INTRODUCTION:
POST-MEMORY AND HISTORICAL AGENCY

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A heretical history?
PAUL RICOEUR, Memory History, Forgetting.

The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) remains to this day the focus of intense and passionate discussion among scholars, intellectuals, and politicians both in Spain and abroad. There are numerous works on the political, economic, diplomatic, military, even social history of the war and recently a cultural approach has been steadily growing stronger. Cultural Spanish studies had been a field cultivated by literary critics rather than historians. Little by little, we are reaching out to each other across disciplines to gain a more textured understanding of the war—such a profound wound in our historical imaginary. As Peter Burke says, “Cultural history is not the monopoly of historians. It is multidisciplinary as well as interdisciplinary.” Therefore, this volume aspires to contribute to the discussion, to serve as a navigational chart, a fresh look into some of the most recent scholarship in literary criticism, art history, social, and cultural memory of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism. The approach in this anthology follows Jacques Le Goff when he says: “What interests me is to show ... the kind of relations that historical societies have entertained with their past, and the place of

1 Paul Ricoeur, Memory, History, Forgetting (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006) 342–44.
2 On December 27, 2007 the Spanish Parliament passed Ley de Memoria Histórica (“Law of Historical Memory”).
4 Peter Burke, What is Cultural History? (Malden: Polity, 2009), 135.
history in their present.”\textsuperscript{5} The historian’s role is to make the historical process intelligible so that recurrent patterns may be identified. In turn, by reaching across disciplines we stand a better chance to draw informed conclusions. Again in Le Goff’s words: “An ambitious goal, objective history is slowly constructed little by little, through the ceaseless revisions of historical work, the laborious successive rectifications, and the accumulation of partial truths” (my emphasis).\textsuperscript{6} The chapters in this collection focus on what might be regarded by some as marginal or unconventional topics linked together by a few provocative questions that emerge from putting in conversation memory and literary studies with cultural history. The volume offers a “polyphony” of themes with fresh insight by outstanding senior and emerging scholars. This concerted effort demonstrates how a cultural approach to the remembrance of the Spanish Civil War during Francoism and the transition to democracy promises to reveal that a multidisciplinary historical narrative is not only possible but urgently necessary in the age of globalization.

A few of the chapters look at the Spanish Civil War from the perspective of Post-memory as defined by Marianne Hirsch: “Post-memory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.”\textsuperscript{7} Our axiomatic question attached to it is to explore the relationship between memory and historical agency. Two of the authors explore how we are to rethink political and social narratives of the Spanish Civil War at the turn of the twenty-first century. These questions are based in a solid intellectual conviction of all the authors to resist facile arguments both on the Right and the Left, concerning the historical and collective memory of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship in the milieu of post-transition to democracy. Therefore, the problem we intend to discern is: how do memory and historical agency relate to each other? The answer points to a constant zeal for compromise to negotiate discrepant memories in the democratic and global economy of the twenty-first century. Central to a true democratic historical narrative is the commitment to listening to the other experiences and the willingness to rethink our present(s) in light of

\textsuperscript{5} Jacques Le Goff, \textit{History and Memory} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 105.
\textsuperscript{6} Le Goff, \textit{History and Memory}, 114.