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To cite this article: Alicia Castillo Villanueva & Lucía Pintado Gutiérrez (2021) Narrative accounts of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship: translation and memory at a crossroad, Perspectives, 29:1, 100-102, DOI: [10.1080/0907676X.2020.1724661](https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2020.1724661)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2020.1724661>



Published online: 13 Jan 2021.



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## INTRODUCTION



# Narrative accounts of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship: translation and memory at a crossroad

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This collection of articles endeavours to establish a new dialogue between translation and memory studies. By using a contemporary approach, this collection focuses on the cultural representations of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and the following Franco dictatorship (1939–1975) to explore the effects and significance of translation within Spain. This contemporary reassessment in literature has led to new avenues of analysis and the examination of pending issues with current implications regarding the censorship that was applied during the dictatorship.

Since the end of the dictatorship, especially since the 1990s, a new spirit of inquiry has led to a proliferation of books, films, and documentaries about the Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship. The work carried out by the *Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory*, for example, led to the search and recovery of the remains of nearly 2,000 victims of the Francoist Repression. These factors have created an atmosphere of ‘the right to memory’, which means granting victims and their families the right to be remembered. In this way, ‘the right to memory’ is an ongoing debate, not only among those seeking their relatives, but also in the public arena, including different spheres, like politics, the media, and the cultural world of film and literature. This shift towards ‘the right to memory’ also implies turning toward social justice.

Translation and memory encompass an emerging field that bridges the gap between these disciplines within Spanish Studies to provide a solid background for further analysis and research. The following articles give further visibility to this field, which needs to be explored in-depth, as it has the potential to be inserted within a larger map of narratives that deal with both translation and memory. Recent studies that analyse and reassess translation and memory have started to gain increasing significance in academic contexts, namely, literature, visual arts, history, and politics. This challenging and complex new field calls for these disciplines to create a space that critically analyses how cultural artefacts travel between different languages, cultures, and time periods. Although the nexus between translation and memory is relatively new, there are important contributions to the field that include works by Brownlie (2011, 2013, 2016, 2017); Pintado Gutiérrez and Castillo Villanueva (2018); Davies (2018); Deane-Cox (2013, 2017); Spiessens and Toremans (2016).

The articles in this collection explore the works of key writers across different decades and examine: (a) the cultural and linguistic negotiation in translating memory; (b) how translated narratives are imported and exported to different scenarios. The first article,

by Jeroen Vandaele, focuses on Ibsen's play, *A Doll House* (1879), and the challenges concerning the translation and staging of such a ground-breaking piece of emancipatory and feminist ideology during Franco's dictatorship. Vandaele shows how translating and staging *A Doll House* made the playwright, Ibsen, an irreverent defender of free will. The play involved Nora, a mentally-ill protagonist, and this was considered inadmissible by the censorship of the same regime that vanquished the idea of women's liberation during the Second Republic. Based on the Francoist state censorship files of *A Doll House* from 1940 to 1965 at the Archivo General de Alcalá de Henares (AGA), Vandaele examines different versions of the play that was sent to the censorship board, including a Catalan translation that was prohibited to be shown. He also thoroughly analyses different examples of manipulation, rewriting, and self-censorship by the translators in an effort to achieve the censorship board's approval. In this example, translation served as a source of power.

In an article by Catherine O'Leary, she analyses how the translations for Sartre's theatre productions were a challenge for the censorship board during the so-called, *apertura* period (1962–1969), when Franco's dictatorship adopted a more open attitude towards cultural policies to ensure the continuity of his reign. O'Leary shows how the choice of Jean-Paul Sartre's theatre productions by independent, experimental theatre groups and authors, like Alfonso Sastre, was not accidental. They sought to use translation as a way to transmit the vision of an alternative political order. Drawing on archival evidence from the state censorship files held at the AGA, O'Leary examines the requests that were made to censor various plays by Sartre. She also applies the term, 'engaged translations', to the translations of these pieces, which is a term proposed by Maria Tymoczko (2017) that involves the practice of creating translations to be used as instruments of cultural opposition and products of resistance.

In Josep Marco's article, he looks at George Orwell's, *Homage to Catalonia*, which is an essential work to introduce a reader to the Spanish Civil War. It was translated to both Spanish and Catalan. Marco explores the regime's institutionalised censorship in 1938 and the published translations. In the phrasing proposed by Nora (1989), the translations of *Homage to Catalonia* become a memory site because of its importance to the community and its strong symbolism. In fact, this canonical text may imply a reactivation through translation, meaning that reprints of contesting narratives from the past may act as a vehicle to reach the future. Furthermore, Marco suggests the irony that texts, such as *Homage to Catalonia*, managed to preserve memory through a mixture of forgetting (the system of censorship) while, at the same time, tolerating the publication of this memorial content.

Finally, Alicia Castillo Villanueva and Lucía Pintado Gutiérrez explore the intricacies of translation's role in mediating memory in contemporary literature. They consider translation to be a powerful tool when dealing with memory across languages and borders. They use Brownlie's work (2011, 2017) as a catalyst and platform that specifically investigates challenges regarding the representation of memory in translation (according to Deane-Cox, 2013). They also analyse *La voz dormida* alongside Erll's (2011) model of transcultural memory and postmemory. This is framed within Mariane Hirsch's work (2001) concerning postmemory, trauma, and intergenerational conflicts, which is explained by Portela (2007). The ever-changing dynamics of memory in modern times are reflected in Assmann's (2010) models that deal with traumatic pasts and how current societies manage conflict, trauma, and memory through action at both local

and global levels. Translation adds a new dimension to memory that problematises the ethical position of the translator and their power as a preserver of memory. This article by Castillo Villanueva and Pintado Gutiérrez stresses the importance of the turn of memory and the turn of translation and the scope of translation as textual sites.

These articles contribute to the field of translation and memory studies by looking at the challenges and possibilities regarding the re-examination of the past in modern societies. They are intended to stimulate a debate that remains controversial, where translation acts as an effective channel for circulating and transferring memories across linguistic and cultural borders.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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