

**Collective Memory of Political Events**  
**Social Psychological Perspectives**

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## Art and Remembering Traumatic Collective Events: The Case of the Spanish Civil War

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This chapter examines the processes by which societies, using works of art, remember traumatic political events. These works of art, especially popular narrative forms such as films and novels, will play an important role in maintaining, reconstructing, and assimilating collective traumatic events such as the Spanish Civil War (SCW). It briefly summarizes what some classical authors in the field of collective memory have stated about the processes involved in forgetting, maintaining, and reconstructing this memory. Later, the chapter discusses the "natural history" of forgetting, remembering, and reconstructing traumatic events. In order to do so, it focuses analysis first on Japan and its official history concerning World War II, and second on the war in Algeria and the French films on this issue, and finally on the SCW and the films and novels that have portrayed this event. In the specific case of Spain, a more detailed, systematic, and quantitative analysis on the Civil War is included. All these results allow the study to partially confirm the existence of memory cycles every 25 years. The chapter also investigates how the contents of these films have evolved over time. Finally, it empirically shows that exposure to entertainment films with a de-dramatization and relativity content will congruently affect the beliefs and attitudes toward the Civil War.

### THE SOCIAL ACTIVITY OF RECONSTRUCTION: FREUD AND BARTLETT

Classical authors in collective memory, such as Halbwachs (1925/1975, 1950) and Bartlett (1932/1990), insist on memory's institutional basis and on the social dynamics of remembering. Freud, on the other hand, is interested in the motivational nature of forgetting: Individuals repress that which is negative, or remember it in a distorted way. Nevertheless, as Erdelyi (1990) stated, the reconstructive processes posited by Bartlett (levelling, accentuation, assimilation, and conventionalization) are very similar to Freud's repression, displacement, and condensation mechanisms. These processes of forgetting, selecting, and reconstructing allow people to adapt the memory of traumatic events to their social frames of reference, to the dominant values and beliefs. On the other hand, when insisting on its normative nature and on the fact that it is based on present-day needs, Halbwachs implicitly coincided with Freud in the fact that collective memory is biased toward forgetting that which is negative, and toward having a positive image of the past. Both Freud and Bartlett insist that forgetting, the selective omission of events, is an example of the reconstructive labor of memory: This activity of remembering is performed by means of symbolic reconstructions of the past, both under the scientific banner of history and by means of narrative/dramatic artifacts.

Consider the reconstructive processes of memory studied by Bartlett. First of all, a story told by one person to another as if it were a memory is *simplified* and *condensed*. Details are reduced and simplified. This is the equivalent of *forgetting* or *repressing* some aspects of the event. Second, some details are *retained* and *remembered*. Certain aspects are stressed always with the idea of *assimilating* them to the frame or narrative schema of that memory. Third, memory is *elaborated*, and those details that are coherent with the general idea or position transmitted by the collective memory are emphasized. In other words, some details that go down well in the general frame of the story are included. This is collective memory's reconstructive or distorting activity. The important and basic process underlying all these aforementioned phases is conventionalization. Memory adapts itself to the conventions (usage, customs, values, stereotypes, etc.) of the group that constructs this memory. People start forgetting and including things, and these transformations allow that which is remembered to be coherent with the local stereotypes and values (Allport & Postman, 1952/1977; Bartlett, 1932/1990; Erdelyi, 1990).

Examples of these processes can be seen by studying the institutional mechanisms involved in remembering traumatic historical events. In the case of Japan, their history textbooks center World War II in the confrontation with the United States and its allies. These books accept that the starting point was the attack on Pearl Harbor (condensation and simplifi-

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caution). This allows these books to avoid mentioning the Japanese military aggressions in Asia, which began in 1931, or the atrocities that took place during these years (e.g., the abduction and raping of Chinese and Korean women, or the massacre of entire populations of innocent people). At the same time, they amplify the importance of those battles lost against the Allies (omission and assimilation). Japan is shown as a victim and the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki are presented as natural catastrophes, which allow the Japanese to exorcise any resentment felt against the "American friend" (conventionalization in a frame of "subordinated patriotism to the USA" so predominant nowadays in Japan). Only now, 50 years after the war is over, are people beginning to learn about these crimes, and in fact some Japanese leaders have publicly asked for forgiveness for the pain and sorrow beset on these Asian countries (Halff, 1991; Postel-Vinay, 1991). In Japan after the war, as in Germany at the end of the Nazi era, an important amnesty was handed out. In history textbooks the war era was declared taboo. If this is linked to what has been previously said, it becomes obvious how the reconstructive processes of collective memory are somewhat similar to Freud's repression and censorship phenomena.

Another way of viewing this situation would be to state that memory is orientated toward offering a normative view of the past that guides present-day behaviors: positive for the ingroup, negative for the outgroup. Memory allows one to defend the positive image of the group or collectively using social identity's defense mechanisms retrospectively.

Finally, Bartlett stressed that commemorations, rituals, and the group's needs and interests would be the affective and cognitive basis of social memory. This memory is developed starting from a collective affective activation in the schematic frame of rituals and social cycles (Bartlett, 1932/1990). Works of art are considered to be cultural artifacts, symbolic rituals of commemorations that allow social memory to have an external cognitive and affective frame.

#### THE SYMBOLIC RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PAST

Collective memory does not only exist in the individuals, but that in fact it is located in cultural artifacts. Analyzing the contents of cultural creations, as for example films, one may see how a social group symbolically reconstructs its past in order to confront traumatic events for which it is responsible (Paez & Basabe, 1993).

Using the example of the French film productions and the Algerian war, it can be seen that the external symbolic reconstruction of collective traumatic events has a number of phases. The Algerian war lasted from 1954

to 1962. For 8 years, this issue was taboo. Only politically and military censored films were allowed during these years on this topic. In this first phase above all there is *silence* (which was fought among others by critics such as Godard and his ambiguous satire *The Little Soldier*) and/or a *conventional version* of the issue that ignores the negative events. Following this era came a period of *amnesia*, or forgetfulness. Until 1972, a 10-year period, there were no direct references to the war, which officially did not exist or was not seen as a real war. A film such as *The Battle of Algiers*, which is in favor of the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), was filmed in 1966 in Italy, but was censored in France until 1981. In 1972, an *individual memory* starts to emerge that stresses the subject's personal features and forgets the lost cause. In that year three films showed the most hidden aspects of the war and how normal people could turn into assassins. The French waited until 1986 to see more films produced on this issue. Nevertheless, in 1982, a conservative filmmaker, Schoendorffer, produced a film (*The Captain's Honor*) showing the impact of the war but in which tortures were just minor errors in a frame tending to highly evaluate French military honor. This film represented the final period: *idealized memory*, in which the social group's actions are positively evaluated. It was only 30 years after the war finished that Alain Tavernier produced a documentary on the Algerian war (*The War With No Name*), which focused on the soldiers' individual tragedies (Joassin, 1992). In the same vein, the monument built to commemorate the Vietnam War also stresses individual participation while it obviates the causes and sociopolitical reasons for the war. The memorial is a ritual symbol that expresses the contradictory collective memory of a "dirty" war dividing the country (Wagner-Pacifici & Schwartz, 1991).

Berrand de Muñoz (1993) conducted a study on the quantitative and content production of novels referring to the SCW. It allows an illustration of the following evolution in the artistic expression of a traumatic event. There are six great periods. The first one lasts the 3 years of the Civil War (1936-1939). During this period, there are many dramatic novels and articles on the war from the standpoint of both sides: "During the fight there were some 50 titles, some better than others but all of them too close to the events to produce a great book" (p. 48). In a second period, the immediate postwar years, the novels portray a *conventional view* of the "winners," and a self-justification and praise on behalf of the side that "won." A third period would be the years from 1950 to 1960, which is a phase of amnesia with a scarce literary production: "The fifties and the beginning of the sixties, the years of objective realism and of a scarcer number of titles but evidently of a better quality" (p. 62). The fourth period is the dictatorship's last decade. Due to a less rigid censorship, some novels that start giving another version than that of the Franco regime start to emerge: "After the new 1966 Press Law novels will have another tone and argument quite different from the

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previous ones due to the concession of certain liberties and because of the three decades which separate the novels from what they are referring to" (p. 78). The fifth period comprises democracy's first years, it is the time to recover the critical memory toward the traumatic event. The Republican point of view strongly surfaces, and is shown as a counterpoint to the Franquist exaltations of the second period: "During the first stages of democracy in Spain there was a return to the features of the immediate post-war years with an eagerness to self-justify and praise their own side (this time the Republicans) which were very similar to those employed by the Franquists in their time" (p. 22). The sixth and final period begins in the 1980s. An idealized and distanced memory of the war appears. The dramatic nature of what is being told has been lost, and this is translated into a less affectively charged and a more ahistorical memory. Sometimes the war will only be a background in which to include a story or individual drama, not a collective one. As Berrand de Muñoz (1993) stated, "The last period emerges at the beginning of the 1980's with novels in which in many cases the Spanish War is not shown as an addition of deeply felt events. The need to express one's point of view, to state what one feels about such cruel events has nearly disappeared. This fight of brothers against brothers is now just a remote memory, it is just a background in which eternal passions operate, it transcends history by way of mythification" (p. 14).

In general, although this must be taken with some caution, the semiotic instruments used on collective traumas first of all deny and later on give a conventional view of the situation. After this situation, and using a Freudian notion, they "forget." This is followed by a Durkheim phase of positive reconstruction of the past. In the case of unpopular events, which may divide the collectivity, the memory of the group members who took part in the event is put forward, and their individual tragedy is accepted. The sociopolitical cause of the trauma is forgotten.

It may seem likely that denial and "affective anesthesia" combined with nonsystematized intrusive memories and with assimilation and elaboration, acceptance of the traumatic past and stressing the positive aspects, may not only be a psychological process but also may be studied as artistic productions, at the level of collective symbolic artifacts (Horowitz, 1986; Pennabaker, 1993).

#### THE MEMORY CYCLE

Collective memories are maintained even as years and generations go by. Pennabaker (1993), after studying various examples, found that approximately every 20-30 years individuals and societies look back and reconstruct their past. The factors behind these 20- to 30-year memory cycles are the following:

1. The existence of the necessary psychological distance that remembering a collective or individual traumatic event requires. Time may soothe and lessen the pain that remembering a traumatic event produces.

2. The necessary accumulation of social resources in order to undergo the commemoration activities. These resources can usually be obtained during one's middle age. The events are commemorated when the generation that suffered them has the money and power to commemorate them.

3. The most important events in one's life take place when one is 12 or 25 years old. When these people grow older they may remember the events that happened during this period (chapter 1, this volume, by Pennebaker & Banasik).

A fourth explanation may be included that is apt in the commemoration of negative events:

4. The sociopolitical repression will cease to act after 20 or 30 years because those directly responsible for the repression, war, and so on, have either socially or physically disappeared.

This last explanation is even more important in dictatorship regimes. But remember that these four explanations are not mutually exclusive.

Now consider the evidence in favor of the 20- to 30-year memory cycle in the case of the films on the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Before beginning with this issue, note that until 1949 there was still guerrilla warfare going on in some parts of the countryside and the war did not really end until this last date.

Ripoll i Freixes (1992) studied those films in which the SCW is the main issue. His book presents some basic data with which to identify each film: the year it was produced, its nationality, and a synthesis of the screenplay. This information aids in answering two very important questions: What evolution or change has there been in the number of films on the SCW from 1940 to 1991? And, how has the image of the SCW evolved or changed in these films?

Ripoll i Freixes stated that a total of 66 Spanish and/or co-produced films (excluding short films, television series, and documentaries) on the topic of the Spanish Civil War were made during the period from 1940 to 1991. In order to evaluate the evolution in the number of films on the SCW, the total number of films produced during these years must be taken into account in order to obtain a percentage to allow further study on this evolution. On the basis of data supplied by Ripoll i Freixes (1992) and García Fernández (1992), the percentage of films on the SCW has been calculated in relation to the total number of films during the period from 1940 to 1991. Table 4.1 and Fig. 4.1 show this data.

As can be seen in Fig. 4.1, there are two periods in which the percentage of films on the SCW is at its peak. First of all during the period from 1940

TABLE 4.1  
Total Number of Spanish and Co-produced Films: Global Data  
and Data on the Films on the Spanish Civil War from 1940 to 1991

Period	Total Number of Films (1)	Number of Films on the SCW (2)	% of Films on the SCW out of the Total (3)
1940-1944	199	9 (13.6%)	4.52
1945-1949	198	2 (3.0%)	1.01
1950-1954	242	7 (10.6%)	2.89
1955-1959	345	5 (7.6%)	1.44
1960-1964	496	4 (6.1%)	0.80
1965-1969	671	7 (10.6%)	1.04
1970-1974	528	5 (7.6%)	0.95
1975-1979	533	8 (12.1%)	1.50
1980-1984	575	5 (7.6%)	0.87
1985-1989	316	11 (16.7%)	3.48
1990-1991	106	3 (4.5%)	2.83
TOTAL	4,209	66 (100%)	1.56

Note: Column 1 Source: García Fernández (1992); column 2 Source: Ripoll i Freixes (1992); column 3: On the basis of García Fernández (1992) and Ripoll i Freixes (1992).

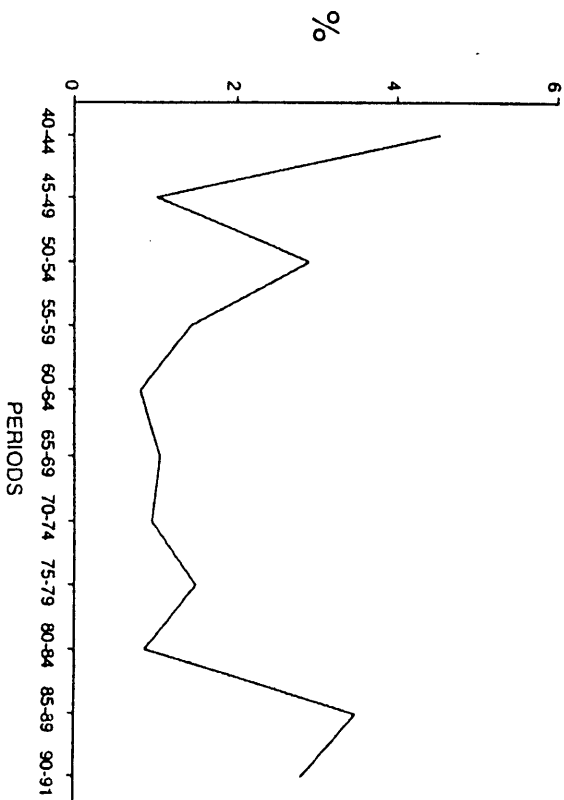


FIG. 4.1. Evolution in the percentage of films (non-documentaries) produced between 1940 and 1991 on the topic of the SCW (Spanish productions and co-productions with other countries).

to 1944, a period corresponding with the postwar years. And second, there is an increase in the number of films from 1975 (Franco died and the beginning of the democratic process) onward. Moreover, there is a period of prolonged "amnesia" covering from 1950 to 1975 (a 25-year span).

A second type of analysis of a more qualitative nature shows how the image of the SCW has changed in these films. A coding frame was built and applied to each of the 66 films. The codes for analysis were the following: Is the repression/civil war justified or legitimized? (Yes/No); point of view (those who won or those who were defeated); affective tone (none, scarce, strong); view held of the Franco and his supporters (negative, ambivalent, or positive); view held of the defeated or Republicans (negative, ambivalent, or positive); do they stress the causes? (not at all, somewhat, a lot), do they stress the roles or characters portrayed in the film? (not at all, somewhat, a lot). The unit of analysis was the written synthesis of each film as mentioned by Ripoll i Freixes (1992). The content analysis was performed independently by two blind judges. In order to establish the reliability of this analysis, the percentage of agreement among judges was obtained as 69.5%. The next phase was to resolve together all possible discrepancies in the coding in order to recount frequencies and perform the subsequent analyses.

The first element analyzed was the evolution in these films of the justification of the repression/civil war. As time went on, there was a tendency toward delegitimizing the war. Justification is stronger in those films produced immediately after the end of the war, whereas delegitimization is stronger in those films produced just before and following Franco's death. These results are shown in Table 4.2.

In relation to the point of view adopted in these films, as years go by the Republican side gains importance and protagonism. The first films on the SCW tended to reflect the Franco and his supporters' (winners) point of view. It is only after the dictatorship has ended that the losers' point of view starts to appear in these films. The image of the winners and losers of the SCW evolves in different directions during the course of time. As years go by, the image of the Franco roles or characters is more negative, and on the other hand the Republican characters are more positive. Results are shown in Table 4.3.

In relation to the affective tone found in these films, this evolves significantly during the course of time. Those films produced closer to the end of the SCW refer to the war in a more dramatic way. As time passes, this dramatism is lower ( $r = -.26$ ,  $p = .03$ ) and there is more relevance attached to the sociopolitical causes of the repression ( $r = -.26$ ,  $p = .03$ ). As time passes, the affective distancing from the event allows the people to better analyze the context in which the war started. People want to know the causes behind what happened.

TABLE 4.2  
Legitimation or Justification of the Repression/Civil War,  
and the Films' Point of View on the SCW (Horizontal Percentages)

Periods	Justification of the SCW (% who answer "yes")		Point of View	
	Winners	Losers	Winners	Losers
1940-1944	88.9	100	100	0
1945-1949	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0
1950-1954	85.7	71.4	71.4	28.6
1955-1959	80.0	100	100	0
1960-1964	50.0	100	100	0
1965-1969	71.4	71.4	71.4	28.6
1970-1974	20.0	20.0	80.0	20.0
1975-1979	37.5	12.5	12.5	87.5
1980-1984	60.0	20.0	20.0	80.0
1985-1989	27.3	27.3	27.3	72.7
1990-1991	0	0	0	100
TOTAL (n = 66)	54.5	57.6	57.6	42.4
Contrast statistics	$\chi^2(10) = 19.48$ , $p = .03$ $r = -.45$ , $p = .0001$	$\chi^2(10) = 33.19$ , $p = .0002$ $r = .58$ , $p = .0000$		

TABLE 4.3  
View of the "Winning" and "Losing" Characters  
in the Films on the SCW (Horizontal Percentages)

Periods	View of the "Winners"			View of the "Losers"		
	Negative (1)	Ambivalent (2)	Positive (3)	Negative (1)	Ambivalent (2)	Positive (3)
1940-1944	0	11.1	88.9	2.89	100	0
1945-1949	50.0	0	50.0	2.00	50.0	0
1950-1954	14.3	14.3	71.4	2.37	71.4	14.3
1955-1959	0	0	100	3.00	80.0	0
1960-1964	0	25.0	75.0	2.75	50.0	0
1965-1969	14.3	28.6	57.1	2.42	42.9	14.3
1970-1974	20.0	60.0	20.0	2.00	0	80.0
1975-1979	87.5	12.5	0	1.12	0	25.0
1980-1984	60.0	20.0	20.0	1.60	0	60.0
1985-1989	54.5	45.5	0	1.45	9.1	54.5
1990-1991	100	0	0	1.00	0	33.3
TOTAL (n = 66)	34.8	22.7	42.4	2.07	37.9	34.8
Contrast statistics	$\chi^2(20) = 51.43$ , $p = .0001$ $r = -.67$ , $p = .0000$		$\chi^2(20) = 50.17$ , $p = .0002$ $r = .64$ , $p = .0000$			27.3
						1.89

In summary, on the basis of the analysis of the films produced in Spain from 1940 to 1991 on the topic of the SCW, the image of the war shifts dramatically. In the immediate postwar years the films stress the winners' point of view. These films justify the war and there is a stronger affective tone or dramatism. Those that took part in the war on the Franco side are positively evaluated while the Republicans are negatively evaluated. This biased vision of the SCW evolves over time in the same way that the government's policy of "reconciliation and forgiveness" for both sides also grew stronger. The turning point in the image held of the SCW was 1975, Franco's death. The beginning of the democratic process implied the emergence of the "losers'" point of view. There was a delegitimization of the war. The Republican side started to appear as the main actor in these films. The Franco elements were seen as negative roles and the Republicans as positive. The causes of the conflict were stressed more than ever before.

#### CULTURAL ARTIFACTS, MEMORY PROCESSES, AND DEVELOPMENT OF BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

Stressing the idea that memory is a collective process underscores the fact that semiotic objects (such as monuments, novels, television series, and films) help to mediate and are an external support for memory and forgetting. Vygotzky's sociohistorical theory (Paez & Adrián, 1993; Vygotzky, 1930/1979; Wertsch, 1985, 1988, 1991) is a theoretical approach stressing the importance of the semiotic instruments as "tools" with which to develop the higher psychological processes. An artistic creation (especially of the narrative type: novels and films) is a semiotic instrument aimed at affective and cognitive development (Vygotzky, 1925/1972). Miall (1989), a cognitive psychologist, also stressed the idea that art (in a broader sense) has as one of its functions that of inducing cognitive development. This author stated that the artistic or dramatic accounts allow individuals to redefine, modify, or question schemas (thought structures that refer to oneself and also to past affective experiences). The artistic semiotic instruments (among others, television series, and films) will not only "entertain" people, but will also develop the higher psychological processes (especially memory, emotions, and thought and evaluation structures such as beliefs and attitudes). From this perspective, and in this particular case, television series and films will be semiotic structures that impel or reinforce certain representations of the SCW.

In this research, it might be expected that the development or cultivation (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorelli, 1980, 1990) of a certain notion on that event in the mass media (e.g., a positive image of the Republicans and the delegitimization of the SCW) would imply assimilating those ideas. Although this approach may seem very mechanistic, it does not overlook the

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fact that the impact would be mediated by a series of processes such as the level of cognitive production derived from these stimuli (which is at the same time related to the relevance or the subject's personal implication with the topic), the affective impact produced by the film or series, and the realism and credibility of the message (Flora & Maibach, 1990; Jyengar & Kinder, 1985; Oskamp, 1991; Perloff, 1985, 1993; Pety & Cacioppo, 1986; Potter, 1986). Moreover, variables such as previous and direct experience ("first hand") with the object or the issue to which the media refers (in this case the SCW) will mitigate the impact (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1994).

A research project was conducted (1994) to test the aforementioned ideas. Participants were 162 psychology students (74.1% women, 25.9% men with ages ranging from 20 to 46 years and a mean of 24.9 years). The participants had to fill in a questionnaire in their own classroom with the following scales and indexes. First of all, there was a scale measuring *clarity of the memory*. This scale was formed by 5 items with an internal consistency of .86. An example of these items is the following: Do you have clear images, vivid visual memories of the Spanish Civil War (answering format: 1 = not at all, to 5 = many)? Second, data on the *use or exposure of/to mass media* was obtained. Subjects were asked to state if they had or had not seen three television series based on the SCW and the postwar years. These series had been shown on television more than once during the 1980s and 1990s. The subjects were also asked if they had seen any of a list of 30 films produced from 1976 to 1994. In this list there were 18 films based on the SCW, and the remaining 12 were movies with great impact that had been box office successes (e.g., *Philadelphia*). These decoys were presented in order to make the aim of the study not so evident. Three exposures to the media indexes were created: total number of series the subjects had seen (range from 0 to 3,  $M = .86$ ), total number of movies seen by the subjects (range 0 to 18,  $M = 2.89$ ), and a global index obtained from adding up the number of movies and television series. Also included was a scale to evaluate the attitudes and beliefs on the SCW. A semantic differential made up of 5 pairs of items was used to evaluate the attitude toward the SCW. Examples of these items are the following: "the SCW a pleasant-unpleasant, close-far away, etc. event" (answering format = 1 to 7). In a first subscale on "general opinion about remembering the SCW," 10 items were included on if it was suitable or not to forget what had happened during the war, on the opinion held of each of the participants in the war, and on the emotions attached to remembering the war. Examples of these items are the following: "it is better to forget all that happened during the war and the postwar years," "when I think about or remember the civil war and postwar years I do so with sadness." A second subscale consisted of 7 items on the "beliefs on the causes of the SCW." Examples of items include: "The civil war started because the Franco mili-

tary had no confidence in the Republic," "One of the main causes of the SCW was that the population had lost its confidence in the institutions, in the Republic." Finally, another 21-item subscale was included on the beliefs on the consequences of the war. Examples of these items are the following: "During the SCW deaths and shootings especially affected those who had lost," "In most families there were a great deal of personal losses and deaths caused by the SCW." In all the subscales, subjects had to answer using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = total disagreement to 7 = total agreement. A principal components factor analysis was conducted on each of these scales and subscales, extracting the following dimensions (due to space limits only a synthesis of these is presented in Table 4.4).

Remember that the people who took part in the study were university students and so did not have a "direct" but only a "mediated" experience with the SCW. This experience was obtained by what they had learned in school, by the generational transmission of facts, and by those facts presented by the mass media on the SCW. Both the television series and movies were produced from 1976 to 1991, and as in the qualitative study it is in this period when the SCW is seen through the eyes of the defeated side, stressing the causes of the war. On this basis, it can be hypothesized that more exposure to these productions would be associated with a stronger agreement with the attitude and belief dimensions on the SCW, which are congruent with the image shown in these movies and series. Due to its correlational nature, a caveat must be stated: If the posited association is found, it would be due to a "self-selection" process in which those subjects with a certain previous attitude toward the event may expose themselves to those movies or series that confirm their beliefs.

As a way of evaluating the role the mass media play in the processes of memory and cultivation of beliefs and attitudes toward the SCW, these processes are linked to the indexes of exposure to television series and movies on the SCW (these results are shown in Table 4.5). The first result is that there is a positive association between seeing series or movies on the SCW and the clarity of memory. Moreover, exposure to these cultural products is associated with stating that remembering the war produces negative self-reference emotions (sadness, guilt, shame, etc.). Having seen these cultural products is also linked to thinking that the conflict was a great collective disaster because it caused the country to split into two sides while also producing Spain's cultural, economic, and political isolation from the rest of the world. People also think this event has influenced the present-day political situation.

On the other hand, and referring only to the television series, those who have been exposed to more of these series tend to disagree with the idea that "it is better to forget what happened during the war and the postwar years." They also show less ambivalence toward those who took part in the war and have a more positive image of the Republicans who

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TABLE 4.4  
Dimensions of Beliefs and Attitudes Toward the SCW

<i>Scale of Attitudes and Beliefs About the Spanish Civil War</i>	<i>Number of Items in Each Factor</i>	<i>Explained Variance</i>	<i>Mean in the Factor<sup>a</sup></i>
<i>Attitude toward the SCW:</i>			
A positive and nonimportant event	3	38.9%	1.49
A distant and incomprehensible event	2	27.8%	4.27
<i>General opinions:</i>			
It is better to forget what happened during the war and postwar years	2	22.1%	3.31
Ambivalence toward the participants and negative image of the Republicans	2	14.9%	3.69
Nostalgia and positive view of the past	3	13.4%	1.86
Negative self-reference emotions when remembering the war	3	12.0%	4.25
<i>Beliefs about the causes:</i>			
Franquist military had no confidence in the Republic: A climate of conflict	4	26.3%	4.18
The population had no confidence in the Republic	3	22.8%	3.14
<i>Beliefs about the consequences:</i>			
Collective disaster (death, misery)	4	17.9%	6.16
Social demobilization (staying away from politics) during the postwar years	5	11.3%	4.18
The Republicans were the main victims	4	9.9%	3.97
The country split up: Political, economic, and cultural isolation during the postwar years	3	6.4%	5.55
<i>The past conflict has determined present-day politics</i>			
Frustration, disillusion, and despair among the Republicans	3	6.2%	5.25
Climate of nonconfidence among the population during the postwar years	1	5.7%	5.29
	1	4.8%	5.56

<sup>a</sup>The items that formed a single factor were added up and the result of this sum (simple not weighted) was divided among the total number of items in that factor. If an item had factorial weights in more than one factor we included it in the one in which it had a stronger weight. In other words, a higher score in each of the dimensions reflects more agreement with this dimension. In the two attitude dimensions a low score is equivalent to evaluating the SCW, respectively, as a "negative and important," and "close and comprehensible" event.

are perceived as the main victims of the conflict. Moreover, having seen more movies on the SCW is related to believing that what started the war was the lack of confidence the Franco military had in the Republic. These subjects also believe that the population's social demobilization and staying away from politics was a consequence of the war, and among the "defeated" there was a feeling of great frustration, disillusion, and despair.



TABLE 4.5  
Mass Media, Clarity of Memory, and Cultivation of  
Attitudes and Beliefs on the SCW (Pearson Correlations)

Clarity of Memory, Attitudes, and Beliefs About the SCW	Having Been Exposed to the Mass Media		
	TV Series	Films	Global Index
Clarity of the memory about the SCW	.19**	.39***	.37***
Attitude toward the SCW:			
A positive and nonimportant event	-.09	-.05	-.07
A distant and incomprehensible event	-.07	-.03	-.05
General opinions:			
It is better to forget what happened during the war and postwar years	-.17*	-.07	-.11†
Ambivalence towards the participants and negative image of the Republicans	-.25**	-.03	-.09
Nostalgia and positive view of the past	-.07	-.03	-.05
Negative self-reference emotions when remembering the war	.11†	.20**	.19**
Beliefs about the causes:			
Franquist military had no confidence in the Republic: A climate of conflict	-.00	.14*	.11†
The population had no confidence in the Republic	-.01	-.08	-.06
Beliefs about the consequences:			
Collective disaster (death, misery)	.16*	.16*	.18**
Social demobilization (staying away from politics) during the postwar years	.02	.12†	.10†
The Republicans were the main victims	.19**	.04	.09
The country split up: Political, economic, and cultural isolation during the postwar years	.26***	.24***	.28***
The past conflict has determined present-day politics	.13*	.22**	.22**
Frustration, disillusion, and despair among the Republicans	.02	.12†	.10†
Climate of nonconfidence among the population during the postwar years	.07	.07	.08

Note: A higher score in each of the dimensions reflects more agreement with this dimension. In the two attitude dimensions a low score is equivalent to evaluating the SCW, respectively, as a "negative and important," and a "close and comprehensible" event.  
† $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Results show that it is plausible to conceive the mass media, especially those using a narrative format (films and series), as cultural artifacts that may exercise an influence in maintaining collective memory and contributing toward the cultivation and reinforcement of certain beliefs on events that have had a great affective impact on specific collectivities or social groups. For example, it is known that Oliver Stone's *JFK* played an impor-

tant role in maintaining the idea of a coordinated plot in Kennedy's assassination. On the other hand, *Schindler's List* also had a great impact on public opinion, alerting it to the dangers of the Nazi revival and recovering the memory of the collective trauma produced by the Holocaust. In this case, the Spanish Civil War, seeing movies and series that are generally critical of the past helps to maintain the emotions felt toward the collective event. This is an element that Bartlett (1932/1990) considered as central in the persistence of collective memories. It also reinforces the beliefs on the view that the war was a collective disaster, on the impact the past has on the present and on the need to remember. Finally, it also gives us a positive image of the losers and is critical toward the past official history.

A final research project analyzed the impact of three movies based on events of the SCW had on the attitudes and beliefs toward this historical event. The previous study showed that there is a close association between having seen television series and movies on the SCW and the attitudes and beliefs toward this event. Nevertheless, one of the possible explanations for this effect could be that a self-selection process had taken place: People with certain beliefs would seek entertainment products that confirm their stance on that issue. In accordance with an experimental methodology, this idea may be dismissed due to the fact that subjects are randomly assigned to one condition or another (seeing one film or another, or being part of the control group). This guarantees the group's homogeneity from the very start.

In this new study, participants (psychology students with a mean age of 25 years) were randomly assigned to three experimental conditions (three different movies were used, and 26–30 subjects per group) and a fourth group remained as a control group (it did not see any film and was composed of 76 students). Movies were chosen on the basis of three criteria: being a recent production, having been a commercial success in Spain (which is an indirect sign of acceptance by the Spanish public), and on the basis of the image it showed of the Spanish Civil War. The movies were released in 1984 (the film entitled *Las Bicicletas son para el Verano*), in 1985 (*La Vaquilla*), and in 1990 (*Ay, Carmela*). The films were analyzed by nine judges who had already seen them in order to determine the image of the war, the position toward the actors or characters, and so forth, in each film. A coding system similar to the one used before in the qualitative documentary analysis of the movies was employed. The only difference was that it included a question on the "degree of perceived realism" of the events that take place in the film (using an intensity scale ranging from 1 = not at all, to 5 = a great deal). From the data obtained, it was obvious that there were differences among the three films.

The first film, *La Vaquilla*, did not justify the war (this is what 8 out of 9 judges thought) and it did not clearly state the point of view of either

side in the war (4 judges thought it adopted the standpoint of the Franquists, 3 thought it was the Republicans' point of view, and 2 stated that it used arguments from both sides). There was an ambivalent image of the Franquists (7 out of 9 judges thought so) and of the Republicans (8 out of 9), and the image of the war was also ambivalent (5 out of 9 judges said so). On the other hand, the affective weight attributed to this movie, its perceived realism, and the fact of stressing the causes or sociohistorical context were low (in a 5-point scale the means were 2.44, 2.11, and 2.00, respectively). This movie delegitimizes the war but at the same time offers an ambiguous treatment of it, with little realism and without stressing the sociohistorical events that led to the war. It also offers an ambivalent image of both sides. The fact that *La Vaguilla* is a comedy may explain its low affective weight. This film is an example of a de-dramatized and individualistic form of remembering. There is not a positive homogeneous view of the Franco side, but there is a similarity between "winners and losers," both of them worked together in helping the national disaster take place.

The nine judges found only small differences between the other two films (*Ay, Carmela* and *Las Bicicletas son para el Verano*). Both delegitimize the war, which is perceived as something negative (8 out of 9 judges thought so of *Ay, Carmela*, and 7 out of 9 of *Las Bicicletas son para el Verano*). The movies adopt the Republicans' ("losers") point of view (9 out of 9 for *Ay, Carmela* and 8 out of 9 for *Las Bicicletas son para el Verano*). There was a positive image of the Republicans (8 and 6 judges thought so for each of the films). The image held of the Franquists ("winners") was negative (8 and 7 judges agreed with this statement). Both movies were perceived as being realistic (mean scores were 3.88 and 4.00, respectively). They mentioned the sociohistorical factors leading to the war (3.92 and 3.88), and its affective weight or dramatism was high (4.55 and 4.35). In general terms, these two films share a similar approach to the SCW, although they are quite different types of films. *Ay, Carmela* is a comedy with a tragic end (the main female role is shot by a Franquist when she shouts out in favor of the Republic). On the other hand, *Las Bicicletas son para el Verano* is a drama with an "open" end (the film finishes at the end of the war but without such a dramatic scene as the one found in *Ay, Carmela*). The characters found in *Las Bicicletas* are a "normal" family with very down to earth and nonheroic situations (this is not the case of *Ay, Carmela*). Summarizing, *La Vaguilla* is in favor of a reconciliation between both sides and tends to foster forgetting and getting the past over with. *Ay, Carmela* and *Las Bicicletas* share a negative view of the SCW and a positive stance toward the "losers" (Republicans). This side is seen as the victim of the national disaster. Nevertheless, these last two movies differ in their dramatic weight and the "exceptional" versus "normal" nature of the characters in the film.

Two versions of the questionnaire were built, one for the experimental groups and another for the control group. The attitude and belief scale

on the SCW was included in both due to the fact that this was the main dependent variable. The experimental groups' questionnaire had additional scales in order to measure the impact's mediating processes: the affective impact, identification with the characters, and degree of elaboration or reflection on the SCW while seeing the film. Watson's Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was used to evaluate the impact on the subject's mood. It consists of two dimensions: positive affect and negative affect. The scale was completed before the film was shown and immediately after (internal consistency: for positive affect, .81 in the pretest, and .86 in the posttest; for negative affect, .76 in the pretest, and .91 in the posttest). Identification with the characters was evaluated by using a scale consisting of 17 items with an internal consistency of .93. The following are some examples of these items: "I have affectively implicated myself with the characters' feelings," "I have had the impression of really living what was being shown in the film." Response format ranged from 1 = not at all, to 5 = totally.

In order to evaluate the degree of elaboration or reflection on the SCW while seeing the film, a 5-item scale was used with an internal consistency of .77. An example of these items is the following: "I have thought about the Spanish Civil War." Responses ranged from 1 = not at all, to 5 = totally. These two last scales were presented immediately after seeing the films.

The following tables show that each film had a different impact on the attitudes and beliefs toward the SCW. This difference is especially visible when comparing the film that takes an "ambivalent and re-conciliation" stance (*La Vaguilla*) and the one that holds a positive but dramatic image of the "losers" (*Ay, Carmela*).

The data shown in Table 4.6 indicate that those individuals who saw the most ambivalent film (*La Vaguilla*) tend to reject a fatalist and dramatic vision of the SCW. These participants disagree with the idea that there was great social demobilization and a climate of distrust among the population as a consequence of the war. They also disagree with the idea that the main victims of the war were the Republicans. They also think that the Republicans did not suffer at the end of the war frustration, disillusion, and despair. There is more ambivalence toward those who took part in the war, and a more negative image of the "losers" (i.e., "there were neither good guys or bad guys"). These participants are also more skeptical of the idea that the war determined the present-day political situation, and also tend to reject the idea that the memories of the conflict produce in them self-reference negative emotions (such as sadness, guilt, or shame).

Those who saw the most dramatic film (*Ay, Carmela*) tend to express a more negative attitude toward the war and think that it was a close and understandable event. There is a more positive stance toward the "losers" and less ambivalence toward those who took part in the conflict. They also

TABLE 4.6  
Differential Impact of Each Film on the Attitudes  
and Beliefs on the SCW (Pearson Correlations)

Attitudes and Beliefs About the SCW	Film 1	Film 2	Film 3
Attitude toward the SCW:			
A positive and nonimportant event	-.03	-.11†	.00
A distant and incomprehensible event	.08	-.17*	.03
General opinions:			
It is better to forget what happened during the war and postwar years	-.06	-.02	.11†
Ambivalence toward the participants and negative image of the Republicans	.19**	-.16*	.05
Nostalgia and positive view of the past	-.06	.00	.01
Negative self-reference emotions when remembering the war	-.10†	.17*	.05
Beliefs about the causes:			
Franquist military had no confidence in the Republic. A climate of conflict	-.02	.13*	-.19**
The population had no confidence in the Republic	-.04	.01	-.06
Beliefs about the consequences:			
Collective disaster (death, misery)	-.04	.08	.07
Social demobilization (staying away from politics) during the postwar years	-.11†	.03†	-.03
The Republicans were the main victims	-.10†	.02	.05
The country split up. Political, economic, and cultural isolation during the postwar years	-.07	-.13*	-.04
The past conflict has determined present-day politics	-.23***	.18*	.01
Frustration, disillusion, and despair among the Republicans	-.11†	.06	.15*
Climate of nonconfidence among the population during the postwar years	-.15*	-.01	.16*

Note: Film 1: *La Vaguilla*; Film 2: *Ay, Carmela*; Film 3: *Las Bicicletas son para el Verano*. Each experimental condition was coded as either 1 (having seen the film) or 0 (not having seen it) which includes the rest of the experimental conditions including the control). This allowed us to evaluate each film's differential effect. In other words, a positive correlation means that those who saw the film had a higher than average mean, a stronger agreement with the belief dimensions (evaluating the SCW, respectively, as a "positive and insignificant" or "far away and incomprehensible" event).

† $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

share the idea that remembering the SCW or just thinking about it produces self-reference negative emotions. These subjects also express a higher agreement with the idea that it was the Franquist military lack of confidence in the Republic and the climate of political conflict that led to the war. Finally, they also agree with the idea that the conflict has determined the political situation nowadays, but they tend to reject the idea that this event

led to a split in the country and to political, economic, and social isolation in the postwar years. Those who saw this film share a negative and catastrophic image of the Civil War.

The third film (*Las Bicicletas son para el Verano*), which offered a negative and dramatic vision of the SCW from a "normal" family's point of view, and without much dramatism, had less impact in the attitudes and beliefs on the conflict. Those subjects who saw this film agreed with the statement that "it is better to forget what happened during the war and postwar years," and reject the idea that it was the Franco military lack of confidence in the Republic that caused the war. They also believe that as a consequence of the war the Republicans were frustrated, disillusioned, and in despair. They think that after the war there was a climate of lack of confidence among the population. They had a negative vision of the war although they did not have a global explanation for the event and they favored forgetting this event.

In relation to the mediating processes, it was observed that a low impact of the films on attitudes and beliefs was associated with participants' low affective involvement with these films. On the other hand, a high affective induction (of a negative mood) and a stronger identification with the characters depicted in the films is linked to a stronger agreement with beliefs and attitudes congruent with the film's content. Moreover, in the most dramatic film (*Ay, Carmela*) there was a positive relation between negative mood and cognitive reflection ( $r = .52, p < .001, N = 30$ ). In other words, an affective interest in the topic is linked to more cognitive reflection, and cognitive reflection is linked to a stronger impact on attitudes and beliefs (Igartua & Paez, 1995).

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In accordance with the idea of the existence of 20- to 30-year cycles in remembering events, 20 to 30 years after the end of the SCW (established in 1949, which is when the last actions of the rural guerrilla took place) there is an increase in the number of films produced on the topic of the SCW. This increase coincides with the biological and social disappearance of those responsible for the negative collective event. Although this "biological" fact is of utmost importance, it cannot be ruled out that those other factors mentioned by Pennnebaker (1993) were not important in this specific situation. In relation to the content of the films on the SCW, as the years pass, there is a higher cognitive and affective distancing from the collective catastrophe, there is an increase in the ambivalent view of this event and more interest in understanding the real causes of why the event took place. With regard to the impact of having seen films and series that are critical toward the past, having been "exposed" to them helps maintain certain

emotions toward the event. This is a central tenet in Bartlett's (1932/1990) idea of why collective memories are maintained. It also reinforces beliefs on the nature of the event having been a collective catastrophe, on the impact of the past on the present, and on the need to remember. Finally, there is positive view of the "losers" and a critical stance toward the official past.

The potential impact of popular works of art in influencing the collective memory of events was experimentally demonstrated among students who viewed one of three SCW-relevant movies. Those who saw the most ambivalent and de-dramatizing film shared a minimized vision of this event, they disagreed with the idea that due to the war there was isolation, greed, frustration, and lack of confidence among the population. They tended to disagree with the idea that the Republicans were the main victims, and were more ambivalent toward all those who took part in the conflict. Moreover, they disagreed with the "impact of the past on present days" (that the war has determined present-day politics), and remembering the war produced in them less negative emotions such as sadness, guilt, or shame. As an external semiotic mechanism, this type of work of art is effective in producing a de-dramatization and distancing from the event both cognitive and affectively.

The film depicting a more negative and critical view of the war from the point of view of a middle-class family and with a small amount of dramatic impact provoked in the subjects less change in their attitudes and beliefs toward the war. Moreover, although the subjects had a negative vision of the war, they did not agree with a sociopolitical explanation of the war and tried to forget this collective event. These results coincide with the opinion that a Spanish film critic has of *Las Bicicletas son para el Verano*: "One phrase finally defines the cinematographical nature of this biased and false version. The main actor, the head of the family, is the character who expresses it, when referring to the war he states: 'I think that in the end nobody will win.' This character . . . forgets and wants us also to forget that those who started the war, kept it going and finally won, and their allies, did win, and they won a lot" (Ripoll i Freixes, 1992, p. 158).

Finally, those experimental participants exposed to the film that offered a more dramatic vision of the war showed a more negative attitude toward the war and thought it was closer to them and could understand it better. This film produced a more positive attitude toward the "losers" and less ambivalence toward those who took part in the conflict. Remembering the SCW produced self-referent negative emotions. On the other hand, they stated more agreement with the sociopolitical causes of the war. Finally those subjects who saw this film (*Ay, Carmela*) were more inclined to believe that the past had shaped the present.

The results confirm the idea that having been exposed to films with a de-dramatized and relativizing content will congruently affect the beliefs

and attitudes toward the SCW, and that exactly the opposite happens when exposed to a more dramatic film. Works of art act as "external containers" of emotions, beliefs, and attitudes toward the collective events of the past. But they also play an effective role in maintaining and reconstructing the historical past. Producing works of art or semiotic structures that commemorate the war stressing the individual participation while not paying much attention to the sociopolitical causes of the war, giving a neutral or ambivalent view of the event, will distance oneself from the collective event and foster forgetting instead of helping to express the contradictory collective memory of a war that split the country in two. Exactly the opposite will happen with semiotic structures that insist on the suffering and sociopolitical causes of the collective catastrophe. These semiotic structures will produce more emotional activity, more reflection, and a stronger identification with the characters. These processes are linked to a stronger agreement with critical and negative beliefs on the war. These different processes activated by the films are a sign of the struggle in search of "rendering some meaning to the past," which is a feature of the collective memory of traumatic collective events such as the SCW.

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