCapra envisioned a narrative process with the positive goal of representing that which should be remembered, the acts of transcription found throughout Part One of *La voz dormida* reveal a potentially darker purpose. Not unlike the coercive, divisive rhetorical choices made by the Franco regime, the representation of different types of transcripts manipulates the reader’s response to the characters as well as their historical counterparts.

Another significant pair of real and notional transcripts appears at the end of Part Two. The real transcript here consists of a letter composed by Dolores Conesa, the mother of one of the actual women prisoners who was executed at Ventas. The transcript of the real letter is
included as a means of comparison to the wholly fictional plight of Hortensia, who is sentenced to death for her presumed involvement in the resistance movement. Hortensia’s companions quickly realize that she will not be pardoned despite their best efforts to prevent her death:

“Como de nada sirvieron las firmas que recogieron las madres de Las Trece Rosas ni los suplicatorios que escribieron solicitando clemencia. No. De nada sirvió la firma que Dolores Conesa estampó en un documento al mismo día…sin saber que su hija había sido fusilada ya” (218). Hortensia’s death sentence thus serves as a conduit between reality and fiction, enabling the narrator to segue into a part-transcript, part-description of the letter that Dolores Conesa sent to Franco.

If the actual letter presumably consists of a mother begging for clemency for her daughter, the transcript in the novel somewhat jarringly includes the narrator’s voice. It reads:

Encabezó la súplica llamando Señor al destinario y, después de dos puntos, escribió: La que suscribe. Añadió su nombre y dirección y comunicó que era viuda, y madre de la procesada Julia Conesa, condenada a la pena de muerte por los Tribunales de esta plaza. Como madre suplicó que no fuera cumplida la sentencia. Sentencia fatal, escribió. Ya que como comprueban estas firmas de industriales y vecinos es excesiva. Como madre, imploró. Espero en estos momentos de amargura la ayuda de V.E., de su bondad infinita, pidiendo a Dios le conceda vida larga para que nuestra España conducida por su mano sea pronto la nación Grande que sirva de modelo al mundo entero. (218)

The narrator-transcriber’s interventions censor Conesa’s original document, eliminating some elements while emphasizing others. The result is an incomplete and incorrect transcript, which raises the question of why it is represented in this form. In one way, the new version, replete with
narrator intervention, plays into LaCapra’s premise of awakening the dead: the transcriber’s relocation of Dolores Conesa’s plea to Franco demonstrates the transcriber’s desire to remember that particular experience and to instill that same desire to the reader. The narrating present takes command of the narrated past to influence the reader’s response. The revised transcript likewise reinforces Conesa’s status as a mother and a widow, with verbs such as “begged” and “implored” enforcing a sense of empathy for her loss.

Shortly thereafter we have a transcript of Julita Conesa’s letter to her family, written before she was executed along with the other twelve women of the Trece Rosas. The narrator identifies it as “la carta más triste. La última. Y la más corta” (219). The letter appears in italics in the midst of the story:

\begin{verbatim}
Madrid, 5 de agosto de 1939

Madre, hermanos, con todo el cariño y entusiasmo os pido que no lloréis ni un día. Salgo sin llorar, cuidad a mi madre, me matan inocente pero muero como debe de morir una inocente.

Madre, madrecita, me voy a reunir con mi hermana y papá al otro mundo pero ten presente que muero por persona honrada.

Adiós, madre querida, adiós para siempre.

Tu hija que ya jamás te podrá besar ni abrazar. --JULIA CONESA

Besos a todos, que ni tú ni mis compañeras lloréis.

Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia. \(219\)
\end{verbatim}

The narrator-transcriber does not intervene in Julia’s letter as she did with Dolores Conesa’s, but the prefatory description still influences the reader. Is it the “saddest” letter because it is real? Or is it the saddest because it is one of the Trece Rosas’s last goodbyes before being executed?
Representing the letter in the novel does allow it to reach a wider audience, fulfilling Julia Conesa’s wish that her name not be erased. But ultimately the novel, although partially based on historical events, is not historical. Transcribing the letter in *La voz dormida* therefore recalls LaCapra’s attention to issues of disciplinary boundaries as well as to the consequences of relocating texts in new and, more specifically, fictional contexts. Conesa’s name comes to form part of literary history, preserving her memory in a way that history in a way that history could not. However, the relocation of the letter also violates the ethics of fiction, encouraging readers to seek actual resources and factual information within the realm of literature.

The danger of conflating the real with the fictional becomes greater when Chacón mentions the original copy of Julia Conesa’s letter in her list of acknowledgements. Although she does not reveal to the reader that Conesa’s letter is a document that she came across during her research, she does credit Fernanda Romeu Alfaro in her acknowledgements “porque hizo posible que yo tuviera en mi casa las cartas originales de Julita Conesa” (428). Everly observes that the same letter is reproduced in Romeu Alfaro’s study as a facsimile “written in pencil on worn, crinkled paper” (285). By tracing the chain of transcripts, we find that the original letter was first photocopied into a historical anthology, and then transcribed as part of the fictional narration of *La voz dormida*. By recognizing both Romeu Alfaro and the original letters in the acknowledgements, Chacón paradoxically situates herself as an actual, “fictionalizing” transcriber: her efforts to document primary historical sources, to interpret them, and to represent them in written, albeit fictional, form draw from Ricouer’s three-phase model of the historiographic operation but do not conclude with a written history. In fact, Chacón’s acknowledgement of the existence of the original letters, coupled with the implication that she has fictionalized the originals as part of her narrative, establish distance between the source and
the subsequent copies. Her choice to represent the letter in fictional form confirms the notion that the transcript, and, by extension, the other transcripts included in the narrative, are intended to manipulate our experience of the fictional world of the novel. Paradoxically, distanci

Paraphrasing, distanci

If, in the case of Julia Conesa’s letter, Chacón fictionalizes a specific, existing source document as a transcript within the narration, Hortensia’s death sentence, which appears in the same scene, is wholly verisimilar. The transcript is visually similar to the war dispatch that concludes Part One and it is likewise situated on its own page, following the close of the Part Two narration. Such parallels reinforce the constructedness of the fictional narrative, shaping the reader’s experience of the novel. The document, which utilizes capitalization and an old-fashioned typewriter font, “officially” condemns Hortensia for “ADHESIÓN A LA REBELIÓN” and sentences her to “la pena de MUERTE . . . por FUSILAMIENTO” (246, capitalization in original). In keeping with its formal appearance, the document employs language one would associate with legal or government writs: it lists Hortensia’s criminal offences, references specific articles of the constitution and state laws, and walks the reader through the various considerations that have produced the final ruling. Everly notes that the jarring typeset and lack of emotion used in the facsimile provide an “opposite rendering of Hortensia’s death” when compared to the personal nature of her final moments. The last words of the transcript also make use of the first person plural, “Que debemos condenar y condenamos a la procesada . . . Así por ésta nuestra sentencia lo pronunciamos, mandamos y firmamos” (246). The use of “we” lends agency to the implied “other” condemning the sympathetic
protagonist, fortifying the sense of antagonism already associated with the government official characters. However, the anonymity of the subject pronoun makes the implied writers seem removed from the scene of Hortensia’s sentence and execution: it is impossible to trace the transcript back to a specific author and, thus, to identify a particular party responsible for Hortensia’s death. Experiencing the isolated presence of the transcript as cold and detached from the narration about the group of imprisoned women, along with the absence of its implied authors, facilitate the reader’s approximation to the environment of defeat.

A more curious example of transcribing a real source alongside a notional source occurs when a fictional photograph dedication accompanies the description of a photograph that coincides with the actual book cover image. While Felipe is out in the woods with the resistance fighters, he looks over a snapshot that Hortensia gave him before her arrest. The dedication is transcribed within the scene with italics: “En prueba de mi cariño, te dedico este recuerdo. Tuya para siempre: tu Hortensia” (81). The dedicatory transcription corroborates the subsequent description of the photo, an example of ekphrasis which itself might be understood as a textual copy (or transcript) of the image: “Tensí, con su uniforme de miliciana, con su fusil en bandolera y la estrella roja de cinco puntas cosida en el costado, sonríe para él, con un niño que no es suyo en los brazos. Era un día caluroso de julio, ella se había puesto los pendientes que él le había comprado en Azuaga y se había recogido el pelo ocultando sus trenzas” (81). The description of the fictional photograph matches the image found on the cover of the actual novel, drawing attention to the line between fiction and reality.

Numerous scholars have commented on the deceptive relationship between the picture and the fictional (re)creation of the image in the novel. In *Defining Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* Mary Nash observes that although “historically such images of ‘la
miliciana’ were used to entice men to take up arms, women’s war resistance efforts were limited mostly to the home front” (101). Attributing the photo to a specific militiawoman within the text thus renders a false image of the historical situation. Yet if the details do not match up with the historical reality, nor do they coincide with the fictitious character Chacón claims as the subject of the photograph on the front cover of the novel. Gil Casado criticizes the inconsistency between the historical subject and the fictional subject, explaining that the photographed woman—who, following the description in the text, is supposed to be Hortensia—is actually a militiawoman from Columna Uribarry. Thus, even on a notional level she cannot be Hortensia, who is said to be from Extremadura (91). For Edurne Portela, the photograph represents vitality, the idealism of youth, and the hope for a better future, yet the anonymity of the woman and child also prompts the reader to consider their possible deaths and disappearances from history (57). Although the image lives on, the true story behind it is forgotten and ultimately displaced by Chacón’s reinvention, re-contextualization, and use of notional transcription. Only by fictionalizing the story do we get answers. Transcription therefore serves as the vehicle for suspending disbelief and manipulating our growing compassion towards the defeated protagonists.

A transcript of verses from acclaimed Peruvian author César Vallejo’s poem “España, aparta de mí este cáliz” (1937) serve as the epigraph to Part Three. More importantly, they constitute a final deceptive relationship between transcripts of authentic and fictional sources. Vallejo was a fervent supporter of the Second Spanish Republic, and his untimely death in 1937 halted his advocacy of the movement. The entire collection examines themes of good versus evil and the triumph of humanity, yet the lines transcribed in the paratext particularly relate to Part Three of La voz dormida, in which some of the vencidos begin to recover what they have lost.
The verses, which come from the very end of the poem, read: “si no veis a nadie, si os asustan / los lápices sin punta, si la madre / España cae—digo, es un decir— / salid, niños del mundo, id a buscarla!” (249). In the poem the lonely and fearful environment prompts a call to arms and a reclamation of the nation. Moreover, “los lápices sin punta” reference a type of writer’s block, an impediment to telling the story of the Republicans, which may only be remedied by going out and recovering the fallen Spain. These words resonate with the use of transcription found throughout *La voz dormida*: a figurative form of re-collection that involves a return to and recovery of the traces of particular past experiences. The poem signals the double recollection at work in and through the novel, that of Chacón and the narrator-transcriber. Their actual and notional searches to convert absence into presence, forgetting into remembrance, and memory into narrative culminate with writing (and/or re-writing) the memories of the defeated. As LaCapra prescribes, they go in search of the fallen, missing version of Spain to awaken the defeated and to provide the reader with a case for remembering them, albeit fictitiously.57

Building upon Vallejo’s poem, the storyline of Part Three begins with Pepita staring aimlessly at the objects given to her by the functionary after her sister’s execution: Hortensia’s notebooks, her earrings, her (notional) death sentence, a half-made skirt, and “un lápiz sin punta” (252). Upon opening one of the notebooks a letter falls out and Pepita realizes that it is addressed to her. The scene then consists of a partial description of and a partial citation from the letter, again as if the narrator were transcribing only selected portions into the text. We learn that Hortensia wants Pepita to read her notebooks to Tensi, and also “que le lea el cuaderno de Felipe, <<así la niña irá conociendo a su padre>>” (253). The transcribed sections emphasize the importance of transmitting information to future generations, as embodied by Tensi. Leaving the diary for Tensi is akin to a transcriber or historiographer leaving a textual copy and permitting
later readers to have access to its contents. Such an idea is in keeping with both LaCapra and Ricoeur, for whom the work of the present on the past is always directed to the future, to the question of the end. The textual traces of Hortensia’s personal catastrophe constitute what “should” be remembered in the future: she wants Tensi to learn about her family’s past and to learn from it in order to have a better future. Tensi becomes emotionally implicated in her mother’s stories and works out an affective response by participating in a resistance movement. The reader not only bears witness to Tensi’s newly formed subject position but also feels justified in agreeing with her decision.

The remaining transcripts in Part Three seem to reward the written resistance and physical resilience of the characters. One such example consists of transcribed segments of Decreto 1.504, which was published in the actual Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE) but becomes part of the fictional story: Pepita encounters a copy that she then shares with other characters. The decree, which we are told has been signed by Franco and Luis Carrero Blanco, offers a general pardon in honor of the recently deceased Pope John XXIII and his successor, Cardenal Juan Bautista Montini, “con la fundada esperanza de que el recuerdo del hecho que motivó la gracia ha de cooperar a la recuperación del delincuente” (408, italics in original). The narration explains that the pardon is composed of eight articles, and highlights a transcribed portion of Article One, Section d): “Penas de veinte años en adelante, en una sexta parte, excepción hecha de aquellas condenas en que se hubiera conmutado la pena capital por la de treinta años” (409, italics in original). The sections of the decree that are copied in the novel are based on verifiable events, such as the death of the pope and the decision of Franco and Carrero Blanco to pardon certain prisoners in honor of the deceased. However, the transcribed sections frame the ensuing climax of the long awaited reunion of Pepita and Paulino.
The final transcript of Part Three (and also of the novel proper) consists of the instructions for Paulino’s conditional release. Much like the official-looking documents that conclude Parts One and Two, here again the reader encounters what appears to be a typewritten facsimile replete with numbered sections, signed and dated from Burgos on the twentieth of July of 1963. The transcript of Paulino’s conditional release suggests, yet again, that a state document serves to wrap up the personal story of the protagonists. However, the reader then encounters a transcribed fragment of a poem by Luis Álvarez Piñer, which reads, “Y a lo lejos / la empalizada temporal improvisaba / el horizonte imprescindible” (421). For Inma Cívico Lyons, the poet’s words foreshadow the last long decade of dictatorship in Spain, the palisade on the horizon (473). Yet other readers may understand the transcribed verses to signal the temporary condition of any such horizon. The impermanent, changeable horizon symbolizes the passing, changing contexts of events and our interpretation of them. The reference to horizons also recalls LaCapra’s argument on boundaries. By resisting fully concordant narrative closure, the novel challenges contact between fiction and history. LaCapra explains that this mode of resistance “inhibits compensatory catharsis and satisfying ‘meaning,’” which throws the reader back upon the need to come to terms with the issues the novel helps to disclose (History, Politics, and the Novel 14). In other words, fiction forces us to look outward and to reflect critically upon the reality and history it has sought to represent.

Such resistance to narrative closure and a need to deal with the reality of the defeated is reinforced by the presence of Chacón’s long list of acknowledgments, which serves as a concluding paratext that records the sources of the testimony and documents she has fictionalized by means of transcription. First and foremost, she offers “Mi gratuidad a todas las personas que me han regalado su historia” (423). The change from third-person omniscient to
first-person singular highlights the author’s auto-inclusion and involvement; it also marks the start of her list of seventy-two proper names all accompanied by a brief description of each person’s connection to her writing process. Effectively, Chacón takes advantage of the coda to bring the characters out of the fictional reality and to place them squarely in a biographical, and also autobiographical, acknowledgment. She not only tests the boundaries between fact and fiction, real and notional, personal story and history, but also reinforces her connection to the defeated and prescribes a similar position for her readers.

For some scholars, the acknowledgements are favorable. As Everly observes, the list serves as a tribute to other texts and other voices, thus augmenting “a truly intertextual and cross-disciplinary project” (89). Similarly, Gómez López-Quiñones notes that by concluding the novel in this way Chacón “atiende a un principio de respeto y cuidadosa atención a lo contado por Pepita y otros” (La guerra persistente 215). For others, particularly Gil Casado, “El procedimiento de agradecimiento que sigue Chacón no tiene desperdicio” (89). He goes on to observe that her thanks are, in reality, a glorified bibliography; providing the list therefore highlights her manipulation of such resources. The use of clarifiers following the names clearly connects some of the people to characters in the text—despite the fact that Chacón has made the effort to change their names. This serves the purpose of convincing the reader of the alleged authenticity of the fiction, demonstrating that “lo narrado va más allá de la verosimilitud de una novela” (Gil Casado 90). And we are left to wonder whether what is beyond the verisimilitude of a novel is something more real or more illusory and mystifying than a novel.

Ending the novel with the list of acknowledgements does not change the fact that the reader has been dealing with fiction all along. Chacón gives partial credit to some of her sources, yet even they are recognized in very rhetorically specific ways. Thus, despite the author’s effort
to make her narrative appear more historical and to align herself with the historiographic operation, her product—the novel—is only speciously intertextual or cross-disciplinary. By constructing “una verdad a medias sobre…una verdad completamente auténtica,” Chacón creates a text that crosses the lines of history, historiography, and the original testimony and documents on which it is based (Velázquez Jordan). We are led to believe that the novel has recovered the sleeping voices of the title when really it has distanced us further from them. We wholeheartedly sympathize with the protagonists and with their real counterparts in history, yet we are manipulated into transgressing the bounds of fiction by the same representational practices that we know to have victimized the defeated. Transcription, as found in *La voz dormida*, disregards previous violations of political ethics, adopts the rhetoric of such violations, and disrupts the ethics of fiction.

3. *Los girasoles ciegos*

As with *La voz dormida*, *Los girasoles ciegos* centers on those considered to be the defeated of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. However, the two texts have several fundamental differences. For example, whereas Chacón examines the drama surrounding numerous characters tied to the Ventas prison and the Republican resistance from the 1940s to 1960s, Méndez focuses on four specific “derrotas” that are supposed to have taken place between 1939 and 1942. Unlike Chacón, Méndez claims no pretense of authenticity or even of historical research. Furthermore, *La voz dormida* assumes the prior handiwork of a narrator-transcriber, but *Los girasoles ciegos* represents the transcription process within the narrative. These differences enable us to examine more closely the transcription process and the transcriber(s)
responsible for selecting, interpreting, and representing notional testimony and documents that have been copied as part of the narrative of *Los girasoles ciegos*.

*Los girasoles ciegos* has received considerably less critical attention than *La voz dormida*. This is unfortunate, because Méndez’s narrative represents a literary achievement every bit as worthy as Chacón’s.⁶⁰ Among the few scholars who have analyzed *Los girasoles ciegos*, Catherine Orsini-Saillet, Pilar Montero Camarena, and Cristina Albizu all evaluate the novel’s relationship to contemporary theorizations of collective memory and postmemory. Meanwhile Antonio Gómez López-Quíñones focuses solely on the first section of *Los girasoles ciegos*, considering the way in which irony and violence contribute to a disenchanted revision of the grand narratives associated with the Spanish Civil War (“La posutopía” 100). My study also relates to memory, postmemory, and the (re)writing of the Spanish Civil War, but it differs from previous articles by focusing on the function of transcription, showing how the novel prioritizes and exalts fiction’s capacity to critique the recovery of historical memory.

*Los girasoles ciegos* is divided into four short stories, each of which depicts one of the aforementioned derrotas. Transcription is of utmost importance in understanding the derrotas as individual texts and as part of a larger narrative experience of defeat because each depends upon the interaction between three key elements: transcriber, transcribed testimony, and transcribed source documents. Specifically, each micronarrative involves an explicit or implicit narrator-transcriber who attempts to represent a particular moment of loss, surrender, or death suffered during the four-year period in question. The narrator-transcribers utilize the transcription process in much the same way as a historian would Ricouer’s historiographic operation. However, they are clearly more interested in exerting their powers of selection and interpretation to represent the personal side of defeat rather than the historical. They choose to transcribe only the testimony
and the documents (or fragments of documents) that contribute to an illusion of verifiability regarding the characters’ particular misfortunes, as opposed to using the transcripts to demonstrate the notional historical accuracy of their narrative product.

While it is possible to interpret each piece individually, the presence of transcribers and transcripts, among other paratextual, plot, and thematic ties, further encourages a reading of the text as a whole. The first such indication is the index, which enumerates the titles of each section: “Primera derrota: 1939, o ‘Si el corazón pensara dejaría de latir’”; “Segunda derrota: 1940, o ‘Manuscrito encontrado en el olvido’”; “Tercera derrota: 1941, o ‘El idioma de los muertos’”; and “Cuarta derrota: 1942, o ‘Los girasoles ciegos.’” Repeating the term “derrota” and ordering the stories chronologically by year invites a linear reading, one that understands each section to be a part of a larger experience of defeat. Likewise, the footnote on the title page of the second story refers to the section as a “capítulo,” which enables us to view the four pieces as smaller constituents of a narrative whole (37). At the same time, Albizu carefully observes that the use of the conjunction “o” in each section title specifies distinct options that are exclusive or inclusive depending on the reader’s interpretation (73). This means that “or” offers an alternative: either the reader may acknowledge the central thematic unity of the four stories, the sentiment of defeat set in the pseudo-historical context (and discourse) of the early years of the postwar, or s/he may recognize the individuality of the micronarratives, which highlights the power of literary discourse to inspire “una búsqueda interior de la verdad” (Albizu 74). Should the reader opt for the latter understanding, it becomes clear that the more poetic titles do not emphasize historical or political defeats but rather personal or literary concepts. The titles thus relate to the bidirectional process of transcription found throughout the novel: it moves outward,
toward an external, more objective, collective search for “truth” and understanding, and also inward, toward the personal, private experience of defeat.

Transcription also connects certain characters that (re)appear or are referenced in more than one derrota. For example, Captain Alegría, the Nationalist soldier of “Primera derrota” who surrenders to the Republicans the very day Franco’s army takes Madrid, resurfaces two years later in the cell of Juan Senra, the protagonist of “Tercera derrota.” The transcripts included in “Primera derrota” evince a philosophy of defeat that culminates in “Tercera derrota” with the narration of Alegría’s prison suicide; likewise they establish a language of defeat in the “Primera derrota” transcripts that is recycled in the transcripts of Juan’s letters in “Tercera derrota.” Similarly, we learn that the young woman who dies giving birth at the start of “Segunda derrota” is Elena, the runaway daughter of Ricardo and Elena Mazo, the protagonists of “Cuarta derrota.” Her death and relation to the Mazo family are documented within the transcribed diary of “Segunda derrota” and later recast through the rotating transcripts of “Cuarta derrota.” Such ties show that there are different stories, perspectives, and versions of the time period and defeats in question, which may be understood separately or connected to a more hegemonic representation of the past.

In “Primera derrota,” transcription reconstructs the protagonist’s philosophy and language of surrender, thus contributing to what we may understand to be a broader literature of defeat. The story, in brief, consists of Captain Alegría’s poorly timed surrender to the Republican troops mere hours before Franco’s soldiers take Madrid. Standing before “un enemigo incrédulo,” Alegría limits himself to yelling over and over again, “Soy un rendido” (15). When the Nationalist troops arrive and discover Alegría in prison, they accuse him of being a traitor and he is sentenced to execution by firing squad. Not unlike the character of Rafael Sánchez
Mazas in *Soldados de Salamina*, Alegría somehow survives the execution and, with the help of some unlikely friends in the forest, he manages to recover from the wounds inflicted by the gunfire. He then embarks on a long hard journey home to Somosierra, but upon his arrival Alegría once again runs into a band of Nationalist troops. The chapter concludes uncertainly with Alegría approaching the soldiers and declaring “Soy de los vuestros” (36).

The story of Alegría’s defeat has been modified by the first-person narrator-transcribers, who, unlike the implicit narrator-transcriber of *La voz dormida*, repeatedly interject with comments about what they do and do not know, how they have come to possess such information, and why they have chosen to include or omit certain details. Although Alegría’s surrender and near execution are unique, the narrator-transcribers never explicitly state why they have chosen to reconstruct his story. They make clear that they have gone through the motions of a historiographic operation, collecting testimonies and documents related to Alegría’s surrender and near-execution, but their narrative product is not historical in nature. Instead, it demonstrates greater concern for Alegría’s personal story, for an internal search for truth, than it does for history or any kind of historical truth.

The narrator-transcribers’ involvement is apparent from the opening line of the story, “Ahora sabemos que el capitán Alegría eligió su propia muerte a ciegos” (13). The subject pronoun “nosotros” reappears throughout the chapter, reinforcing the narrators’ acquaintance with Alegría’s story as well as their role in the narrative reconstruction. For Albizu, the use of “nosotros” demonstrates “el plural de modestia propio del discurso científico” (74). Understood this way, the quasi-scientific discourse should legitimize the narrator-transcribers’ intervention, lending a sense of objective credibility to their actions. However, the notion of a collective subject reflecting on and engaging in the reconstruction of the past is connected to the
overarching theme of recovering historical memory common to all of the works included in my study. In this way, “nosotros” becomes a red flag that signals the impossibility of pure objectivity: just as LaCapra explains, the “we” responding to the traumatic event in question must have worked out an acceptable response that accounts for the collective subject’s emotional implication. Thus, the combination of first-person plural and present tense enforces the narrator-transcribers presence and highlights their decision to assume control over the narrative reconstruction. At the same time, the presence and agency of the narrator-transcribers marks Alegría’s absence and lack of authority with respect to the textual product. The narrator-transcribers call attention to the fact that they have the last word, privileging their superior position: “Ahora sabemos que él, sin saberlo, había rechazado de antemano ambas opciones” (14).

The types of verbs paired with the narrating subject “we” evince a concern for what is verifiable as well as what is plausible. Phrases such as “sabemos que,” “nos consta que,” “podemos afirmar,” “la verdad es que,” and “sabiendo ahora lo que sabemos” indicate that part of the narrative is based on supposedly conclusive, authentic facts, whereas expressions such as “suponemos que,” “presuponer,” “apenas sabemos,” and “tenemos sólo datos imprecisos” contradict the credibility of the narrated account. The different types of verbs are significant because they stress the way in which the narrator-transcribers combine fact and plausible assumption. As Orsini-Saillet observes, the story is located in the realm of verisimilitude rather than reality; it is the result of investigation, reconstruction, and interpretation (8). One understands that the final narrated product not only depends on what probably occurred and what actually occurred, but also what the narrator-transcribers decided to include.
What the narrator-transcribers decided to include largely consists of partial transcripts of personal and official documents. Unlike La voz dormida, the transcripts found in “Primera derrota” are all notional and they all always appear in pieces. The transcripts include portions taken from four letters—one to Alegría’s girlfriend Inés, one to his professor of Natural Law, one to his parents in Huérmececs, and one to Francisco Franco—as well as notes found in his pocket after his death, a memo he wrote while stationed in the administration division, the entry of his death in the military registry, and the minutes from his summary trial. Each piece of the aforementioned documents is transcribed in italics and, with the exception of the minutes from the trial and the death entry, is authored by Alegría.

The transcripts are representative of the types of documents one might include in a historical account, yet they are in no way used to prove the veracity of any particular (or remotely historical) event. Instead, the transcripts are incorporated to express Alegría’s philosophy of defeat. This, in turn, allows us to ignore Alegría’s Nationalist involvement and helps us to identify with him as an individual. This is evident from the first transcribed fragment of Alegría’s letter to Inés, in which he reflects upon the hopelessness of the war and the need to choose between “ganar una guerra o conquistar un cementerio” (13). The sense of defeat is repeated in the letter to his law professor, where he states “ya sólo se habla la lengua de la espada o el idioma de la herida” (14). On the night he surrenders to the Republican forces, Alegría likewise concludes his final supply report: “<<Hecho el recuento de existencias, todo cuadra cabalmente con los estadillos adjuntos, todo menos el oficial que esto firma, que se considera a sí mismo un círculo cuadrado, un espíritu metálico, que, abominando de nuestro enemigo, no quiere sentirse responsable de su derrota. Firmado Carlos Alegría, Capitán de Intendencia>>” (21-22). The letters and reports are highly philosophical and literary in nature.
The letters—or at least the fragments copied in the chapter—do not express common themes of nostalgia, missing loved ones, or future plans, but rather Alegría’s thoughts on war, death, and defeat. Likewise the supply report has less to do with supplies than it does with Alegría’s decision to abandon his post and surrender himself as a “rendido.” The specific references to “conquering a cemetery,” “the language of the sword and the idiom of the wound,” and feeling like a “squared circle” possess an extremely poetic quality. The blend of introspection and poetry in the transcripts shows that Alegría was trying to articulate a personal philosophy and language of defeat, an internal search for truth as opposed to an external presentation of true events.

The narrators remark “Así lo reflejó en sus cartas,” suggesting that the transcribed letter is a reflection, or perhaps a transparent representation of Alegría’s experience of defeat. They likewise view their own narrative reconstruction to be a straightforward reproduction: “Así lo contó y así lo reflejamos” (33). The narrators thus propose that the transcripts form part of a chain that is traceable to the innermost, internal, personal “truth” of Alegría’s defeat. Yet if, given our understanding of transcription, the notion of a “clear reflection” proves problematic, the narrators go on to claim that the documents written by Alegría “son los únicos hechos ciertos, lo demás es verdad” (25). The distinction is perplexing, if not ironic. What would be the difference between true (i.e. “certain”) facts and truth?

One possible answer is that the narrators understand there to be different types of truth, both historical and literary, which combine to form the purportedly true story of Alegría’s surrender, execution, survival, and recapture. However, the way in which the narrator-transcribers include these particular transcripts in the chapter and make reference to them as the only points of certainty suggests that the significance of the narrative recreation is more personal, literary, and philosophical than historical in nature. The presence of the transcribed fragments in
the narrative, as well as the narrator-transcribers’ documentation of the sources, make the narrative appear more believable, accurate, and “real.” However, the contents of the transcripts, the supposedly “certain facts,” have nothing to do with objective, historical fact: instead they contain an internal, individual truth—a philosophy and a language of defeat.

Like the transcribed documents, the testimonies recorded by the narrator-transcribers inform much of the allegedly verifiable knowledge we have regarding Alegría’s surrender, failed execution, and recapture. At various points throughout the chapter the narrators thank the people who have provided testimony, among them Inés, Alegría’s comrades, a wounded Republican soldier, and also Alegría’s gaunt cellmate and relatives. Unlike Chacón’s list of acknowledgments at the close of La voz dormida, the thanks given to the notional characters in “Primera derrota” highlight the fictional nature of the story. The narrator-transcribers, as if paraphrasing Ricouer, state that they could not have told Alegría’s story without the testimony of the witnesses, yet the transcribed testimony only focuses on the inner workings of Alegría’s defeat. For example, some of the information proportioned by the witnesses affirms the defeated state of mind already demonstrated by the aforementioned transcribed documents: “sabemos por los comentarios a sus compañeros de armas que un cansancio sumergido y el pasar de los muertos le transformó, según sus propias palabras, en un vivo rutinario” (16). Other testimonies include extremely minor, if not entirely unimportant or irrelevant, details: “sabemos que aquel compañero de celda se limitó a pedirle desabridamente un poco de picadura para liar un pitillo y mostrar una indiferencia grosera cuando supo que el recién llegado no fumaba” (20). Lastly, witnesses such as the family members provide a brief biography of Alegría’s life prior to the army, developing Alegría’s backstory and showing that his early life greatly differed from his
demise (20-21). The notional testimony included in the narrative primarily contributes to the representation of Alegría’s personal experience.

Although the narrators insist upon a mimetic portrayal of the transcribed testimonies, emphasizing that they appear in the words of the witnesses and straining to include every detail they possess, at other points in the story they explain that all of the facts “se confunden en una amalgama de informaciones dispersas, de hechos a veces contrastados y a veces fruto de memorias neblinosas contadas por testigos que prefirieron olvidar” (28). The statement recalls Ricouer’s insistence that we have nothing better than testimony to assure ourselves that something did happen in the past, which someone attests to having witnessed in person. At the same time, the transcribed testimony reveals a primary consequence outlined by LaCapra: the unreliable nature of memory and testimony, particularly over time, has in the case of “Primera derrota” resulted in competing, “cloudy,” and even incomplete and (intentionally) forgotten information.

The presence of the testimony in the narrative also brings to mind LaCapra’s notion of testimonial transference and the need for the historian (or in this case, the transcriber) to work out an acceptable subject position and response. To overcome the inherent difficulty of testimony and to complete the story—despite of all the information they do seem capable of affirming—the narrator-transcribers explain that they have chosen to believe and to include specific memories and events “aunque no sean ciertos” (28). Even though the testimony may not be certifiable, the narrator-transcribers’ responses consist of selecting and interpreting said testimony in order to rewrite Alegría’s story with an eye toward rebuilding his private philosophy and experience of defeat.
Understood in this way, the narrator-transcribers clearly privilege fiction, their *privileging* of fiction, and their status as those who *can* privilege certain kinds of discourse over other kinds of discourse. Rather than tell the story with the facts they do have, they constantly reshape it. Justifying their assumption of Alegría’s thought process, they state, “Presuponer lo que piensa el protagonista de nuestra historia es sólo una forma de explicar los hechos que nos consta que ocurrieron” (20). Similarly, the narrators repeat the phrase “debió de” to indicate points at which they have employed deduction and speculation to fill in gaps of knowledge. In large part, such conjectures relate to Alegría’s reactions; for example, the narrators state “debió de producirle cierta satisfacción” (24) and “debió de resultarle insorportable” (30). Such additions transfer emotions that would have gone unregistered, enabling the reader to feel greater empathy for Alegría and they also point at the internal defeat he experiences. In cases where the narrators claim “apenas sabemos,” “no constan más datos,” and “tenemos sólo datos imprecisos,” they also make use of imagination to explain what might have happened and what might have been (29). We see as much through the presence of phrases such as “si tuviéramos que imaginar,” which, although grammatically contrary to fact, is overshadowed by our knowledge that they had to imagine and did (29). Such examples indicate that all the rhetorical devices, including transcription, are at the service of the transcriber’s fictionalization, within an already fictional narrative.

The clearest example of the narrator-transcribers’ status as those who can and do privilege the fictionalization of “real” sources occurs when they unabashedly conclude, “Voluntariamente omitimos la primera arte del acta del juicio sumarísimo . . . en la que se toma filiación al capitán Alegría, se le degrada, se le expulsa del ejército y es calificado, a todos los efectos, de traidor militar en tiempos de guerra” (26). In one way, the elision is significant
because the narrators declare it outright. In another way, the fact that the omission relates to the military degradation and expulsion of Captain Alegría also means that the narrator-transcribers have eliminated the moment in which he is technically defeated in the eyes of the armed forces, classified as a traitor and theoretical loser of the historical battle. The suppressed segment of the transcript substitutes for the act itself, distancing us from the notionally real, historical moment.

Voluntarily omitting part of the transcript shows that the narrator-transcribers are more concerned with their story, their literary reconstruction, of Alegría’s personal defeat than they are with what (supposedly) actually happened. This becomes evident when the narrator-transcribers confusingly declare that the deleted acta is “el documento más real que tenemos de lo realmente ocurrido, la única verdad que refrenda nuestra historia, que, probablemente, tuvo bastante semejanza con lo que estamos contando” (26). The description is perhaps the most complicated of the entire chapter. “El documento más real que tenemos de lo realmente ocurrido” indicates that the document is, qualitatively speaking, the most real document. This suggests that there may be others that are “more” real, but the narrators do not have access to them. Viewed this way, the statement questions both the veracity of the document and the documentation phase of the narrators. “La única verdad que refrenda nuestra historia” proposes that there is more than one truth, since this is the “only” one that endorses their history, their version of what happened. The final piece, “que, probablemente, tuvo bastante semejanza con lo que estamos contando,” is likewise riddled with uncertainty: the narrator-transcribers sound unsure as to whether what they are saying is close enough to the documents and information on which they have based their story. Ultimately, they express more concern over the possibility that their “narración fuera malinterpretada” than they do over the fact that Alegría’s story will be (and is) misrepresented (26).
Controlling, censoring, and completing Alegría’s personal story signals the propagation of disinformation. The apparent contradictions and blatant elisions mentioned throughout the chapter not only question the credibility of the narrator-transcribers, they highlight the narrator-transcribers’ superior interest in internal truth. If, following Albizu, the reader realizes the irony of a pseudo-scientific text littered with inconsistencies and inaccuracies, it should follow that s/he likewise understands that the “truth” of the text paradoxically lies in its fiction (Albizu 77). The transcribers appropriate the research model of the historiographic operation, making it look like a historical, historiographic, and even verifiable account—but they are not foregrounding a historical event. They are using the conventions of history and historiography to depict a personal defeat, to explore the philosophy and language of said defeat, and to represent an internal search for truth. The fact that Alegría’s National troops take the city on the day he surrenders is not just ironic, it is essential to demonstrating that the war of words is ongoing. Just as the regime exalted its own version of “History” over what most would have argued really happened, the narrator-transcribers’ privilege their modified version of Alegria’s defeat over the full story. They possess more information than they share, and they share information in rhetorically strategic ways.

If “Primera derrota” foregrounds the process of the anonymous transcribers, how they researched, wrote about, and ultimately misrepresented Captain Alegría’s story, rather than what “really” happened to the latter, “Segunda derrota” takes such a relationship between transcriber and transcript(s) one step farther. Here the opportunistic narrator-transcriber gradually appropriates the original manuscript, converting himself into the editor and protagonist of another man’s text by means of the transcription process. The chapter begins with the words of said extradiegetic narrator-transcriber, who explains how he came to possess the original
document and why he chose to transcribe it. He states that the text was first found “en 1940 en una braña de los altos de Somiedo” along with the skeletons of an adult and child (39). However, he goes on to claim that some twelve years later he rediscovered the text in the General Archive of the Civil Guard, where it lay forgotten inside a yellow envelope classified as “DD (difunto desconocido)” (39). In one way, the presence of an extra-diegetic narrator capable of documenting the text’s history, including when, how, and where it was found, gives an impression of fact and authenticity; the narrator assumes the role of Ricouer’s model historian or historiographer, determined to record his research and process of representation. In another way, the trope of the found manuscript and the history of the text’s origins set it in the company of works such as Amadís and Don Quijote, alerting the reader to the likelihood of intertextual and literary play. The remainder of the prefatory section confirms as much, specifically when the narrator confesses that he was drawn to the text by the accompanying report, which stated that on the wall of the cabin where the manuscript was found “había una frase que rezaba: <<Infame turb de nocturnas aves>>” (40). If the line from Góngora’s Polifemo serves as another intertextual nod to another literary master, it likewise prefigures the manuscript as a literary artifact that is well-connected to the world of fiction.

Unlike La voz dormida or “Primera derrota,” the bulk of the ensuing narrative consists of the product of the narrator’s transcription process. This product is meant to be a copy of the original, but the reader quickly observes that every transcribed page features the narrator-transcriber’s comments, which are distinguished from the source document via parenthesis and italicized font. Like “Primera derrota,” the presence of the narrator-transcriber marks the absence of the text’s original author; the textual trace of the former’s agency in the transcript we encounter reinforces its distance and difference from the source. The narrative alternates between
the original document and the narrator-transcriber’s remarks and tells of the defeat of a young poet, Eulalio, who attempted to flee to France with his pregnant wife Elena. His diary begins with the literal end of their journey in the cabin near Somiedo: “Elena ha muerto durante el parto. No he sido capaz de mantenerla a este lado de la vida” (40). Surprisingly, the baby survives, but the poet, demonstrating the same sense of defeat as Captain Alegría, cannot bring himself to care for the child. He explains, “Pienso que ella no hubiera querido un hijo derrotado. Yo no quiero un hijo nacido de la huida. Mi hijo no quiere una vida nacida de la muerte” (43). Little by little Eulalio begins to comply with his parental duty, recording his actions and reflections in the diary.

As the reader progresses through the chapter it becomes increasingly evident that the transcriber fails to utilize Eulalio’s diary in the way the latter had intended; even more importantly, the transcriber fails to transcribe the diary correctly. Eulalio’s words clearly express his defeat: he feels guilty and responsible for not having been able to avoid what happened to his family (41). He thus views the diary as his only recourse, “sólo sé escribir y contar cuentos,” and he depends on the notion of a future reader/interlocutor who will share in his guilt and spread his physical and textual remains (41). Yet despite Eulalio’s explicit intentions, the narrator-transcriber takes advantage of the opportunity to transcribe the text in a way that depreciates Eulalio’s guilt and foregrounds his own role. The narrator-transcriber does not experience empathy for Eulalio’s personal losses in the way the narrator-transcribers of La voz dormida and “Primera derrota” do; instead, he censors and manipulates the original to cast himself as protagonist, as editor, and as someone with authority over the source.

This becomes evident through what Orsini-Saillet refers to as the narrator-transcriber’s “genética textual”: he intervenes in Eulalio’s narration as well as his supposed transcript to
comment upon scratched out phrases, the evolution of Eulalio’s handwriting, the general appearance and organization of the pages, and also visual elements such as sketches and smudges (10). At times, such interjections fill in gaps of which the reader would not have been aware. For example, the transcriber mentions “una serie de hojas, nueve, arrancadas al mismo tiempo, porque el perfil rasgado es exactamente igual en todas. Es un corte cuidadoso, no hay desgarros. En la numeración de las páginas que viene a continuación no se han tenido en cuenta las hojas que faltan del cuaderno” (54). Through his description of the torn out pages and interrupted numeration, the transcriber appears dedicated to the goal of providing all the significant details of the original document. However, the illusion of transparency is thwarted by the fact that the diary is transformed: the mystery of the missing pages may pique our curiosity, but calling attention to the absent pages changes the original text and defeats what should be the purpose of transcribing it in the first place. The description betrays the narrator-transcriber’s desire to commandeer the text.

For similar reasons, the narrator-transcriber draws the reader’s attention to the manuscript’s artistic and intertextual elements. He describes several of Eulalio’s drawings: “alrededor de este texto hay un dibujo muy sutil en el que se adivina una estrella fugaz, o la representación infantil de un cometa, que choca violentamente contra una luna menguante que llora” (45). In doing so, the transcriber underlines what is around the text, as opposed to the text itself, thus distracting the reader from Eulalio’s story. At the same time, the transcriber symbolically redirects the reader to his own interventions, which likewise frame Eulalio’s words.

The narrator-transcriber also highlights Eulalio’s efforts both to copy and transcribe images and verses from famous works of art and literature, as if converting Eulalio into a copy of himself. Just as his gradual takeover involves substituting his “transcript” for the original text
and himself for the original author, the narrator-transcriber focuses on moments in which Eulalio similarly attempts to (re)produce texts. For example, the aforementioned description of Eulalio’s drawing, that of the crashing comet and the crying moon, likens Eulalio’s sketch to well-known frames from Georges Méliès’s *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902). The narrator-transcriber thus underscores Eulalio’s recreation of the original, much like his own transcription process. On page eight of the diary, the transcriber similarly interjects, “*Hay varios intentos fallidos de transcribir* [un] poema...*aunque aún son legibles los siguientes versos*” (46). The verses, “re-transcribed” by the manuscript transcriber, correspond to Garcilaso de la Vega’s “Soneto XXV” and thus build upon the intertextual chain established with Góngora’s verses written on the cabin wall—a chain of which the narrator-transcriber now forms part. Interestingly, the legible Garcilaso verses appear correctly in the chapter, meaning that the narrator-transcriber took the liberty of amending Eulalio’s crossed out “*intentos fallidos*” in the transcript. The moment signals a failed effort to transcribe: the narrator-transcriber does not adhere to Eulalio’s mistakes. This, in turn, puts into question the authenticity of the entire transcribed manuscript. Taking the time to include what Eulalio crossed out and considered incorrect (or perhaps irrelevant to his account) indicates the transcriber’s desire and ability to exert authority over the original.

The transcriber’s final comments on the manuscript confirm this desire. Rather than transcribe the last few pages, the transcriber limits himself to recounting the number of times Eulalio repeats the name “Rafael,” as well as the gradual decline of the handwriting. He observes:

*Ya no está escrita con el mismo lápiz, pues es muy probable que se terminara, sino con un tizón apagado o algo parecido. Cuesta leerlo porque, después de escribirlo, el autor pasó la mano por encima como si hubiera intentado borrarlo.*
Creemos, pues, que hemos leído correctamente lo escrito, que transcribimos hechas estas salvedades. «<Infame turba de nocturnas aves>>. (56)

The substitution of Eulalio’s repetition for the narrator-transcriber’s description is significant: it marks the culmination of the latter’s appropriation of the manuscript. If, in the beginning of the transcript, the narrator-transcriber’s interventions were short, sparse, and limited to mentioning minor details, here he ceases to transcribe and completely rewrites the original. The change to first-person plural likewise draws attention to the importance the transcriber places on his involvement with the manuscript: he gets the literal last word. That he attempts to use a quasi-scientific narrative formality is overshadowed by the fact that he superimposes himself on the supposed “copy.” Ending the transcript with what he believes to have read and transcribed correctly (the same Góngora verses from the introductory note that inspired his initial reading of the diary) brings the transcriber’s commandeering full circle. It thus provides concordant closure to the transcriber’s story (that of his experience with the manuscript), but not to Eulalio’s story. The situation is comparable to that of “Primera derrota,” in which the narrator-transcribers voluntarily omit information; however, while they do it for the sake of Alegría and his philosophy of defeat, here the narrator-transcriber does it to claim authority and the “definitive copy.”

The final piece of the chapter consists of a “Nota del Editor,” in which the transcriber reappears as a first-person narrator and protagonist. It is interesting to note the change in terminology: naming himself editor of the diary affords him greater room for subjectivity, authority, and revision with respect to the original text. In the note he claims that in 1954 he went to Caviedes “y afirmó lo que se había dicho en el manuscrito” (57). The investigation confirms the disappearance of a young poet with characteristics similar to Eulalio’s: “tenía una afición
desmedida por la poesía,” “había huido con 16 años, en 1937, a zona republicana para unirse al ejército que perdió la guerra,” “su padre también se llamaba Rafael,” and “tenía fama de loco porque escribía y recitaba poesía” (57). Likewise, the description of Caviedes and of the fate of a local professor named Don Servando coincide with one of the passages from Eulalio’s diary. But said information only verifies part of what was written in the manuscript. The editor does not visit the cabin near Somiedo, nor does he find out about Elena or her family; in fact, he fails to authenticate any piece of the story of Eulalio’s defeat and death. By going to Caviedes the narrator-transcriber only transmits the veracity of the details that relate to Eulalio as a crazy young poet, not as a guilt-ridden, downtrodden failure.

In one way, the editor’s note illuminates the way in which transcription changes the very nature of documents, enabling entirely different interpretations over time. If, for Eulalio, the diary was intended as a partial confession and a partial transmission of his guilt and defeat, for the transcriber the diary becomes an opportunity to create a new edition, one that privileges the creative, literary components over the historical. Although he, too, likely lived during the war, the transcriber seems uninterested in its aftermath. He acts out a desire to be in the text and to participate in literature—not in history. Thus, in a related way, the note demonstrates how transcription changes the transcribing subject over time. Although he claims to set out with a desire to reproduce the document he found in the General Archives, the narrator-transcriber concludes with a desire to rewrite the story with himself as editor and protagonist. In the context of the consequences of the Spanish Civil War, “Segunda derrota” demonstrates an inherent risk of recovering historical memory: certain people charged with the task may be more interested in rewriting what happened with themselves at the center.
The marked presence of the first-person narrator-transcriber-editor of “Segunda derrota” contrasts with the seeming lack of transcriber in “Tercera derrota.” Like *La voz dormida*, the transcriber is implied by the presence of the transcripts, but s/he is ultimately absent from the narrative. Instead, a third-person omniscient narrator presents the story of Juan Senra, a former Republican medic who is undergoing a military interrogation to determine his sentencing. The chapter moves between Juan’s interrogation in the military tribunal and his time in the prison cell block, and transcription is limited to copies of letter drafts composed by Juan to his brother Luis.

As in “Primera derrota,” the transcripts in “Tercera derrota” appear as fragments. We never know how the pieces of Juan’s letters have come to form part of the narration, which establishes a type of distance that is absent from the first two chapters. Such distance is magnified by the use of italicized font, which visually separates the transcripts from the rest of the narrative. The first transcript to appear in the narrative is comprised of the remnants of the first letter Juan tried to send to Luis, which was censored almost entirely and returned to Juan as undeliverable. Minus “Querido hermano Luis” and “acuérdate siempre de mí, tu hermano Juan,” all of the sentences were “tajantemente tachadas” (70). Leaving out the censored parts communicates the grim nature of Juan’s situation and allows the reader to experience the oppression and lack of humanity more directly. That which is not transcribed remains removed, accessible only indirectly through the narrator’s confusion over the deletion of harmless details such as the cold and the precarious health of the inmates, which he attributes to the complete lack of room for “lo humano” (70). The transcripts serve as evidence of textual defeat: censorship indicates Juan’s loss of authority over his letter.

The subsequent portions of another letter that Juan drafts in prison center on his advice to Luis as well as his attempts to interpret a dream in which everyone speaks “un idioma extraño”
that Juan later understands to be the language of the dead (84). In this way, the transcripts, like those of “Primera derrota,” attempt to express a language of defeat. They represent Juan’s personal hell in the prison and the effects of confinement on the inner workings of his subconscious and imagination. In another way, the transcripts signal Juan’s temporary survival: he repeats that as long as he is able to write “es que estoy vivo” (80). As with the first and second chapters, here again the transcriber demonstrates an interest in characters who write. Composing the letter serves as proof of life, but for the reader the transcripts foreshadow Juan’s impending death. In the last transcript Juan morbidly declares, “Aún estoy vivo, pero cuando recibas esta carta me habrán fusilado” (99).

If what is transcribed serves as evidence of textual defeat and later physical defeat, what is not transcribed serves as a form of deception. This is made clear through Juan’s testimony to the military tribunal, which is presented in the form of direct and free indirect speech. Unlike La voz dormida or the earlier derrotas, here we have the narrative representation of the moment in which testimony is given, yet the opportunity to include the courtroom copy is not taken. One reason for the absence of transcribed testimony is that what Juan says during the tribunal is entirely false: he lies, pretending to know the son of the colonel presiding over the interrogation, and in so doing, “sin saberlo, salvó momentáneamente su vida” (61). By continuing to bear false witness against Colonel Eymar’s son Miguel, feigning that the latter was an honorable man and not the cowardly thief he really was, Juan postpones his execution. Much like Scheherazade, the success of Juan’s lies grants him “una noche más. Y otra noche más. Y otra noche más” (97). The colonel and his wife are deceived by Juan’s false testimony, as if they need to believe (à la Ricouer) that they have nothing better than testimony to prove something did happen in the past that someone attests to having witnessed. However, we as readers recognize the trouble of
equating testimony with event: we know that Juan’s “memory” is actually imagination and that what he says does not represent in any way what actually happened. We are not fooled by what is not transcribed; instead, we value the internal truth of the transcribed letters.

The second way in which transcription serves as deception relates to the curious reappearance of Captain Alegría, the protagonist of “Primera derrota,” who turns up in the same jail as Juan. Alegría’s presence demonstrates how contrast is crucial to understanding the use of transcription in both “Primera derrota” and “Tercera derrota.” The passage of time is marked on Alegría’s face by “una gran cicatriz en la frente que desperdigaba su pelo en dos mitades,” which means the wound from Alegría’s failed execution has had time to heal since the reconstructed time of “Primera derrota” (87). Alegría’s appearance in Juan’s cell block challenges the formal and narrative boundaries between the first and third chapters, suggesting that all of the defeated individuals form part of a more global narrative. Yet if Alegría’s presence brings the two characters together on a narrative level, it establishes distance on a more structural level: the first-person plural narrator-transcribers who actively reconstructed Alegría’s story are gone, and they are replaced by the distant third-person omniscient narrator of “Tercera derrota.” Whereas the former chose to conclude the story of Alegría’s defeat with his recapture, merely alluding to his later death, the latter limits himself to a simple back story and then briefly accounts for the moment in which Alegría removes a gun from a guard and commits suicide. The moment, necessary to provide closure for the experience of personal defeat that is painstakingly outlined throughout the transcripts of “Primera derrota,” is deceptive because it lacks any such documentation. In fact, the only arguable “transcript” is the narrator’s quotation of an ominous observation Alegría offers to Juan just before Alegría takes his own life: “Tú y yo vivimos de prestado. Tenemos que hacer algo para no deberle nada a nadie” (89). His words, copied into the
narrative like Juan’s transcribed letter fragments, offer a piece of personal truth that stands in contrast to Juan’s ongoing false testimony. It suggests that personal “truth” is the only thing really worth transcribing and, thus, remembering.

Alegría’s advice, in conjunction with the execution of one of Juan’s only friends, prompts Juan to say goodbye to Luis in the final letter and to tell the truth during his next (and final) round of interrogation at the military tribunal. Appearing before the colonel and his wife, Juan claims, “Es que he recordado,” and confesses that everything he has told them was a lie: “Lo hice para salvarme, pero ya no quiero vivir si eso le produce a usted alguna satisfacción” (100). Yet even after deciding to “come clean,” the truth that Juan is set to reveal consists of new lies aimed at defaming Miguel Eymar and hurting his parents. The chapter ends with Juan contemplating “qué arcanos criterios habría aplicado el alférez capellán para censurar la carta que había escrito a su hermano” and the fact that “jamás sería enviada” (101). In this way, “Tercera derrota” concludes with a reference to the transcript, to the personal story of Juan’s defeat that will remain a secret to all except the reader.

Unlike the previous chapters, “Cuarta derrota” consists of three interwoven versions of the same story, as told by three individual narrators. Transcription seems to have taken place a priori, since someone must have been responsible for organizing and copying down the alternating transcripts and narration. Yet although s/he is implicit, said transcriber is ultimately absent from the chapter, much like the transcribers of “Tercera derrota” and La voz dormida. “Cuarta derrota” thus exists as a narrative product that is composed of two transcripts of first-person source documents and one third-person omniscient account. The three narrative threads rotate in long pieces, combining to tell the story of the events leading up to and culminating in the suicide of Ricardo Mazo. In short, the story explains that Mazo is a former literature
professor who lives in hiding within his family’s apartment. While his wife Elena and son Lorenzo keep up appearances outside of the home, Ricardo conceals himself in a secret space behind an armoire. Unfortunately, Lorenzo draws the attention of a deacon at his school, who is ironically named Salvador. Salvador takes an unusual interest in Lorenzo, begins following him, and gradually becomes infatuated with Elena. Finally, Salvador attempts to sexually assault Elena in the Mazos’ apartment, but Ricardo reveals himself, saves his wife, and commits suicide by jumping out of a window.

The two first-person transcripts are authored by Salvador and Lorenzo, respectively, and they differ in appearance, mode, and time of writing. Salvador’s document consists of a letter of confession directed to one of his ecclesiastic superiors and it appears to have been composed shortly after Ricardo’s suicide. The event still weighs heavily on his mind and he has decided to resign from the church: “Trataré de vivir cristianamente fuera del sacerdocio . . . viviré como uno más entre los girasoles ciegos” (155, italics in original). Salvador writes the letter hoping for one of two outcomes: either he will be absolved by the recipient or the recipient will deign to pray for him (105). He also expresses a desire to write about what happened so that he may come to know the “truth:” “porque la verdad se me escapa” (131). He does not explicitly state why he feels the need for absolution, although he suggests that he felt bewitched and confused by his emotions toward Elena. His letter of confession thus represents another internal search for truth, which is exteriorized through the act of writing and of transcribing the original into the chapter.

Whereas the use of italicized font, as in the case of the other derrotas, signals Salvador’s handiwork, Lorenzo’s transcript is represented in bold font. His document consists of what appears to be a personal diary, which is addressed to no one in particular. Lorenzo reflects upon the events of his childhood from an adult perspective, which suggests that his document was
composed at a much later time than Salvador’s. The passage of time is further marked by the uncertainty with which he recalls the past: “**Probablemente los hechos ocurrieron como los otros cuentan, pero yo los reconozco sólo como un paisaje donde viven mis recuerdos**” (106). If Salvador’s letter acts as a search for absolution, Lorenzo’s diary serves as a sort of personal therapy for the guilt he still feels as an adult—similar to Eulalio’s therapeutic use of the diary in “Segunda derrota.” Lorenzo regrets not alerting his parents to Salvador’s persecution of him and maintains the conviction that if he hadn’t been “a child,” “**nada de lo que ocurrió habría sucedido**” (112). Unlike Salvador, Lorenzo feels responsible for his part in what took place; his transcript thus represents a working-through of personal truth that he feels he has kept bottled up and secret for too long.

Neither transcript offers a clear vision of the actual events; instead they provide a window into the feelings of personal defeat experienced by both Salvador and Lorenzo. Although the transcripts exist as two separate eyewitness accounts, the autobiographical versions of the story behind Ricardo’s suicide prove insufficient individually and even together. The reader depends on the third-person omniscient narration to get the “full” story behind Ricardo’s death. For example, the third-person account is the only one to connect the Mazo family to Eulalio and Elena from the second chapter. The narrator explains that “su hija mayor, Elena, había escapado con un poeta adolescente al terminar la guerra y nunca volvieron a tener noticias de ella . . . . Preñada de ocho meses, su hija huyó de Madrid . . . siguiendo a un aprendiz de poeta que se transfiguraba recitando a Garcilaso” (114-15). In one way, the narrator confirms details from Eulalio’s story, such as the Garcilaso verses, the timing of their escape, and Elena’s advanced stage of pregnancy. In another way, the narrator reshapes the reader’s understanding of the story by providing the missing motive to Elena and Eulalio’s secret departure: “El muchacho había
publicado unos poemas . . . y temió ser ajusticiados por ello” (115). Eulalio’s fear of persecution, as opposed to actual persecution, justifies his feelings of guilt and responsibility for the deaths of his wife and child. The mention of Garcilaso also picks up the literary and intertextual interest of “Segunda derrota,” reintroducing the importance of fiction in the supposedly real story of the Girasoles protagonists. The narrator fills in blanks from three separate transcripts of autobiographical texts, demonstrating that the most readably recognizable format—that of a traditional literary narrative—is the only one able to bring together disperse accounts and to provide the most cohesive, comprehensive version.

The idea that fiction provides the most plausible, transparent representation of the events of “Cuarta derrota” is evident when one compares the three versions of a specific scene: the moment when Ricardo leaves his hiding place and saves Elena. Lorenzo remembers, “vi cómo mi padre, desangelado e impotente, se abalanzaba sobre el hermano Salvador . . . Mi padre había salido del armario” (152). Meanwhile, Salvador expresses considerable disdain through/in his recollection of the the same act: “Y bastó un gramo de mi ira para que saliera de su escondite el instigador del mal, el abyecto organizador de ese entramado de mentiras. El marido de Elena estaba oculto en esa casa” (152). The third and final description both confirms and builds upon the two first person accounts:

Gritando algo ininteligible, Ricardo se abalanzó sobre el hermano Salvador, que logró incorporarse llevándole sobre sus espaldas sin comprender lo que estaba ocurriendo . . . Durante unos instantes prevaleció el estupor sobre la ira y el religioso vestido de seglar se volvió hacia Lorenzo, que estaba inmóvil en la puerta, y le preguntó:

--¿Quién es ese hombre?
--Es mi padre, hijo de puta—contestó el niño, y corrió junto a Elena, que acababa de romper en un llanto agónico. (153)

The omniscient description repeats words used in the previous versions, such as “abalanzarse” and “ira,” as if confirming the first-person accounts. However, the description also provides a perspective that is capable of including dialogue, action, and emotions that go unmentioned in the first-person transcripts. The same happens at the climax of the chapter. Salvador states that Ricardo committed suicide “para cargar sobre mi conciencia la perdición eterna de su alma, para arrebatarme la gloria de haber hecho justicia” (154). Lorenzo instead recalls impossibilities: hearing his father say goodbye despite his mother affirming “que se arrojó al vacío sin pronunciar una palabra,” as well as seeing his father fall “aunque esto es imposible porque mi estatura no me permitía entonces asomarme a esa ventana” (154-55). The third-person narrator, on the other hand, describes the actions and reactions of even the neighbors, concluding with Ricardo’s hesitation and final “sonrisa triste como las que suelen usarse en las despedidas tristes” (155).

The rotating transcripts of Salvador and Lorenzo’s accounts demonstrate the potential tension and inconsistencies between competing witness testimonies, memories, and fictional narrative. Likewise, they exemplify how different people may adopt different subject positions when responding to the same past events: Lorenzo experiences guilt and responsibility, Salvador feels in need of absolution and prayer, and the third-person narrator seems disaffected. But what is most interesting about the presence of the two first-person narrative transcripts is that although they seem as though they should be the most credible, direct, transparent representations of the time leading up to Ricardo’s suicide, they fail to achieve the cohesion and comprehension of the non-transcribed account. The purely notional recreation of the (albeit notional) past excels
beyond the transcripts, suggesting that the fiction may appear more “real” than the very testimony and transcripts on which “history” is based. This concept resonates with the distortive effect of transcription seen throughout the novel.

In this chapter, we have seen how transcription succeeds in coercing and legitimizing the reader’s empathy toward the perceived victims of the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship. In *La voz dormida*, the narrator-transcriber’s decision to offset personal and official documents and to intervene in the transcribed fragments creates a non-neutral representation of the protagonists’ experiences inside and outside of Ventas. This choice betrays the narrator-transcriber’s sympathy for the defeated and prescribes a similar position for the reader. In *Los girasoles ciegos*, the four derrotas combine to form a more complete vision of the defeated during the immediate postwar era, and the use of transcription as a rhetorical figure shows that the success of said vision is highly dependent on the successful fictionalization of the presumed “history.” The transcribers aim to recover personal experiences, philosophies, and languages of defeat as opposed to anything remotely historical or entirely credible. By doing as much, they create a verisimilar, plausible representation of the past that conditions our sympathy for the victims.

Both *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* advocate a politically ethical cause. The problem, however, is that they do so at the cost of violating the ethics of fiction. The use of transcription within both works coerces the reader’s alignment with the fictional protagonists and with their real, historical counterparts. Transcription conflates aesthetic with politics, and it confuses sources of historical knowledge with fictional narrative. The way in which the fictional transcribers represent the transcripts also presents an ethical challenge, since they corrupt, censor, and control the source documents and testimony much like the Franco regime corrupted,
censored, and controlled the narrative of the war and its aftermath. That readers seek out stories of the victims in two texts modeled after the rhetorical strategies of the victors is not only paradoxical, it is telling of our time. Transcription shows that although we cannot return to the past or fully recover the historical “truth” of the defeated, we must carefully reconstruct such experiences within works of fiction. Transcription identifies the need to address the rules for representing the recovery of historical memory, which may shape the future courses of fiction and history.
CHAPTER 2

PUTTING THE PRESENT BEFORE THE PAST: TRANSCRIPTION AND
THE LUCRATIVE POSSIBILITIES OF RECOVERING HISTORICAL
MEMORY IN SOLDADOS DE SALAMINA AND LA MITAD DEL ALMA

In Chapter One, I explained how transcription functions as a form of coercion in La voz
dormida and Los girasoles ciegos: it legitimizes the reader’s empathy toward those considered to
be the defeated of the Spanish Civil War and of Franco’s dictatorship by seemingly drawing him
or her closer to the sources of their experience. Yet although the anonymous transcriber-narrators
use transcription in an effort to represent the recovery of the historical memory of the vencidos,
they reproduce some of the same rhetorical strategies prevalent during the Franco dictatorship. In
these efforts, aesthetics and politics, however noble or fine, trump any pretense of truth, despite
being deployed in a package that mimics the conventions of history. The line between what is
recovered and what is invented becomes contested; it is plausibility in the guise of precision.

Javier Cercas’s novel Soldados de Salamina (2001) and Carme Riera’s novel La mitad
del alma (2004), like La voz dormida and Los girasoles ciegos, contest conventional distinctions
between the functions of fiction and historiography. Cercas' and Riera's narrators claim to be
interested in recovering information about peculiar events set at the end of the Spanish Civil War
and during the Franco dictatorship so as to present the implied reading public with a particular
truth. However, the transcripts found within both narratives demonstrate that the narrators are
more interested in the lucrative possibilities of recovering and writing about historical memory.
Since 1939, many authors of fiction and nonfiction have, without question, written about the
Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship disinterestedly and sometimes at great cost to themselves. Others unintentionally find themselves associated with the renewed interest in history, memory, and the preservation of the past while researching other topics. What is unique about Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma, however, is that they satirize the recovery of historical memory by portraying the narrators, those who “recover” (or try to and fail), as self-serving and motivated by fame rather than truth. Transcription provides the narrators with a means for telling their own stories instead of the stories of their alleged subjects.

In Soldados de Salamina the narrator, who quickly proves unreliable, sets out with the purpose of discovering the “true” identity of a Republican soldier who allegedly saved the life of Rafael Sánchez Mazas, a writer and a founding member of the Spanish Falange. Meanwhile, the first-person narrator-protagonist of La mitad del alma, referred to only as “C,” wishes to learn the truth about her mother’s supposed connection to anti-Franco spies as well as her mother’s potential affair with Albert Camus. Both narrators engage in a lengthy research procedure akin to Paul Ricouer’s historiographic process, which they recount within the narrative. They maintain the reader’s interest in the mysterious cases largely by means of transcripts, which seem to serve as clues. However, neither narrator succeeds in discovering the “truth”: the narrator of Soldados de Salamina cannot validate the identity of the Republican soldier and C never verifies her mother’s activities during the dictatorship. Rather than resolve questions about these particular past episodes, the transcripts represent the fictional narrator-protagonists’ desire for recognition and prestige.

If in La voz dormida and in the four derrotas of Los girasoles ciegos the transcripts formed part of an effort to demonstrate the plight of the defeated and to align the reader with them, in Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma the treatment of the transcripts refocuses
the reader’s attention on the “plight” of the fictional narrators. Transcription provides the narrators with a means for telling their own stories—the stories of how they acquire information so as to legitimize their positions within particular literary fields—and not the stories of those who actually participated in the war and the postwar. In other words, transcription aids in resolving the personal and professional difficulties of the narrator-protagonists and results in the successful completion of what we understand to be a lucrative commodity: a book about recovering historical memory. Transcription thus signals another dimension of the critique of the recovery of historical memory as represented in contemporary Peninsular fiction: attempting to uncover the past often reveals the self-interested motives of the present.

Chapter Two will be informed by the work of Pierre Bourdieu. His characterization of fields of cultural production as fields of struggle and competition is particularly useful to my analysis of Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma because the fictional narrators are authors that are acutely concerned with their status among and recognition from other writers, critics, and readers. Bourdieu’s explanation of an agent’s habitus, or disposition towards a particular field, likewise relates to my examination of the two narrators’ motivations; namely, their desire for fame, popularity, and wealth. Transcription illuminates how the fictional narrator-protagonists use their textual production to advance their position within their fictional fields.

1. Bourdieu: The Field of Cultural Production

Bourdieu most fully develops his concept of the field in the title chapter of The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature (1993). His theory of the field stems largely from his belief that agents do not act in a vacuum, but rather in concrete social situations governed by sets of objective social relations (30). Bourdieu explains that a field, at its most
basic level, is a “structured space” and that at any given moment, the structure of the field is determined by the associations between the positions the agents occupy in the field. In this way, the field is a dynamic concept that changes based on changes in the agents’ positions. Bourdieu does not mention transcription, actual or notional. However, each act of transcription in Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma develops the reader’s understanding of the field, agents, and products represented within the novels.

Bourdieu’s concept of the field of cultural production is analogous to an athletic playing field: it consists of multiple “players,” each with different experiences, abilities, and talents, all of whom strategically compete to dominate the field and to legitimize themselves as the symbolic winners of the game. Bourdieu explains that each would-be player, or “agent,” possesses a distinct habitus, a “feel for the game” or a “practical sense” (sens pratique) that inclines said agent to act and to react in specific situations in a certain manner (62-63). He goes on to identify an agent’s habitus as a system of dispositions that simultaneously shape and are shaped by the field. Understanding this way, dispositions connect to my discussion of the narrators’ personal motivations: Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma depict the narrators who are as much products of the age of recovering of historical memory as they are producers of works catering to members of the field interested in recovering historical memory.

Because the field depends on the relationships between agents, Bourdieu describes it as a “field of struggles” (34). Each position in the field is recognized and defined thanks to the other positions and to the system of connections and contrasts among them. The network is not stable, but rather a system in constant flux, the primary unifier of which is conflict itself: “the network of objective relations between positions subtends and orients the strategies which the occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to define or improve their positions (i.e.
their position-takings), strategies which depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations” (Bourdieu 34). Bourdieu’s observations are correct in the case of Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma, which represent fictional fields of struggle: throughout the course of the novels we witness the efforts of the fictional narrator-protagonists to define and to improve their positions, vis-à-vis their position-takings and strategies, with respect to the other agents occupying the field. However, in these two particular novels, the struggle is tied to fame and fortune. The representation of the fictional field is a means of satirizing the recovery of historical memory.

In literary fields, competition often concerns the authority inherent in recognition, consecration, and prestige. Bourdieu defines this type of attention and response as “symbolic capital” and explains that it is founded on knowledge (connaissance) and recognition (reconnaissance) by the various members of the group (38). Symbolic capital provides a source of symbolic power, which translates into authority, legitimacy, and the ability to establish dominant criteria within the field. The struggle for symbolic capital and symbolic power perpetuates a vicious cycle: those who have a legitimate voice are those who have been able to establish, in one way or another, that said voice is legitimate.

In Bourdieu’s view, one can never ignore the balance of forces between agents, not least among them critics and members of the reading public. Commenting specifically on the role of critics within the literary field, Bourdieu contends:

Every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it . . . and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. All critics declare not only their judgment of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in a struggle
for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art. (36)

There is, as Bourdieu claims, an interest even in disinterestedness. His observation reiterates the significance of the personal motivations of all members of a given field, which, recast in the frame of Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma, involves the lucrative potential of involving one’s self in a popular, sought-after field.

For the purposes of my study, it is necessary to stress that Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production will be applied to the fictional fields represented within the novels. Because Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma are highly self-reflexive works of fiction, and because the fictional narrators bear a striking resemblance to the actual authors, it is tempting to conflate their identities and dispatch with the boundaries between the real and the fictional. But this is precisely what makes both novels so interesting: they draw the reader into the verisimilar fictional representation and then deftly satirize it, redirecting the reader’s critical gaze toward the actual recovery of historical memory taking place in contemporary Spain.

2. Soldados de Salamina

Javier Cercas is the author of numerous short stories, novels, chronicles, articles, essays, and translations. However, Soldados de Salamina (2001) is unarguably his most successful work to date and has won Cercas several prestigious international awards. The popularity of Soldados de Salamina has also led to an equally triumphant film adaptation, which was directed by David Trueba and appeared in theaters in 2003.

Current scholarship on Soldados de Salamina is diverse; however, there are certain identifiable trends in the critical analyses of the novel. One such trend includes the work of Ana
Luengo, who concludes that “la única intención es la construcción de una historia amena y de unos héroes puros que puedan server como monumento conmemorativo . . . sin ninguna relectura política crítica” (270). Other scholars, such as Robert Richmond Ellis, similarly praise the work for creating a hero “whose actions recover a seemingly derailed history and set it once again on its proper course,” thus participating in the realization of a better world (Ellis 527). In the article “Soldados de Salamina: Indagaciones sobre un héroe moderno,” Carlos Yushimoto del Valle likewise commends the invention of “un héroe moderno . . . que decide actuar motivado por sus propias convicciones y no condicionado en cambio por un grupo colectivo” (3). For Robert C. Spires, Cercas belongs in a privileged place among an ethical group of Spanish authors who, Spires believes, counterbalance the nihilism of the Generación X writers like José Ángel Mañas and Ray Loriga. Spires, along with Idoya Puig, also considers the importance of the self-reflexive elements of the text, but whereas Puig traces the relationship of said elements to Cervantes, Spires considers the figure of the author-narrator to be integrated into the text: “la imagen reflejada puede ser considerada como una metáfora de como cualquier narrador es visión, distorsionada poco o mucho, de su autor. No es el autor mismo . . . sino una representación lingüística y así espectral de la persona de carne y hueso” (“Una historia” 83).

Samuel Amago similarly deals with the narrative self-consciousness of the text, explaining how the narrator works “to come to terms with the complexities of historiography and approach a new understanding of the larger importance of narrative to the human experience” (144). The last group of scholars, among them Alexis Grohmann, José V. Saval, and David F. Richter, examines the process (and effectiveness) of blending history and memory. Whereas Grohmann criticizes the novel for its “intencionada elaboración de una trama y manipulación de la verdad,” (318) Richter explains that in blurring the traditional boundaries between story and history, the novel
affirms the fragmented representation of history and calls for a reconsideration of the historical reading of the Spanish Civil War and its heroes (285).

Perhaps most relevant to my argument, Ellis declares the success of texts like *Soldados de Salamina* demonstrates that “the Spanish past is itself a most lucrative commodity” (516). He goes on to state that *Soldados de Salamina* may be read as a meta-narrative that aims not merely to grasp the truth (here of Sánchez Mazas and his miraculous escape) but to interrogate the very process through which these texts are produced. By following the transcripts that Cercas-narrator includes throughout the narrative the reader sees that the specific “Spanish past” recreated within the novel leads to Cercas-narrator’s successful acquisition of symbolic capital and to his established position within the fictional literary field. Cercas-narrator achieves the desired recognition, celebrity, and authority he seeks, and he does so at the expense of the true story he claims that he wishes to discover. Understood this way, *Soldados de Salamina* offers a harsh critique of the mixed motives behind the renewed wave of interest in recovering historical memory. The novel uses transcription to expose the narrator-protagonist’s “present” self-interest, which takes precedence over his alleged interest in the past.

The plot of *Soldados de Salamina* essentially follows the first-person narrator’s investigation into the story of how Rafael Sánchez Mazas survived a Republican firing squad and subsequently escaped into the surrounding forest. Here it bears stating that the plot strongly coincides with the real Cercas’s interest in and investigation of historical events, which makes the information regarding Sánchez Mazas and the actions of the narrator that are represented within the novel highly verisimilar. Curiously, however, the narrator remains anonymous until well into the third and final part of the novel. Although we assume it is a fictional, literary avatar of Cercas, and although many scholars have taken to referring to the narrator simply as “Cercas,”
the narrator is not identified as a fictional “Javier Cercas” until close to the end of the novel. Over the course of the fictional investigation, the narrator comes into contact with survivors, witnesses, and firsthand sources related to Sánchez Mazas’s story, in addition to a number of acclaimed writers, all of whom curiously advance the narrative in one way or another. The action of the novel takes place on multiple levels: Sánchez Mazas’s escape and the aftermath, which are situated at the close of the Spanish Civil War; the personal past of the narrator, which concerns his evolving status as an author in the late 1990s; and the fictional present, the 21st century, where the narrator indirectly addresses the implied reader and references the construction of his novel, also (and somewhat confusingly) titled Soldados de Salamina.

The narrative is divided into three parts, which combine to form the novel titled Soldados de Salamina to which the narrator refers at the end of the actual metafictional novel that we are reading. The three parts demonstrate the narrator’s journey toward the lucrative goal of recovering information about and representing the story of Sánchez Mazas: the narrator begins as a failed minor writer, attempts to achieve recognition from writing about Sanchez Mazas and transcribing relevant documents and testimony, and legitimizes his voice and authority on the topic through the fictional completion of his novel.

The transcripts that appear throughout the novel range greatly in size, from snippets of correspondence to a full-length news article and to what the narrator refers to as a relato real, a non-fictional biographical account, both of which are penned by the narrator. Often shorter transcripts are found within larger transcripts, which results in layers of reproduced text. The effect of the transcripts is two-fold: they intensify the implied reader’s interest in discovering the secret of how Sánchez Mazas survived the firing squad and, even more significantly, they satirize the narrator’s penchant for fame and fortune. The transcripts do not lead to the resolution
of any mystery; nor do they recreate the story of the verifiable past. Instead, they tell the self-motivated story of the narrator.

Part One is entitled “Los amigos del bosque,” which serves as a reference to the group of Republicans who aided Sánchez Mazas after he escaped the firing squad. However, the reader quickly learns that Part One is really about the fictional narrator, and not los amigos del bosque. In the opening lines, the narrator, who remains anonymous throughout Part One, characterizes his past protagonist-self in keeping with Bourdieu’s quintessential minor writer, one who has already failed admission into a circle of successful contemporary Spanish novelists. The narrator uses the story of Sánchez Mazas as a temporal marker, stating that “fue en el verano de 1994, hace ahora más de seis años, cuando oí hablar por primera vez del fusilamiento de Rafael Sánchez Mazas” (17). Curiously, he delays the transcript of said story and instead lists the three major events of his personal life at that time: “la primera es que mi padre había muerto; la segunda es que mi mujer me había abandonado; la tercera es que yo había abandonado mi carrera de escritor. Miento. La verdad es que, de esas tres cosas, las dos primeras son exactas, exactísimas; no así la tercera” (17). By focusing on his personal life, the narrator situates Sánchez Mazas within his own biography. Lying in the first lines of the novel characterizes the narrator as unreliable; it aligns him with the likes of a pícaro capable of exploiting a social weakness, which here means the reader’s presumed interest in history and memory concerning the war and the postwar period.

Revising the third claim and admitting to lying about having abandoned his career as a writer allow the narrator to elaborate upon his status as a minor writer as well as his distance from any field of seemingly major writers such as Sánchez Mazas. The narrator mentions that he had published a novel in 1989, along with a few short stories that met with “notorious
indifference” (17). Such indifference is magnified by the anonymity of the narrator-protagonist: he literally has not made a name for himself. The narrator similarly explains that he left his post at an unnamed newspaper for which he claimed to work in order to pursue a literary career, which resulted in “cinco años de angustia económica, física y metafísica, tres novelas inacabadas, y una depresión espantosa” (17). The narrator describes how his failure to become a successful novelist at that time led him back to the same newspaper, where his employer relegated him to the lowly culture section, “que es donde se adscribe a la gente a la que no se sabe dónde adscribir” (18). Although he demonstrated an interest, the narrator-protagonist lacked the necessary disposition and skill to succeed. Relative to the field, he was indeed anonymous.

As a minor writer, the narrator unsurprisingly wishes to improve his status. He gets the chance to interview Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, the son of Rafael Sánchez Mazas, as part of a section on featured artists in the newspaper. The narrator explains that at the time of the interview he had not yet heard the story of Sánchez Mazas’s escape and he juxtaposes his career with Ferlosio’s: he must call in favors through a friend of a friend in order to “chat a bit” with Ferlosio, “porque llamar a aquello entrevista sería excesivo” (18). The narrator recalls that Ferlosio “apareció en la terraza del Bistrot envuelto en una nube de amigos, discípulos, admiradores y turiferario,” as if he were a religious guru surrounded by acolytes (18). He also alleges that Ferlosio “se negó en redondo a contestarme una sola de las preguntas que le formulé, alegando que en sus libros había dado las mejores respuestas de que era capaz” (19). The description of Ferlosio, a demigod surrounded by fans whose work speaks for its author, sharpens the contrast between the two. However, the scene acknowledges that the narrator succeeded in making contact with a major writer and in making Ferlosio a minor character in the story of the narrator.
The narrator’s desire for personal gain is illustrated by the fact that he, and not Ferlosio, decides to do something with the story. Ferlosio has the biological connection, the personal motive, and the experienced to represent and to publish the episode in written form, yet it is the outsider, the narrator, who becomes motivated to do the work. The narrator almost appears desperate to become an authority once he hears the story for the first time. He cannot remember who brought up Sánchez Mazas but he insists that he managed to transcribe the entire conversation, replete with Ferlosio’s pauses: “ésa fue la primera vez que oí contar la historia, y así la oí contar” (21).

If this perfect recollection of the Sánchez Mazas story seems suspicious, the narrator’s reference to the popularity of vindicating Falange writers like Sánchez Mazas is even more so. He affirms that at the time of the interview “se puso de moda entre los escritores españoles vindicar a los escritores falangistas . . . vindicar a un escritor falangista era sólo vindicar a un escritor; o más exactamente: era vindicarse a sí mismos como escritores vindicando a un buen escritor” (22). However, the narrator fails to acknowledge the similarity to his own situation: he, too, clearly views Sánchez Mazas as a ticket to vindicating himself as a writer and therefore participates in the “exhumación colectiva” of Sánchez Mazas and his works (22). The narrator displays his growing knowledge of Sánchez Mazas and of the field of authors writing about the historical period in question: he mentions the publication of Sánchez Mazass’s complete works of poetry, an edited volumen of La vida nueva de Petrito de Andía, and a re-edited version of the novel Rosa Krüger (22). Curiously, he does not transcribe any information from the texts to which he refers and instead limits himself to name-dropping the various texts he says that he has read. In doing so, the narrator appears to believe that he is acquiring capital that will lead to greater prestige and legitimacy within his desired field.
In another sly move, the narrator uses his newly acquired knowledge of Sánchez Mazas to write an article for the newspaper and, one supposes, to get recognition for doing so. The narrator explains that the newspaper editor had proposed an article commemorating the death of the poet Antonio Machado, which occurred shortly after Machado fled the Nationalist forces to France at the end of the war. In order to give a new twist to the well-known tale, the narrator decided to interweave Sánchez Mazas’s incredible story, which occurred at around the same time as Machado’s death. The narrator explains, “Entonces me puse a escribir. El resultado fue un artículo titulado ‘Un secreto esencial.’ Como a su modo también es esencial para contar esta historia, lo copio a continuación” (23, emphasis mine). As in *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos*, the transcript of the article lends a degree of verisimilitude, if not authenticity, to the narrator’s story. However, the transcribed article reveals nothing about the “essential secret” promised in the title. In fact, the author of the transcribed article concludes by confessing, “Nunca sabremos quién fue aquel miliciano que salvó la vida de Sánchez Mazas, ni qué es lo que pasó por su mente cuando le miró a los ojos; nunca sabremos qué se dijeron José y Manuel Machado ante las tumbas de su hermano Antonio y de su madre” (26). Why, then, include the transcript? The most plausible answer is that the transcribed article is essential to the narrator’s personal story of development, not to the historical events involving Machado or Sánchez Mazas.

The narrator also strategically transcribes three short fragments of text into the newspaper article. First, he reproduces a part of what he attributes to Antonio Machado’s memoirs: “Esto es final; cualquier día caerá Barcelona. Para los estrategas, para los políticos, para los historiadores, todo está claro: hemos perdido la guerra. Pero humanamente, no estoy tan seguro…Quizás lo hemos ganado” (24). He likewise includes a verse that he claims was found by José Machado
among his brother’s personal effects, “Estos días azules y este sol de la infancia” (24). In the final paragraph of the article, the narrator also transcribes the first three verses of the second stanza of a poem that, he briefly notes, was written by Jaime Gil de Biedma not long after the time of Machado’s death: “De todas las historias de la Historia / sin duda la más triste es la de España, / porque termina mal” (26).

In one way, the Machado and Gil de Biedma transcripts lend a semblance of authenticity to the narrator-protagonist’s transcribed article. Whether they are real or not, the presence of the transcripts within the article makes them appear to be so and the reader may believe that they should possess some clue to the revelation of the eponymous secreto esencial. In another way, the textual copies exhibit what Bourdieu calls a “possession of the code,” which here means the fictional narrator-protagonist’s acquisition of knowledge about two major authors connected to the particular past events in question. The poems link the narrator-protagonist to the literary output of the historical period, whereas the lines from the memoirs demonstrate his familiarity with Machado’s personal viewpoints. By transcribing Machado’s and Gil de Biedma’s texts into his own article back in 1999, the narrator uses them to legitimize his product and, thus, better his position relative to the field.

The narrator’s opinion of the article confirms this desire. He confesses that upon the article’s original publication on February 22nd, 1999, exactly sixty years after the death of Machado in Colliure and sixty years and twenty-one days after the failed execution of Sánchez Mazas in El Collell, his colleagues congratulated him “extensively” and that he was extremely pleased with the result (27). The article thus appears to have been the narrator-protagonist’s first moderately successful “play” towards the success he desires; he emphasizes that he achieved a
small degree of recognition from his colleagues and from other members of the fictional literary world.

Specifically, the narrator transcribes sections from two of the three letters he receives in response to the publication of the article. The first letter is signed by a man named Mateu Recasens, who accuses the narrator-protagonist of “revisionism” and criticizes his citation of Gil de Biedma. The narrator includes the final sentences of Recasens’ attack: “Termina bien para los que ganaron la guerra . . . pero mal para los que la perdimos. Nadie ha tenido ni siquiera el gesto de agradecernos que lucháramos por la libertad” (27). Although the review is negative, it legitimizes the product precisely by recognizing it as something worth responding to. The other letter mentioned by the narrator comes from a historian named Miquel Aguirre, who tells the narrator that Sánchez Mazas was not the only one to survive the firing squad at El Collell. Aguirre refers the narrator to a book written by another survivor, Pascual Aguilar, entitled *Yo fui asesinado por los rojos*. Aguirre says that the book is “casi inencontrable,” yet he offers to loan the narrator his personal copy (27). Interestingly, the narrator does not transcribe the part of the letter concerning Pascual Aguilar, and he opts to copy the conclusion of Aguirre’s letter: “si le interesa, yo tengo un ejemplar a su disposición” (27). As with the first letter, the narrator only reproduces the portions that directly advance his own work and chances for achieving his personal and professional goals.

For the same reason, the narrator contacts Aguirre, the historian with access to Aguilar’s diary, but not Recasens, whose use of first-person plural suggests that he is a living witness of the historical period in question. Within the realm of the novel, the story of Sánchez Mazas—the well-known literary figure and subject of the narrator-protagonist’s desired (fictional) field—will help the narrator gain admission into said field, something that the experience of the “unknown”
surviving Republican Recasens apparently will not accomplish. Perhaps the “essential secret” of the transcribed article and response letters is that they are about the fictional narrator-protagonist and not about Machado, Sánchez Mazas, or any other person involved in the historical events that the narrator claims to represent.

The narrator takes advantage of the recognition he receives from publishing the news article in order to contact certain well-regarded authors. The narrator begins by meeting with Aguirre, and he cannot help but mention that Aguirre recognized him from the cover of one of his books, “que había leído hacía tiempo” (28-29). Aguirre rewards the narrator-protagonist with Aguilar’s diary and suggests that he read the memoirs of Enrique Líster, a Republican who also described the firing squad at El Collell.70 Aguirre also gives the narrator contact information for Andrés Trapiello, a well-regarded contemporary Spanish writer whom Aguirre deems “él único que puede saber más” about Sánchez Mazas and his time in El Collell (34). Aguirre explains that Trapiello is one of the current writers involved in editing and reproducing the works of authors like Sánchez Mazas and that Trapiello maintains a personal relationship with the living members of Sánchez Mazas’s family. Aguirre thus lends Trapiello a high degree of prestige and authority with respect to the Sánchez Mazas mystery.

Upon reading one of the books by Trapiello suggested to him by Aguirre, the narrator observes that Trapiello, too, has told the story of El Collell, “y casi exactamente en los mismos términos en que yo se la había oído contar a Ferlosio, salvo por el hecho que, igual que había hecho yo en mi artículo . . . él tampoco mencionaba a ‘Los amigos del bosque’” (38). Highlighting the coincidence provides the narrator with a reason to call Trapiello, the major writer, and to question Trapiello’s source for the story. In a curious move, the narrator transcribes his phone call to Trapiello within the narrative. The transcript of the phone call offers
no new information with regard to the Sánchez Mazas episode, but rather serves as a textual
trace of the growing relationships between the writers who have taken the time to re-tell the same
tale. Being a part of the field, as Bourdieu might say, means reinforcing the actions of the field
itself.

If the narrator’s use of secondhand sources is suspicious, his treatment of firsthand
witnesses, the living amigos del bosque, and also the diary of Sánchez Mazas is even more so.
The narrator meets Jaume Figueras, the son of one of the amigos del bosque, who brings with
him “una libretita vieja, de tapas de hule ennegrecido, que alguna vez fue verde” (55). Figueras
explains that the manuscript is the original diary that Sánchez Mazas carried with him during the
time he spent with los amigos del bosque; he believes that Sánchez Mazas gave the diary to his
father in memory of their bond. Much like in “Segunda derrota” of Los girasoles ciegos, the
narrator notes the appearance of the book’s interior: “la mayor parte estaba en blanco, pero varias
hojas del principio y el final estaban garabateadas a lápiz, con una letra rápida, no del todo
ilegible, que apenas resaltaba contra el crema sucio y cuadriculado del papel; el primer vistazo
delataba también que varias de sus hojas habían sido arrancadas” (55). The description of the
manuscript lends a degree of verisimilitude to the situation and also builds upon the sense of
intrigue: the reader feels as though Sánchez Mazas’s diary will hold the key to unlocking the
mystery of El Collell.

If the narrator-protagonist’s possession of the diary symbolizes his possession of the
source, the “code” par excellence of the Sánchez Mazas story, the way in which he transcribes
the diary serves as a final blow to any pretense of telling that story. An on-and-off transcript
comes to occupy much of the remainder of Part One, as the narrator alternates between
describing the contents of the diary, transcribing particular sections (in the same font as the rest
of the narrative), and even including what appears to be a facsimile of a page from the original document. The transcript completed by the narrator differs from the apparent photocopy of the source document that he includes, and it does so in several subtle, yet significant, ways. For example, in the transcript, which precedes the presumed photocopy of the original, the narrator writes, “3—Casa bosque . . . Fabricación refugio” (57). In the facsimile, one finds, “3—Día bosque . . . Fabricación del refugio” (59). Although the handwriting in the photocopy is somewhat sloppy, it is nonetheless legible. Thus the differences between the transcript and the apparent photocopy are telling: they do not considerably change the meaning of the document, but they do highlight the narrator’s involvement. The narrator is more concerned with re-writing Sánchez Mazas’s words within the narrative than he is with ensuring an accurate reproduction. The same is seen when the narrator transcribes, “Vigilancia [palabra ilegible] al refugio,” despite the fact that the corresponding section of the supposed photocopy is indecipherable because the handwritten words overlap one another (57-59, italics in original). The narrator’s desire to insert his own forced transcript within the narrative transcends the physical, visual limitations of the photocopy; he composes a false contemporary “copy” of the indeterminable facsimile, which is itself but a copy of the original document. The act is a turning point in the reconstruction of the Sánchez Mazas episode, one that establishes the way in which the narrator will proceed to recreate documents vis-à-vis transcription within the fictional narrative.

However, the narrator-protagonist is not alone in wishing to rewrite and to improve upon the past (with a place for him in it). While describing the diary, the narrator notes that at the end of the booklet, “después de otras hojas arrancadas, escritos con una letra distinta, pero también a lápiz, figuran los nombres de los tres muchachos, de los amigos del bosque: Pedro Figueras Bahí, Joaquín Figueras Bahí, Daniel Angelats Dilmé” (57). In the same handwriting, the original
author purportedly provides a list of two locations, “Casa Pigem de Cornellá (enfrente de la estación)” and “Palol de Rebardit, Casa Borrell, Familia Ferré” (58). Because the signatures of the two Figueras brothers appear immediately after the list of names and locations the narrator presumes that they are responsible for recording the information. If such is the case, the textual trace within the diary indicates their desire to figure into the Sánchez Mazas story and to record their involvement in the episode. The narrator’s decision to transcribe the diary demonstrates his own desire for the brothers’ names to factor into his re-telling. The presence of the names and places thus highlights the way in which each successive “present” seeks to write itself onto the past. It also indicates that the narrator assigns himself to the role of ultimate authority over the process.

The way in which the narrator comments upon an allegedly missing diary page supports such an observation. He transcribes the part of the diary in which Sánchez Mazas begins to recount the events of El Collell, explaining how he, Sánchez Mazas, was taken prisoner, miraculously escaped, and fled to the surrounding forest. However, the narrator then interrupts his transcript of Sánchez Mazas’s account to note that a section is missing. The narrator’s observation of the missing diary page, mid-transcript, is especially curious given the lapse in the chronology of the transcribed information: immediately before the narrator’s interjection (and the supposed missing page), Sánchez Mazas notes that he had just lost his glasses, “con lo cual [se] quedaba medio ciego” (59); right after the “missing page,” in the narrator’s resumed transcript, Sánchez Mazas states that he was hiding in someone’s house “hasta que llegaron las tropas nacionales” (61). The missing page of the diary (and the transcript) is therefore the one containing Sánchez Mazas’s account of his time with los amigos del bosque. The absence of source information affords the narrator an opportunity to provide his own conclusion: “Me
extrañó, no obstante, que uno de los fragmentos arrancados de la libreta fuera precisamente el fragmento de la declaración en el que, según todo parecía indicar, Sánchez Mazas agradecía la ayuda de los hermanos Figueras y de Angelats. Me pregunté quién y para qué había arrancado las . . . hojas del diario” (62). In one way, the narrator’s deduction appears clairvoyant. Nothing in the transcribed text suggests that Sánchez Mazas was about to declare his thanks; rather, the narrator fills in the purported gap based on previous interviews and information. In another way, the use of the first person projects the narrating present onto the missing description of the particular past events, redirecting our attention to the role of the narrator in “solving” the past mystery.

To conclude Part One, the narrator engages in what Paul Ricouer would view to be a historiographic documentation phase: he rereads Sánchez Mazas’s books and articles; visits to libraries, periodicals, and archives; speaks to professors, friends, and friends of friends of Sánchez Mazas; and travels to Madrid, El Collell, and Barcelona. Aguirre further directs the narrator to the Historical Archive, where he says the latter will find a catalogue registering all the names of the prisoners held in the city jail since before the civil war. The narrator proves incapable of locating the entry regarding the father of Jaume Figueras, whose name does not appear to exist in the registry. However, the functionary on duty fortuitously explains that someone “pudo equivocarse y transcribirlo mal” and, sure enough, the entry appears as a typo, an incorrect transcript of the original information: “Piqueras Bahí, Pedro” rather than Figueras Bahí, Pere (66). The functionary’s reaction suggests that such inaccuracies are common to the transcribed entries, but the fact that the narrator mentions this particular mistake and transcribes the flawed transcript within the narrative is compelling. In doing so, the narrator underscores the potential flaws of the very process on which his narrative depends.
In the most important phase of his historiographic research, the narrator (finally) interviews los amigos del bosque: Joaquim Figueras, Maria Ferré, and Daniel Angelats. However, in a disappointing move, the narrator does not transcribe the interviews and instead observes, “las versiones de las tres diferían, pero no eran contradictorias, y en más de un punto se complementaban, así que no resultaba difícil recomponer, a partir de sus testimonios y rellenando a base de lógica y de un poco de imaginación las lagunas que dejaban, el rompecabezas de la aventura de Sánchez Mazas” (71). The notion of reconstructing the testimony, filling in the blanks and using a bit of imagination, tremendously discredits the narrator’s already questionable reliability. Abandoning any pretense of a faithful transcript allows him to author his own version of the events in question. He sacrifices history for his own story: “la entrevista que mantuve con [Daniel Angelats] fue decisiva. Decisiva para mí, quiero decir; o, más exactamente, para este libro” (72, emphasis mine). “This book,” the reader learns, is essentially an idea that the narrator steals from Sánchez Mazas, who promised the amigos he would write a book to commemorate what happened, “en el que aparecerían los amigos, y que iba a llamarle Soldados de Salamina” (73). Co-opting both the title and the premise for himself, the narrator decides that his work will take the form of a relato real: “un relato cosido a la realidad, amasado con hechos y personajes reales, un relato que estaría centrado en el fusilamiento de Sánchez Mazas y en las circunstancias que lo precedieron y lo siguieron” (52).

Part Two is entitled Soldados de Salamina, which suggests that it is the same relato real to which the narrator refers at the end of Part One. The entirety of Part Two may thus be understood as the narrator’s transcript of his own aforementioned relato real. Transcribing the relato within the narrative provides the narrator with a second opportunity to display his textual product(s) and the progress he has made towards becoming a legitimate voice on the events
related to Sánchez Mazas. The transcript of the *relato real* appears to condense much of the research that the narrator claims to have completed in Part One, which implies that he has carried out the documentation, interpretation, and representation phases of Ricouer’s historiographic process within the fictional realm. However, upon closer examination it becomes clear that the *relato* is not as strongly grounded in historical reality as the narrator claims it to be. Instead, the *relato* transcript reveals a dual design: it draws a parallel between Sánchez Mazas and the narrator, which allows the latter to insert his voice into the story of the former and to connect the narrative present to the historical past; it also allows the narrator to cast himself in the role of a critic capable of judging Sánchez Mazas’s literary work.

The narrator not only declares his judgment of Sánchez Mazas’s work within the *relato* but also his claim to the right to judge it. To do so, he analyzes how Sánchez Mazas possessed the necessary *habitus* to evolve into a well-regarded writer and he assesses several of the latter’s literary works. The contents of the *relato* include very few transcripts; rather than reproduce the source texts that he mentions and evaluates, the narrator paraphrases most of the information. Among the limited transcripts present within the *relato* transcript there are a quote that the narrator attributes to one of Sánchez Mazas’s novels and the last of three sonnets that the narrator says Sánchez Mazas wrote as a young man. The transcripts within the *relato* transcript allow the narrator to contrast the wane of Sánchez Mazas to his own rise as a critical authority on Sánchez Mazas. For example, the narrator attributes the aforementioned transcript to Sánchez Mazas’s novel *La vida nueva de Pedrito de Andía*: “Nunca he podido acabar yo nada en este mundo” (139). For the narrator, the quote emphasizes Sánchez Mazas’s decline and defeat, which simultaneously paints him as one of the former *falangistas* in need of figurative exhumation and saving by a contemporary writer such as himself. The narrator thus includes the transcript in the
relato as a reason for vindicating Sánchez Mazas—not unlike the contemporary writers engaged in the “collective exhumation” of Falange writers that the narrator mentions in Part One. He states, “Quizás [Sánchez Mazas] no era otra cosa que un superviviente, y por eso al final de su vida le gustaba imaginarse como un gran señor otoñal y fracasado, como alguien que, pudiendo haber hecho grandes cosas, no había hecho casi nada” (139). By deeming Sánchez Mazas a survivor, a fallen hero, and a victim of the war, the narrator simultaneously marks himself as someone capable of defending Sánchez Mazas.

For a similar reason, the narrator absorbs alleged source documents and testimony within the transcribed relato rather than including the originals. For example, the narrator returns to an Oswald Spengler phrase that José Antonio Primo de Rivera liked to quote, “según la cual a última hora siempre ha sido un peloton de soldados el que ha salvado la civilización,” but he does not represent it as a direct quote or as a fragment copied from elsewhere (86). The narrator also absorbs the story of Pascual Aguilar, mentioning how “nadie puede en ese momento saberlo, pero, de todos los presos varones que integran el convoy, al cabo de una semana sólo Sánchez Mazas, Pascual y Poblador permanecerán con vida” (96). The narrator likewise tells the story of Sánchez Mazas, the amigos del bosque, and the diary without any transcripts of their testimony or copies from Sánchez Mazas’s diary. By limiting himself to paraphrase and to indirect reference when he could have reproduced firsthand sources, the narrator maintains the reader’s focus on his narrative reconstruction. The relato transcript evidences the narrator’s motives: self-promotion.

The final transcript present within the transcript of the relato encourages such misgivings about the narrator’s motives. Toward the end of the relato, the narrator mentions how Daniel Angelats overheard a private conversation between Sánchez Mazas and Pere Figueras, in which
Sánchez Mazas identified the soldier who saved his life. The conversation, reconstructed but not transcribed, mentions how the soldier “siempre estaba sentado en un banco y tarareando algo, canciones de moda y cosas así, y una tarde se levantó del banco y se puso a cantar Suspiros de España” (121). Immediately after the paraphrased conversation, the narrator transcribes the full lyrics to Suspiros de España within the relato real. The presence of the lyrics is suspicious because it is the second time they appear in full within the narrative. In Part One, while waiting for the arrival of Figueras, the narrator claims to hear the famous paso doble for the first time, states that he would not mind learning how to dance to it, and copies the lyrics within the scene (49). Much more than a casual coincidence, the paso doble highlights the narrator’s deliberate enhancement of his connection to the Sánchez Mazas episode.

Unsurprisingly, Part Three then begins with the narrator-protagonist’s evaluation of the relato: “el libro no era malo, sino insuficiente, como un mecanismo completo pero incapaz de desempeñar la función para la que ha sido ideado porque le falta una pieza. Lo malo es que yo no sabía cuál era esa pieza . . . el libro seguía estando cojo” (144). Since the narrator set out to produce “una suerte de biografía de Sánchez Mazas,” his dissatisfaction with the relato is curious: the transcribed relato does present a great deal of biographical information about the figure in question, although not in a convincingly objective manner.

The structural parallels between Part One and Part Three suggest that the missing piece is the narrator, who wishes to appear in the text not only as a critical voice but as a protagonist. In the first such structural parallel, the narrator returns to the same newspaper to resume work. As in Part One, he gets the opportunity to carry out an interview with yet another famous author: this time internationally renowned Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño is purportedly residing in Blanes and agrees to an interview. The narrator describes how the fictionalized Bolaño, like
Aguirre in Part One, surprisingly recognizes the narrator from his two previously published books. Even more importantly, the narrator states that Bolaño specifically calls the narrator and his works by name: “Oye, ¿tú no serás el Javier Cercas de El móvil y El inquilino?” (145). For the first time in the novel, the narrator-protagonist is identified by name, and it is suspiciously significant that Bolaño, an author wielding a tremendous degree of symbolic capital and power, is the one to do so.

As if empowered by the recognition from Bolaño, the narrator puts fiction completely before fact and invents a more crowd-pleasing conclusion to the Sánchez Mazas mystery. The narrator explains that following the successful publication of the interview, Bolaño called to invite him to lunch. Similar to the Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio interview in Part One, the narrator cannot recall how he and Bolaño came to speak of a man named Miralles; nonetheless, he states that “una vez corregidos los pocos datos y fechas que Bolaño había alterado, la historia es ésta” (153). The account, which is not transcribed but instead reconstructed, explains how Bolaño worked for several summers in a campground in Castelldefells, where he met a former Republican soldier named Miralles. According to Bolaño, Miralles took Bolaño into his confidence and recounted his experiences during the Spanish Civil War, experiences that included being present at El Collell; he also states that Miralles would regularly dance the paso doble to “Suspiros de España” with a woman in the park. Although they have little to no “hard” evidence—if anything the two men depend on a dubious number of coincidences—both Bolaño and Cercas-narrator believe that Miralles may be the very soldier who spared Sánchez Mazas.

Bolaño, the fictionalized major writer who not only praises the narrator’s literary output but also encourages him to continue writing, insists that “el inventado es más real que el real” and advises the narrator to make up a fictional ending that will enable him to put the final, absent
flourish on the *relato real*. Thus, abandoning any pretense of authenticity or even verisimilitude via transcription, the narrator apparently heeds Bolaño’s counsel. Obsessed with the notion of Miralles as the would-be hero, the narrator claims that he tracked down the missing Miralles in France, interviewed the other man about the war, and left promising to write a book about his fallen friends. Although the interview with Miralles should be the most important of the novel, the narrator does not provide a transcript of their conversation and instead filters their supposed exchange by way of a narrative reproduction. In a euphoric state, Cercas, as the narrator-protagonist, also overlooks the fact that at no point in the conveniently happy ending that he (re)created had Miralles admitted to being the “hero,” the Republican soldier who allowed Sánchez Mazas to escape. The omission of transcripts produces a more fictional, less historiographic representation. Truth and proof take a backseat to a happier ending with the narrator as the featured protagonist.

In the last scene of the novel the narrator rides the train home from France, sees his reflection in the window, and muses, “Me duplicaba” (205). The self-image appears to symbolize the moment in which the narrator decides to transition from “real life” actor within the realm of fiction to narrator and protagonist of his own (future) novel. Looking at his reflection in the window, he sees his book, “entero y verdadero, mi relato real completo,” and he realizes he has but to write it,“porque estaba en mi cabeza desde el principio” (209). The idea that the book was in his head all along is disconcerting because it implies that the narrator is (and perhaps will) write the version he imagines. In other words, “his” book, the one that will be published, read, and recognized, will be a fictional rendering of his own professional journey toward fame and not the “true” history of the El Collell escape.
As if to confirm as much, the narrator concludes with a parenthetical transcript of the opening lines of the actual novel that we have been reading: “(Fue en el verano de 1994, hace ahora más de seis años, cuando oí hablar por primera vez del fusilamiento de Rafael Sánchez Mazas)” (209). In one way, the reproduced sentence takes advantage of the reader. Re-situated at the start of the novel, we inevitably recall the story we have just completed, only this time with Cercas-narrator in mind. Seeing the transcribed sentence for a second time, now at the end of the novel, the reader knows that the completed book will not tell the story of Rafael Sánchez Mazas’s failed execution but rather of the narrator and his desire for success and recognition.

3. La mitad del alma

Carme Riera is perhaps best known for her novels, although she has authored numerous essays, short stories, scripts for radio and television, and works of literary criticism as well. Her first novel, Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora, was published in 1975 and since that time she has produced nearly a dozen best-selling works of fiction that have been translated into many languages, among them Qüestió d’amor propi (1987) and Cap el cel obert (2000). Currently her most famous work is the historical novel Dins el darrer blau (1994), winner of the Josep Pla Prize, the Joan Crexells Prize, the Lletra d’Or (Golden Letter) Prize, the Ministry of Culture National Prize for Narrative, and the Elio Vittorini Prize from the Syracuse Department of Tourism.

La mitad del alma (2004), originally written and published in Catalan as La meitat de l’ànima (2003), was the winner of the 2003 Sant Jordi Prize and has received a good deal of critical attention, but not nearly as much as either Riera herself or the aforementioned novels. One group of scholars that does focus exclusively on La mitad del alma includes Maryellen
Bieder and Alfredo J. Sosa-Velasco, both of whom examine the paradox of recovering historical memory present in the novel. Specifically, Bieder examines how the novel questions whether it is possible to recover historical memory or to assemble history or an individual subject’s experience into a “coherent narrative” (172). Sosa-Velasco likewise considers how the narrator-protagonist turns to writing to recover the past. However, he goes on to analyze how the novel traverses geographical limits and he shows how a change of topographies allows the reader to reconsider his or her identity and connection to others. A second group of scholars, which includes Emilie Bergmann, Patrick Paul Garlinger, and Kathleen Glenn, addresses the function of letters generally found in Riera’s work and, in doing so, provides a framework that extends to the epistolary features of La mitad del alma. Bergmann and Glenn aver that personal letters and diaries are particularly apt for writing the feminine, whereas Garlinger dissects Riera’s narratives as confessional acts that “privilege self-reflection and introspection” (89). Lastly, full-length books such as Emilie L. Bergmann and Richerd Herr’s edited anthology Mirrors and Echoes: Women’s Writing in 20th Century Spain and Kathryn Everly’s Catalan Women Writers and Artists attempt to situate Riera within a group of women writers that includes Lourdes Ortiz, Mercè Rodoreda, Carmen Martín Gaite, and Dulce Chacón, among others.

Although Bergmann, Glenn, and Garlinger offer insight into Riera’s use of letters, they do not examine the letters present in La mitad del alma as transcripts. Nor do Bieder and Sosa-Velasco analyze the effects of transcribing notional source documents and testimony (those without a real counterpart) and they do not consider the other documents reproduced in the text as part of the literary representation of recovering history and memory. My analysis thus contributes to the growing scholarship on La mitad del alma by approaching the text from a new angle: I demonstrate how the transcribed documents and testimony contest C’s personal
motivations for recovering information about her mother’s activities during the Franco dictatorship.

As with Soldados de Salamina, La mitad del alma follows the narrator-protagonist on a journey toward the revelation of a secret said to have occurred during the end of the Spanish Civil War and the early postwar period. However, unlike the premise of Soldados de Salamina, which is sparked by actual historical events, the premise of La mitad del alma is purely fictional. La mitad del alma, like Soldados, is presented as a work of historiographic metafiction, which traces C’s investigative process and self-consciously constructs the narrative with transcripts of supposedly authentic original documents and testimony. C is represented as a writer who, although she has achieved some commercial success, stands in a position to gain more recognition and prestige by entering the popular field of recovering historical memory.

The plot of La mitad del alma is straightforward: while signing books at the 2001 Día de Libro in Barcelona, C explains that she was approached by a mysterious man who handed her a sealed envelope and said, “Le he traído esto porque sé que le va a interesar” (22). Thinking it held an unedited novel or the poems of a new young writer, C comments that she ignored the folder and threw away the accompanying card that she says contained the man’s contact information. However, months later, she discovered that the envelope enclosed a train ticket, a photograph, and a series of personal letters that C believes were penned by her mother, Cecilia Balaguer. C insists that she transcribes the letters, sometimes in full and sometimes only in fragments, within the self-reflexive narrative because she hopes that in doing so a future reader might be able to explain their coded content. The letters, or at least the segments transcribed by C, suggest that Cecilia was a spy for the Republican resistance movement. Furthermore, they imply that Cecilia had an affair with the famous writer Albert Camus, which may have resulted
in the birth of C. Because the letters lack any information that might confirm the identity of the recipient, C must depend solely on the clues contained within them to structure her investigation. The narrative thus alternates between the transcripts, C’s attempts to interpret the transcripts, and C’s account of her related efforts to learn the truth.

The transcripts found within the narrative largely consist of the aforementioned letters. However, C also transcribes song lyrics, quotes from canonical works of literature, excerpts of Mallorcan folk stories, Catalan sayings, newspaper clippings, book dedications, her mother’s alleged suicide note, and even the epitaph from Walter Benjamin’s grave in Portbou, France. The transcripts follow C’s personal investigation of the mystery: she begins by transcribing the letters that she attributes to her mother, she speaks with her mother’s old friends and her grandfather’s former nurse, and she transcribes some of the original documents they give her. Next, she travels to her family’s home in Mallorca, where she locates and transcribes selected documents found in an old trunk, among them coded spy instructions that she believes were written to her mother. Lastly, C researches Camus and the maquis resistance and partially transcribes some of the documents that she believes might pertain to her discoveries.

Similar to the narrators of *La voz dormida, Los girasoles ciegos,* and *Soldados de Salamina,* at times C interrupts the transcripts to comment upon the appearance and the content of the source documents. The verisimilar nature of the transcripts piques our interest in C’s peculiar case, and in reading them we hope to discover some piece of information that might shed light on her mysterious mother. Yet although the transcripts appear to lead us closer to the supposed family secret, they in fact misdirect our attention from what is really going on. The transcripts connect C to the question of her uncertain parentage, but not to the answer (as she might hope). In fact, the transcripts offer more evidence of C’s infidelity to the original texts and
testimony than they do of Cecilia’s alleged affair. The transcripts reveal C’s motives: to claim ancestry to Camus and to take advantage of the popularity of anti-Franco spy drama to propel herself to fame.

From the outset of the novel, we see that the transcripts reveal C’s concern for her status as a writer. Indeed, much like the narrator in Soldados de Salamina, throughout La mitad del alma C regularly mentions the literary world and her position in it. According to Mirella Servodidio in the introduction to Moveable Margins, Riera always “trains her eye on the world of writers of all stripes and stations” (10). In La mitad del alma, C demonstrates a particular awareness of the fictional world of writers and it comes to form the heart of the narrative; in fact, the exposition takes place during the 2001 Día de Libro in Barcelona. Here C characterizes herself as a legitimate writer with a high degree of recognition and prestige. For example, she details the overwhelming success of her signing and she casually mentions a number of famous authors and agents in the publishing community with whom she supposedly has contact: Quim Monzó and Jaume Cabré were seated next to her at the signing booth; Eduardo Mendoza sat at the same stand before her; and Xavier Gafarot, “entonces jefe de comunicación de Destino,” accompanied her “para correr a un programa de televisión” (23). These characters, at least in name, directly correspond to real-life, well-respected people. By including them, Riera accomplishes verisimilitude; by name-dropping them, C betrays her motives.

C also explains that she did the same book signing in the past and had come to consider the event a bore: “Lo hacía a ruegos de mi editor, que trataba de promocionar mi novela, publicada apenas un mes antes, justo para que los distribuidores pudieran enviarla a los libreros y éstos tuvieran tiempo de desempaquetar los ejemplares” (20). Such detail paints C as quite the
opposite of Cercas-narrator at the start of Soldados de Salamina. Whereas he was a self-proclaimed failed, minor novelist, C views herself to be at the top of her game.

Before C even presents the transcribed letters that will come to form the catalyst for her narrative journey, she takes the time to mention other professional accolades in order to reiterate her symbolic capital. For example, she states that following the 2001 Día de Libro she was invited to Dartmouth, a top-tier Ivy League university, to teach a summer course in literature. The reference indicates that C, unlike the young Cercas-narrator, has obtained international esteem, as well as the recognition and the symbolic power to set the course of her career. She also describes how, upon returning to Spain from Dartmouth, a “young” minor writer, Alberto Tugues, sought her critical affirmation: “me había enviado unos poemas . . . y me preguntaba si había tiempo de leerlos” (26). The request plants C firmly in the role of a respected critic, capable of judging the value of another author’s work and, thus, affirming the status of contemporary literature and writers.

Since C is already what Bourdieu would consider to be a major author, one established within a particular, fictional field, her journey is not that of evolving from minor to major writer like Cercas-narrator. However, like Cercas-narrator, C utilizes transcripts to feign an interest in a past secret in order to tell her own personal story. Specifically, she demonstrates a desire to represent the recovery of historical memory as a means of reinvigorating her career. Put in Bourdieu’s terms, C already possesses particular experience, ability, and talent, which she intends to use strategically in order to compete for legitimacy within the newer, more popular field.

She explicitly outlines certain differences between her current self-reflexive text and the books she has written in the past. Perhaps most importantly, C appeals to the implied reader as a
potential accomplice: “en ninguno de mis libros me había dirigido de manera tan directa al público, ni nunca había sentido la necesidad de ir al encuentro de alguien para pedirle que me leyera, como me veo forzada a hacer ahora” (16). If petitioning the implied reader in such a way is uncharacteristic of her previous oeuvre we may understand her ploy to be endemic to the representation of recovering history and memory, as presented in the novel. In other words, she views the reader-accomplice to be an effective “play” within the fictional literary field responsible for representing the recovery of historical memory.

Another apparently new strategy for C, which she believes might be used effectively to accrue capital and establish authority within the field, is to transform the transcripts, which represent that which is personal and private, into a public and published narrative. Having unsuccessfully dedicated two full years “a buscar el rastro dejado por una mujer llamada Cecilia Balaguer,” she despair:

no me queda otro remedio que utilizar este libro para llamar la atención sobre el caso de Cecilia Balaguer, que es también mi caso. Para conseguir saber cuánto hay de verdad en la historia que voy a contarle, para que usted me ayude a descubrirla, no tengo más opción que hacer público lo que hasta ahora siempre había considerado privado. (15)

Such a claim highlights an integral feature of C’s new field: if in the past she invented purely fictional stories, now she must lay bare “real,” personal, family history and memories by way of transcription. She insists that she will not alter any of the information because she believes that “emplear nombres ficticios, esconder unos hechos, escamotear otros u ofrecer datos falsos no tendría ningún sentido” (15). In order to learn the truth of her mother’s past, C must tell the truth
about her own personal life as well. The transcripts are thus intended to demonstrate her desire to share all of the names, facts, and other information at her disposal.

Her new game plan has profound implications. In one way, the idea of committing to the truth, despite its intensely personal nature, lends a sense of vulnerability and elevated purpose to her investigation and narrative. Yet C’s apparent weakness is a ruse, one that distracts the reader from her complete authority over the narrative representation. She does not unwillingly expose herself or her family history; instead, she actively includes transcripts of personal documents and testimony to increase the intrigue of her narrative for public and critical exposure. In another way, the notion of directly appealing to the implied reader allows him or her to feel as though s/he plays a part in and contributes to the resolution of a compelling case. Since C’s particular mystery promises the reward of recovering a missing piece of history and memory set during the dictatorship, it involves the implied reader in a particularly engaging situation. Here again, the transcripts serve as decoys for the underlying purpose: the implied reader will not use them to crack the case of Cecilia Balaguer, but instead will provide C with symbolic capital and promote her entrance into her desired literary field.

Clearly, C is not just interested in the discovery of truth; her awareness of the text, its construction, its dependence on transcripts, and its completion demonstrate as much. For example, she argues:

> el hecho de que este libro se publique significa que ya no me queda más recurso que acudir al público, que depende de las aportaciones que puedan ofrecerme los lectores para completar esta historia . . . el próximo 23 de abril seré yo la que insista ante el editor en la necesidad de aprovechar todas las posibilidades de firmar en la mayoría de librerías de la ciudad, las más concurridas, e, incluso, de
C has an eye toward the attention and the recognition that publishing the text will bring her. Her goal is not just to complete the book, but to publish it and to distribute it to the many readers eager to digest that particularly type of story.

In order to solidify her connection, C must transform herself into an authority, so she employs several subtle, yet noticeable strategies when dealing with the transcribed information. First, she glosses content found in the source text, transcribing what appear to be fragments of the purportedly full-length letters. This is evident beginning with the first transcript present in the narrative, which she incorporates prior to explaining the encounter with the mystery man at the Día de Libro and her receipt of the enigmatic envelope. The original words of C’s mother are transcribed in italics, whereas C’s interruption appears in the same regular font as the rest of the narrative: “Amor mío—escribió—, estoy en Portbou” (11, italics in original). The change in font, much like in La voz dormida and Los girasoles ciegos, marks the temporal distance between the source document and C’s copy. Furthermore, it calls attention to C’s role as editor-transcriber, since the short reproduction forms part of the longer, original text that she mentioned. She does not include the entire text; instead, she narrates how the letter contains little information regarding Cecilia’s reasons for visiting Portbou and that it is limited to a description of the hour, the weather, and her attire. From the outset of the narrative, then, C establishes a precedent that contradicts her claims of full disclosure to the reader. She uses transcription to craft a specific vision of the past and to influence how and what the implied reader will consume.

C not only reconstructs and edits information found within the letters, she also reorders the entire set of documents so that they befit her narrative. When she finally turns her attention
(and the narrative) to the mysterious envelope, she starts by describing its contents: “Las cartas, nueve completas más dos incompletas—sólo una hoja—, todas sin sobre, estaban ordenadas cronológicamente y numeradas a lápiz, no sé si por la persona que hubo de recibirlas o por alguien ajeno a quien habían ido a parar” (27). Curiously, C does not transcribe the letters in chronological order, despite the fact that she takes the time to note that they were ordered sequentially in the envelope, but rather jumps between the late 1940s and the late 1950s and focuses on the sections that most closely connect to her dubious inception. Nor does she come to transcribe all eleven letters found in the envelope. C, much like the unknown person responsible for ordering and numbering the letters in the envelope, reorganizes and reconstructs the transcripts of the documents as she sees fit and, in doing so, frames the representation of the events. Much like Cercas-narrator, C’s goal is to frame herself as the protagonist.

She also uses her proximity to the case to establish her authority over the information she chooses to transcribe. Specifically, she makes constant reference to her familiarity with the handwriting of the letters that she transcribes. Upon opening the envelope, she declares, “la letra me fue enseguida familiar . . . la impecable caligrafía inglesa de mi madre” (27). Since the letters lack any kind of identifying information—addresses, names, etc.—the reader must trust C’s determination that the handwriting pertains to her deceased mother. Understood this way, her connection to the reader is predicated upon the information she provides to him or her and the way in which she does so. Although she stresses her dependency on the reader’s involvement, the first transcript signals the reader’s dependency on the illusion of C’s honesty and interpretation. Like the situation present within Soldados de Salamina, the reader cannot discover the secret of the past without the frame of the narrative present, which here means C’s personal story.
Because the information contained within Cecilia’s letters is personal and indeterminable, C looks for ways to increase the letters’ value through transcription. In fact, some of the strategies she uses are similar to the manipulative techniques found in La voz dormida. This first occurs when she transcribes a complete two-page letter into the narrative. In it, Cecilia describes how in 1941 she went to visit her exiled father in France and was detained by Nazi officials. According to the letter Cecilia’s father was forced to choose between his two daughters; at the threat of losing Cecilia, he told the guards to take Anna, the older daughter, who was then sent to a concentration camp (32). C does not interrupt the transcript to comment upon the contents, but immediately following the reproduction she remarks that the story differs from an oral account of the same situation as told to her by relatives. According to C’s aunt and cousin, “Anna había ido a parar a un campo de concentración porque su escondrijo había sido descubierto por la SS el día que registraron la casa para llevarse el abuelo” (34). Since the SS were unable to locate Cecilia’s hiding place, she was not captured either. The contrast between the contents of the transcribed letter and the paraphrased testimony is significant because it highlights the fact that there are very different versions of what happened. Furthermore, the disparity between how C represents each version, transcribing the complete letter while paraphrasing the oral testimony, underscores how the person responsible for sorting through historical information and memory likewise holds the power of characterizing such information. By transcribing the letter in full, C gives more weight to her mother’s written word than to the account told to her by family members. Similar to La voz dormida, the presence of the copied letter manipulates the reader’s alignment with and empathy toward C and the plight of her mother. At the same time, by including the paraphrased testimony, C incorporates a version of the events that directly include her as a character. She imposes her own story on that of her mother.
C utilizes the same transcribed letter to draw a connection between the alleged encounter and a scene from a famous work of Holocaust literature. She states, “Al leer de nuevo la carta de mi madre para transcribirla me he dado cuenta de que coincide, en parte, con el inicio de una película . . . La decisión de Sophie” (37). Since the novel Sophie’s Choice was not published until 1979, and the film adaptation was not released until 1982, it is improbable that C’s mother could have plagiarized the scene some thirty years prior. Yet if the coincidence is peculiar, her choice to highlight the coincidence is even more so. Establishing a connection between her family history and a fictional work based on Holocaust history, a connection that might have gone unnoticed by the reader, raises certain questions about why C chooses to turn the reader’s eye in such a direction. Is C’s story fiction, too? Is she alluding to the weight of Holocaust literature, history, and memory to make her personal story seem more important? Or is she establishing a false link to a well-known work that involves history and memory in order to legitimize her own narrative foray into a field dedicated to recovering historical memory?

Paradoxically, another way that C increases the capital of the letters and establishes authority is by posing more questions than answers. In other words, she transcribes incomplete and unknowable information from the letters so that she may then fill in the gaps and create. For example, the transcribed fragment of a letter said to be dated November 14th of 1957 indirectly mentions a prize or recognition that was recently awarded to the addressee. C infers that the letter is incomplete because it lacks a proper heading and because the page is numbered “2”; in failing to reproduce the entire document she forces the reader to fall in line with such a determination. C transcribes the section of the letter that makes reference to her, or so she believes: “te has dignado contestar a mi telegrama y me has dicho que te hace ilusión conocer a la niña y verme de nuevo” (42, italics in original). Yet despite her hopeful interpretation, out of
context the contents of the transcript confirm nothing about Cecilia’s alleged secret: the letter could refer to any prize and to any girl and anything could have been written on the presumably absent first page. Again, the handwriting is the only confirmation that C has, for which reason she continues to stress the appearance of the original text: “El papel de esa carta es diferente al de las otras, aunque también de color azul, su textura es más fina, más endeble y eso permite que destaque todavía más la caligrafía zancuda de mi madre” (43). And again, her insistence on her familiarity with her mother’s alleged handwriting paints C as the only possible authority on the letter.

Because the letter transcript cannot stand on its own, C fills in the gaps of her mother’s mysterious past by transcribing sayings that she recalls from her childhood. She reproduces the quotes in the same font and style as the letter transcripts, which lends them an equal degree of visual verisimilitude. For example, following the November 14th, 1957 letter, and still lacking any hard evidence that her mother actually had an affair, C begins to recall and to transcribe certain Catalan expressions that she claims to have heard. On one such occasion she allegedly caught her father complaining to their cook about how Cecilia would be away for long periods of time, waiting for “allò que no se sap quan es pot presentar” [Eso que no se sabe cuándo se puede presentar] (47, italics in original). When C asked the cook what her mother was waiting for, the cook purportedly replied with a Calatan saying: “Una cosa que no és cosa i que tot el món es troba” [Una cosa que no es cosa y que todo el mundo se encuentra] (47, italics in original). By including the transcribed (and recalled) refrán, C builds upon the strained relationship between her parents; she uses the cook’s saying as a coded reference to the affair in which her mother was supposedly involved.
In similar fashion, C transcribes part of a letter composed in French, in which Cecilia exclaims that she is ready to leave everything behind, to sacrifice her family, and to start over, “mais toujours avec toi” [pero siempre contigo] (49, italics in original). By placing the transcripts in such an order—first the letter about meeting an unidentified little girl, then the cook’s Catalan sayings, and lastly the letter in French—C sponsors speculation about Cecilia’s infidelity. Combined with the other “clues” found in the other transcripts, the reader continues to construct an image of the unknown addressee, a famous, French-speaking man, and to believe in C’s connection to him.

The way in which C repeatedly transcribes the sections of the letters that dramatize her dubious parentage suggests that intensifying that which is unknowable is valued by the implied reading public and critics. One of the earliest letters, dated in 1950, alludes directly to Cecilia’s pregnancy: “Amor mío: mi hora se acerca y aún sigo pendiente de tu decisión. Estoy a punto de enloquecer. Ya sé que tú no querías que las cosas llegaran hasta donde han llegado, que soy yo la única culpable . . . ¿Podrá reprochármelo el hijo que espero? Me lo reprochará si no te conoce, si no conoce a su padre, de eso puedes estar seguro” (50). The transcript, like those before it, does not confirm the identity of the unborn baby’s father, nor does it pinpoint C as the child in question. In fact, C herself admits that she does not know what to make of it: “Como usted puede imaginarse, antes de llegar hasta aquí, antes de transcribir este párrafo, lo he leído infinitas veces tratando de interpretarlo, palabra por palabra, o casi letra por letra” (50).

Her deliberate redirection to the unknowable goes so far as to ignore useful information about the real nature of the postwar period present within the transcripts. In other words, in her ambitious quest to recover information proving that her mother was an anti-Franco spy and mistress to Camus, C overlooks opportunities to recover and represent interesting moments in
history and in memory. Several of the transcribed letters offer descriptions of postwar Barcelona, but she appears uninterested in dealing with such details. For example, she transcribes a paragraph from a letter written in December 1949, which captures the cold and unwelcoming environment of the city:

\[Hace un frío terrible, ese frío húmedo que penetra en los huesos . . . Barcelona, que tanto me gustaba antes de la Guerra, es una ciudad enlutada y llena de socavones. Las marcas de metralla en las paredes, agujeros por los que se cuelan los fantasmas del miedo, me recuerdan el terror de la guerra. Las restricciones eléctricas empeoran más aún las cosas ahora que es invierno. Miro hacia el cielo esperanzada, quién sabe si esas nubes vendrán de Francia, me digo, pero el cielo es de color ceniza, opaco, bajo, angustiante. París es otra cosa. París eres tú. (57)\]

The passage provides a firsthand perspective of the period in question and captures, with elegant insight and specificity, the very mood of postwar Barcelona. However, C’s concern for the transcribed segment is whether it means that she was conceived in Paris. The transcript thus betrays her disinterest in and infidelity to the source material rather than her mother’s infidelity to C’s father. The transcript demonstrates how C’s interpretation hinges upon her desire to be the featured protagonist of the story.

The same occurs when C speaks with her mother’s old friends, Rosa Montalbán and Esther Brugada: she disregards their descriptions of her mother because they are not what she expects, or wants, to hear. When she runs out of letters written by her mother, she contacts Rosa, who gives her a letter from Cecilia. C transcribes the short text in full: “Querida Rosa: cuando las rosas se marchiten tendrás el jarrón para poner otras. Me gusta regalar flores pero me
gusta más todavía regalarlas en jarrones. Es como si le diera posibilidades a otras flores.

“Llénalo pronto otra vez” (73). Rosa also explains that Cecilia was friendly with Baeza Alegría, the then civil governor, who was the presumed lover of Carmen de Lirio, a popular singer at the time. Rosa shares one of de Lirio’s songs with C because for Rosa it exemplifies the reality of the postwar: “Es belleza con delirio / es guapa con lozanía / se alimenta de Alegría / y es tan pura como el lirio. / Ella es tan buena persona / que de muchos es querida / justo es que paguen su vida / las gentes de Barcelona” (74). Despite the moral rigidity of the Franco regime, what happened behind closed doors was very different: “Mientras no trascendiera, mientras no se divulgara, todo estaba permitido” (74). Rosa insists that Cecilia was a warm, morally upright person, but C cannot accept this firsthand version of her mother. Although C interviews Rosa in the hopes that the latter will shed light on Cecilia’s life, C disregards Rosa’s explanation and abruptly asks whether her father might not really be her father. Rosa again flatly denies any such possibility: “¡Qué disparate!, (sic) ¡qué absurdo! —me cortó con contundencia—. ¡Si eres exacta a tu padre! Clavada, como dos gotas de agua. No hagas ni caso. Cecilia fue siempre fiel a su marido” (76). Although she says that she believes Rosa’s sincerity, she nonetheless continues her investigations.

Following the interviews with her mother’s friends, C tracks down Madeleine, her grandfather’s nurse during his exile in France, because she hopes Madeleine might provide her with documents or testimony that she may then include in the story. Madeleine, like the others, refuses to believe that Cecilia had a lover or that C is the child of anyone other than Cecilia’s husband. However, Madeleine does explain that Cecilia died in Avignon and not in Paris as C had thought. C researches the regional papers from the first week of January 1960 and learns that Albert Camus died on the fourth—the same day her mother was killed in a hit-and-run accident.
In a distinct yet related form of transcription, C translates the article from French: “Tal como informamos ayer a nuestros lectores, la mujer que fue atropellada sobre las nueve de la noche del día 4 en la calle de la République, esquina con Joseph Vernet, por una camioneta cuyo chófer se dio a la fuga, resultó ser Celia Ballester, de nacionalidad española” (100). The transcript goes on to explain that the driver, Juan Pérez, was also Spanish, that witnesses testified that C’s mother jumped in front of the truck, and that the driver fled for fear of being indicted and deported back to Spain, where he was wanted for fighting as a maqui. C concludes by transcribing a correction found in the same paper on the 7th, “Se trata de Cecilia Balaguer y no de Celia Ballester,” and adds that the correction also made reference to a suicide note found in Cecilia’s jacket pocket (100). Since this is some of the most convincing information reproduced within the narrative, it is unusual that C does not provide a transcript of the original French text along with a parenthetical translation as she had done previously with the letters written in French by her mother. Although she insists “Traduzco literalmente,” she nonetheless changes the original words by changing the language in which they were written (100). She here assumes more control over the original documents and the transcripts than she did toward the start of the narrative.

C’s actions up to this point are strikingly similar to those of Cercas-narrator in Soldados de Salamina, which confirms certain patterns common to the usage of transcription of both narrator-protagonists. First, C uses the letters she believes were written by her mother to accumulate cultural and symbolic capital, just as Cercas-narrator literally and figuratively uses the Sánchez Mazas diary. Second, C bluntly contradicts the validity of her mother’s friends’ memories just as Cercas-narrator largely ignores the firsthand testimony of the amigos del bosque. Finally, C chooses to abandon the pretense of a purely historical, factual narrative and to
invent what she views to be the appropriate ending to her story. Just like Cercas-narrator chooses Miralles to serve as the missing piece and ending to the Sánchez Mazas escape, C decides to prove that Camus was the anonymous addressee and her biological father.

The rest of the transcripts present within the narrative are included as part of C’s hopeful attempt to connect herself to Camus. C goes to Mallorca to search through her family’s old files, which have been boxed up at their former residence in Fornalutx. The trunks are replete with works of literature, spy directives, detective agency reports, and even the diary of C’s grandfather from his time in exile. Yet despite the incredible amount of information germane to the historical period and to the personal, family events in question, C transcribes only those documents that support her claim to Camus. For example, C mentions that in one of the trunks she finds piles of books authored by a wide variety of writers. However, she focuses her attention (and that of the reader) on Camus: “Pero Camus se llevaba la palma. Conté doce ejemplares. Parecían muy usados, quizá habían sido comprados de segunda mano. Abrí uno, al azar. Era L’Étranger. En la primera página se leía, sin firma, una dedicatoria: “A la meva petita Cecília” (150). Within the trunks of texts C also finds the suicide note supposed to have been written by Cecilia, “No hay más que un problema verdaderamente serio: el suicidio” (163). C explains that the handwriting does not belong to her mother, nor is the phrase an exact copy of the original line from Camus’s Le Mythe de Sisyphe, which she then transcribes: “No hay más que un problema filosóficamente serio: el suicidio” (164).

To solidify her connection to Camus, C also begins to research the author and to meet with veteran maquis. She learns that Camus had diverse contacts with people from Catalunya and that he formed part of the “comité honor del Instituto Catalán de Arte y Cultura,” which proves little but suggests more, in keeping with C’s narrative thus far (175). C also transcribes
several verses by Maragall that Camus once translated from Catalan to French: “Si le monde est déjà si beau, Seigneur, quand on le contemple / De cet oeil où vous avez mis votre paix [...] Mais alors, que serait la vie? / L’ombre seulement du temps qui passé” [Si el mundo es ya tan bello, Señor, cuando se le contempla / con esos ojos donde habéis puesto la paz [...] Pero entonces, ¿qué será la vida? / Tan sólo la sombra del tiempo que pasa] (175-76). For C, the transcribed verses prove Camus’s familiarity with Catalan, which indicates that he could have penned the dedication and the transcribed letters that were written to her mother in said language. She similarly infers that the important prize to which her mother alluded in one of the letters was none other than the Nobel Prize for Literature, which was given to Camus on October 16th in 1957. By extension, the transcribed verses seem to prove that Camus might be C’s father, which connects her to a major author and allows her to situate herself back at the center of the narrative.

The documents C chooses not to transcribe are equally telling. Among the same files, she uncovers a manuscript written by her grandfather during his exile in France. Despite the intimate, firsthand nature of the diary, she limits her transcription to an epigraph copied from a text she attributes to the Catalan writer known as Gaziel. She also finds sundry bills and receipts for high-value art pieces, all of which suggest that Cecilia was involved in trafficking antiques to help raise money for the resistance movement in France, but she does not copy any of this information within the narrative. Likewise, she discovers reports from a detective agency that confirm that C’s dad was investigating Cecilia, but she leaves them out of her text. Most significantly, she discovers twenty-three letters addressed to Cecilia in Paris, which she believes are spy messages for her mother. Yet rather than transcribe the alleged spy letters to Cecilia (as she did with the letters written by Cecilia to her presumed lover), C limits herself to describing them: “Todos tenían la particularidad de que comenzaban sin encabezamiento. Estaban escritas
con diferentes máquinas y no llevaban fecha. Su tono era directo, conminatorio, expeditivo y neutro. En ninguna se le preguntaba por nada personal, ni siquiera por su salud, excepto en una, en que se la felicitaba por haber cumplido con gran acierto una misión” (160). After insisting that she would not leave out any details so that the reader would have all the information she has, C’s omission of transcripts is significant and highly suspicious. Tracing the pattern of transcripts she has included and excluded thus far, it becomes clear that she omits the coded spy letters because they do not have anything to do with her. She is not concerned with her mother’s political activities during the dictatorship, she is concerned with her mother’s personal affairs, which she believes are related to her, to her potential connection to Camus, and to the successful reception of her book.

Having exhausted all possible leads, C returns to her initial plea to the implied reader. She reiterates that the transcribed correspondence to and from her mother was limited to her mother’s first name or initial and she admits that she is unsure how “Luis G.”, the man who delivered the envelope to her at the 2003 Día de Libro, made a connection between the addressee and herself. She also restates her claim: “aunque deseo saber cómo se enteró de nuestro parentesco no es eso lo que más me interesa. Lo que trato de indagar con todas mis fuerzas es si mi madre fue un agente doble, por qué la mataron, quién dio la orden. Y sobre todo si la paternidad aludida en la carta es cierta” (206). Although C could theoretically approach Camus’s family with the documents and request DNA confirmation, she chooses not to do so:

Me repugna que alguien llegue siquiera a sospechar que tengo el síndrome de Anastasia o que me impulsan intereses exhibicionistas o mercantiles. Por eso esperaré hasta averiguar quién me mandó las cartas, y por qué lo hizo precisamente aquel 23 de abril de 2001, cuando yo acababa de asegurar que no
escribiría más o que, si escribía, no volvería a publicar, en respuesta al papanatismo que domina la literatura o, mejor, dicho, a la necia vulgaridad en que está sumido el mundo editorial. (217-18)

She puts all her faith in the release of her book. And this, more than any other action, confirms her desire for recognition and for all of the lucrative possibilities tied to publishing a popular text. Publishing the narrative affords no guarantee of discovering the truth, it only means more people will come to read her work.

C concludes the narrative by returning to her status as a writer, which is the final sign that she is more self-interested than interested in learning about her family. Now viewing Luis G. to be a sort of *deus ex maquina*, someone who knew she was ready to give up writing altogether, she wonders, “Quizá sospechó que la necesidad de buscar mi verdadera identidad me impulsaría a escribir de nuevo” (218). She also reiterates the importance of the collaboration of the reading public: “No sé si suponía también que yo habría de pedir su ayuda para poder completar la historia de Cecilia Balaguer y la mía propia, ni hasta qué punto estas páginas sólo adquirirán sentido si cuentan con su colaboración. De ella dependo. Se lo puedo, te lo puedo asegurar” (218). By transcribing the private, personal story of her family, C transforms it into a public, published book. She must now awaits the reception by her reading public, her critics, and her peers not only to discover the truth behind her mother’s mysterious past but also to affirm her place within the group of writers concerned with representing the recovery of historical memory.

In *La mitad del alma*, the Spanish past again proves to be a lucrative commodity. By examining the transcripts that C includes in and leaves out of the narrative, as well as the ways in which she does so, we see how the particular past she seeks to represent ultimately promotes her success among the writers, readers, and critics concerned with recovering historical memory.
pertaining to the Franco dictatorship. C builds upon the popular interest in the time period, the alleged affair of her mother, and her questionable connection to Albert Camus in order to produce a work that will reach a great number of readers and will reignite her symbolic capital and power. However, much like the narrator of *Soldados de Salamina*, C derives prestige and legitimacy at the expense of the “true” story she initially claims to seek. *La mitad del alma*, along with *Soldados de Salamina*, thus confirms how the self-interest of the present overshadows the importance of the past.
As I have demonstrated thus far, transcription is an avenue for examining the ethics of politically motivated historical fiction as well as the motivations of the authors who choose to assume the task of representing historical events in fictional form. In Chapter One, I showed how transcription adopts the conventions of historiography in order to provoke the reader’s empathy for the main characters of *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos*, who are understood to be the victims of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. Yet although transcription promotes a politically ethical cause, its use in the novels violates the ethics of fiction in two notable ways. First, it represents actual source documents and testimony within the fictional narrative, which challenges the boundary between “true” historical information sought by the reading public and fictional information crafted by the authors. Second, the goal of championing the defeated is undercut by the way in which transcription mimics several rhetorical strategies that are commonly attributed to the perceived victors. In Chapter Two transcription reveals the personal and professional motives of the characters responsible for including transcripts within the novels. The narrator-protagonist-transcribers of *Soldados de Salamina* and *La mitad del alma* take advantage of the historical ruin and intrigue associated with the war and the postwar in order to achieve success and recognition. While it may not be true of everyone who chooses to represent and to transcribe a historical past, the choice of transcripts and the way in which they are reproduced within the two novels demonstrate that these transcribers are self-motivated.
In Chapter Three, the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship take a backseat to larger issues of loss, absence, and nostalgia. The very real feeling of losing something, of discovering that it is irrevocable, is complicated by the act of transcription. In Eduardo Lago’s novel *Llámame Brooklyn* (2007) and in Kirmen Uribe’s novel *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* (2009), the main characters obsessively represent all manner of saving what is perceived to be lost, but in doing so they highlight that what they transcribe and “bring back” is not the same as what they miss. Néstor, the primary narrator of the former, longs for his deceased friend and mentor, Gal, but excessively copying down the texts Gal once wrote does not “revive” his friend in the way he wants. Similarly, those texts authored by Gal that Néstor reproduces within the narrative indicate that the former also used transcription as a means of working through loss and absence. In a different way, Kirmen, the narrator-protagonist of *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, believes that each successive generation lacks more of what is authentically Basque. He gets caught up writing down stories, texts, and testimony connected to the older people in his family and his hometown in an attempt to fill what he views to be a looming void. However, transcription does not perfectly reproduce the original stories, experiences, or individuals. These novels therefore differ from those of the first two chapters because in the previous four works of fiction no one is expressly “sad” or “nostalgic” about the past events they represent. The novels in Chapter One evoke a desire to promote empathy, whereas those of Chapter Two caution against the desire of certain individuals to take advantage of the past for “present” motives. In the current chapter, *Llámame Brooklyn* and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* focus on a desire to fill an emptiness, to work through feelings of absence and nostalgia, which is represented by means of transcription.

The use of transcription in both novels is symptomatic of a society that is becoming increasingly fearful of disappearance and loss. Afraid of and yet fascinated by missing figures
and traditions, the characters wage an imperfect battle against recovering what is gone. That is to say, although the principal characters achieve some degree of solace from the process of prolonging a dialogue with and about absent people and traditions, transcription ultimately provides an imperfect and temporary substitute. Uncertainty and nostalgia drive them to transcribe, to simulate a response to that which is no longer present, which in turn reinforces the inaccessibility of the absent source. Transcription, as it is represented within these two novels, illustrates a similar process to the one that is taking place in contemporary Spain: numerous organizations and groups of people seek out and copy down countless testimonies and texts related to the Spanish Civil War and to the Franco dictatorship because they are concerned that the sources soon will cease to exist. To demonstrate this, I will adapt Jean Baudrillard’s key ideas on disappearance, simulation, symbolic exchange, and response.

1. Baudrillard

“The Precession of Simulacra” is Baudrillard’s fundamental essay on simulacra, simulation, and hyperreality. Originally published as part of the 1981 collection Simulacres et simulation, “The Precession of Simulacra” distinguishes Baudrillard’s understanding of these concepts from his predecessors through a series of vivid, modern-day examples and analogies. He divides the process of simulation into four stages, or “phases,” of the image (“Precession” 6). This precession of simulacra shows how each progressive step leads further toward destabilizing and replacing the real, a course that culminates with the generation of “a real without origin or reality: a hyperreality” (Baudrillard, “Precession” 1). In the first phase of the image, the image is “the reflection of a profound reality,” a “good appearance” that Baudrillard relates to the “sacramental order” (“Precession” 6). For example, one might consider a photograph of an
individual’s childhood home: it faithfully attempts to represent the actual past location. In the second phase, the image “masks and denatures a profound reality,” and thus Baudrillard characterizes it as an “evil appearance” and associates it with the “order of maleficence” (“Precession” 6). An airbrushed or photo-shopped version of the same childhood home would be an appropriate analogy: it still represents the real location, but it distorts and masks the original home and the individual tells a minor lie if he or she identifies that image as the place where s/he grew up. The third phase of the image “masks the absence of a profound reality,” which means that it “plays at being an appearance—it is of the order of sorcery” (Baudrillard, “Precession” 6). Continuing with the same analogy, one would use a photograph of an entirely different house where s/he never lived. The image depicts a real place, but it only plays at being the actual place where the individual resided. Lastly, the fourth and final phase of the image bears no relation to any reality whatsoever: “it is its own pure simulacrum . . . it is no longer of the order of appearances, but of simulation” (Baudrillard, “Precession” 6). In this final phase, one would draft an entirely fake, yet seemingly real, image of a house that does not exist in reality. The perhaps computer-generated image would exist to hide the fact that it is not an image of anything, because there never was a childhood home. The fourth phase of simulation therefore intersects with the hyperreal: it demonstrates a world in which an image generates a “real” object or event without a real origin (Baudrillard, “Precession” 1).

Baudrillard’s phases of the image signal a transition from “signs that dissimulate something to signs that dissimulate that there is nothing” (“Precession” 3). In other words, the phases of the image transform from reflections of reality to distortions of reality and on toward the absolute uncertainty of what is real. Baudrillard associates this shift with three types, or orders, of simulacra, each of which, he suggests, pertains to a historical period (“Precession” 3).
In the first order, which is associated with the pre-modern period, the image is a clear counterfeit of the real; the image is recognized as just an illusion, a place marker for the real. In the second order, which is associated with the modernity of the Industrial Revolution, distinctions between representation and reality break down due to the proliferation of mass-reproducible copies of items, turning them into commodities. Such production misrepresents and masks an underlying reality by imitating it so well, thus threatening to replace it. However, the second order remains only a threat; it does not succeed in substituting for the real. In the third order of simulacra, which is associated with the postmodern age, the simulacrum finally precedes the original and the distinction between reality and representation vanishes. There is no longer a line between reality and its representation; there is only the pure simulacrum, the realm of the hyperreal.

Baudrillard believes that modern-day media culture, language, ideology, and economics, and particularly exchange-value, multi-national capitalism, and urbanization, all contribute to “a liquidation of all referentials” (“Precession” 4). The liquidation of referentials produces a sense of nostalgia for the “real” that once was and anxiety over the simulation that has come to replace it (Baudrillard, “Precession” 6). He states that the contradictory, if not self-deluded, craving for the real paradoxically spurs individuals to substitute the real through overproduction of simulacra, that is, through increased, if not excessive, simulation. Nostalgia for the real generates a “panic stricken production of the real and of the referential, parallel to and greater than the panic of material production” (Baudrillard, “Precession” 7). The “hysteria” of modern times, that of the production and the reproduction of the real, demonstrates that “what every society looks for in continuing to produce, and to overproduce, is to restore the real that escapes it” (Baudrillard, “Precession” 17). The heightened transcription present in the particular fictional realms of *Llámame Brooklyn* and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* relates to Baudrillard’s theory, as
well as to the increased recent efforts made by those attempting to recover history and memory in contemporary Spain. The past, although real, eludes the present, and so it is reproduced and overproduced in response to a craving for what once was. The difficulty, as demonstrated in both novels, is that attempting to pin down what is now absent produces an imperfect substitute.

Baudrillard’s interest in disappearance and simulation permeates his later publications as well. In Why Hasn’t Everything Already Disappeared? (2009), one of the last texts written before his death in March 2007, he poignantly meditates on the renewed allure of what is gone. “Behind every image,” he writes, “something has disappeared. And that is the source of its fascination” (Disappeared 32). He offers the example of Lewis Carroll’s Cheshire cat, whose grin still hovers in the air after the rest of his body has vanished. Here Baudrillard pinpoints the disconcerting problem of the trace of the real, or of what is left behind when what was present has vanished into concept: “Now, a cat’s grin is already something terrifying, but the grin without the cat is even more terrifying” (Disappeared 25). Extending this analogy, he declares that everything that disappears, including institutions, values, prohibitions, ideologies, and even ideas, “continues to lead a clandestine existence and exert an occult influence” (Disappeared 26). The remnant, or hidden influence, affects and moves human beings, even in the absence of the original. In Llámame Brooklyn, the absence of Gal’s love, Nadia, drives Gal to write obsessively; later Gal’s death incites Néstor to transcribe and to complete Gal’s work. In Bilbao, the ever-increasing disappearance of elements of traditional Basque culture haunts the narrator and influences his decision to transcribe.

The last of Baudrillard’s major ideas that will inform my analysis is that of response. In the essay titled “The Masses,” which is included in the collection Selected Writings, he writes:
To understand properly the term response, one must appreciate it in a meaning at once strong, symbolic, and primitive: power belongs to him who gives and to whom no return can be made. To give, and to do it in such a way that no return can be made, is to break exchange to one's own profit and to institute a monopoly: the social process is out of balance. To make a return, on the contrary, is to break this power relationship and to restore on the basis of an antagonistic reciprocity the circuit of symbolic exchange. (207-08)

In *Llámame Brooklyn* and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, the main characters simulate a response to absent people and practices. Borrowing from Baudrillard’s definition, we understand that in doing so they are attempting to restore a sense of balance to the symbolic exchange. They respond in order to complete the circuit and to continue the cycle. Figuratively, they “talk back” to the dead so as to keep them alive. On some level, the characters also may be understood to seek the proverbial last word. The very absence of their interlocutors paradoxically motivates their response and reinforces a new end to the exchange.

Baudrillard offers the example of the mass media, where speech occurs in such a way that there is no possibility of a return (“Masses” 208). Understood this way, the media represents “speech without response” because it fabricates non-communication: “if one accepts the definition of communication as an exchange, as the reciprocal space of speech and response, and thus of responsibility” (Baudrillard, “Masses” 207). He concludes that the primary means of mass “communication” is “what finally forbids response, what renders impossible any process of exchange (except in the shape of a simulation of a response, which is itself integrated into the process of emission, and changes nothing in the unilaterality of communication)” (“Masses 207-08). Although the characters of *Llámame Brooklyn* and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* are not
concerned with the mass media or its relationship to the masses, they are involved in a delicate balance of response, reciprocity, and responsibility. If the death and disappearance of loved ones and beloved traditions should symbolically forbid response, transcription allows the protagonists to simulate a response, albeit one that “changes nothing” about the unilateral nature of the communication.

2. *Llámame Brooklyn*

*Llámame Brooklyn* is Eduardo Lago’s first novel. Although it has won several prestigious literary prizes it has yet to receive much scholarly attention. This is somewhat surprising because *Llámame Brooklyn*, like *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, incorporates many themes common to contemporary Peninsular literature. For example, both novels portray the challenges of representing both history and memory. Unlike *Soldados de Salamina* or *La voz dormida*, however, *Llámame Brooklyn* does not put the Spanish Civil War or the postwar period at the forefront. Instead, the historical past serves as a backdrop to the foregrounded “crisis” of writing, and specifically transcribing, that the central characters experience. *Llámame Brooklyn* also overlaps with recent interest in a particular type of past that “haunts” the agents of the present. In a completely different way, *Llámame Brooklyn* fits with ongoing interest in Cervantine influences in contemporary works of literature. Lago’s novel takes several cues from its literary forbearer, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605): there are found manuscripts, an “editor” who commits to recompiling mysterious documents, intercalated short stories, an intricate web of intertextual references, and, at its core, main characters who become so consumed by the texts that they read and transcribe that they become lost in the “more than real” realm of fiction. Focusing on transcription allows me to intersect with recent interest in
representing history, memory, and the process of writing. Focusing on transcription in this particular novel further enables me to consider Cervantine presence in the contemporary work of fiction. Perhaps most notably, however, my analysis of *Llámame Brooklyn* contributes to future discussions of the novel by offering a new avenue of investigation, that of transcription as a simulation of response.

*Llámame Brooklyn* tells the story of Néstor Oliver-Chapman and Gal Ackerman. The two men are friends and fellow writers who met at a bar called the Oakland, which is set in the heart of Brooklyn, New York. Néstor is a young journalist writing for the *New York Post*. Gal, some twenty-five years his senior, once wrote articles and stories for local papers and literary journals but had declined mentally and physically by the time he met Néstor. His only remaining project during the time of their friendship was an incomplete novel referred to as *Brooklyn*, the fragments of which were scattered about a hidden room off the back of the Oakland in boxes labeled simply as “Cuadernos de Brooklyn.” Néstor and Frank, the owner of the Oakland, attribute Gal’s ultimate deterioration to the departure of Nadia Orlov, whom Gal believed to be his muse and one true love. He expressed hope that *Brooklyn* would capture the story of their amorous relationship and it is implied that he desired to send the completed manuscript to the absent Nadia as a means of closure.

*Llámame Brooklyn*, however, begins at the end. Néstor receives word that Gal has died and decides to fulfill a former promise: he will rescue the abandoned boxes of notebooks and finish *Brooklyn* “for Gal.” The narrative thus alternates between Néstor’s first-person memories (in the narrating present) and an excessive number of transcripts. The majority of the transcripts are fragments that Néstor has copied from Gal’s entries in the “Cuadernos de Brooklyn.” These entries consist of newspaper clippings, journal articles, epitaphs, detective
agency reports, poems, short stories, epigraphs, letters, emails, telephone conversations, and passports, among other documents.

The transcripts often appear in lengthy, inchoate series, which lends a chaotic and disparate feel to the novel. However, they converge to provide the key for understanding the work as a whole: transcription gives Néstor a false sense of connection to his deceased friend. Through the act of transcription, he feels as though he revives their friendship, if not his friend. Unfortunately, transcription only simulates their previous communication; he uses it to mask the absence of the defunct older man. Néstor obsessively, if not hyperactively, transcribes Gal’s discarded documents because he is overwhelmed by nostalgia, anxiety, and a sense of loss. Interestingly, his pattern of hyperactive transcription, or “hyper-transcription,” is itself modeled after similar behavior exhibited by Gal the first time he saw Nadia and during the time following her sudden disappearance from his life. The texts and testimony that Gal transcribed within the “Cuadernos de Brooklyn,” in addition to the texts and testimony that Néstor transcribes within Brooklyn, thus offer two distinct yet related cases for analyzing the ability of transcription to respond to loss.

From the beginning of Llámame Brooklyn it is clear that transcription helps Néstor simulate a response to Gal. This notion is foreshadowed by the epigraph to the first chapter, which is titled “Fenner’s Point.” The epigraph reads, “Los muertos no existen salvo en nosotros” (1, italics in original). The quote is a translation of a line from the fourth of seven volumes comprising Marcel Proust’s novel À la recherche du temps perdu, originally published between 1913 and 1927. Specifically, the source appears during a scene in the Proust text in which the narrator looks over a photograph of his deceased grandmother and contemplates how he remembers her through the pain he feels at having lost her: the pain proves that the memory is
alive within him. The reproduction of the Proust line thus prefigures the themes of memory, absence, and working through loss that appear throughout the first chapter of *Llámame Brooklyn*.

Specifically, Néstor simulates a response to Gal by reacting to what he perceives to be “clues” left to him by the latter. He confesses, “No te hacía mucho caso cuando me decías que nunca serías capaz de terminar el *Cuaderno de Brooklyn*... En cierto modo era como tenerte siempre ahí, señalándome el camino. Y no eran sólo tus anotaciones. Muchas veces, de manera fortuita, recordaba retazos de conversaciones” (21). The “signals” Néstor references are reproduced in the form of transcripts. For example, he transcribes a newspaper clipping published in the *Gaceta de Deauville* on June 7th, 1965:

**INSTALADA RED DE BALIZAS**

**EN LA COSTA DE DEAUVILLE**

El pasado viernes 4 se procedió a la instalación de un sistema de señales luminosas en la llamada Horquilla del Diablo, en Fenners Point... Desde entonces, cuando cae la oscuridad, los arrecifes adquieren un aspecto sobrenatural. Con esta operación, tantas veces retrasada, las autoridades confían en dotar al litoral del condado de un nivel de seguridad más adecuado. (8)

He states, “al menos para mí, el autor era inconfundible,” yet as if to distinguish his own writing from Gal’s more practiced, lyrical prose he centers the gazette article on the page and makes use of a smaller font (9). The juxtaposition of Néstor’s reproduced diary entry with Gal’s reproduced news piece marks the start of what transforms into a tapestry of transcripts: in the same scene he weaves together his words, Gal’s words, and also the indented, aligned inscription from a plaque presented to Fenners Point by the General Consulate of Denmark:

**IN MEMORIAM**
El 19 de mayo de 1919 se estrelló contra los arrecifes de Fenners Point el carguero Bornholm, de la Marina Real Danesa. Se recuperaron sólo trece cuerpos que no fue posible identificar. Los demás descansan para siempre en el fondo del océano. Se ruega una oración por sus almas.

Consulado General de Dinamarca
Ciudad de Nueva York
21-IX-1919. (11)

Néstor clarifies that the plaque appears in a tiny cemetery found on Fenners Point, whose presence proves more enigmatic and “supernatural” than the beacons adorning the coast (9). Within the cemetery, he adds, there are an abandoned chapel and a handful of tombstones and, “salvo una, todas son anónimas y no llevan más adorno que una cruz” (9). To the reader, the transcripts seem unconnected, but Néstor quickly connects the dots: “todo encaja: el lugar donde Gal Ackerman estaba destinado a descansar para siempre lo descubrió él mismo” (11). There, in the Cementerio Danés, he writes that Gal will rest in peace and “en compañía de unos cuantos marineros daneses, buenos bebedores sin la menor duda, como si en realidad no hubiera dejado el Oakland del todo” (11-13).

Néstor thus transcribes each document because he believes that he is following a trail of breadcrumbs left to him by Gal. Each one has played a part in the personal history of the protagonists: the news clipping documents Gal’s past work as a writer and predilection for Fenners Point, the inscription from the consulate’s plaque pinpoints the cemetery and reveals the inhabitants of the other, anonymous graves found next to Gal’s and the passages copied from Néstor’s diary frame Gal’s death and funeral. Néstor interprets the documents much like the beacons: they light the way toward understanding. However, the signals are deceptive. The
process of reproducing them does not bring back to his friend, nor does it elicit closure to the
symbolic exchange. Instead, transcription simulates a response to Gal and to what the transcriber
believes the older man left behind.

The epigraph that precedes Néstor’s entry about Gal’s funeral also concerns talking back,
or responding, to the dead. Specifically, the transcribed words are a translation of the final verse
from Paul Valéry’s poem “Le cemitéire marin”: “Mirar por fin la calma de los dioses” (11). Like
the other transcripts included in the first chapter, the verse helps to stage the funeral and the
solemn tone at the marine cemetery of Fenners Point. However, unlike the other transcripts the
Valéry verse is the only readily identifiable “actual” transcript that appears within the chapter.
That is to say, the verse is copied from an existing original source document—Valéry’s
collection of poems titled Charmes (1922). The poem in question begins with another epigraph,
this time from Pindar (Pythians III): “Do not, dear soul, strive after deathless life, but use to the
utmost the resources in your power” (McGrath and Comenetz 5). Steven Shankman declares
that “it is remarkable that no one has scrutinized Pindar’s third Pythian for its affiliations with
Valéry’s meditations” (143). He goes on to observe that “both fully acknowledge and express a
desire to transcend limitation, but both believe that such a desire must be held in check” (144).
Shankman explains that in order to express how the Pythian is implicated in the human desire to
transcend limitation, the latter begins the ode with a contrary-to-fact condition: “I would wish
that Chiron, the son of Philyra—if it were permitted to utter a prayer—that is on everyone’s
tongue—I would wish—I say—that Chiron, who is now dead and departed, were alive” (145).
The Pindar ode, combined with the Valéry poem, firmly root the “Fenner’s Point” chapter within
a literary tradition concerned with loss, absence, death, and the responsibility of the living to live,
“to use the utmost resources in their power.” The big difference between Néstor and the
protagonists of the epigraphs is that he crosses the line: it is not that he “would wish” for Gal to be alive, he does wish for Gal to be alive and he engages with his friend as if the latter were still present. His desire to overcome nostalgia overwhelms him: he uses transcription as a means of attempting to transcend the limitation of symbolic exchange.

In another way, the presence of the Valéry transcript within the narrative, both as an epigraph to Néstor’s diary and, allegedly, as one of the texts read during the service for Gal, suggests a more complicated relationship between sources and copies. The “real” verse lends authenticity and verisimilitude to the fictional texts and to the scene they depict. Additionally, the well-documented wake of Spanish language translations following the original publication of “Le cimetière marin,” many of which were completed by members of Spain’s “Generation of 1927” and all of which produced noticeable variants, subtly points toward the inherent difficulty of accurately reproducing, re-presenting, and repackaging another person’s work for a new body of readers. Linking the Spanish verse to Gal’s death and to Néstor’s grave mission to order, copy, and thus finish Gal’s posthumous work symbolizes the demise of the former as author, the rise of the latter as transcriber, and the inevitable transformation of Gal’s manuscript. Gal dies, but Brooklyn is born. And in many ways the new creation enables Néstor to feel as though he continues communicating with his deceased friend.

Néstor repeatedly directs himself “to” Gal, as demonstrated by his use of the second person singular form “tú.” In fact, the novel is peppered with examples of apostrophe. In a chapter called “La entrega,” which refers to the day Néstor leaves the completed Brooklyn at Gal’s grave, he writes, “¿Te das cuenta, Gal, del día que elegiste para morir? Conociéndote, dudo mucho que sea casualidad. . . . Por si acaso, he escogido la misma fecha que tú para traerte Brooklyn” (14). The date, April 14th, 1999, is significant because it marks exactly two years after
Gal’s death; it also marks several years to the day that Gal showed Néstor the room filled with the “Cuadernos de Brooklyn” and told him he wanted the final product to reach Nadia. The figure of speech is likewise significant. It is appropriate for simulating communication with an absent person, as if Gal were present and capable of understanding and answering Néstor’s query. At the same time, the Greek and Latin origins of the word “apostrophe” connote aversion. On an etymological level, then, it is suitable that Néstor uses this device because it exhibits his own aversion to recognizing that his implied “second audience” is not merely absent, but permanently so.

At other times he utilizes transcripts of Gal’s texts to answer questions that the latter refused to answer even when he was alive. For example, he recalls an encounter during which he asked Gal, “¿Por qué escribes?” (22). According to the former, his older friend refused to reply and abruptly asked him to leave. While sifting through the “Cuadernos de Brooklyn,” however, Néstor finds an answer, which he then transcribes within the narrative. The reproduction is distinguished from his narration by means of an earlier date, smaller font, and thicker margins. The transcribed entry begins, “La pregunta de Néstor me hizo pensar en uno de los amigos españoles de Ben, Antonio Ramos,” and goes on to describe how some thirty years prior Gal’s adopted father met Antonio in France (22). The transcript explains, “el médico le había prohibido pintar [a Antonio], que dado el estado de su único pulmón, si seguía pintando, las emanaciones tóxicas no tardarían en acabar con él. . . . Sé lo que estás pensando, pero te equivocas, le dijo Ramos [a Ben]. Al médico le he dicho lo mismo. Es justo al revés: si no pintara me moriría” (24). The fact that Gal mentions his young companion at the start of the transcribed entry means that the latter has good reason for believing that the story of Ramos and Ben connects to the original question to Gal. For Néstor, the passage serves as a long-awaited answer to his query,
“De modo que por eso escribías. Tuve que esperar a que murieras para conocer la respuesta” (24). However, the time and place of the transcription process suggest that Gal is haunted by unanswered questions. Reproducing the story simulates a perpetuation of the dialogue between the two men.

There are numerous other examples of how Néstor transcribes Gal’s documents as a means of preserving and continuing their connection. However, these instances are also relevant to my argument because they document how the transcriber loses hold of himself. In other words, hyper-transcription is symptomatic of the way in which he steadily conflates his own identity with Gal’s. At the start of the narrative, the deceased man’s texts are analogous to the beacons lighting the way for ships along the coast of Fenners Point: they guide Néstor through the process of completing the *Brooklyn* manuscript. He not only reproduces Gal’s documents, he learns from Gal’s writing and consciously mimics the latter’s techniques to complete what he considers to be a well-written narrative. Midway through a series of pieced-together transcripts concerning a trip Gal took to Madrid, for example, Néstor introduces a parenthetical observation of his own: “¿Voy bien, verdad, Gal? Los diálogos sin entrecomillar, entrelazados con la acción, como a ti te gustaba. Y ahora voy a hacer algo que también he aprendido de ti: intercalar fragmentos de mi diario. Nunca tuve ocasión de decírtelo, pero fue así como te conocí)” (79).

What begins as harmless admiration of Gal’s stylistics, however, devolves into a disappearance of Néstor’s voice, and it does so specifically through the transcribed fragments that the second man has learned to “intersperse” throughout the narrative. Two years following Gal’s death, Néstor reflects on the time he has spent finishing *Brooklyn*:

Cumpliendo tus deseos fui completando los huecos que habías dejado. Lo fui examinando todo con cuidado: las cartas, los blocs de notas, los cuadernos, las
carpetas, tus diarios, los de Nadia. Al final del día, bajaba a quemar el material que ya no era necesario. Me había convertido en la prolongación de tu sombra ... Muchas veces, al releer lo que hemos hecho, me cuesta trabajo distinguir tu voz de la mía. Aunque en realidad, sólo hay una voz, la tuya. (30)

The notion of “becoming an extension of Gal’s shadow” is telling. Since having a shadow implies presence, and Gal is physically absent, Néstor’s figurative phrase suggests that transcribing enables him to continue Gal’s work, which he equates with Gal. His difficulty distinguishing his work from Gal’s highlights the dominance of the other’s “more real than real” voice.

Adopting Gal’s voice and style is dangerous because, as Néstor points out, Gal was “un ser vulnerable, extrañamente separado de su entorno por una campaña de cristal” (85). He describes the first time he saw Gal in the Oakland, “aquel individuo que escribía en un cuaderno, ajeno a los enmascarados que atestaban el local” (82). His awareness of Gal’s self-induced solitude and obsession for writing and completing Brooklyn should have served as a warning to the young man. Instead, Néstor dives into the project headfirst, relishing the opportunity to transcribe “Gal’s voice.” Assuming Gal’s narrating persona is also suspect since Gal himself suffered through prolonged periods of absence and loss. In fact, most of the documents that Néstor discovers in the “Cuadernos de Brooklyn” relate to one of three events: the time at which Gal learned the identity of his biological father, the aftermath of Gal seeing Nadia for the first time, and Nadia’s abrupt departure from Brooklyn, the Oakland, and Gal’s life.

For example, the transcripts of an entry from Gal’s diary and of a letter addressed to his adoptive parents combine to show that the former’s family was masked, or perhaps simulated, by the latter. The reproduced diary entry, dated March 9th, 1964, explains that Gal was traveling to
Spain to meet with Abe Lewis, the man who wrote the letter. Gal interrupts his diary transcript with reproduced passages from Abe’s letter, which is dated, indented, and reproduced in a smaller font. The diary transcript and the letter transcript are braided together, alternately occupying the primary focal point of the narration while the other is hidden from view. Within the letter Abe writes, “Voy al grano: la razón de que os escriba es que hace cosa de tres meses se cruzó en mi camino, o yo en el suyo, Umberto Pietri” (54). Gal abruptly suspends the transcript of the letter and records in the journal, “Aparté la viste del papel. Daba igual que hubiera leído aquella carta infinidad de veces. Me hacía daño ver el nombre . . . Evité la cuartilla como si estuviera impregnada de veneno y en la siguiente lei: ‘A mediados del pasado mes de julio, mi mujer y yo estábamos de viaje por la Toscana’” (54). The content of the two transcripts reveals that Gal’s whole identity was predicated on a simulacrum: his origin was feigned in order to mask a notable absence. Moreover, the form of the transcripts, overlapping one another at regular intervals, evokes the tension between the simulated past he believed to be true and the revelation.

Another example of the simulated world that Gal inhabits takes the form of a brief transcript from his passport. Within the same sequence of transcripts from Abe’s letter and Gal’s diary, the latter interpolates the following information: “Place of Birth: Madrid, Spain” (58, italics in original). The passage from the journal then resumes:

> Madrid. Spain. Cada una de aquellas dos palabras encerraba tras de sí un mundo.
> La M, con su forma de sierra, las montañas donde Ben había combatido; la S líquida que los españoles eran incapaces de pronunciar sin arroparla con una e, el laberinto mismo de la contienda. El perfil de las dos letras agrupadas, despertaba
ecos de un sinfín de historias. Ben tardaría catorce años en decírmelo, pero yo era español. (59)

The imagery of the excerpt is beautiful and it neatly captures the relationship between the transcribed words and the reality they are meant to portray. For Gal, Spain is a geography of letters. Having never known the actual place, the written symbols on the page signal the imagined space that he has confirmed as his country of origin. By extension, one comprehends that his entire sense of ancestry and identity is based on a simulation; adapting Baudrillard’s concept, Gal’s image of Spain masks his absence of familiarity with the “profound reality” of Spain (“Precession” 6). He may believe that the “M” and the “S” enclose within them entire worlds, but they are not real worlds. Likewise, he may be Spanish, but he has not yet had an authentic experience of what being Spanish means.

If learning that the identity of his biological parents makes Gal nostalgic for people and places that were never part of his life, the bulk of Gal’s anxiety and depression is predicated on a simulated response to Nadia. The transcripts connected to his initial contact with Nadia show how he pretends to understand her based solely on a photograph, a letter, and a name, and number that she leaves behind on a seat in Port Authority. He transcribes each of the documents within a diary entry dated October 23rd, 1973 in Hell’s Kitchen, which is then transcribed within the novel (91). First, Gal records the name and number, “Zadie (212) 719-1859,” and notes that the style of the handwriting is “grande, redondeada, algo infántil” (92). Next, he transcribes the photograph; that is to say, he copies down the condition of the picture and describes the image therein: “Era una foto borrosa, de mala calidad, pero era ella, la chica de Port Authority . . . . (add fourth period?) El individuo que aparecía con ella en la foto era el mismo que había ido a recogerla a Port Authority” (94). He then transcribes the complete letter, which is penned by a
woman named Nadia to her brother Sasha. The letter reveals that Nadia has begun work, “tres días por semana, en un archivo de la Biblioteca Pública, en el Lincoln Center,” close to Juilliard where she holds a scholarship (94). It also implies that Zadie is Nadia’s roommate and that the two girls share an apartment in the Russian neighborhood of Brighton Beach.

Without analyzing any of the found texts that he transcribes, Gal launches into a new transcript of a phone call to Zadie made on October 24th at 10 a.m. His growing obsession with Nadia is well documented by his frantic, overexcited, and excessive behavior: he makes almost hourly entries into his diary, which are, in turn, transcribed within the narrative. Thus, Gal’s hyper-transcription represents his hyper-active fixation with a virtual reality of Nadia that he has constructed. In an entry made at 1 p.m., he confesses, “Todo lo tiñe el encuentro de Port Authority, la carta, la foto. No sé por qué me afecta tanto esto, es absurdo tratándose de alguien que no conozco, pero lo cierto es que no me puedo quitar a esa mujer, Nadia, de la cabeza” (98).

His obsession with his idea of Nadia is more real to him than both the real woman and the real consequences of the world he inhabits. In fact, he becomes so consumed by his ruminations that he commits a series of crimes: he opens her mail to read the letter, he has his friend impersonate him and deliver the letter to Zadie, he follows Zadie home to find out where Nadia lives, and he trespasses in their building. Gal’s desire causes him to transgress the legal limitations of the “real” world, thus confirming both Valéry and Pindar’s concern for keeping such desire in check.

Gal decides to hire a private detective to follow Nadia in order to obtain more information. The summary report from the detective agency is transcribed in italics within a later chapter, which is an ironically titled reproduction from one of Gal’s manuscripts: “Do you know who you’re dating?” A realistic-looking heading precedes the agent’s report:

Clark Investigation & Security Services, Ltd.
The address, the number bearing a Manhattan area code, and the case number all establish a sense of verisimilar precision. When the transcript identifies the “observed subject” as “Nadia Orlov. Edad: 23 años Nacida en Layrat, Siberia, el 17 de mayo de 1950” the information seems standard, if not plain (157). As special agent Carberry notes, the observations summarize “el caso más anodino” that he has had in the last year (158). The excess of seemingly unimportant transcripts demonstrates how Gal attempts to overproduce signs in order to flesh out the otherwise empty image that he possesses of Nadia.

In a cleverly fashioned moment, Gal reaches for the doorknob to leave Carberry’s office, looks up, and sees the name of “CLARK INVESTIGATION AND SECURITY SERVICES” printed in reverse type through the glass door. The inverted agency name is transcribed in the narrative just as Gal would see it, with the letters in reverse type. The visually correct transcript of his perspective of the reverse side of the door draws attention to his skewed perception of Nadia: he has had it all wrong; he has been misreading the signs and propagating a fantasy of her. His departure from the office signals his return to the simulated realm of Nadia that he has constructed. As if glancing back through the figurative looking glass, he notes, “Al cerrar, el nombre de la agencia, escrito en letras doradas, recupera su sentido natural” (159). The transcribed name from the door marks the border between the truth, reality, and objectivity found
within Carberry’s office and the world of outside of the office, which enables Gal’s precession from reality.

This precession away from the real, that is, the move toward simulation, becomes more defined as Gal looks over one of the photographs of Nadia taken by Carberry. In an entry that Néstor transcribes within the novel, Gal writes, “la cámara capta un instante lleno de misterio y lo congela en el tiempo. . . . Se puede percibir su agitación, el momento en que la sorpresa se transforma en ira” (161). He perceives a response: he interprets Nadia’s still expression as an active response to the camera and to the photographer. In doing so, he recalls Baudrillard’s concern about ascribing meaning to the photographic image: “To do so is to make objects strike a pose. And things themselves begin to pose in the light of meaning as soon as they feel a subject’s gaze upon them” (Disappeared 52). Once the image becomes pregnant with the viewer’s meaning, it acquires agency and responds to the subject’s gaze. Gal’s image of Nadia begins to take on a life of its own before he even meets her; the “false copy” of her that he constructs forms the center of the “virtual” reality in which he casts her.

Unfortunately for Gal, his time with Nadia is limited. After they meet and become involved in a tumultuous, unconventional relationship, she abruptly disappears from his life. He never explains the rupture in full, and only discloses that the last time the two met was in Bryant Park. One of the few traces of Nadia that Néstor is capable of recovering is a postcard signed “N.G.,” but the “G” has a circle around it that is reproduced in the transcript. Néstor explains, “Gal había trazado un círculo a tinta roja. . . . Tenía la costumbre de firmar añadiendo la inicial del apellido. Nadia O. Nadia R. ¿Pero de dónde venía la G? . . . Nadia Orlov, después Nadia Rossof, y ahora Nadia G.” (262). Clearly, Nadia got remarried, but to whom?
The answer arrives in a series of sixteen emails from an anonymous sender, all of which are addressed to Néstor. The emails are transcribed within a chapter titled “Regreso a Fenner’s Point,” which, like the first “Fenner’s Point” chapter, is preceded by an epigraph. This time the epigraph comes from a poem in Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s collection *A Coney Island of the Mind*: “I once started out / to walk around the world / but ended up in Brooklyn” (328). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the poem, called “Autobiography,” ends by describing the end of the journey of the poetic voice:

But I am the man
And I’ll be there.
And I may cause the lips of those who are asleep to speak.
And I may make my notebooks into sheaves of grass. (Ferlinghetti 66)

The transcribed lines signal the themes of the full poem, which coincide with those of *Llámame Brooklyn*. The novel refashions the idea of making “those who are asleep” speak through Néstor’s ultimately unsuccessful attempts to “talk” with Gal. Similarly, the notion of turning notebooks into “sheaves,” or organized bundles, is play on words that aptly captures Néstor’s preoccupation with transforming the “Cuadernos de Brooklyn” into a finalized manuscript.

The emails that are transcribed within “Regreso a Fenner’s Point” feature a noticeably different font and are dated between May 9th and May 18th. The sender, who is later revealed to be Nadia’s daughter, Brooklyn “G.,” states that she has read *Brooklyn*, the novel, and that she possesses “ciertos papeles de Gal Ackerman” (330). She requests to meet in person and although
Néstor’s email responses are not transcribed it is clear from the one-sided communication that they will meet in Cádiz that summer. In the meantime, she continues to email him in order to send him scanned documents that she has come to own “de manera legítima” and also so that she may express her opinion on the completed novel (329). Her first observation is that Gal was an unreliable source of information: “Los papeles que encontré en la caja que me dio mi padre no siempre coinciden con lo que se dice en la novela. Gal Ackerman no era totalmente fiable. No es que le engañara, pero sí le utilizó. Le dejó todo preparado para que terminara el libro de cierta manera” (388). For example, she confirms that Gal and Nadia contacted one another long after the supposed “farewell” in Bryant Park. Gal knew Nadia had a daughter with another man and he wrote her a letter. They also met again years later. The observation that Gal was not wholly dependable may come as no surprise to readers: they become mindful (if not doubtful) of Gal’s reliability as a narrator through the transcripts, which reveal his ongoing process of representing a skewed image of Nadia.

The email transcripts also paint Brooklyn as a foil to Néstor. Aside from critiquing Néstor’s rhetorical role model, she reads about Gal, Frank, and the other people connected to the Oakland and she refers to them as “personajes de la novela” or “personajes de papel” (333). Meanwhile Néstor expended a great deal of time and energy precisely to make them “come alive” or perhaps “come back to life.” To reinforce the distinction between the individuals and the literary representation of them is to call out his simulation. He confesses that the project consumed him entirely: “No podía trabajar como reportero y sumergirme luego en el mundo de la novela de Gal. . . . Viví, dos años durante los cuales existí sin ser yo, metido en la piel de Gal, prisionero en un mundo que había creado él, leyendo cartas, diarios, cuadernos, borradores de
cuentos, seleccionando papeles, destruyéndolos. La realidad dejó de existir para mí” (380). For Néstor, the simulation, the process of transcription, supplanted reality.

Yet despite the fact that he uses the past tense and insists that he left the Oakland and Brooklyn to regain his sense of self, the novel concludes with an epilogue in which he again “speaks” to Gal. Describing the meeting in Cádiz with Brooklyn, he states:

Fue como si me viera a mí mismo dentro de una película que para explicar las cosas recurre a las imágenes de un sueño, una película extraña, muy antigua, en blanco y negro. Reproduje nuestra conversación por escrito con una precisión extraordinaria para poder leértela. No me costó ningún trabajo hacerlo. Recordaba lo que habíamos dicho los dos con una lucidez que rayaba en lo doloroso. Lo raro es que, aunque ya no la tenía delante, seguía teniendo presentes su rostro, su figura, los rasgos de la cara y, sobre todo, sus ojos (393-94).

The scene is not uncommon to a cemetery: one imagines Néstor seated beside Gal’s grave, speaking aloud to the absent interlocutor. What is unusual about the situation, however, is Néstor’s insistence on how he reproduced the conversation with Nadia with extraordinary precision so that he could read it to Gal. Leaving issues of memory and accuracy aside for a moment, the intent behind his actions is of utmost interest. Because of transcription, he is able to share the episode with Gal. Because he copied down the conversation with Brooklyn, he may simulate a conversation with Gal. Transcription allows Néstor to respond to the loss he experiences and to feel some comfort from the process.

In the final scene of the epilogue, the world Néstor inhabits and the world of Gal’s novel collide. Recalling Brooklyn, “la viva imagen de su madre,” Néstor feels as though he has been thrown outside of himself (396). He says (to Gal’s grave), “Reconocí aquel sentimiento, o para
ser más exacto, lo recordé. Pero no podía ser. No podía ser que me estuviera pasando a mí. Era como si el tiempo hubiera encogido. Era…como si me hubiera enamorado de Nadia” (394). The odd wave of recognition that washes over Néstor indicates that for a moment he felt as though he were in Gal’s shoes, reliving the love the latter felt for Nadia. Since Brooklyn bears such a striking resemblance to her mother, and since Néstor toiled over Brooklyn for two years, it is understandable that he should experience a strong connection between the former lovers, the young woman, and himself. However, given his track record of overlapping his own identity onto that of Gal, the confession serves as a climax to the former’s simulation process. The sensation lasts very briefly, and Néstor immediately regains his composure: “Lo que antes eran imágenes, de repente se habían vuelto sombras. Sombras, pensé, o tal vez oí una voz que hablaba dentro de mí. Sombras, dijo la voz, sólo sombras . . . Se han ido todos los que formaron parte de aquel mundo, un universo entero se ha borrado. Los seres que una vez lo habitaron pletóricos de vida, ahora son poco más que humo” (396). He goes on to state that a white light of clarity blinds him; he will not read any of the missing papers Brooklyn turned over to him, nor will he add or alter Brooklyn in any way. The symbolic yet somewhat mysterious ending suggests that Néstor has finally exorcised Gal (397). He acknowledges that Gal, Nadia, and the other people who once inhabited the Oakland in Brooklyn are no longer: all that remains of them are “shadows” and “smoke,” traces and memories that affirm their absence. His decision to leave Brooklyn in the cemetery with Gal, unmodified, marks the end of his simulated response and the end of his symbolic exchange with Gal.

3. Bilbao-New York-Bilbao
Although Kirmen Uribe is better known for his poetry and mixed media projects, his first novel, *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, has already garnered a number of prestigious prizes. To date, however, no scholar has published a critical analysis of *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*. Because the themes of the novel are consistent with popular themes found in many well-studied works of contemporary Peninsular narrative, *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* is a strong candidate for future scholarly investigation. For example, recent edited anthologies such as *A Companion to the Twentieth Century Spanish Novel* (2008) and *The Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel* (2003) feature essays dedicated to the rising popularity of regional, and specifically Basque, works of fiction. Similarly, numerous edited anthologies, books, and articles published in recent years have explored topics of globalization, plurality, and multiculturalism, all of which resonate with *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*. Perhaps the most popular theme in contemporary Peninsular literature, that of writing about history and memory, is also featured in *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*.

My analysis of *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* sets out to explore the ways in which transcription demonstrates the narrator’s concern over what he views to be the disappearance of a traditional, local way of life that he associates with his hometown of Ondarroa. Transcription provides a means for preserving elements of the people and the practices that the narrator anxiously regards to be significantly absent. However, it does not succeed in masking the absence of the source. Transcription responds to the narrator’s nostalgia, but it does not bring back what is gone.

*Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* traces the journey of the narrator, who is traveling from Bilbao to New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK). The narrator, named Kirmen Uribe, is, like the author, a writer. Throughout the trans-Atlantic flight, the narrator contemplates the
novel that he has begun to compose. He explains that he hopes to discover the secret behind the
enigmatic name of his grandfather’s boat, *Dos amigos*: “Sentía que tras ese *Dos amigos* había
una novela, una novela sobre ese mundo del mar a punto de desaparecer” (19). In order to gather
information, the narrator has contacted elderly family members and local people and read
through old diaries and documents. Unlike the four novels I discussed in Chapters One and Two,
however, the novel does not foreground the investigation or the writing process. Instead, the text
follows the narrator’s journey from Bilbao to New York, with different points along the flight
map serving as chapter titles, place markers, and points of departure for memories, stories and
transcripts.

Simply put, although the premise of *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* is simple, the structure is
complex. The transcribed information signals the path of Kirmen’s narrative, which would
otherwise seem overly fragmented, if not incomprehensible. As he explains, his projected novel
“se estructuraría en torno a un vuelo entre Bilbao y Nueva York. El reto consistía en hablar de
tres generaciones distintas de una familia . . . Expondría el proyecto de escritura de la novela, y
fragmentariamente, muy fragmentariamente, historias de esas tres generaciones” (136). *Bilbao-
New York-Bilbao* similarly alternates between three time periods: the narrative present, which
consists of Kirmen’s flight; the recent past, which consists of his experiences with friends,
colleagues, and family members; and the more distant past, which consists of events involving
Kirmen’s parents, grandparents, and their contemporaries. The intertwining time frames are
further complicated by an impressive, if not overwhelming, number of transcripts. The sheer
excess of transcripts and the obsessive behavior they exhibit validate the notion of hyper-active
transcription, or hyper-transcription. The fragmentary form of the novel also evokes the nature of
memory. Just as memory feels involuntary yet guided by a sort of subconscious logic, the structure of the novel is at once deliberate and free-flowing.

In the first line of the novel Kirmen expresses the central theme: “Los peces y los árboles se parecen. Se parecen en los anillos” (11). He explains that the rings on fish and trees mark the passage of time; specifically, they correspond to the winter seasons and indicate the severity of the period. The rings are significant to Kirmen because he believes people, too, are marked with “rings”: “Lo que para los peces es el invierno, para las personas es la pérdida. Las pérdidas delimitan nuestro tiempo . . . Cada pérdida es un anillo oscuro en nuestro interior (11-12). The idea is suggestive. In one way, it means that people carry loss with them internally, that the presence of the figurative rings denotes the absence of what caused them anguish. In another way, the image of the lines tracing loss connects to the notion of transcription. The process of recording stories and documents responds to the nostalgia that weighs upon Kirmen. He leaves external copies, or traces, in order to simulate a response to the internal traces of loss that mark his life and the passage of time.

This idea is recaptured early in the novel. Kirmen collects information about Ricardo Bastida and Aurelio Arteta, two men that he believes might be the “dos amigos” behind the boat’s mysterious moniker. In addition to several letters exchanged between the friends, Kirmen curiously transcribes entries from the diary of Bastida’s son, Ricardo Bastida, Jr., which is titled “Mi viaje al Congreso Eucarístico de Chicago. Junio y julio de 1926” (67). It seems odd that he would choose to reproduce sections of this document, since the relationship to Bastida and Arteta (and why the boat would be named after them) is not made clear from the content. In fact, the diary is limited to the young Bastida’s trans-Atlantic trip with his father from Cherbourg to New York. But Kirmen persists in drawing attention to the manuscript: “Era una libreta de bolsillo, de
dieciséis centímetros de largo y diez de ancho, con las pastas de cartulina y las hojas del interior a rayas horizontales. El propio Ricardo había numerado las páginas, ochenta y seis en total, de las cuales había escrito en ochenta y cuatro. La caligrafía de Bastida era la de un chaval de catorce años” (67). Since the diary is unrelated to the *Dos amigos*, one may conclude that Kirmen transcribes portions of it as a means of comparing his flight with Bastida’s voyage by steamer. For example, the transcript of an entry dated “Día 7 de junio” describes, “La hora. Al embarcar en Cherburgo atrasamos el reloj para tener la hora solar y luego cada noche se retrasa en el vapor el reloj 50 minutos; así al llegar a Nueva York, como pasaremos 6 noches, habremos atrasado el reloj 6 x 50 = 300 minutos, o sea, las 5 horas de diferencia de meridiano” (71, italics in original). Kirmen is preoccupied by the math and explains, “Bastida menciona las cinco horas de diferencia entre Cherburgo y Nueva York. Hoy en día son seis. Lo que ellos hicieron en seis días, nosotros lo haremos en siete horas y media. En la pantalla incluida en el respaldo del asiento anterior aparecen los detalles del vuelo” (71). Focusing on the time difference allows Kirmen to mark the passage of time and the changes that have occurred. Transcribing the diary responds to Kirmen’s feeling that the present generation moves faster and further away from traditions or “old” ways.

This point is emphasized by ongoing references to the in-flight navigation screen. Kirmen’s descriptions of the digital images draw attention to the distortion produced by the map, which denatures the size and form of the Earth and situates a disproportionately-sized plane atop it. The act of reproducing the diary entry and the navigation screens calls attention to the fact that most modern-day travelers are familiar with (and unbothered by) the screens because they lack the experience of being close to the ocean over a journey of six days. They fly right over it in seven hours. And for Kirmen, in doing so they add another line of loss.
While perusing an old atlas Kirmen observes yet another line, this time traced by his father. He realizes, “la marca en el libro perduraría, pero él no” (43). In other words, although the line would remain in the book his father would not always be there. By extension, one understands that the absence of Kirmen’s father will similarly leave a mark on him. Kirmen simulates an outward response to this anxiety by transcribing information connected to Rockall, his father’s preferred fishing zone back when the work of the trawlers formed the heart of local life. First, he transcribes “lo que dice en Wikipedia en su entrada sobre la isla de Rockall” (22). However, the alleged Wikipedia entry bears little resemblance to the actual Wikipedia entry of Rockall that is currently available online. Even the search results in Euskera, the original language of publication of the novel, do not match: a simple comparison of proper nouns present in the actual online entries with those found in the transcript indicates that the latter is an unfaithful reproduction. Although the premise of Wikipedia is to represent and to explain the real world, the digital realm of Wikipedia gestures towards the hyperreal: it establishes a network of signifiers that incessantly point to (and link to) one another rather than to their referents. The site is constantly changed and updated; it is not consistent or static. A Wikipedia entry cannot, furthermore, truly be “transcribed” because the image on the screen evolves. The transcript included within Bilbao-New York-Bilbao signals the nature of this type of digital record: it is imperfect and deceptive. The entry by itself provides an illusion of precision; the transcript magnifies the illusion. The act of transcribing the entry satiates Kirmen’s nostalgia for a place (Rockall) and a memory (fishing at Rockall) that pertain to his father.

Kirmen also transcribes part of an article published in a scientific journal to prove that his father’s seemingly fantastic details of fishing at Rockall were in fact accurate. He states, “Los relatos de los marineros han sido considerados siempre míticos, leyendas en las que las olas
alcanzaban el tamaño de las montañas en esa parte de Rockall. Nadie les creía, se pensaba que eran exageraciones” (34). His own father insisted upon having seen a giant wave that would have engulfed Kirmen’s family home in Ondarroa, but no one paid any attention to him. In fact, Kirmen explains, no one believed the stories about the giant waves until scientists became interested in the phenomenon and set out to measure the ones close to Rockall. A transcript from a report attributed to “Geophysical Research Letters, vol. 33, 2006” provides the results: “El altímetro vía satélite ha demostrado que no mide las olas como es necesario y que las ve más pequeñas de lo que son. El medidor de nuestro barco ha hallado una ola de 29,1 metros de altura. La ola más grande jamás medida. Por lo tanto, queda claro que las mediciones hay que hacerlas en el mar, por medio de boyas y barcos” (36). Kirmen does the math and realizes that his father was right, but that he, along with everyone else, was unable to believe it until it was published in a scientific journal. Transcribing the article in conjunction with his father’s story indicates that Kirmen knew the “truth” behind the giant waves all along. It acknowledges his father, the story, and the accuracy and significance of both.

When Kirmen arrives to Frankfurt, he recalls another story related to rings and loss. His aunt lost her wedding ring, which amazingly was found within a fish caught by her husband. Kirmen explains that he converted the story into a poem that was later published, which resulted in moderate critical attention. He then transcribes part of an email from an unnamed “Profesor de Literatura Oral,” in which the latter informs Kirmen that “la historia del anillo de oro es una vieja leyenda extendida por toda Europa” (63). The narrator reproduces the revelatory text because for him “lo más importante son las historias, sean verdad o mentira, o las dos cosas” (66). The transcript responds to the exchange initiated by the professor: through the act of copying it within the narrative Kirmen reestablishes the importance of the story. He does not care where or
how it was first told, but he does care about the significance the story held for his aunt and the
enjoyment she got from sharing it. His aunt is aging, but Kirmen has immortalized her version of
the tale.

Shortly after the story of his aunt’s ring, Kirmen discusses the CD recordings of his “tío
Boni.” While listening to the audio file on his iBook on board, he contemplates the process
through with his acquaintance, Professor Barrutia, made a dictionary of Euskera:

>Cómo se hace un diccionario. Muchas veces me lo he preguntado. En la grabación
se aprecia con claridad la técnica de Barrutia. El profesor enuncia una palabra, la
mayor parte de las veces en castellano, y el tío la traduce al euskera del pueblo.
Por ejemplo, cuando le pregunta “sotavento,” el tío responde “haixebekaldi,” y, si
le dice “barvolento,” entonces “haixekaldi.” (75)

Kirmen transcribes select portions of the recording into the narrative. First, he reproduces a
phrase from the beginning of the recording that Boni “solía soltar en vida de vez en cuando,
‘antes el mar estaba lleno de peces, ahora de agua’” (75). The decline of the fish population is
akin to the wane of Euskera in Ondarroa, which is likewise documented on the CD: “menciona
en el CD muchas palabras que yo no he oído ni una sola vez, palabras de un vocabulario perdido,
como ‘sakillu,’ por ejemplo” (76). The corresponding entry from Barrutia’s completed dictionary
is also reproduced in the narrative:

*Sakillo-sakillu* (O-b), *Sakilluk* (O-b)

>Test.: O-b; vuelan muy cerca del agua. (73)

Kirmen realizes from the list of abbreviations that “O-b” stands for “Ondarroa, Boni Laka.” In
other words, the entry is a transcript of part of the CD recordings of Boni; Boni’s words and
thoughts have become the reference for future generations. Although Kirmen claims the transcripts represent his efforts to confirm the word for a particular species of fish, in reality the process of reproducing segments of the recordings and the dictionary allow him to engage with the now deceased man. He does it because it points at the absence of the source and because it provides him with an opportunity to “respond” to what Boni said. In a related way, Kirmen’s mention of how there are some words that he has never heard “ni una sola vez,” words of a lost vocabulary, highlights his desire to respond to the wane of particular expressions, which symbolize the wane of local traditions. Transcription is not a form of penance or atonement, but it does assume a similar tone in this situation. Kirmen attempts to make up for his own ignorance and unfamiliarity, or perhaps his participation in the loss of language and culture, by reproducing the entries and drawing attention to the situation.

Kirmen’s concern for the figurative disappearance of words extends to a preoccupation with the way in which the importance of Euskera has changed with time. What was once a language of survival has become a language of play. Kirmen recalls an experience shortly before Franco’s death in which civil guards raided his family home in search of incriminating documents. He writes that his mother gathered up everything, “todos los papeles, carteles, y panfletos que nos pudieran comprometer y los hizo desaparecer, como tantos y tantos otros, antes de que fuera demasiado tarde” (200). To calm their mother, Kirmen’s sister spoke a phrase that Kirmen then transcribes within the narrative: “Lasai, ama, kantak dira (Tranquila, madre, son canciones)” (200, italics in original). He concludes, “En aquellos años oscuros, la lengua marginada y clandestina salvó a mi madre y a mi hermana de aquel apuro. Para protegerse a sí mismas utilizaron la vieja lengua. Ahora, sin embargo, décadas después . . . dos niñas que habían ido a coger mariposas utilizaban la misma lengua, pero para jugar. También la hija vasca de uno
de los marinos senegaleses” (201). The juxtaposition of the transcribed phrase with the young girls’ use of Basque to catch butterflies shows that although Euskera is still in use, it is now largely a means of recreation, an amusement. What was once a private and safe, if not coded, means of communication has transformed into a public language of play. This is not to say that Kirmen “misses” the time of the dictatorship or that he is unhappy that two young and culturally diverse friends are speaking in Euskera. Instead, transcription acknowledges the changing times and responds to the nostalgia he feels for a moment in which the language united his family against a very real threat.

In a related scene, Kirmen recalls how his friend, a New York writer named Phillis Levin, browsed a few texts online that were written in Euskera, trying to deduce the meaning of the strange-looking words. According to Kirmen, the relatively high number of “x” letters that appeared in the words captivated Levin. He reproduces her comments within the narrative: “Vuestra lengua parece el mapa de tesoro . . . Si desenfocas en el resto de letras y percibes sólo las x, parece como si te guiaran por la ruta del tesoro” (29). The quote is a beautiful, intriguing description of Euskera. The notion of the letters and words—themselves a sort of imperfect image, or simulacra, of the ideas they are meant to represent—revealing the route to a hidden treasure could be understood as a metaphor for the language. Just as following the “x” on a map leads one to the “treasure,” understanding the relationship between “x” and the other letters in the Basque words leads the enlightened reader (or listener) to the meaning of the phrase, which is the figurative “prize.” That Euskera is a “secret” language is justified by its status relative to other languages used not only in Spain but around the world. Preserving the language preserves the reward, which would be lost without the map.
Kirmen likewise transcribes information about Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka, the father-son partnership responsible for fabricating the famous collection of glass flowers housed in the Harvard Museum of Natural History. Kirmen explains that originally, “utilizaban flores secas para el estudio de la teórica vegetal, pero de esta manera no se podía apreciar la auténtica belleza de las flores. Se valían también de réplicas en papel maché y cera, pero no cumplían el objetivo propuesto” (178). The museum director at that time (1886) wanted something else, “algo más real” (178). He employed the Blaschkas to make flowers out of glass, which were agreed to be better than “real” flowers for showing displaying the beauty of the living plants (179). Kirmen adds that even in the present, “incluso mirándolas de cerca no se distingue si no de vidrio o son de verdad” (181). His observation suggests that the glass flowers are similar to first order images, faithful reproductions of the original, and yet the way in which they have come to replace the real flowers—to be “more real” than real—hints at a more hyperreal nature. The flowers are simulacra that draw the viewer’s attention away from their deceit; their only flaw, protected by the glass cases that house them, is their lack of scent (181). In the same scene, Kirmen transcribes part of a text written by Leopold Blaschka about the process of fabricating the glass flowers, which states:

Muchos piensan que empleamos algún tipo de máquina para realizar las plantas. Pero no es así nuestro secreto es el tacto. Rudolf lo tiene más desarrollado que yo, porque el tacto es algo que se perfecciona de generación en generación. Sólo hay una forma de ser un virtuoso vidriero: tener un bisabuelo que ame el vidrio, que ese bisabuelo tenga un hijo al que le guste el vidrio, y que, del mismo modo, ese hijo de éste sea un apasionado vidriero . . . si no tienes antecedentes, te afanas en vano. (181)
The transcript reveals that the secret to the flowers is that there is no secret. In other words, the tradition must be passed down over generations because it is the only way to preserve and to perfect the technique. In much the same way, Kirmen transcribes because he believes in the importance of his precursors and their traditions. Transcription only simulates a solution to the problem of loss, absence, and disappearance because, like the glass flowers, the substitute is not “alive” as the originals were. It pretends to revive or to keep alive, when really it highlights the inanimate nature of the copy by comparison.

The narrative concludes with Kirmen’s arrival to New York’s JFK airport. It is noteworthy that the novel does not end when Kirmen reveals the story behind the name Dos amigos. Kirmen’s Uncle Santi gives him a document that he found among old papers, which contains the history of a boat named “San Agustín, SS-3-765” (186). Kirmen reproduces the information from the document within the novel, which tells the true story behind the name of the ship: the boat’s name was changed from San Agustín to Dos amigos by Pedro Artetxe and José Mari Goiogana, the two people who sold it to Kirmen’s grandfather, Liborio, in 1941. Kirmen realizes, “Nuestro abuelo Liborio no tenía nada que ver con el nombre Dos amigos. . . . No había ningún amigo desaparecido. Se acabó el misterio” (187). The transcribed deed of sale dispels all the rumors and fantasies that Kirmen had constructed about the boat’s origin. But not ending the novel with the revelation of the initial secret suggests that, like the glass flowers, the secret is that there is no secret. In other words, the origin of the boat name is insignificant; what matters is that it enables Kirmen to transcribe and thus simulate a response to his anxiety over the disappearance of people and traditions that held special significance in his hometown.

After the plane lands at JFK, Kirmen describes the passengers’ bustle to disembark and reproduces two final texts: “A Renata [who is seated next to Kirmen on the flight] le ha llegado
un mensaje al móvil. ‘Please, help me,’ reza el mensaje. El avión finalmente se ha detenido. ‘Welcome to New York City’” (203). Taken together, Kirmen’s arrival, the text message to Renata, and the welcome announcement from the flight crew symbolize his departure not only from Bilbao, but from the small world of Ondarroa and all that it represents. Although the title of the novel suggests he will have a return flight home, ending the narrative journey in New York indicates that in many ways the trip, like the transcripts, is unidirectional: the past, the traditional marine lifestyle, the previous generations of his family, and their supposed secrets are disappearing over time. Kirmen will return to Bilbao, but it will not be the same Bilbao that he left. The transcript of a text message reiterates the digital, technology-driven contemporary world that is gradually infiltrating his hometown and supplanting the ways of life that are left behind; the use of English in the transcribed text message and the welcome announcement reinforces the progressive globalization and modernization of the once small, autonomous, Ondarroa community. Although he appears ambivalent about the consequences of substituting sources with varying orders of simulacra, Kirmen’s frenzied reproduction of originals is symptomatic of his fear of loss, his fascination with the disappearance of the real, and his desire to preserve some remnant of an older way of life.

Both Bilbao-New York-Bilbao and Llámame Brooklyn exemplify the desire to combat loss and nostalgia. By over-producing transcripts, the main characters establish fragmented, even fictional, “images” of absent sources and consequently become lost, disoriented, and displaced. Although transcription allows the characters to simulate a response to companions and traditions that are no longer present, it ultimately showcases the impossibility of bringing back that which is absent.
CONCLUSION

Literary transcription has been overlooked by scholars in the past. This is likely due to its innocuous nature. When transcripts are included in works of fiction, they seem superficial: a simple means of copying actual or notional source information within another text. However, transcription raises many questions about the alleged copies, sources, and transcribers. For example, who is/was responsible for transcribing the source text or testimony? Why did he or she take it upon him or herself to transcribe the information? What is the relationship between transcription, narration, and the narrator? When and where did the act of transcription take place? And how did this process occur? As I have demonstrated in my analysis of the six novels included in my dissertation, transcription is anything but a simple procedure. And these types of questions provide avenues to compelling interpretations of transcripts, transcribers, and the works of fiction in which both are found. Transcription calls attention to the boundaries between fiction and reality and to the similarities and differences between writing fiction and historiography. Transcription amplifies the constructedness of the novels as well as the reader’s enjoyment of and involvement in constructing meaning.

The first three questions in the above paragraph relate to larger issues of agency, responsibility, and personal motivations. When the fictional transcribers are anonymous and extradiegetic, it is understandably more difficult to determine their hypothetical reasons for becoming involved. However, even in the case of seemingly unknown or absent transcribers, the product reveals a good deal about the imaginary individual(s). This is the case in both La voz dormida and the first three “derrotas” of Los girasoles ciegos. We, as readers of fiction, are never able to identify the transcribers, but what they transcribe and the way in which they do so
expose their admiration for those considered to be the defeated of the Spanish Civil War and the
Franco dictatorship, as well as the transcribers’ desire to recover and reproduce silenced or
obscured experiences. At the same time, transcription allows us to consider the moral weight that
accompanies the relationship between those who write about the past and those who experienced
the past. The task of representing the experiences of others is always a delicate one. However, it
becomes exponentially more so when representing these types of personal and public tragedies in
fiction.

If the “absent” transcribers of *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos* exhibit a more
convincing desire to advocate on behalf of the defeated, the first-person narrator-transcribers of
*Soldados de Salamina* and *La mitad del alma* take advantage of past tragedies for personal gain.
This contrast demonstrates that transcription responds to the transcribers’ often varied personal
and professional motivations. In both *Soldados de Salamina* and *La mitad del alma*, professional
success hinges upon the intrigue of historical ruin. However, this horrifying cause and effect
relationship is overshadowed by the identities of the two narrators, who serve as avatars of their
real author counterparts. In other words, conflating the identities of the fictional narrators with
the real (self-fictionalizing) authors is a loaded metafictional move that generates meaning by
highlighting the complex textual construction and literary qualities of the novels. The presence of
literary transcripts screams “not real.” In *Soldados de Salamina*, for example, the circulation of
transcripts explicitly directs attention to the narrators’ investigation and representation of both
Sánchez Mazas and Miralles. The presence of the transcripts emphasizes the narrator’s
increasingly intense desire to discover the “real” hero of the former’s miraculous escape and why
the latter would have saved the Falange leader. Yet the narrator’s enthusiasm for the story he
seeks betrays his own intentional unreliability in addition to the fact that he reveals a recipe for
publishing a successful novel about history and memory. The same is true for _La mitad del alma_.

Transcription ultimately reveals the illusion of authenticity and the impossibility of definitive knowledge. The two novels, and the function of transcripts/transcription within the novels, invite profound questions about a wealth of relevant but murky issues: the relationship between writers and a reading public, history as a commodity, the politics of writing politically motivated historical fiction, and the increasingly popular trend of exhuming the secrets of the past.

Lastly, the transcribers present in _Llámame Brooklyn_ and _Bilbao-New York-Bilbao_, who are also first-person narrators, highlight a desire to revive the past: not to lend it a high degree of moral value or to receive personal or professional gain, but simply to bring back people, events, stories, language, and experiences. The protagonists of both novels transcribe to keep the past alive in the present and to preserve it for the future. Their reasons for doing so, which feature nostalgia for physically absent or deceased individuals and for traditional ways of life, reflect universal themes of disappearance and loss. However, the transcribers of the two novels do not succeed in their missions. Their efforts demonstrate the paradox and the allure of literary transcription: attempting to bring back the source only pushes it farther away. Nostalgia is not sated by a false substitute. This process assumes a new dimension in the modern age of technology and globalization. As the excessive and, particularly, the electronically-based transcripts of both novels demonstrate, technology is changing the way people communicate. The ease and the accessibility of the digital world make reproducing information instantaneous and uncomplicated. In the case of an electronic transcript, it is as effortless as “cut and paste.” The plights of the transcribers in both novels question what we are losing amid these new means of mass-producing and sharing source information. Is there something more to hearing a folk story live and in person that is not captured on a video or audio file? Do we lose the essence of
the interaction by “saving” it on a computer? Do we sacrifice the authentic experience just as we try to preserve it?

Returning to my initial list of questions, examining when and where literary transcription has occurred within a fictional environment reveals equally as much as who has transcribed and why. In the six novels included in my study, the time and location of transcription varies. However, the time frame of transcription connects to generational concerns. Specifically, in Soldados de Salamina, La mitad del alma, Llámame Brooklyn, and Bilbao-New York-Bilbao, individuals pertaining to the two generations following the events in question take up the task of transcription. The texts they transcribe belong to the narrated past, but the transcribers make them relevant in the narrated present. In doing so, they create a bond between the two time periods. The generational gap is significant because it relates to a similar trend that is occurring in contemporary Spain and in other countries that have endured equally momentous experiences such as civil war or dictatorship. As I explain in my introductory chapter, the witnesses and firsthand sources of the Spanish Civil War are approaching advanced ages. Many have died and others have long since left Spain. The inaccuracy of memory and the natural decay of time limit our ability to restore original information. In Spain, this has resulted in an increased pressure to record testimonies and to transcribe documents—to exhume and, thus, preserve “originals.” In some instances, the window for transcription is also affected by social, political, and ideological changes. Organizations such as the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH) have made strides in large part due to recent legislation concerning history, memory, archives, and rights to exhume mass graves. If human agents in the present desire to do something about the past, the authors of these six novels succeed in such a mission by writing novels that call
attention to the challenges of history, historiography, and representing texts and testimony connected to past experiences.

Location is similarly significant in all of the novels since it lends a sense of authenticity to the transcripts. However, the location of the transcribers and the transcription process in *Soldados de Salamina, La mitad del alma, Llámame Brooklyn*, and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* is particularly meaningful because it extends beyond Spain. In *Soldados de Salamina* and *La mitad del alma*, the transcription process leads each of the fictional transcribers to France, where they hope to find more information about the events in question. In *Llámame Brooklyn* and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, the transcribers and their transcription processes cross multiple, international borders. These novels demonstrate that the notion of a quest for truth and the hope of discovering a long-kept secret are not limited to Spain, just as they are not limited to the last few decades.

Literary transcription contributes to and thrives on human interest in what was and what might have been. The international nature of transcription as it is represented within these novels makes it an apt point of departure for similar literary investigations in other works of Peninsular literature and literature of other countries.

Literary transcription, as it occurs in the six novels included in my study, co-opts and interrogates the current mode of Spanish historiography. That is to say, transcription assumes the guise of historiography: it mimics Ricouer’s three phases of documentation, interpretation, and representation. However, the transcripts of these six novels further seek to exhume, to unearth, and to reveal. The discovery process is driven by a supposed truth, as in the cases of *Soldados de Salamina, La mitad del alma*, and *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao*, or by something perceived to be sacred, as in the cases of *La voz dormida, Los girasoles ciegos*, and *Llámame Brooklyn*. The transcripts prove that the procedure is imperfect: what the transcribers reproduce is never what
they seek. As these six novels demonstrate, literary transcription does not reproduce the historical past, it produces works of fiction. Moreover, it produces several of the most carefully crafted and alluring novels to have been published in Spain since 2000.

Literary transcription surpasses the supposedly objective representation of historical memory. Although it is found in a number of recently published works of fiction both in Spain and abroad that deal with history, memory, and writing, literary transcription also appears in a variety of other types of novels. For example, Belén Gopegui’s novel *Deseo de ser punk* (2009) incorporates transcripts of emails, letters, songs, and pop culture references as part of the teenage protagonist’s journey to “become punk,” in other words, to define herself on her own terms. Here transcription has less to do with a historical past or a collectively traumatic event and instead serves as a procedure through which the protagonist comes of age, explores different possibilities, and communicates her moods and feelings to her interlocutors. Transcription is also featured in Andrés Neuman’s novel *El viajero del siglo* (2009). The text, which is the third published novel by the Argentine author, pertains to the realm of the futuristic, fantastic, science-fiction narrative, and yet it is flush with transcripts of the protagonist’s translations of other texts.

The literary history of transcription demonstrates its unique ability to adapt: to new genres, to new literary movements, and to new audiences. Literary transcription warrants continued scholarly analysis because it has been neglected as an object of critical inquiry in the past. The fact that it has continued to exist over the last several centuries indicates that it will continue to affect works of fiction in the future. Many canonical (and non-canonical) literary texts currently incorporate transcripts, just as they have done throughout the last several hundred years. To ignore such a rich tradition is to limit the present and future possibilities of literary criticism.
My dissertation contributes a new approach to the six novels I have analyzed throughout, and it also justifies literary transcription as a point of departure for future investigation. From historical fiction and historiographic metafiction to pop culture and sci-fi literature, literary transcription is key to understanding how different texts, authors, regions, genres, and movements converge. Perhaps rather than examining transcription as a means for reproducing information, we should continue to pursue a better understanding of how transcription functions and has functioned throughout the history of literature.
NOTES

1 See, for example, H. Wayne Storey’s study *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric* (1993), in which he analyzes the practice of actual transcription and the role of the medieval scribe.

2 Among the Trans-Atlantic examples most relevant to my study, one finds *Yo el supremo* (Augusto Roa Bastos, 1974), *Libro de navíos y borrascas* (Daniel Moyano, 1983) and several short stories published in *Ficciones* (Jorge Luis Borges, 1945).

3 In the United States, there are three national court reporting associations: The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), the National Verbatim Reporters Association (NVRA), and the American Association of Electronic Reporters and Transcribers (AAERT). These organizations have strenuous programs for the training and certification of professional stenographers. Similarly, Spain’s legal system utilizes the “Cuerpo de Redactores Taquigráficos y Estenotipistas de las Cortes Generales” (Body of Stenographers and Shorthand Typists of the General Courts), which regulates certification and standardization of the practice. For more information, visit their respective websites: www.ncraonline.org, www.nvra.org, www.aaert.org, www.congreso.es, www.senado.es.

4 For more information on this group, see their website at www.IAPRT.org.

5 See, for example, reports published at the website of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, http://www.netac.rit.edu/publication/taskforce/realtimed/index.html.


10 In a study by Lapadat and Lindsay, several seasoned transcribers were asked to transcribe the same interaction. Findings showed that participants’ transcripts differed in layout, quantity, type of elements of the interaction they transcribed, conventions they derived to represent those elements, and the consistency with which they applied the conventions. The researchers concluded that these transcription decisions were linked to interpretive consequences, with each transcript re-presenting the interaction in a slightly different way.

11 Among them, one finds groups dedicated to making one-to-one matches between components of discourse events and the symbols used to represent those events, as well as proponents of “The Jeffersonian Transcription System.” For more on the latter, see the online introduction and training module available at:

http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/TranscriptionProject/page1.html.

12 In its most explicit and literal form, intertextuality consists of quoting, with quotation marks; however, in a less explicit and less canonical form, it is the practice of plagiarism, an undeclared but still literal borrowing. In its least literal and explicit form, intertextuality is the practice of allusion (Genette 2). For a full background on the evolution of intertextuality, from Kristeva to postmodernism, see Mary Orr’s Intertextuality (2003) and Graham Allen’s Intertextuality (2000).

13 I will discuss the relationship between transcription and metafiction in the subsequent chapters. For a complete study on metafiction in the contemporary Spanish novel, see Francisco G. Orejas, La metaficción en la novela española contemporánea (2003).
It makes sense that literature from the Early Modern period is concerned with transcription, because actual transcription was a common practice at that time. However, my examples all surpass this real-life reflection, utilizing transcription in ways that question the nature of literature.

I choose to focus on the new facets of transcription relevant to this work. However, it is useful to note that in Chapter XVII of the Sergas de Esplandián, Montalvo, like Juan Manuel before him, uses notional transcription as a means of leaving a written example: Lisuarte tells el maestro Elisabad to write down what he hears, thus preserving “solamente lo que vio y supo de personas de fe” (132).

Here Montalvo anticipates Cervantes’s play with the term “historia,” which I will discuss in the next section.

Hardly a critic has failed to mention that the Quijote is, if anything, a book about books—the reading, writing, translating, consumption, conflagration, censorship, death, and types of books. See, for example, Julio Baena’s Discordancias cervantinas (2003) and Anthony J. Close’s A Companion to Don Quijote (2008).

Bruce Wardropper observes that at that time there was no word for “novel” and that “historia” was often an ambiguous term, implying both “history” and “story” at once. Thus, when Cervantes calls his work “una historia,” he engages in a conscious play on words (Wardropper 89).

Williamson is not alone in considering the Quijote to be one of the finest examples of ironic, self-conscious narrative performance. Robert C. Spires referred to Cervantes as a significant precursor to the metafictional mode, a claim that has yet to be contested. See, particularly, Beyond the Metafictional Mode, pages 18-32. Similarly, in The Cambridge Companion to the
Spanish Novel, Harriet Turner and Adelaida López de Martínez explain that the Quijote and Velázquez’s Las meninas (1656) are both works of art that promote the theme of their own identity “as a fabrication” (2). Their observations are useful for my examination of the contemporary novels, since transcription repeatedly calls attention to the nature of the texts themselves, supposedly based on historias verdaderas, true histories, but ultimately aware of their own creation and fabrication as works of fiction.

20 As previously mentioned, in the Sergas de Esplandián, Lisuarte tells el maestro Elisabad to write down what the others are saying, and, similarly, don Juan has Patronio’s exemplum written down for posterity. However, unlike in the Quijote, in the former examples the process of transcription appears only indirectly.

21 At other times, letters written by characters are transcribed into the text, as are fragments of other stories. Although the Quijote is the precursor to this trend, I will examine it in more detail in the following section.

22 Consider, for example, the practice of transcription found in “El Miserere” and in “El monte de las Ánimas.”

23 See Spires’s analysis of La familia de Pascual Duarte in La novela española de posguerra (1978).

24 The historical referent is 1909.

25 If Atxaga’s own actual translation (transcription) of Obabakoak from Euskera to Castilian Spanish literally transforms the text from one language into another, it also results in several noted changes in form and meaning. As Ibon Izurieta notes, Atxaga’s translation plays tricks on the Spanish reader (74). The presentation of the table of contents in both the Spanish and English translations differs from the table of contents in the original Basque version. The novel is divided
in three parts in the Spanish and English versions, whereas it consists of only two parts in the Basque version. Similarly, Atxaga eliminated one of the stories in the Basque version and two numbered sections of the second part from the Spanish translation. Finally, Atxaga modified the order of the stories in the first part. While one may argue that these changes are minor, they alter the way in which certain types of readers are able (or allowed) to interact with the text.

Translation as a form of transcription appears in recent fiction, as well: one of the novels I will study (Bilbao-New York-Bilbao) has been translated by the author from Euskera to Castilian Spanish, and another (La meitat de l’ànima) has been translated by the author from Catalan to Castilian Spanish. In both cases, the translation of the novels has resulted in notable changes.

Later on, I will relate my understanding of hyper-real transcription to Jean Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality, a world without a real origin. As Douglas Kellner elucidates, hyperreality generates “a blurring of distinctions between the real and the unreal in which the prefix ‘hyper’ signifies more real than real” (119).

The major issue with the proposed Amnesty Law was that in exchange for granting amnesty to prisoners condemned for terrorist acts, those functionaries and agents who had committed crimes against “los vencidos” were also given a free pass: “los delitos y faltas que pudieran haber cometido las autoridades, funcionarios y agentes del orden público con motivo u ocasión de la investigación y persecución de los actos incluidos en esta ley” (“Ley 46/1977” 22765).

Here he refers to “public” in the social sense, as opposed to “public” political or institutional venues.

Juliá offers an exhaustive list of scholars from the transition period who wrote about a variety of topics related to the war and post-war Franco era. See, in particular, page 66.
Among them, anthropologist Antonius C.G.M. Robben likens Spain’s situation to the “indifference” felt during Chile’s transitional undertaking (267).

The ARMH website indicates that the group currently has thousands of online followers around the globe, but the organization’s heightened media presence exposes it to millions both within and outside of Spain.

One common denominator among these studies is the work done on collecting testimonies. “Testimony” is of legal origin, and is defined as an eyewitness account the purpose of which is to establish facts so that justice may prevail. Particularly in Latin America, testimony has become a privileged genre for making state terror known to the public. According to Jo Labanyi, it has mostly been promoted by Marxist critics, who have seen its first-person “micro-histories” as a way of maintaining a Marxist political commitment while also recognizing a postmodern critique of “master narratives” (“Testimonies” 194). Testimony has been linked to offering personal truths about the past, as evidenced by key critical works in the field like John Beverley’s Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth (2004) and Georg Gugelberg’s edited volume The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse in Latin America (1996). Yet although these works focus on the relationship between testimony and ideology, they pay scant attention to the role of transcription in the collection of testimony. This is surprising since, as all of these scholars observe, the firsthand account reaches the public through the mediation of an interviewer and/or transcriber (often the same person), who present(s) the information to the public in edited form.

The website is regularly updated with news, articles, documents, and video pertaining to the exhumations, thus copying and relaying information among interested parties. In fact, the ARMH has sparked a media deluge of images and information related to the exhumations of mass graves in Spain. The group has reached an international audience, as evidenced by articles
published in the international press over the last ten years. For example, an article by Elizabeth Kolbert titled “Looking for Lorca,” published in the New Yorker in December of 2003, brought to the attention of many United States readers the work being done by the ARMH, and similar articles have been published in The New York Times, the Boston Globe, and the LA Times, as well as on the BBC website. Because of the dissemination of information through technology, the transcription process has come to form part of the global scene. In the words of Gina Herrmann, technology has led to more “transatlantic awareness,” allowing different groups to promote each other’s work (170). For example, prior to the January 24th, 2008 airing of the documentary Las fosas del olvido, directed by Alfonso Domingo and Itiziar Bernaola, the ARMH sent a mass email to its list of followers, encouraging everyone to watch the program. The email stated, “Lo que os queremos proponer es que nos ayudéis a convertir la audiencia de dicho programa en un ejemplo del apoyo social que tiene la causa de estos republicanos desaparecidos” (quoted in Herrmann 170). By equating each spectator with a “vote,” the organization involved the viewers in an international performance focused on victimhood and on the controversial notion of recovering historical memory through testimony.

34 Beginning in 2003, the trend in publishing collections of testimonies gave way to the production of TV documentaries containing interviews and the live testimony of survivors. Since the release of the first two documentaries of this type, Els nens perduts del franquisme (2003) and Les fosses del silenci (2003), produced by Montse Armengou and Richard Belis, only a few volumes of print testimonies have been published, whereas the visual documentaries have flourished. Anne E. Hardcastle comments that these documentaries and testimonies are cultural products, “constructed through discursive and filmic practices, and, consequently, are only “representations” of the past” (150). Although “representation” has become a somewhat suspect
term, associated with postmodern notions of performance, simulacra, and the reproduction of an “eternally displaced and inaccessible real world,” it should also be understood as acting on someone else’s behalf, or standing in for them when they are unable to do so (Hardcastle 150). These observations on the representational function of the documentaries are in keeping with the representational function of transcripts, as discussed previously.

35 Here it is important to note that the collections of testimonies published during this period were not the first to deal with Spain’s past. As early as 1979, Ronald Fraser published Blood of Spain, which mingled historical narrative and first-person accounts.

36 Among the anthologies Labanyi examines, one finds the following: Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza and Álvaro de Diego’s Historias orales de la Guerra Civil (2000); Jorge Martínez Reverte and Socorro Thomás’s Hijos de la guerra: testimonios y recuerdo (2001); Carlos Elordi’s Los años difíciles: El testimonio de los protagonistas anónimos de la guerra civil y la posguerra (2002); and José María Zavala’s Los horrores de la guerra civil (2003).

37 The three volumes are entitled Testimonios de mujeres en las cárceles franquistas (1974), Mujeres en la resistencia (1986), and Cárcel de mujeres (1939-1945) (1985).

38 Organizations as diverse as Amnesty International and El Mundo, a conservative Spanish newspaper, began to get involved by publishing reports and opinion pieces on the matter. Specifically, the July 18, 2005 Amnesty International report entitled “España, poner fin al silencio y a la injusticia” stated that crimes against international law committed during the Civil War and dictatorship “were not dealt with during the Transición, nor were the rights of victims—who were denied truth, justice, and compensation—dealt with either.” Amnesty International later pushed the government to recuperate the memory, dignity, and remains of the forgotten victims. As if in response, on June 23rd of the same year, El Congreso de Diputados declared
2006 “El año de la memoria histórica,” celebrating the 75\(^{th}\) anniversary of the founding of the Second Spanish Republic, as well as the 70\(^{th}\) anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War. Historical markers and encouragement to recuperate memory and testimony about the past has, in turn, created a push toward transcription as a tool for so doing. With each successive push to study and commemorate the past, the need for transcribers and transcription grows, as does its presence in fiction.

39 Although the law is commonly referred to thus, its formal version is a mouthful: “La Ley por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la Guerra Civil y la Dictadura.”

40 Article 4 grants “una declaración de reparación y reconocimiento personal” for those who fell victim to the political motives, ideologies, and religious beliefs of the Franco regimen (“La ley” 53411). Articles 5-10 discuss the improvement of state aid (pensions and health) to widows and families of those who died because of the Franco regime; aid to those who were orphaned by the Franco regime and/or suffered a loss of liberties during that time; and recognition of those who died in defense of democracy between 1968 and 1977 (“La ley” 53412–13).

41 Article 15 calls for “la retirada de escudos, insignias, placas y otros objetos o menciones conmemorativas de exaltación, personal o colectiva, de la sublevación militar, de la Guerra Civil y de la represión de la Dictadura” (“La ley” 53413). Article 16 prohibits political events at El Valle de los Caídos, where Franco is buried. Articles 18-19 concern the granting of Spanish nationality to surviving members of the International Brigades, as well as recognition of “la labor de las asociaciones, fundaciones y organizaciones que hayan destacado en la defensa de la dignidad de todas las víctimas de la violencia política” (“La ley” 53414).
Montse Armengou Martín has commented that journalists and researchers alike face “serious hurdles in examining Spanish archives,” in part because employees attempt to “thwart” their research and also because many documents were destroyed, neglected, and even burned during the Transition (161).

“El caso Garzón” (the Garzón Case) is perhaps the most recent political event to fuel the fire of historical memory in Spain, and, in turn, the push for recording and transcribing testimony. In September of 2008, Judge-Magistrate Baltazar Garzón began compiling a register of deaths resulting from reprisals during the wartime and postwar periods. On October 16th of the same year, he published a judicial decision declaring himself competent to oversee investigations into crimes that took place during the war and postwar periods. In the writ, Garzón accused Franco and 34 other members of his regime of the systematic extermination of at least 114,266 victims (“La causa contra Garzón”). The judge defended his position, arguing that these deaths constituted crimes against humanity, and he further argued that “los hechos objeto de denuncia nunca han sido investigados penalmente por la Justicia española” (“La causa contra Garzón”). He explained that the purpose of the investigation was not to make a judicial “revision” of the Civil War, but rather to investigate the past with “el máximo respeto para todas las víctimas que padecieron actos violentos… durante la Guerra Civil y la posguerra,” and to bring the perpetrators to justice on behalf of those victims (“La causa contra Garzón”). The document concluded with a plan of action: the formation of a group of experts and judicial police to investigate the aforementioned crimes and also to authorize exhumations associated with the same (“La causa contra Garzón”). By the end of 2008, Garzón had received over 130,000 names of victims of Franco’s reprisals, and information about his investigation dominated the media. His judicial decision met with immediate opposition, which began a two-year battle to overturn
his decision and to remove him from his position. Garzón was indicted in April of 2010, and, on May 14th of 2010, suspended for exceeding his authority and going against prior judicial decisions (such as the aforementioned 1977 Law of Amnesty). On May 18, 2011, he was removed to the Hague on a seven-month appointment to serve as a consultant to an international committee. For more information, see Manuel Altozano’s article in *El País*, “Garzón lanza la mayor investigación sobre los desaparecidos del régimen de Franco,” as well as the *El País* article he co-authored with J.A. Hernández, and J.M. Lázaro, “El Poder Judicial suspende a Baltazar Garzón por investigar los crímenes del franquismo.”

44 In the case of Chacón’s *La voz dormida*, the author transcribed actual interviews, which she then fictionalized by reworking them into the narrative.

45 In “The Reality of History,” David Carr affirms that this sort of new projected value is a common element of historiography, since many historians, especially today, see their activity as one of “redressing certain imbalances, of rediscovering or retrieving what has been lost, forgotten, or covered over” (134). Carr explains that the lives of those typically excluded from the stories of the past or relegated to the margins, such as women, minorities, or in our case the defeated—“those selected out of the standard narratives of both historical agents and later historians”—are to be reinstated in our historical consciousness (134). The first task is to give them back their own voices, “to let them tell their own stories just as they are articulated in diaries, speeches, sermons, court testimony, folk art, or other expression” (Carr 134). Carr’s statements about historiography relate to narrative fiction, particularly in the case of novels like *La voz dormida* and *Los girasoles ciegos*. Both works of fiction take as their premise the rediscovery and retrieval of the forgotten, or perhaps marginalized, stories of the defeated and
transcription functions as a means of giving back the voices of the defeated through their own alleged diaries, letters, and other documents and forms of expression.

46 Consider, for example, Primo Levi’s contention that language lacks words to express the offense of the Holocaust.

47 Although some scholars, among them José F. Colmeiro and Pablo Gil Casado, have attributed Chacón’s popularity to her premature death the following year, she had proven herself to be a successful writer as early as the 1990s. Her literary career began with several books of poetry, one of which, Contra el desprestigio de la altura, received the Premio de Poesía Ciudad de Irún in 1995. Her transition into narrative began with a trilogy of novels: Algún amor que no mate (1996), Blanca vuela mañana (1997), and Háblame, musa, de aquel varón (1998). Two years later she was awarded the prestigious Premio Azorín for Cielos de barro (2000), the first of her published novels to explore testimonies from the Spanish Civil War and postwar eras. At the time of her death, Chacón was actively involved in social and political issues, participating in “Mujeres contra la Guerra” and protesting the Iraq War alongside Portuguese Nobel laureate José Saramago.

48 For much of the general public, including Chacón, the story of the victors dominated the popular understanding of and reflections on the past. By concentrating her work on the testimony of the defeated Chacón seemed to promise the revelation of a secret from the past. See Aguilar Fernández’s Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española.

49 Chacón’s efforts to research, to write about, and to fictionalize a historical event also placed her in the company of contemporary Peninsular authors such as Lourdes Ortiz (Urraca, 1982) and Carme Riera (Dins el darrer blau, 1994; Cap el cel obert, 2000), both of whom have selected historical fiction as a recent mode of expression. Similarly, Chacón’s desire to include
information about her sources and her process link her to present-day international writers of historiographic metafiction, among them Javier Cercas (Soldados de Salamina, 2001), Jonathan Safran Foer (Everything Is Illuminated), and Patrick Flanery (Absolution, 2012).

50 In the interviews with Mariano Crespo and Santiago Velázquez Jordan, Chacón commented on the four and a half years she spent researching La voz dormida, during which she met with historians, visited libraries, read newspaper annals and periodicals, and, most importantly, interviewed men and women who had experienced the Ventas prison and the Republic resistance efforts firsthand. Her efforts to document primary sources involved in the incarceration of women at the Ventas prison, to interpret those events, and to represent them in written, albeit fictional, form exemplify Paul Ricouer’s three-phase model of the historiographic operation.

51 Chacón was not the first to write about the incarceration of women in the Ventas prison, nor was she the first to consider the lives of the men and women involved in the Republican resistance. In fact, Pablo Gil Casado points out that “Chacón nunca vivió la vida de las cárcelers franquistas,” nor was she or her family involved in the Republican movement (89). Chacón was born in 1954, well after the war and the heyday of the Ventas prison, so her interest in the topic was mediated by her distance from it, just as LaCapra postulated about historians in general. Furthermore, prior to the publication of La voz dormida, anthologies written by actual survivors and witnesses of the Spanish Civil War had circulated throughout Spain and abroad. Chacón credited many of these writers as sources of information and inspiration, particularly Juana Doña for her testimonial novel Desde la noche y la niebla (mujeres en las cárcelers franquistas) (1978) and Tomasa Cuevas for her three volumes, Testimonios de mujeres en las cárcelers franquistas (1974), Mujeres en la resistencia (1986), and Cárcel de mujeres (1939-1945) (1985). What truly separates Chacón from authors such as Doña and Cuevas, and what makes her work unique, is
the way in which she used texts, stories, letters, diaries, and memories to create a “polivocal narrative,” one that combines both fact and fiction (Everly 83).

52 The use of the “amapola,” or poppy, in the title of Celan’s collection bears mention. The poppy was traditionally considered one of the strongest medicines for inducing sleep and dulling the senses, and in ancient history poppies were even used for euthanasia. Thus, naming the poem collection after a natural drug for sleep, for deadening sensation, and for death resonates with the themes of war and suffering in La voz dormida.

53 In the case of Don Fernando and Doña Amparo, the notes also show how transcription may lead to the dissemination of inaccurate information—and not just because the notes are fictional. Even within the storyline the notes reveal how greatly the couple misunderstands one another because they refuse to speak. The transcribed notes demonstrate the limits of their written communication, further the distance between them, and showcase the artificiality of their relationship. Understood this way, Don Fernando and Doña Amparo symbolize the utility of an omniscient, omnipresent narrator-transcriber who can select and represent the documents as part of a larger, rounder narrative, one that uncovers the “secrets” that are kept so without such mediation.

54 Gil Casado emphasizes that the transcribed version is not even remotely official because it lacks “membrete, sellos, y firmas” (92).

55 When it is time for Hortensia’s execution, her imprisoned companions hug her, tell her “me han dicho que no duele,” and promise to deliver her personal effects and letters to Pepita (243). As Hortensia calmly says her goodbyes, the narration unexpectedly changes course, noting the date, “era el seis de marzo de mil novecientos cuarenta y uno,” and describing the registry for the East Cemetery (244). We learn that the registry contains the first and last names of seventeen
“ajusticiados,” sixteen men and one woman, but that Hortensia’s name “no figura en la lista” (244). The scene ends shortly thereafter with a brief description of Hortensia’s last moments and the appearance of a woman who the reader presumes to be Pepita’s landlady, Celia. She closes Hortensia’s eyes, washes her face, and cuts a piece of fabric from her dress to deliver to Pepita as proof of Hortensia’s death. The seemingly random description of the East Cemetery registration book is significant because it calls attention to the fact that there is no written record of Hortensia’s execution: it is as if her name has been erased from the history books just as Julia Conesa feared in her own letter to her mother.


57 The poem also foreshadows the characters’ efforts to fight back and gradually recuperate from the losses suffered throughout Parts One and Two. Nearly all of the transcripts found in Part Three relate to this theme, among them the constitution of the fictional “Agrupación Guerrillera de Cerro Umbría,” which lists as its primary goals an adhesion to the national union of Spanish patriots and a dedication to combating Franco’s forces for the salvation of Spain, and also fragments of Pepita’s letters requesting clemency for Paulino, who has been detained in the Central Prison of Burgos. In both cases, the fictional characters write to recover, both in the sense of healing and of getting back power, people, and pride they have lost. Including the transcripts allows the reader to experience the “taking back” of the Republican and maqui past.
Chacón’s choice of Álvarez Piñer is significant. A former student of Gerardo Diego, Álvarez Piñer was jailed for his Republican involvement and he also refused to publish for years during the Franco regime. He thus epitomizes the literature of the Loyalists and also the titular theme of La voz dormida.

As Catherine Orsini-Saillet observes, Méndez was unable to write his stories from personal memory since he was born in 1941. Instead, he based some of his ideas on memories and stories transmitted by older family members and friends (Orsini-Saillet 3).

Here it is also worth mentioning that the 2008 film version of Los girasoles ciegos, directed by José Luis Cuerda and adapted by Rafael Azcona and Cuerda, has received equal if not more attention than the novel.

In fact, Méndez submitted the second derrota, “Manuscrito encontrado en el olvido,” as an autonomous piece for consideration in the Premio Internacional de Cuentos Maz Aub in 2002, and it was published by the Fundación Max Aub the same year.

Albizu notes that despite its denomination as the most “real” of the documents, the trial transcript contains several errors, all of which are easily verified by historical fact. She mentions the erroneous date of events known to have occurred in 1937 rather than 1936, as well as Franco’s capture of Madrid, which took place at the end of March and not the beginning of April as stipulated in Alegría’s testimony (75-76). Such errors mark the dissemination of disinformation at work within the text.

Bourdieu formally defines the habitus as the system of “durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as . . . principles which generate practices and outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them” (14). The dispositions are “durable” in that they
endure throughout the agent’s lifetime and they are “transposable” because they generate practices in multiple and diverse fields of activity. Bourdieu refers to them as “structured structures” because they inevitably incorporate the objective social conditions of their inculcation. That is to say, an individual develops given dispositions in response to the objective conditions he or she encounters; he or she absorbs such structures into his or her personal, subjective, mental experience. Lastly, dispositions are “structuring structures” because they generate practices adjusted to specific situations: the introduction of a new player’s habitus into the field affects the practice of the other agents and, thus, the “game.”

64 In order to understand transcription as a salient feature of metafiction it is necessary to provide an overview of Linda Hutcheon’s work on metafiction and, specifically, works of historiographic metafiction like Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma. In Narcissistic Narrative Hutcheon explains that certain texts postulate a mimesis of process. Product mimesis does not suffice since “the novel no longer seeks just to provide an order and meaning to be recognized by the reader. It now demands that he be conscious of the work, the actual construction” (Narcissistic 39). Hutcheon believes that the constructedness of the text, of metafictional reality, has, in contemporary fiction, become equally if not more significant than the alleged truth or meaning of said work. In novels like Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma, such an observation proves particularly useful: transcription highlights the constructedness of the texts and also of the narrator-protagonists’ critical awareness of their production. Likewise, in both The Poetics of Postmodernism and The Politics of Postmodernism Hutcheon explores the issues raised by recent fiction’s “paradoxical confrontation of self-consciously fictive and resolutely historical representation” (Politics 63). Historiographic metafiction, including Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma, points simultaneously inward, at its construction (and
fictionality), and outward, at the allegedly real events (the history) it re-presents. Yet in both novels, the “real events” that are represented include as much the current admission of the narrator-protagonists into their desired literary fields as much as they do a formally historical past. Hutcheon explains that although historiographic metafiction cannot escape order—if anything such works demonstrate a more explicitly conscious composition—it can focus attention on the act of imposing order on the past (Politics 63). This is true for Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma: transcription aids in demonstrating how the narrator-protagonists consciously write themselves into the literary field, imposing themselves on a pre-established order by means of transcription. In doing so, the two novels stress “the tensions that exist, on the one hand, between the pastness (and absence) of the past and the presentness (and presence) of the present, and on the other, between the actual events of the past and the historian’s act of processing them into facts” (Politics 70). Transcription, within the frame of historiographic metafiction, repeatedly calls attention to the narrator-protagonists’ presence and present-ness with respect to the “pastness” and absence of the particular historical events they claim to be interested in representing (“The Pastness” 275). Taken as a whole, historiographic metafiction provides fertile ground for the functioning of transcription as a rhetorical figure: it boasts an environment in which documents “can no longer pretend to be a transparent means to a past event,” instead showing them to be “the textually transformed traces of the past” (Politics 83).

Historiographic metafiction also exemplifies how writers—in the case of Soldados de Salamina and La mitad del alma, historiographic-minded narrator-protagonists—“fill in the gaps and create” (Hutcheon, Politics 83). Transcription allows the two fictional writers to create a place for themselves within their textual representation of past events.

The movie was nominated for eight Goya Awards in 2004 and won for Best Cinematography. It also won prizes at the Bogotá Film Festival, the Butaca Awards, and the Cophenhagen International Film Festival, among many others. For more on the movie, see Hughes (2007) and Ballesteros (2005).

See Javier Cercas and David Trueba’s *Diálogos de Salamina*, particularly pages 15-18, 24-26, 47-48, and 116-18.

In an effort to be precise and to avoid confusion, I will utilize the following nomenclature throughout my chapter: “Cercas-author” for the real Javier Cercas and “the narrator” or “Cercas-narrator” for the fictional version of the author who serves as the first person voice throughout the novel.

This is particularly relevant when one considers that Cercas, the real-life author, published a nearly verbatim version of an article with the same title in *El País*.

Somewhat curiously, the narrator transcribes only “una frase reveladora” that Aguilar noted that José Antonio Primo de Rivera would repeat “como si fuera suya”: “A última hora siempre ha sido un pelotón de soldados el que ha salvado la civilización” (38). Failing to transcribe portions of Aguilar’s first-person diary of El Collell would appear to be a sorely missed
opportunity to provide authentic details to the story of Sánchez Mazas. However, the narrator does transcribe the quote attributed to Primo de Rivera, which reiterates his interest only in those agents whose work advances his own. Citing the words of Aguilar, an unknown Republican soldier, does not help the narrator in his quest to establish a legitimate place for himself within the literary field, whereas citing a favorite phrase of Primo de Rivera does.

71 The first opportunity to do so consisted of his own transcript of his own article in Part One.

72 In his article “Metafiction and Memory in Soldados de Salamina,” David F. Richter avers that it is ambiguous in the novel whether Cercas is actually trying to write a “true history” or if he is simply writing fiction as if it were history, “since the novel’s second chapter . . . includes no references to the writer and could easily be seen as a verifiably historical narrative of its own” (286).

73 For many readers, the loop likely also confuses “Cercas-narrator” with “real-life Cercas,” the author of the actual novel. At best, it conflates the narrator-protagonist with a fictionalized avatar of the actual author.

74 As Maryellen Bieder observes in her article “Carme Riera and the Paradox of Recovering Historical Memory,” Riera is responsible for translating nearly all of her original Catalan works into Castilian Spanish. She goes on to note that Riera has repeatedly explained that she prefers the term “version” to “translation” for her method of preparing the Castilian editions of her works (186).

75 The novel was the first Catalan novel to win the National Prize for Narrative.

76 Within Llámame Brooklyn and Bilbao-New York-Bilbao, transcripts are seen to be an attempt to “save” the real: the copy seeks to restore, to preserve, and even to substitute an original source. Employing the example of the mummy of Ramses II, Baudrillard demonstrates how
trying to exhume and to preserve a particular past is only done to make that past more visible to the present ("Precession" 8). Perhaps the present is jealous of a past that is not its own, and therefore tries to own it. Whether or not this is true, upon choosing to "bring back" what is absent or feared to be lost in the near future, such as the case of the mummy of Ramses II or the Tasaday re-relocation, the present must accept that it will paradoxically be responsible for "killing" the past. The sign may be preserved; its meaning, its source, is substituted.

77 *Llámame Brooklyn* won the 2006 Premio Nadal, the Premio de la Crítica de la Narrativa Castellana, and the Premio Ciudad de Barcelona.

78 See, for example, Navajas (2002).

79 Jo Labanyi traces the presence of ghosts in Spanish culture and the postmodern obsession with simulacra as a "return to the past in spectral form" ("History" 65).

80 Idoya Puig’s edited volume, titled *Tradition and Modernity: Cervantes’s Presence in Contemporary Spanish Literature* (2009), is a good example. The articles written by David K. Herzberger, Isabelle du Pasquier, and Idoya Puig offer case studies that may serve as models for similar analyses of Cervantes’s influence on *Llámame Brooklyn*. See pages 13-28, 47-60, and 79-97, respectively.

81 Excessive is an aesthetic judgment relative to the other novels included in my dissertation and to most Spanish novels published since 2000.

82 Although the occasion for Pindar’s poem is not entirely clear, the poem serves as a consolation for Hieron, the ruler of Syracuse, who suffers from ill health (Shankman 145).

83 In fact the chapter concludes with a series of advertisements transcribed from the Yellow Pages, all of which appear in large, bold, attention-grabbing font.
Published in Spanish as *Mientras tanto dame la mano* (2003), the collection of poems won Uribe the 2002 Premio de la Crítica (Poesía en euskera). Also in 2003, Uribe published the CD-book *Zaharregia, txikiegia again*—in Spanish, *Demasiado Antigua, demasiado pequeña quizás*—along with musicians Mikel Urdangarin, Bingen Mendizabal, Rafa Rueda, and illustrator Mikel Valverde. The work was performed in a series of recitals in New York and later inspired the documentary *Agian*, which was submitted to the San Sebastian Film Festival in 2006.

Most notably, the novel was awarded Spain’s 2008 Premio Nacional de la Crítica (Narrativa en euskera) as well as the 2009 Premio Nacional de Literatura (Narrativa).

In *A Companion to the Twentieth Century Spanish Novel*, edited by Marta E. Altisent, one finds Mari José Olaziregi’s section, titled “Basque Fiction.” Olaziregi recalls the 1979 statute permitting autonomous states and also the 1982 statute permitting the use of Basque in bilingual education and in public forums. She explains that in the last thirty years Basque literature has been on the rise and continues to renovate itself (247). *Bilbao-New York-Bilbao* exemplifies this trend, since the novel was originally written and published in Euskera. Its popularity has spread interest in Basque literature and language.

immigrants. It focuses on issues of “difference” that are at the center of current debates in Spain and elsewhere: the emergence of minoritized literatures, multilingualism and identity, new relationships between cultures and institutions, the negotiation of historical memories, the connections between migrations and the redefinition of nationhood, and the impact of global trends on local symbolic systems. Navajas’s section, titled “The Curse of the Nation,” avers that the contemporary political situation in Spain has brought about a reversal of the relations between the center and the periphery: “the center continues to have a predominant role, but the other national and cultural entities have become openly legitimate by themselves, overcoming many of the vulnerabilities that burdened them in the past” (175). He argues that the oft-considered political “peripheries” in Spain, such as the Basque country, hold promising potential for the future of the nation’s literature.

88 As Navajas explains in La narrativa española en la era global (2002), writing about history is the current topic in Spanish literature.

89 The narrator is also named Kirmen Uribe. I will refer to him simply as Kirmen or the narrator and use additional means of designating the author when referring to him.

90 Among the various examples, one finds handwritten correspondence, Wikipedia entries, indexing information for short films, diary entries, letterheads, emails, copies of in-flight navigation screens, Euskera dictionary entries, CD covers, lyrics to folk songs in Euskera, epitaphs, Estonian poems, obituary announcements, a fragment from a scientific journal, part of the Norah Jones song “Don’t Know Why,” the on-board flight screen display for the French film Entre les murs, Facebook messages, a fantasy team line-up on a PlayStation soccer game, an advertisement in a Lufthansa Sky-mall magazine, the words to Mozart’s opera Fígaro, the deed
to a boat, the Basque oral legend of Pedro Aguerre (who was called Axular), and also a poem composed by the narrator for his stepson Unai.
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