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¿Te acuerdas?: Prosthetic Memories of Traumatic Experience in Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002)

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RESUMEN:

La voz dormida (2002) de Dulce Chacón ha sido profundamente aclamada por su descubrimiento de las voces silenciadas de aquellos que fueron vencidos durante la Guerra Civil Española. Al representar esta experiencia desde una perspectiva femenina, Chacón se introduce en el discurso académico actual sobre la memoria histórica en este acontecimiento. La crítica ha salientado las estrategias literarias más notables relacionadas con la novela, especialmente el juego intertextual que pretende recontextualizar la experiencia de este período, la hibridación de textos orales y escritos, y el uso del lenguaje narrativo para así, evaluar y reformular la participación femenina y su papel en la creación de la memoria histórica. Sin embargo, toda la literatura previa aún tiene que discutir la forma en la que la novela recrea tanto reacciones cognitivas como las corpóreas más realistas y su experiencia traumática que, como sostengo, permite a los lectores participar como testigos empáticos en la novela. Las estrategias narrativas que emplea Chacón ofrecen a sus lectores una forma diferente de acceder al pasado a través de unos relatos históricos que convierten al lector en espectador silencioso de sus acontecimientos. *La voz dormida* puede considerarse lo que Alison Landsberg (2004) describe como un acto de "memoria protésica", o la representación cultural en la que "la persona no se limita a conocer dicha narrativa histórica, sino que adquiere un recuerdo más personal, profundamente emotivo de un suceso pasado que no ha vivido" (2). La novela de Chacón se ha convertido en un éxito internacional, ya que permite imaginar la vida durante la Guerra Civil española, observar la implicación de las mujeres en tiempos de guerra y su compromiso con la defensa de sus derechos desde una perspectiva diferente.

Palabras clave: mujeres, Guerra Civil Española, Trece Rosas, Dulce Chacón, memoria histórica

ABSTRACT:

Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002) has been widely acclaimed for uncovering the silenced voices of the vanquished from the Spanish Civil War. By representing women's experiences, Chacón inserts herself into the ongoing public discussion over the memory of this historical event. Scholars have published on the notable literary strategies related to her novel, including the implementation of intertextuality to recontextualize experiences from this time period, the hybridization of oral and written texts, and the use of language in the narrative to assess and reshape women's participation and her role in memory creation. However, research has yet to discuss the way in which the novel recreates the realistic cognitive and bodily reactions to traumatic experiences that, I argue, allow readers to engage with the novel in a personable way as empathic witnesses. The narrative strategies that Chacón employs gives readers a different kind of access to the past than conventional historical accounts by inciting them as silent bystanders in the novel. *La voz dormida* can be considered what Alison Landsberg (2004) describes as a "prosthetic memory," or cultural representation in which "the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live" (2). Chacón's novel has become an international success, as a way to imagine life during the Spanish Civil War and to see women's wartime involvement and their commitment to upholding women's rights in a different light.

Keywords: women, Spanish Civil War, Trece Rosas, Dulce Chacón, historical memory

Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002) has been widely acclaimed for uncovering the silenced voices of the vanquished from the Spanish Civil War. By representing women's experiences, Chacón inserts herself into the ongoing public discussion over the memory of this historical event.¹ Scholars have published on the notable literary strategies related to her novel, including the implementation of intertextuality to recontextualize experiences from this time period (Portela 2007), the hybridization of oral and written texts (Colmeiro 2008), and the use of language in the narrative to assess and reshape women's participation and her role in memory creation (Everly 2009). However, research has yet to discuss the way in which the novel recreates the realistic cognitive and bodily reactions to traumatic experiences that, I argue, allow readers to engage with the novel in a personable way as empathic witnesses. The narrative strategies that Chacón employs gives readers a different kind of access to the past than conventional historical accounts by inciting them as silent bystanders in the novel. *La voz dormida* can be considered what Alison Landsberg (2004) describes as a "prosthetic memory," or cultural representation in which "the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live" (2). Chacón's novel has become an international success, as a way to imagine life during the Spanish Civil War and to see women's wartime involvement and their commitment to upholding women's rights in a different light.²

La voz dormida crafts a realistic simulation of traumatic experience, and incites readers' engagement with the text, in three ways. First, readers observe the physical and emotional responses to living in a prison setting, including what Van der Kolk and Van der Hart describe as a "feeling of helplessness, of physical or emotional paralysis—fundamental to the traumatic experience" (Vickroy, 2002: 12). The protagonists' withdrawn and suppressed behavior does not always communicate their emotions. Thus, readers must speculate on the thoughts behind the protagonists' actions in order to fill in the gaps and piece together an understanding of their trauma. The readers' deciphering of information aligns with what Lisa Zunshine (2008) calls "theory of mind" or readers' "ability to interpret the behavior of people in terms of their underlying states of mind."³ The results of mind-reading, and other narrative techniques found in fiction, have psychological implications on the

reader, with fiction serving as a canvas to imagine alternative realities.

Second, the omniscient narrator uses a technique called "redundant story-telling" to repeat ideas that were already stated in characters' dialogue (Phelan, 2005: 11; Palmer, 2004: 13). This literary technique diffuses to readers the protagonists' constant ruminations, or the dwelling on certain negative thoughts, that are often induced by a stressful environment (Hertel, 2004: 186). The repetition of the same thoughts conditions readers to better understand how trauma, according to Jessica Payne, can either enhance memory or make past memories more vivid (2004: 103). Third, the incorporation of historical figures, photographs, and documents, as well as the manipulation of fictional texts to appear authentic, creates what Monika Fludernik (1996) calls "experientiality," or a "quasi-mimetic evocation of real-life experience" (12).⁴ One such example is the insertion of the memory of thirteen female martyrs, nicknamed the Thirteen Roses, who were executed on August 5, 1939. The interplay between the recollections of the Roses' slaying and the pending execution of one of the protagonists is a powerful technique that capitalizes on the trauma of a real event, a specific episodic memory, to show how executions permanently altered familial relationships.

Chacón's novel provides fragmented snapshots of life during the postwar in Madrid, portraying the lives of a group of four women who are incarcerated in Ventas Prison, along with their network of family and friends involved in the clandestine fight against Dictator Franco outside of the prison walls. Reme, the eldest of the women in Ventas, was sentenced to six years for sewing a Republican flag. Tomasa is a spirited and rebellious woman from Extremadura whose family was killed by the civil guard. Elvira, a young teenager, is doted upon by the other inmates and escapes from the prison with the assistance of her comrades. Lastly, Hortensia, a soon-to-be mother, is destined for execution after the birth of her child for her association with the anti-Franco movement. Readers must speculate and unravel Hortensia's death, particularly when and how it will take place. The constant mention of Hortensia's looming trial and execution adds both suspense and empathy to the narrative. Although Hortensia is indeed executed shortly after giving birth, her daughter, Tensi, is securely delivered to Hortensia's sister to be raised outside of prison, thus offering some consolation to sympathetic readers. At the end of the novel, Tensi is

an eighteen-year-old woman with desires to become politically active in the fight against Franco.

The narrative techniques in the opening scene of the novel create suspense, mystery, and intrigue about prison life as inmates react in different ways to the circumstances.⁵ In *La voz dormida*, readers decipher characters' mental states to comprehend their trauma, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2014) as "a psychic injury, especially one caused by emotional shock, the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed; an internal injury, esp. to the brain, which may result in a behavioral disorder of organic origin. Also, the state or condition so caused" ("Trauma"). In *La voz dormida*, mind reading addresses a core question with which readers must grapple: How can someone react to and cope with the circumstances of a stressful environment?

As the narrator describes in the first chapter, Hortensia, who is eight months pregnant, writes in a blue notebook. The narrator offers no commentary about the contents of what she is writing, although it might hold the key to knowing her thoughts. Thus, readers engage in a mind-reading activity to understand her thought process. Mind reading challenges readers to unravel characters' mental states based on what can be observed from their behavior (Zunshine, 2008: 71). The narrator describes Hortensia's meek conduct, which also perhaps hints as to why she chooses to write in a notebook: "La mujer que iba a morir se llamaba Hortensia. Tenía los ojos oscuros y no hablaba nunca en voz alta" (Chacón, 2002: 11). Through the narrator's explanation as well as the characters' actions, the scene communicates the effects of oppression: "Y había aprendido a no hacerse preguntas, a aceptar la derrota se cuela en lo hondo, en lo más hondo, sin pedir permiso y sin dar explicaciones" (Chacón, 2002: 11). Hortensia does not speak but expresses herself in written word, revealing her personal cathartic preferences.

In contrast to Hortensia's silence at the beginning of the novel, Elvira makes light of her prison situation by playing with a glove filled with garbanzo beans. Some readers may interpret the manipulation of Elvira's puppet as a symbol, on a larger scale, of the way in which Dictator Franco's penal system controls the lives, and fate, of the female inmates. Taken together, Hortensia's and Elvira's behavior provide a basis for readers to envision realistic reactions to these oppressive circumstances. Readers'

cognitive interaction with the novel is stirred because at times the protagonists' emotional states are not entirely transparent.

The last comment from the narrator in the first chapter reinforces the message about the women's helplessness, and how their destiny is out of their control: "La mujer que iba a morir no sabía que iba a morir" (Chacón, 2002: 12). As readers become acquainted with the protagonists' actions, they speculate on their emotions while absorbing the narrator's commentary. The differing reactions between Hortensia and Elvira show the complex, and highly individualistic, mechanisms for dealing with trauma. In response to these scenarios, readers may feel sympathetic, or uncomfortable.

While there are some moments of ambiguity in the novel, such as when readers must speculate on what Hortensia writes in her blue notebook, the narrative also includes brief instances that demonstrate what Zunshine (2008) calls "embodied transparency" (67). To create moments of embodied transparency, the author "builds up a context" with brief access to a character's mental state, which then culminates in a moment that stands out sharply against the "relative opacity of other characters or of the same character a moment ago" (Zunshine, 2008: 72). These concise moments are often tense and dramatic and reveal characters' feelings through their actions. One dramatic incident takes place when the inmates are lined up on Christmas day and are forced to kiss the feet of a statue of Baby Jesus. When Tomasa gets to the front of the line, she bites off Jesus's toe in an act of defiance, causing her to spend time in solitary confinement (Chacón, 2002: 139).

Tomasa's blatant behavior offers readers a rare flash of insight into how characters' mental states, but also their bodies, are pushed to the breaking point of extreme oppression. Tomasa's bold actions show how individuals react to stress, defined as "the overpowering pressure of some adverse force or influence" ("Stress"). Among other factors, stress is determined by whether or not a person perceives that he or she has control over a tense experience (Payne, 2004: 79). Tomasa's actions, and the consequences, offer an opportunity for reflection. As Keith Oatley (1999) explains, fiction serves as a psychological tool for readers to understand reality: "The simulations that are novels...can allow people to find out more about the intimate implications of their emotions. They offer

a laboratory space that, relative to real life, is safe and can make the relations of emotions to goals and action easier to understand" (112). This "laboratory" appears as Tomasa's brazen actions reveal a deep-seated human tendency in some people to fight back against injustice, especially in a moment of helplessness. This example perhaps reminds readers of other celebrated individuals who stood up against oppression.

Tomasa's thoughts communicate one of Chacón's main messages: the vital importance of women's rights and women's commitment to uphold them.⁶ The narrator explains more to readers about Tomasa's mental state and her unwillingness to surrender to the dictatorship: "Tomasa sostiene que la guerra no ha terminado... Ella se niega a aceptar que los tres años de guerra comienzan a formar parte de la Historia. Ella no va a dar treinta años de su vida para la Historia. La guerra no ha acabado" (Chacón, 2002: 31). She refuses to believe that the war will become part of the past, or rather, an event that will be forgotten in history books. As shown by Tomasa's thoughts, *La voz dormida* introduces readers to the possible complex motives, sacrifices, worries, and desires of women from this era.

Cognitive techniques, such as what Zunshine (2006) describes as "our 'trying on' of mental states," give readers the sensation that they are getting in the characters' heads and absorbing their values and apprehensions (17). In the early stages of the novel, readers perceive Tomasa as the character most heavily committed to justice for women because of her words, thoughts, and actions. In solitary confinement, Tomasa thinks about her personal commitment to the war cause, but also questions the reliability of others. Through Tomasa's subjective thoughts, readers first learn more about Reme's past, as well as the conflicting feelings that Tomasa has about her: "Pura inocencia. Inocente, y tan mayor. Por eso la trajeron desde un pueblo de Murcia... Pero no se puede ser tan inocente. Está más claro que las claras del día que no se puede bordar una bandera en la camilla de tu casa si la tienes arrimada a la ventana" (Chacón, 2002: 52). In an earlier scene, the narrator describes Tomasa's frustration with Reme for her apparent complacency related to sewing uniforms for nationalist forces while in Ventas:

Y por eso mira a Reme con desdén cuando Reme se incorpora en la fila. Porque Reme ha abandonado.

Se ha vuelto mansa. Reme no sabe valorar el sacrificio de los que siguen cayendo. Ella es una derrotista, que sólo sabe contar los muertos...Y Reme se incorpora con masedumbre a la fila ignorando su desdén. (Chacón, 2002: 32-33)

Tomasa's surge of frustrating suspicions affects readers' perceptions of both the war and prison situations in two ways. First, it demonstrates to readers the natural human tendency for depressed individuals to dwell upon autobiographical experiences and negative thoughts (Hertel, 2004: 186). Second, Tomasa's thoughts give readers the impression that it was difficult to fully trust others even if they were considered comrades.

Often, readers find subjective evaluations of other characters at the beginning of a novel to be believable until they are offered a different perspective (Zunshine, 2006: 91). In *La voz dormida*, a new viewpoint is provided in the third section of the novel when the narrator adds more details about Reme's seemingly cowardly actions. In the prison sewing workshop, she smuggled supplies to sew two male guard uniforms as part of an elaborate escape plan for two inmates, Elvira and Sole: "Será confusión, para que dos camaradas disfrazados con los uniformes que Reme ha confeccionado en el taller de costura reclamen a Sole" (Chacón, 2002: 273). The new information allows readers to see how the frustration of the postwar situation, and the suffocating silence of prison life, can create misinterpretations that also add suspense to the narrative. The answer about Reme's involvement in the prison's workshop, provided toward the end of the novel, creates satisfactory closure for readers who sympathize with the imprisoned women in Ventas. Furthermore, it fulfills the author's goal of celebrating subversive women who fought against Franco.

In *La voz dormida*, the protagonists converse with each other about their basic needs and opinions, which are repeated, and then elaborated on, through the narrator's commentary. This narrative technique is similar to what James Phelan calls "redundant story-telling," which he describes as "a narrator's apparently unmotivated report of information to a narratee that the narratee already possesses" (11). Many passages that utilize this narrative technique examine the characters' suffering or the difficult prison living conditions:

En silencio y en orden abandonan la sala las mujeres hacia el sótano de la prisión de Ventas. Y Elvira le contesta, a Tomasa, que no tiene frío.

—Pero tengo hambre.

Pero tiene hambre. Tiene tanta hambre como en el Puerto de Alicante, cuando esperaba un barco que nunca llegó..." (Chacón, 2002: 37)

The repetition of information requires readers to process the same ideas more than once and allows them to make connections between characters' past and present challenges. It also echoes the tendency for depressed individuals to "ruminate" on their thoughts: "They ponder the episodes associated with sad feelings and imagine similar future occurrences. They focus on their feelings and wonder if they will ever change" (Hertel, 2004: 186). By repeating the information, the narrator does not come to new conclusions about the prison situation, but rather reinforces the circular loop of these thoughts, thus conditioning readers' minds to understand the thought patterns of a depressed or traumatized individual.

Chacón further communicates how the inmates' experiences are traumatic by employing the past and future verb tenses, as well as impersonal expressions, to interpret and relay information about the women's fate. When referring to Hortensia, the narrator uses the past tense to tell about "la mujer que iba a morir." In contrast, the future tense is employed to talk about the characters that are going to live, such as Elvira:

—¿Me voy a morir?

Tomasa busca con la mirada a Hortensia y a Reme para sonreírles. Sonríe, con la boca abierta. Reme y Hortensia entienden el motivo de su sonrisa y sonrían también.... Elvirita no va a morirse, dicen aquellas sonrisas cómplices. No. Elvira no va a morir. (Chacón, 2002: 36)

Similarly, impersonal expressions used by the narrator offer direct, yet subjective, statements about prison life. When Hortensia receives a death sentence, for example, inmates try to escape from their fear and sadness by making fun of one of the most severe of the prison guards, La Zapatones. The narrator justifies this behavior using impersonal expressions, which assists readers in imaging how to cope with such difficult news: "Es preciso

romper la insolencia de la funcionaria. Es preciso ahuyentar la angustia de la espera, presidida por el silencio de esta mañana de mediados de febrero, luminosa y fría. Es posible tomar aire de esta asfixia, engañar a la tristeza. Es posible" (Chacón, 2002: 222). The combination of the characters' actions and the narrator's extra commentary creates a multi-layered form of communication between the author and readers, one that helps readers to form a subjective opinion: "Our values and those set forth by the narrator and the implied author affect our judgment of characters (and sometimes narrators) and our judgments affect our emotions" (Phelan, 2005: 19). The emotional response that Chacón seeks to impose on readers is one that mixes horror, confusion, trauma, and sympathy for the past and present hardships that the prison inmates endure.

The repetition and manipulation of information that is relayed by the narrator puts emphasis on some of the more important messages of Chacón's account: the pain, injustice, and suffering of the women inmates, but also their love and dedication to help others in need. In Chacón's novel, the web of solidarity in Ventas prison may offer a platform for readers to examine similar ideas in their daily lives: the implications of family, personal relationships, and the intrinsic desire to help others during moments of great hardship. The feeling of solidarity among inmates simulates a family dynamic to which almost all readers can relate.

Readers observe how the characters struggle with illness and support each other. When Elvira is delirious with fever and the other women are taking care of her, she calls for her mother:

—Mamá.

Tomasa añora también a su madre, al igual que Hortensia, que levanta la vista de su cuaderno azul.

—Mamá.

Y el quejido de Elvira es el quejido de todos. (Chacón, 2002: 22)

The narrator's metonymic statement shares with readers the frustrations and desires of prison inmates are not only pertinent to one person but rather to the entire group. In fiction, Alan Palmer (2004) calls this "intermental thought," defined as "shared" or "group" thinking (15). Intermental thought is an important mechanism for further drawing readers into the novel because it points to the important theme of solidarity and social bonding, which are vital survival tactics in prison. It

also triggers readers to reflect upon the formation of the family when traditional family configurations are broken, as well as the ways in which people communicate with the important individuals in their lives. Chacón's fiction is a simulation of personal relationships that many readers have in reality: the relationship between Hortensia and her husband, as well as the one with her unborn daughter. The simulation of reality in the text may provoke readers to identify, and thus feel more emotionally connected, with a protagonist.

At the same time that readers can identify with certain relationships among characters, there is a stark contrast between the communication techniques to which inmates must resort and those of readers. In *Ventas*, conventional communication styles are largely prohibited as a result of the oppressive setting. Correspondence between prisoners and outside family members is mediated, sporadic, and complex. In prison, Hortensia is forced to correspond with her husband through written messages on small pieces of paper. The narrative not only captures the difficulty of mediated communication with loved ones but also the emotional consequences, such as the desperation that Hortensia feels as she swallows a piece of paper containing her husband's clandestine message: "Hortensia intenta tragar. Te quiero, Tensi. El esfuerzo de papel y tinta le produce arcadas. Por aquí andamos igual, mal y bien según el día" (Chacón, 2002: 31). Hortensia's reluctance to swallow the paper, the only contact that she has with her husband, alludes to the isolationism of prison life.

Mediated communication in the novel highlights the trauma of living in postwar Spain, pushing readers to think about communication styles in a whole new light. The most compelling example of this is revealed in the way in which the deaths of female inmates, including Hortensia, are conveyed to those outside of the prison walls. Doña Celia, a woman who rents a room to Hortensia's sister, Pepita, makes an arrangement with prison guards to cut pieces of cloth from the cadavers for family members to identify. Like the notebook, the pieces of cloth from Hortensia's dress serves as an object of memory, suggesting a moral imperative that the deceased must be identified and their story must be told. Much of the characters' actions in *La voz dormida* have been shaped by the author's investigative research and the oral interviews that she conducted with women war survivors over the course of four years. Chacón lists many of her sources in

the Acknowledgement section at the end of her book so readers can be reminded of, and perhaps persuaded by, the historical authenticity of various aspects of the fictional account.

Simulation is not only apparent within the fictional plot, but also visually throughout the text with the manipulation of the font itself. In some parts of the book, especially at the conclusion of each of the three sections of the novel, the font mimics the appearance of historical documents written on a typewriter. Some of the documents are authentic, such as the transcription of a segment from a famous letter authored by Franco that announces the end of the war at the conclusion of Section 1. Others are the author's fictional creations, including an official-looking court document that confirms Hortensia's death sentence. The visual techniques enhance the sensation that readers are experiencing history through fiction.

A black and white photograph, which appears on the cover of the first and subsequent editions of Chacón's novel, gives readers a physical reference to Hortensia: a beautiful mother and female militant who will suffer an unavoidable death.⁷ This image is also incorporated into the plot of the novel, when Felipe remembers Hortensia as she carried a child in her arms: "Tensi, 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 había puesto los pendientes que él le había comprado en Azuaga y se había recogido el pelo ocultando sus trenzas" (Chacón, 2002: 81). The inclusion of the photograph manipulates readers' interaction with the novel in two ways. An image provides a sensation of "what has been," as Barthes (1981) explains in *Camera Lucida*: "The effect it produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed" (82). Also for Barthes (1981), the photograph is an agent of death: "For Photography must have some historical relation with what Edgar Morin calls the 'crisis of death'" (92). The figures in a black and white photograph can provoke melancholy in the viewer, as Barthes experienced himself (Barthes, 1981: 79).⁸

The theme of death, and the melancholy that it produces, is prevalent in other ways throughout the narrative, especially with the constant mention of the memory of the historical figures, 'las Trece Rosas': thirteen

women who were executed on August 5, 1939 for participating in a communist youth organization, the *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*. Seven of the Roses, who received this nickname from prison inmates in Ventas, were under the age of eighteen.⁹ Historically, many anti-Franco supporters perceived this execution as an exemplary one, and the death of so many young women caused a ripple of shock both inside and outside of prison. After their death, the Roses were not primarily remembered as female activists but rather as martyr figures whose last request was that their memory not be forgotten.

In the novel, the fate of the Thirteen Roses is often compared to the unfolding situation surrounding Hortensia. The historical information about the Roses' execution is delivered through the protagonists' thoughts and in flashbacks from the narrator.¹⁰ The Roses' story is used as a narrative tool to reinforce readers' empathy, which is described by Landsberg (2004) as a "feeling of cognitive, intellectual connection, and intellectual coming-to-terms with another person's circumstances (149). The information about the Roses is presented in short fragments, and this technique adds suspense about Hortensia's looming trial and death.

The novel provides direct associations between what happened to the Roses and what may happen to Hortensia. Hortensia records resemblances between the Roses and herself in her notebook:

La mujer que iba a morir escribe en su cuaderno azul. Escribe que han ingresado doce mujeres de las *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* y que a ella la van a meter en ese expediente, y que las van a juzgar muy pronto a las trece. Trece, como las menores que fusilaron el cinco de agosto de mil novecientos treinta y nueve, como Las Trece Rosas. (Chacón, 2002: 56)

Later in the novel, Hortensia is tried with twelve other women and is sentenced to death, thus making the incorporation of the Roses in the plot all the more relevant to understanding the protagonists' trauma.

A similar pattern between the Roses and Hortensia intensifies the empathic quality of the novel, as readers know from the narrator's commentary that the Roses' execution was abrupt and tragic. The connections that readers make between two compelling events have psychological implications for them. Oatley (1999)

clarifies the significance of making associations while reading fiction: "[T]he writer offers patterns of events of the kind that cause emotions. From these, readers attribute emotions to story characters and experiences sympathetic emotions toward these characters" (114).¹¹ The similarities between Hortensia and the Thirteen Roses make the threat to the fictional character in the plot seem believable since readers observe, over and over again, in the novel how tragic events seem to be repeated.

The Roses' memory in the text is used to highlight the natural human tendencies, both the physical and cognitive reactions, to Hortensia's death sentence. When the other inmates find out about Hortensia's fate, they immediately talk about the Thirteen Roses. The female prisoners grapple to comprehend Hortensia's fate by relating it to something else they experienced before:

—¿Las han condenado a todas.
—¿A Hortensia también?
—También. Vienen las trece con 'La Pepa', que estaba hoy baratita.
—Trece, como las 'rosas' del treinta y nueve.
Como las 'rosas', sí. (Chacón, 2002: 211-212)

Readers are first exposed to the inmates' feelings as they process Hortensia's death sentence, which they call "la Pepa," through a collective dialogue. Thereafter, Tomasa's subjective thoughts guide readers to a specific interpretation, or perhaps judgment, about their innocence and the unjustness of Franco's penal system.

While processing the news of Hortensia's death sentence, Tomasa thinks about the one of the Thirteen Roses, Joaquina, to highlight the uncertainty of death and the fact that no one was safe from execution:

Nada se sabe. Tampoco sabe nadie por qué juzgaron a Joaquina...Estaba en Ventas con dos hermanas suyas, juzgadas y condenadas las tres por ser de las *Juventudes*. Las tres estaban en Ventas, aunque nunca les dejaron estar juntas en la misma celda. Dos veces fue juzgada Joaquina. Dos veces condenada a muerte. De la primera condena se salvó, se la conmutaron por veinte años. Y en dos días, cumplieron la segunda. Dos días. (Chacón, 2002: 213)

Tomasa also shares how the Roses' execution was "un escarmiento" (Chacón,

2002: 213). By reading this information, readers make an indirect connection with Hortensia, and how her death sentence is equally confusing and unjustifiable. Furthermore, no one knows when the verdict will be carried out.

The Thirteen Roses are associated with superstitious bad luck, as Hortensia discusses with Reme at the beginning of Chapter 13: "Mal fario, que seamos trece en el expediente, mal fario. Trece, el número de la mala sombra, y el de las menores" (Chacón, 2002: 215). While Reme asks her to not think of the similarities, her mind drifts to the Roses, who were also referred to as "las menores." She reflects upon the young women's reactions as they were taken away for the execution: Anna could not sleep on the night of August 4th and Victoria began to cry as she was taken away (Chacón, 2002: 215). The use of the number thirteen manipulates the common discomfort of many Spaniards, as well as readers in many other countries, of the number thirteen.¹² The Roses' memory in the novel not only serves as a perfect venue to capitalize on this international superstition, but also to highlight the fear associated with executions and the distress that lingers thereafter.

The memory surrounding the Thirteen Roses in the plot helps readers to see inside the protagonists' minds, particularly related to how they react to trauma. The presentation of both cognitive and behavioral effects in a novel allows a character's predicament to be "vividly imagined" by readers (Oatley, 1999: 114). Elvira, for instance, does not look at Hortensia, and she compares this reaction with how she behaved on the night of August 4th, when the Roses left for execution:

La niña pelirroja mira el faldón, pero no se atreve a mirar a Hortensia... Pudor. Sí, siente pudor al mirar a Hortensia. Ella no tiene derecho a descubrir qué hay en sus ojos. Tampoco a Julita Conesa la miró a sus ojos. Ni a Virtudes González. Ella no se atrevió a mirar a los ojos a ninguna de las trece menores... Los juicios rápidos son peligrosos, acaban siempre en condenas largas. Se alegra de que el suyo no se haya celebrado aún, y se toca la cabeza recordando a Virtudes González. (Chacón, 2002: 216)

Elvira appears unable to fully comprehend her emotions. As she is stuck in a depressed loop of negative ideas about her current

situation, her thoughts point to how confronting mortality is deeply personal and highly individualistic. By examining her own reaction to the Roses' death as well as Hortensia's looming demise, Elvira discovers a concern for her own well being as well and also a desire for self-preservation. Readers may see some of their own cognitive challenges reflected in the protagonists' reactions. Through cognitive and emotional stimulation, *La voz dormida* engages readers while presenting an array of possible human responses to the difficulties of this time period.

At the same time that the Roses' memory reveals the unjust aspect of Franco's penal system and the confusion and trauma that ensued because of it, the women also represent the importance of celebrating, and passing on memories, of the vanquished from the war. Some nostalgic memories about the Roses are shared in Chacón's text: "Y Tomasa recuerda a Julita Conesa, alegre como un cascabel, a Blanquita Brissac tocando el armonio en la capilla de Ventas y las pecas de Martina Barroso. Y acaricia en su bosillo la cabecita negra que guarda desde la noche del cuatro de agosto de mil novecientos treinta y nueve. Pertenece al cinturón de Joaquina" (Palmer, 2004: 13; Chacón, 2002: 212). The recollection of the physical characteristics and the personalities of the Thirteen Roses show how their story also represents youth, happiness, and courage. Even though readers of *La voz dormida* are unable to distinguish precisely what accounts are fictional and which ones are historic, the manipulation of their mental interaction with the novel guides them towards a greater appreciation of women's wartime contributions and how women's stories have been transmitted among a small group of sympathizers.

A bead that Tomasa carries with her in the novel is a remnant of the Roses' legacy, as confirmed by historical accounts.¹³ As a gift from Joaquina on the night before the execution, the bead helps inmates maintain hope, and also unifies the collective group of women prisoners. Tomasa recalls how she received the bead: "Repártelas entre las mejores, hasta donde llegue, le dijo Joaquina a una compañera al deshacer los eslabones de su cinturón. Y la compañera repartió las cabecitas negras...y a ella le dieron una cabecita de su cinturón. A ella" (Chacón, 2002: 193). The bead has important cognitive significance as an object of memory, as it is the only tangible item that represents the Roses and their ideals. Inherited objects and the emotions associated with them shape attitudes

about the past. Most readers have a personal understanding of these emotional attachments as they have experienced them, thus allowing them to identify with the topic of inheritance in the novel.

The emotional connections that are created by inheritance are also illustrated through the theme of motherhood in the text, a relationship to which many female readers may relate. To highlight the helplessness of Hortensia's situation, the narrative makes a comparison with the fruitless attempts by the Roses' mothers to save their daughters from execution. The correspondence between Julia Conesa—one of the Roses—and her mother was the only solace that the surviving mother received after her daughter's death: "La madre de Julita Conesa sólo tuvo un consuelo: las cartas de su hija le escribió en la prisión de mujeres de Ventas, segunda galería derecha" (Chacón, 2002: 219). The novel transcribes her last letter, which ends with one of the most famous phrases associated with the Roses: "Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia" (Chacón, 2002: 220). The narrator repeats this same request: "No, el nombre de Julita Conesa no se borrará en la Historia. No" (Chacón, 2002: 220). Hortensia leaves a similar legacy for her unborn daughter. Her last words are recorded in a letter to her sister, as the narrator reports: "Sí, en la capilla de Ventas, en su última noche, Hortensia escribió la carta que vencerá el pudor de Pepita. En ella le ruega que cuide de Tensi y le pide que le lea su cuaderno en voz alta, para que su hija sepa que siempre estará con ella" (Chacón, 2002: 253). At the end of the novel, readers observe the moment of transmission between Pepita and Hortensia's daughter, Tensi. Pepita comes across the piece of cloth from Hortensia's dress, along with other documents from this time. She has the opportunity to pass on this material and explain what it is to Tensi:

—Es un recuerdo.
Sólo un recuerdo. (Chacón, 2002: 399)

After reading about the history of the dress, how Pepita made it for Hortensia while she was in prison, readers are aware that the cloth has more significance than what Pepita reveals in the novel. The brief commentary leaves them to reflect on the importance of the cloth and how, and why, it was collected. The brief description of the significance of the dress can be interpreted as a commentary about how many civil war memories have been diminished in the act of transmission to younger generations.

Like other cultural products about civil war memory, *La voz dormida* dialogues with a demographic of readers who wish to actively engage with and learn about this aspect of the past as part of Spain's collective identity.

The mother-daughter relationship in the text not only enhances the importance of diffusing information about the past, but also underscores the empathic quality of the novel. The story of the Thirteen Roses, and particularly that of Julia Conesa, greatly affected Chacón. As part of the research for the novel, she read all of Julia Conesa's letters and visited the cemetery where the Roses were killed and buried. Inma Chacón, the author's identical twin sister, shares details about the impression that the Thirteen Roses' story left on her sister: "Dulce había manejado las cartas de Julita Conesa como parte de la documentación para *La voz dormida*... Yo la vi llorar leyendo aquellas cartas... Era su particular homenaje a aquellas jóvenes, que perdieron la vida en uno de los mayores sinsentidos de la historia de España" (I. Chacón, 2007). In writing her novel, Chacón may have wished to elicit the same empathic reaction in her readers, which is a tendency that Suzanne Keen (2007) has noted in other authors: "Many novelists call up empathy as a representational goal by mirroring it within their texts" (121). Regardless of the author's personal aims, there is no doubt that *La voz dormida* creates a more sensuous engagement with the past.

The cognitive interaction with historical fiction has real life implications. Fiction works, including novels such as *La voz dormida*, are another medium used to educate the public, to document, to reflect upon, and to question the way in which the Spanish Civil War has been told and remembered. The appearance of a counter-narrative, whether fiction or nonfiction, opens up a dialogue to discuss multiple perspectives of a past event. Furthermore, a sensuous engagement and stirring of emotions encourages readers to think ethically, or as Keen (2007) describes as "thinking beyond the immediacy of one's own wants and desires" (149). As evidenced by *La voz dormida*, cultural production and history are working together to assist Spaniards in discovering ways to learn about, and find closure for, an unresolved past.

Chacón's approach, by creating a cognitively stimulating experience that closely mimics historical testimonies from the time period, has received attention

from scholars outside of the realm of literary studies.¹⁴ With an increasingly close connection between cultural production and transitional justice in the twenty-first century, Chacón spreads awareness about the Spanish Civil War and sends a message that previously unresolved atrocities must be unveiled and discussed in order for the nation to move beyond them.¹⁵ Chacón highlights the importance of remembering the difficulties of this time period because “un país sin memoria es un país enfermo” (Chacón, 2004: 77). *La voz dormida* challenges readers to think deeply of their understanding not only of the past, but also of how this information can shape the present moment and the future. As empathic witnesses to the atrocities presented in the novel, readers are offered an opportunity for individual and collective reflection about topics that stir us: the trauma associated with war, the importance of justice, and the value of solidarity. In so doing, Chacón preserves the legacy of courageous women through a wide readership.

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ENDNOTES

1. In recent years, cultural production about Spanish Civil War memory has been the topic of numerous studies, including Fiona Schouten's *A Diffuse Murmur of History: Literary Memory Narratives of Civil War and Dictatorship in Spanish Novels after 1990* and Kathryn Everly's *History, Violence, and the Hyperreal: Representing Culture in the Spanish Contemporary Novel*.

2. For Chacón, women first suffered repression under Franco's conservative dictatorship (1939-1975). Later, after Spain's transition to democracy in 1976, women's wartime accounts went largely unrecognized for the remainder of the twentieth century (Chacón, "La mujer" 77).

3. Zunshine also refers to "theory of mind" as "mind reading," and this theory

pertains to an interdisciplinary approach to literary and cultural analysis called Cognitive Cultural Studies. This recent branch of scholarship incorporates, among other disciplines, the cognitive sciences to examine how people interact with fiction and cultural products. For an introduction, see Zunshine's *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*. Other authors who have published on Cognitive Cultural Studies include Ellen Spolsky, Francis Steen, Mark Turner, and Alan Richardson.

4. For an expanded explanation of experientiality, see Fludernik's *Toward a 'Natural' Narratology*.

5. Accounts about life within Ventas prison have been published, such as the compilation of first-person testimonies by Tomasa Cuevas or historical studies such as that by Fernando Hernández-Holgado.

6. In an interview, Chacón elaborates on her opinions about women's loss of civil rights after the war and the need to speak out about this loss: "Esa pérdida la hemos arrastrado hasta hoy. La mujer tiene que mostrar su valía doblemente en cualquier campo, porque nuestra sociedad, la sociedad española, sigue siendo muy machista" (Velázquez Jordan).

7. The photo is mentioned in the Acknowledgements: "Y a Nieves Moreno, que descubrió el rostro de Hortensia en un libro de Julián Chaves" (Chacón, 2002: 429). The photograph, is of the miliciana, Rosita Sánchez. Its caption describes Sánchez "con su fusil, casi tan grande como ella, su mono de cremallera, una novedad entonces, su gorrito cuartelero, y con el niño en brazos, le dio al fotógrafo una de las más bellas sonrisas de la Guerra Civil Española." The information about Sánchez can be found in the original report in the magazine, *Ahora* (August 26, 1936) ("La República en guerra").

8. Susan Sontag, a theorist on photography, states that photographs only show fragments of the past: "Those ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of the dispersed relatives" (9).

9. The executed women include Carmen Barrero Aguado, Martina Barroso García, Blanca Brisac Vázquez, Pilar Bueno Ibáñez, Julia Conesa Conesa, Adelina García Casillas, Elena Gil Olaya, Virtudes González García, Ana López Gallego, Joaquina López Laffite, Dionisia Manzanero Salas, Victoria Muñoz García, and Luisa Rodríguez de la Fuente.

10. Chacón was the first to capture the Roses' memory in a work of fiction. Since the publication of *La voz dormida*, other literary and cultural accounts have been created about them, including Jesus Ferrero's novel (*Las trece rosas*, 2003) and Carlos Fonseca's book-length historical

study (*Las trece rosas rojas*, 2004). In 2006, Ángeles López published another work of fiction (*Martina, la rosa número trece*, 2006) and Júlia Bel created a play *Júlia Bel (Las trece rosas)*, 2006). Emilio Martínez-Lázaro directed film inspired by Fonseca's account, *Las 13 rosas* (2007), and Maxi de Diego produced another theater production targeted to adolescence (*Abuela Sol y las Trece Rosas*, 2008).

11. Oatley observes that readers acquire a more personal connection to a story occurs when they feel more emotionally attached to the protagonists. He outlines three psychological processes for how this personal connection is achieved: through identification, sympathy, or autobiographical memory (112-113).

12. In *13: The Story of the World's Most Popular Superstition*, Nathaniel Lachenmeyer identifies forty-six countries, including Spain, that consider thirteen to be an unlucky number (189).

13. Joaquina's belt, which was brought to her from Africa, is part of documented history. See Jacobo García Blanco-Cicerón's "Asesinato Legal (5 August 1939): Las 'Trece Rosas.'"

14. *La voz dormida* has been recognized for its historical veracity by scholars outside of the field of literary studies. In her article titled "El protagonismo de la mujer en la novela sobre la memoria histórica," Inma Chacón provides references to some nonfiction accounts that have cited Dulce's novel as a historical reference. For a list of these scientific studies and historical works, see Inma Chacón's "El protagonismo de la mujer en la novela sobre memoria histórica," footnote 2.

15. Other cultural works such as Clemente Bernard's *Develados* raise awareness about the topic of mass graves from the Spanish Civil War.

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Title: ¿Te acuerdas? La memoria protésica de una experiencia traumática en *La Voz Dormida* (2002) de Dulce Chacón.