

## FRANCOIST REPRESSION AND MORAL REPARATION IN THE THEATRE OF LAILA RIPOLL<sup>1</sup>

REPRESIÓN FRANQUISTA Y REPARACIÓN MORAL  
EN EL TEATRO DE LAILA RIPOLL

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**Resumen:** Este ensayo se centra en un corpus de piezas dramáticas de Laila Ripoll que denuncian cómo la guerra civil española, la dictadura franquista y exilio republicano marcaron la vida de sus protagonistas, la de sus hijos y la de las generaciones futuras. La autora subraya la responsabilidad colectiva de la comunidad creadora para desvelar datos omitidos en el pasado por un régimen autoritario y, en concreto, incide en que esta postura ética está en conexión con la mirada de su promoción, la de los nietos de la guerra. Las obras escogidas son una muestra de que esta tercera generación de víctimas trata de incorporar a la memoria pública los hechos vividos por sus antepasados apoyándose en una intensa labor de investigación. Se plantea además que, para ello, Ripoll recurre al poder de denuncia que tiene la estética grotesca, de larga tradición en nuestra escena.

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1. This article has been produced as part of the Research Project *Escrituras, imágenes y testimonio en las autoras hispánicas contemporáneas* (Ref. FFI2015-63745-P), funded by the Spanish Ministry of the Economy and Competitiveness (Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad). As a teacher in UNED, it's integrated in the activities of Centro de Investigación de Semiótica Literaria, Teatral y Nuevas Tecnologías (SELITEN@T), directed by José Romera Castillo (<http://www.uned.es/centro-investigacion-SELITEN@T/index2.html>).

**Palabras clave:** Laila Ripoll. Memoria histórica. Grotresco. Teatro siglos XX y XXI.

**Abstract:** This article focuses on a corpus of dramatic texts by Laila Ripoll that denounce how the Spanish Civil War, the Francoist dictatorship and Republican exile marked the lives of the people involved, those of their children and those of generations to come. In these texts, the author highlights the collective responsibility of writers to reveal details left out from the past by an authoritarian regime and specifically she emphasises that this ethical stance is linked to the outlook of their generation, that of the grandchildren of war. The works chosen show that members of this third generation of victims seek to restore the events experienced by their ancestors into the public memory, supported by in-depth research work. In order to do this, Ripoll makes use of the critical power of the grotesque aesthetic, as this is a longstanding tradition on the Spanish stage.

**Key Words:** Laila Ripoll. Historic memory. Grotesque. 20th and 21st century theatre.

## 1. LAILA RIPOLL, A VOICE FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN OF WAR AND POSTWAR

Laila Ripoll is a respected Spanish dramatist who has combined her work as a creative writer, stage director and actress with other aspects of the profession, such as set design, lighting, wardrobe and costume design. Like other dramatists trained in the sixties, including Lluïsa Cunillé, Àngels Aymar, Beth Escudé, Yolanda Pallín, Angélica Liddell and Itziar Pascual, she stands out for her academic profile as a performing arts specialist, her professional career in the field and her continued presence on the theatre stage (Vilches-de Frutos, 2010). Her directing work for productions at the Centro Dramático Nacional and the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico is also highly relevant in this sense. Her ongoing efforts to recover and reread the performing arts of the Spanish Golden Age have resulted in some exceptional adaptations of authors like Lope de Vega, Cervantes,

Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina. As a stage director, she has taken part in productions of works by leading figures such as Shakespeare, Cervantes and Neruda. She has combined this work with the running of her own company, “Producciones Micomicón”, of which she is a founding member, alongside José Luis Patiño, Mariano Llorente and Juanjo Artero in 1992. Since then, the company has produced shows that have been staged in some twenty countries. This is an author who, since seeing her early works performed in alternative venues, notably the Cuarta Pared theatre in Madrid, she has consolidated a brilliant career, as she is present on the mainstream Spanish stage and was recently awarded the Premio Nacional de Literatura Dramática (National Dramatic Literature Prize) in 2015. Today her name is a byword for success in Spanish public theatres, a role that she combines with her ongoing work in the Ibero-American theatre world<sup>2</sup>.

Because of Ripoll’s prominent and continued presence in theatre listings both in this country and abroad, the position she has adopted in relation to such a major issue as democratic historical memory is, in my view, extremely interesting. We should bear in mind that, as well as having a correlation in recent international film and narrative production recovering the topic of Nazism, in Spain the stage performance of the aftermath of the Civil War, the immediate post-war period and the Republican exile of 1939 gained momentum in light of the debates triggered by Spain’s Historical Memory Law<sup>3</sup>, as part of genre of literature based on memory that had been emerging since the 1990s. Both well-established and new authors have been coinciding on this. While “los dramaturgos nacidos a mediados del siglo XX han prestado atención en su teatro a la memoria de la posguerra con una tendencia a la autobiografía y una preferencia por lo íntimo, privado y cotidiano” (Pérez-Rasilla, 2009: 143 and foll.), we have to wait until the 21st century to see the greater recurrence on our stages of reflections on the Civil War and forty years of dictatorship in new formats. Although this selection is by no means complete, the following series of works are cited here: *Terror y miseria en el primer franquismo* (1979-2003),

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2. See studies on the author published as part of the European project DRAMATURGAE, developed by UNED (Spain), Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail (France) and Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen (Germany). Respectively, Romera Castillo (2005), *Roswita / Garnier* (2007) and Floeck *et al.* (2008).

3. Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre, por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura.

by José Sanchis Sinisterra; *La cena de los generales* (1998), by Alonso de Santos; *El olvido está lleno de memoria* (2002), by Jerónimo López Mozo; *Varadas* (2004), by Itziar Pascual; *Presas* (2007), by Verónica Fernández and Ignacio del Moral; *Todos los que quedan* (2008), by Raúl Hernández Garrido; *Cantando bajo las balas* (2008), by Antonio Álamo; *La colmena científica* (2010), by José Ramón Fernández; *Perros en danza* (2010), by María Velasco, and *La piedra oscura* (2014), by Alberto Conejero. It is also fascinating to see that this critical theatre is opening up new ways forward that would have been unthinkable a few decades ago, such as the musical, with shows like *Hendaya, el musical. Cuando Adolfo encontró a Paco* (2012), by Carla Guimarães and Pepe Macías, and Álvaro Sáenz de Heredia's scathing production *La princesa roja* (2015) (Campos, 2015: s/p).

It is here that we can insert Ripoll's works *El día más feliz de nuestra vida* (2002), a burlesque portrait of female childhood education during the Franco era; *Cancionero republicano* (2008) and *Un hueso de pollo* (2009), denouncing the sectors hindering the exhumation of Civil War mass graves; and *Restos* (2009), jointly authored with Rodrigo García, José Ramón Fernández and Emilio del Valle. This article will focus specifically on other titles referring to the same historical period, namely *La ciudad sitiada* (1997), the pieces comprising the "Trilogy of memory" –*Atrabilis* (2001); *Los niños perdidos* (2005) and *Santa Perpetua* (2010)–, *La frontera* (2003), *¡Que nos quiten lo bailao!* (2004), *El convoy de los 927* (2009) and *El triángulo azul* (2014). Amongst the variety of techniques employed in this corpus, including restaging, metatheatrical games, documentary theatre techniques, symbolic objects, ghostly apparitions, the silence of discredited figures and evocation through the use of sounds. In all of them, the plot concentrates on a common thread, which is none other than a theatre practice that underlines our collective responsibility to reveal concealed details about the past, and doing so by drawing on the critical power of the grotesque aesthetic<sup>4</sup>.

Thanks to the acerbity of this parodic code, from our point of view the most interesting feature of these works is a dual one: on the one hand it seeks to vindicate the victims and on the other, it denounces repression

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4. Complementary to the study of the grotesque aesthetic in Ripoll I refer to García-Pascual (2011) and the paper I presented entitled "La voz de los colectivos represaliados en la obra teatral de Laila Ripoll" at Colloque *Itinéraires et productions des dramaturges et cinéastes espagnoles (1990-2014)*, held at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3 in November 2014.

by placing the emphasis on executions, control over people's behaviour and seizure of assets. It foregrounds those who never knew where their loved ones were buried or on those still living in the same town as their executioners, as one of the author's main concerns is the need to reflect on how the Spanish Civil War, the Franco dictatorship and the exile of 1939 marked the lives of the people who lived through these events, plus those of their children and of future generations. In fact, although her work is not written as an autobiography, the author has explained that her grandfather was held in a concentration camp, incarcerated in a French prison and later suffered reprisals, which forced him into exile. This means that her work also focuses on the psychological consequences of this enforced migration and chooses to concentrate mainly on anonymous characters and intrahistorical landscapes (García-Manso, 2013: 220). The ethical stance of her theatre is also connected with the gaze of her peers, who belong to the third generation of victims, and features the experience of the close circle surrounding the dramatists, whose stories they try to incorporate into the public memory supported by in-depth research work on documents of the period. This is, then, a theatre of "metamemory" (Murias, 2017) in which the grandchildren activate their intrahistoric evocation by searching to look at the past from a greater distance, but with no less commitment. They make what is concealed visible. They give what is silenced a name with the aim of rigorously examining these events to gain an understanding of the present.

## **2. VOICES FROM CONFINEMENT. THE RETENTION OF LIVES, PEOPLE AND ASSETS IN *LA CIUDAD SITIADA* (1997)**

*La ciudad sitiada* was premiered at the Sala Cuarta Pared in Madrid in 1999. It had been written during the war in Yugoslavia, at a time when Ripoll taught theatre workshops in Honduras and El Salvador as part of the Spain-Central America cultural project run by the Ministry of Culture. In 1996 the company was on tour with the Cervantes play *El sitio de Numancia* and they arrived in a town in El Salvador where audiences felt they could identify with the siege inflicted on the city by the Roman army. That experience produced the documentary drama *La ciudad sitiada*, which evoked a city in the grip of attacks and crushed by silence, a figurative way of once again identifying the problematic

of the work with post-war memory and the Franco regime. In Ripoll's version the enemy is an unknown figure who abuses the civil population and condemns them to confinement by means of intimidation and fear. It also reflects the blockading that happens during an armed conflict with the intention of publicising it on an international scale, as it talks about the World Wars, about the conflicts in Kosovo and Sarajevo, about African countries at war, about the struggles in Central America, about Ciudad Juárez and about Iraq. The characters talk to each other and to the audience about topics like bombings and people mutilated by war, some of which are based on real events drawn from the media: "Recuerdo una foto de una chica musulmana muy joven y guapa, sin piernas, en un bombardeo" (Ripoll, 2011b: 28). In fact, the author chooses to open the play with a monologue by the maimed young girl.

The town is visited by the top ranking political and church figures, who offer no solution whatsoever, as the only help comes in bags of humanitarian aid, which are shown to a background sound of a street organ and circus music simulating a puppet theatre. The characters in these sequences dance and embrace each other like "en aquella película de Kusturica, en la que la gente se divierte en un banquete nupcial, hasta que en la radio suena la voz de Hitler. A partir de ahí, todo se convierte en un vagar entre las ruinas, donde, a pesar de todo, los que sobreviven tratan de sonreír" (Fuertes, 2007: s/p). So, the work is constructed with pictures of conflicts, combined with a polyphony that mixes traditional Latin American and Balkan tunes, plus classic pieces like Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, set against *risus paschalis*: "entre serpentinas y confeti con los colores vaticanos, Sor Angelina Griselda agita una banderita blanquiamarilla" (Ripoll, 2003b: 8). The lighting also underpins these contrasts, as the set design uses plain lighting for everyday scenes and bright, loud colours for post-traumatic scenes. An additional visual component is provided by projections of tropical landscapes and comic strip stories, together with liturgical images that give an element of surprise because of the contrasting tones. With this, the playful scenes and the "colores y prendas que invitan a la vida" (Ripoll, 1999: 171) attempt to cancel out the atrocities. It is important to add here that another of the consequences of armed conflict also documented in *La ciudad sitiada* is economic and administrative repression. Ripoll makes the point that, in addition to executions, imprisonment and purges of adversaries, this

subjugating process also spread to the seizure of assets. Once people were exterminated, their possessions were snatched from them, meaning that many families were left ruined and denied any kind of pension or aid.

This secular oratory is structured in a series of vignettes that alternate musical and narrative moments –distinctive style of Documentary theatre– with other testimonies. Dramatic techniques typical of Ripoll’s theatre can be seen in this work, particularly the device of materialising the living dead (Guzmán, 2012: 3) and critique through the distorting lens of the grotesque and the carnivalesque. This is reminiscent of the best theatre by Francisco Nieva, Fernando Arrabal, Agustín Gómez Arcos and Domingo Miras (García-Pascual, 2006), and that has been practised so widely by Spanish women dramatic authors, including Maribel Lázaro, Maite Agirre, Angélica Liddell, María Velasco, Ana Vallés, Charo González Casas and, through Dance theatre, by Marta Carrasco. This list also includes Laila Ripoll. The following speech serves as an example of this aesthetic device: “en vez de muslos / tenía dos muñones retorcidos./ [...] No me quejo / porque soy afortunada. / Tengo un carrito con el que puedo moverme de ruina en ruina” (Ripoll, 2003b: 2). Like this passage, the lament of a mother who prostitutes herself to feed her son is not written melodramatically, but as part of the grotesque aesthetic, as she offers her breasts full of wounds to a man who abuses her whilst ignoring the torment she is describing<sup>5</sup>. This is an example of another feature of this technique: “el desfase entre realidades espeluznantes y el desapego con que las viven” (Reck, 2012: 65).

Another baby who is a victim of the war appears in scene V, when two men find its body and are reluctant to eat it because the corpse is in such an advanced state of decay. The grotesque appears once again in this sequence: “HOMBRE 1.- ¡Tiene gusanos! / HOMBRE 2.- Los apartamos” (Ripoll, 2003b: 3). Like in *El Guernica* (1969), by Jerónimo López Mozo, hunger plays a leading role as one of the terrible effects of conflict. As we can see, one of the essential features of the play is how women and children are used as weapons of war. Several characters emphasise that their childhoods were snatched from them, also reflecting on the case of an

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5. “MADRE.- Llora toda la noche / y yo... / verá usted, / yo... estoy reseca. (...) / El Hambre / ¿sabe usted? / (...) Por eso, si usted pudiera... / HOMBRE.- Súbete la falda. (...) / MADRE.- A veces me muerde el pecho / hasta sacarme la sangre. / Yo le dejo hacer / porque me digo: ‘es sangre, / algo alimentará’. (...) Cuento los desconchones del techo / y espero a que se acabe” (Ripoll, 2003b: 3, 4 y 8).

unborn child, wrenched from its mother's belly<sup>6</sup>.

In a new echo of earlier dramatic tradition, the play's ending calls for decent treatment for the silenced victims of intolerance, with references perhaps to *La llanura* (1954), by José Martín Recuerda: "*Todos los habitantes de la ciudad sitiada con ramos y coronas de flores que arrojan al público como en una fosa*" (*Ibid.*).

### 3. ABUSES OF POWER AND ACCUMULATED RESENTMENT IN *ATRA BILIS (CUANDO ESTEMOS MÁS TRANQUILAS)* (2001)

The first play in the "Trilogy of memory", entitled *Atra Bilis (Cuando estemos más tranquilas)*, was first performed at the Festival Escena Contemporánea, in the Cuarta Pared theatre in Madrid on 23 February 2001 by the "Micomicón" company and directed by the author. It focuses on one of the consequences of the patriarchal education of the main characters, who are involved in a Lorca-style women's rural drama seen through the filter of the grotesque<sup>7</sup>. The whole text is saturated with scatological and absurd humour and sets up a dialogue with the forms, components and structures of short theatre<sup>8</sup>. The wealth of layers in the aesthetic of *Atra bilis*, from our point of view, sets up a direct dialogue with this Iberian tradition of grotesque in theatre, but also with Quevedo's narrative, with Goya's *Caprichos* and with Gutiérrez Solana's paintings, added to international references that range from Rabelais, Ghelderode, Jarry, Genet, Ionesco and Grotowski to Barba, Kantor, Brook, Mnouchkine, Bausch, Wilson or Sarah Kane's theatre.

This play gives voice to eliminated adversaries, to the disappeared, the silenced and the forgotten. It is a story of personal ghosts, of women plunged into falsehood and filled with bile, resentment, anger and hunger for revenge. Formulated by a Spanish contemporary dramaturgy, it can

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6. "NIÑO.- Los fines de semana papá y mamá nos subían en el coche y nos llevaban de aventura. (...) Pero todo esto es mentira. / Son recuerdos prestados. / Yo nunca he ido de aventura, (...) / porque yo no he nacido. / Me arrancaron del vientre de mi madre / porque era de otra raza" (Ripoll, 2003b: 8-10).

7. For the study of the grotesque on stage see Martínez /*Roswita* (2001) and Vasserot/*Roswita* (2002).

8. As Bakhtin (1965), Barasch (1971), Baraz (1983), Stallybrass/ White (1986) or Bubnova (2000) has studied, the folk and festive grotesque code evokes, on the one hand, the theatre of Aristófanes, Menippean Satire, the comedies of Plautus, ballads of the blind, Goliards poems, farces, *sotties* or *fêtes des fous*, *entremeses* or *Commedia dell'Arte*. Also included in this trend is the festive imagery that comes to the work of Spanish dramatic authors as Valle-Inclán and Alberti (Huerta Calvo, 1989; Romera Castillo *et al.*, 1995; Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2010). However, Bakhtin did not propose theater as a canonical genre for his fieldwork, an issue that did occupy Meyerhold (1998), who took the dramatic genre as a specific reference for the study of the grotesque.



be presented as a possible continuation of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* in the period after the Civil War. The play depicts three elderly sisters accompanied by a servant at the wake for the first sister's husband. As the first-born, the voice of authority is imposed by Nazaria, who is the heir to their father's family assets. Always in her shadow, the envious Daría (new Martirio) is defined by her resentment of her elder sister. It was Daría who broke her back, for which she feels a mix of guilt and resentment, feelings that weave her relationship with her sister, to whose service she dedicates herself in an ambivalent way, as she was also in love with her brother-in-law behind Nazaria's back. Thirdly, we meet Aurori (new María Josefa), who continues to be infantilised with the nickname of "la nena" because of the learning difficulties she suffers from and that lead her to go from moments of lucidity to others of absence. In all of them, their words are intriguing and allude to information that has been silenced, a condition shared by the interventions of Ulpiana (new Poncia), the maid who is perennially submissive until she brings up the grudge she bears with this family. It is important to note here that stereotypical and conformist expressions of a traditional view of society, of women's role and of social class are followed by the explosive venting of all the resentment that has been building up. Verbal violence accompanies the tone of this harsh confession<sup>9</sup>.

This text focusing on the isolation, repression and oversight of women in mourning, under surveillance, forced to hate each other despite being sisters thus refers to a long tradition of virilised Bernardas (Villán, 2001: 39). In fact, when Ripoll directed the production the roles were performed by men, and the play was written for them with the idea of increasing the ironic impact and the resulting alienation (Ripoll, 2012: 23-27). But the work not only portrays the obscurity of older women in deepest Spain, with their falseness and their pent-up resentment, it also shows their complicity in the reprisals they became part of when they took sides with one faction of society in which they were presented as bearers of secrets and lies carried around for years. *Atra bilis* shows that these women took the side of a faction that simulated illegal executions arising from court martial proceedings, reminding that amongst those who suffered such reprisals were countless anonymous victims who had defended the interests of their

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9. "ULPIANA.- (...) Y me cago en las babas de viejo riposo del difunto. Y en las carnes reseacas de estas tres viejas putas, que cada hormiga tiene su ira. (...) (*Cae al suelo, en medio de estertores y echando espuma por la boca. De pronto queda rígida, muerta. Silencio absoluto e indeterminable*)" (Ripoll, 2001: 234).

class, and who were murdered to spread terror. It also explains that others suffered repression because of personal feuds.

The action swings from the realm of death and terror to grotesque humour (Vieites, 2001: 16), only to return to tragedy in the portrayal of tyranny or the struggle for power. We find out about the baby snatched from Aurori, about Ulpiana's brother who was shot dead by the village policeman who discovered him out hunting, and about the sexual abuse inflicted by the master<sup>10</sup>. Once again, the play combines an atmosphere of tragedy with the parody of these characters, a "grotesquisition" that is definitively cancelled when Ulpiana invites everyone to a macabre dance after which they kill her. A combination of contrasts, so typical of the grotesque and also marked by what Bakhtin termed *dialogism*, in other words, the simultaneous presence of dominant thought and its rejoinder. It is the servant, the least valued one, who lifts the veil on what has been silenced by the dominant class. With theoretical support from Harpham (1982), we can argue that the grotesque can enable a reading of the centre from the margins, and with Kristeva (1982) we can say that the carnivalesque character can reveal the "other side", the side not accepted by the official version but nevertheless out there and ready to tell the truth. In fact, Ripoll makes use of this ancient and traditional anthropological dimension on the Spanish stage with a clearly critical intent.

#### 4. DAMAGED AND SILENCED CHILDHOOD IN *LOS NIÑOS PERDIDOS* (2005)

*Los niños perdidos* (2005) was premiered at the Madrid Sur International Festival in October 2005 and performed two months later at the María Guerrero Theatre in Madrid by the "Micomicón" theatre company directed by Laila Ripoll. It was the first time a living Spanish woman dramatist had ever been featured on the Centro Dramático Nacional

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10. "ULPIANA.- (...) Una criatura cuando empecé a servir. Y gracias. Y el señor palpándome los ijares y yo que ni había tenido mi primera sangre. (...) Y a sufrir trato de esclava. Pero eso se ha terminado. (...) De no se sabe dónde surge una música infernal con aires de habanera. Ulpiana agarra de las manos a las tres viejas y las obliga a bailar una extraña danza de la muerte. (...) ¡José Rosario Antúnez Valdivieso! (...) Voy a zapatear encima de tus restos por los siglos de los siglos, para que no se te olvide nunca el tacto de mis ijares de niña pobre. (...) Voy a zapatear encima del señor cura que no quiso enterrar a mi madre por suicida. Y en la tumba del guardia que se llevó por delante a mi hermano por cazar un conejo en el coto. (...) Y en las señoronas de la Casa Grande. (...) De pronto queda rígida, muerta. (...) Aurori, ausente, juega metiendo sus dedos en las narices y en la boca de la criada" (Ripoll, 2001: 234).

programme.

The play denounced the oblivion suffered by the descendants of Republican families who were shut away in religious orphanages and Social Assistance hostels during the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. Ripoll was inspired by a documentary screened on the TV3 channel entitled *Los niños perdidos del Franquismo*, by R. Vinyes, M. Armengou and R. Belis, and by the plot of the comic *Paracuellos* by Carlos Giménez, as well as on eye witness accounts from the period. In this context the work also connects with literary tradition from the period immediately after the war, building a link in the denunciation the situation of reprisal victims of the Franco regime, with which “se llama la atención sobre la necesidad de dejar en herencia a las sociedades del futuro unos valores, confiando en el poder regenerador de las jóvenes generaciones, y se exige el cumplimiento de una obligación moral” (Vilches-de Frutos, 2010: 15-16).

Making a shameful episode visible as a reaction to a previous generation educated in silence, this historical review puts children confined in a hospice at the centre of the action instead of the adults. She regards to characters who, in their helplessness, were unable to tell their version as eye witnesses of these events. But other children of their peer group now denounce those crimes through the memories of Tuso, a 50 year old with special needs who, after experiencing a hallucination, remembers the three children condemned to death from starvation and abuse. In the case of Cucachica, a nun threw her out of the window and beat her companions Lázaro and Marqués to death. In revenge, Tuso pushed her down the stairs. These events are remembered by means of ghostly evocations, which in the play communicate their fear faced with the apparition of death symbolically and physically knocking at their door, personified in the figure of the Sister, in several prolepses of the ending. The Sister is in fact Tuso dressed up as a nun and embodying “el sentimiento de culpa o de vergüenza por haber pactado con el silencio” (Amo, 2008: 252). This is the reason why Ripoll makes this character especially grotesque. She portrays her with a detestable nature debased by attacks of possessiveness that border on the pathetic<sup>11</sup>, and the carnivalesque is also featured with the children dressing up both as saints and as comic superheroes so they

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11. “Va quedándose paralizada, como sin cuerda, con los ojos vacíos, huecos...” (Ripoll, 2011c: 254).

can fight her “*a lo Guerrero del Antifaz*” (*op. cit.* p. 277). Both the device of the mask and the use of “performance within performance” are used throughout in the play. In fact, the Spanish Civil War is criticised with a puppet theatre that uses children’s language to parody martial songs and the Organización Juvenil de la Falange<sup>12</sup>.

Only a door, a window, a cupboard and some wooden beams make up the set on which the action takes place, a metaphor for the confinement of autocratic Spain at the time depicted. Although they were shut away to be re-educated in the ideas of their executioners, the children make fun of the slogans they hear, they parody hymns, joke about the speeches, react spontaneously to the discipline imposed on them and play because, in spite of everything, they are children. They combine children’s language, comic strips and puppet show. With the same theatricality, in the parodies by Lázaro, Cucachica and Marqués, instructors from Sección Femenina come out on stage. The play questions the charity of the Social Assistance organisation, which combined a patriarchal honour system and anti-Marxism to foster a strict discipline by gender, sending girls to convents and boys to orphanages<sup>13</sup>. The work denounces how these children were educated to hate their families and disassociated from their legitimate identity by means of a hard-line segregation regime. The play shows how they were transported in livestock trains with no water or food, where many were already dead as a result of this concealed infanticide<sup>14</sup>. Neither were those evacuated following mass deportations abroad during the Civil War were not spared this kidnapping by the Delegación Extraordinaria de Repatriación de Menores, which took charge of the selective evacuation of children to homes in France, Great Britain, Belgium the Soviet Union, Mexico or Argentina during the Civil War. In the same way that they there were repatriated without permission, the Falange body in charge of returning them to Spain did not give many children back to their biological relatives if these families were considered to be unsuitable. According to the official version, a change of surname gave the lost war children an identity, but in fact some highly irregular adoptions were being facilitated<sup>15</sup>.

12. “*En el teatrillo, aparece una muñeca de porcelana calva y medio rota, vestida rústicamente con camisa azul y boina roja de la que sale una larguísima trenza de lana amarilla*” (*op. cit.* p. 273).

13. “LÁZARO.- (...) a mis hermanas se las llevaron unas monjas” (Ripoll, 2011c: 299).

14. “Entonces se murió otro niño, que no sé cómo se llamaba, pero que era muy pequeño y tosía mucho. Y en otro vagón se murieron dos niños más que estaban muy malitos” (*op. cit.* p. 285).

15. “LÁZARO.- A cada asilo que iba, las monjas iban y me cambiaban el nombre (...) y aquí, para

In the regime's institutions all trace of them could be lost. Probably this is why Ripoll uses the grotesque once again to vindicate the voice from the sidelines, the voice of the forgotten.

*Los niños perdidos* gives its speeches to children's taunts and to the truths of people who lived in confinement, suffering cold and hunger, terrified and insulted by a supposedly bad education blamed on their family's political affiliation. It alludes to the eugenics promoted by hygienists, politicians, lawyers, psychiatrists and paediatricians in order to establish a supposed analogy between progressive beliefs and the degeneration of the race. Because it exposes that the relationship with the parents was not only physical but that they were also regarded as children of murderers, atheists and criminals who were there thanks to sheer public charity. They were intimidated by institutions that stated they were doing good works with them, but in the hospices a form of discipline based on threat was drummed into them<sup>16</sup>.

With a surname that marks his adoption without memory, Expósito<sup>17</sup> recalls that his father, originally from Badajoz, one of the cities that suffered the greatest repression during the Franco regime, was a teacher, a profession that was treated particularly harshly because schools had been the Republic's greatest project. Complementing this, in a masterly combination of two silenced histories, that of these children and their parents, the stage is also a setting for remembering the female prisoners in Franco's jails who were murdered, accused of being "canalla roja"<sup>18</sup>. The children remember their mothers, which is precisely what the Regime wanted to prevent with its purification campaigns. The play calls for a halt to the sacrifices of those who were imprisoned in these jails, even when they were sick, heavily pregnant or nursing small babies. Thus ingenuity is skilfully combined with astuteness, laughter with silences, fun with horror, alternated until at the end of the play, what took place in the orphanage attic is eventually revealed<sup>19</sup>. Tuso could not get there in time to save them:

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abreviar, Expósito. (...) Pero las monjas nunca me quieren hacer caso, ni con lo del apellido, ni con lo de que soy de Badajoz, y me acaban poniendo el nombre que les da la gana" (Ripoll, 2011c: 300).

16. "*Ha perdido totalmente el gesto de beatitud*" (Ripoll, 2011c: 256).

17. "LÁZARO.- A las niñas, después de lo de mis padres, se las llevaron a un asilo. (...) Luego les prendieron fuego con gasolina y olía muy mal, pero mis padres no volvían. Y así hasta que una vecina de casa me llevó al cuartelillo y me metieron en un tren" (Ripoll, 2011c: 298-299).

18. "CUCA.- Una monja me dijo '¿Tu mamá? A ésa la han fusilado porque era una roja muy malísima'" (Ripoll, 2011c: 285).

19. "LAS VOCES: ¿Qué hacéis aquí, escorias?; ¡No me des más golpes!; ¡Que me lleva el aire!;

“ya era tarde. (...) Decidieron no dar parte para no montar un escándalo. Total, ya erais niños perdidos. Al fin y al cabo, los niños de aquí no existen. Son como fantasmas y nadie va a reclamar por ellos” (*op. cit.* p. 310). This is the dramatic ending for these children and the testimony of someone who resists allowing them to leave his memory.

### 5. VICTIMS’ FAMILIES DEMAND JUSTICE IN *SANTA PERPETUA* (2010)

*Santa Perpetua* (2010), the work that closes the “Trilogía de la memoria”, made its debut at the Madrid Sur Festival on 31 October 2010 and performed by the “Micomicón” that same year in the Cuarta Pared theatre in Madrid by the “Micomicón” theatre company, directed by the author. Ripoll also revisited a central theme in *Un hueso de pollo* (2009) of the thousands people who were murdered in ditches, buried haphazardly and whose remains are still unidentified. Although it also refers to victims buried illegally in armed conflicts taking place in other parts of the world, the allusion to the Spanish context is undeniable<sup>20</sup>. The play is still quite pertinent, considering that since 2000 exhumations are being carried out in Spain to help identify the people who disappeared in these mass killings and the Law on Historic Memory was passed in 2007. From this perspective, Ripoll criticises Spain’s reluctance to take action, compared to other exhumation projects in other countries being backed by the State, by the United Nations or by NGOs with the so-called “comisiones de la verdad y de reconciliación” (Ríos *et al.*, 2008: 140). This information can be confirmed by looking at the promotion of this production in some of the media, where it is clear that there was a greater emphasis on the theme of the visionary old woman than on that of memory<sup>21</sup>.

To express her defence of the restoration of the dignity of the disappeared during the Civil War on the stage, Ripoll opted to not split the play into acts or scenes, dividing it instead into two parts marked by notable differences in the actantial roles. In the first part, the character of Perpetua

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¡Rojo!, ¡Hijo de Satanás!, ¡Castigados!, (...) ¡TRES NIÑOS MUERTOS...!” (Ripoll, 2011c: 309).

20. The author admits: “es hacer un homenaje a gente que ha vivido muchos años avergonzada, asustada por algo de lo que no deberían avergonzarse, (...) es rendir un homenaje a la gente que lo ha pasado muy mal y a la que, encima, no se le da voz” (cit. in Basalo, 2005: s/p).

21. In Ripoll’s words, “el tema de la memoria histórica es aún delicado y hay sitios en los que no se puede ni hablar de ella porque todavía existe censura” (cit. in Prado, 2011: s/p).

and her submissive brothers Plácido and Pacífico present scenes from everyday routine in which “la santa” is the owner of a business in which she charges money for her ability to predict the future, read the past, guess hidden information, promote fertility and relieve pain: “Es un don divino” (Ripoll, 2011a: 14). But it is in the second part that Zoilo’s character appears to claim the bicycle stolen from his uncle, shot dead in the Civil War because of Perpetua. It is his spirit that takes over Perpetua’s body to denounce this.

Although Perpetua does not admit her guilt or show any remorse for it, her subconscious is unable to forget the crimes she committed. In the play we discover that as a young woman she was in love with Zoilo’s father, but when her passion was unrequited she turned against his mother. When the war was over she denounced her to the army, but the mother found out and was able to escape being captured. Her brother, Zoilo’s paternal uncle, was shot in her place and his remains were buried in a mass grave precisely on land belonging to Perpetua. The character herself confesses this when, in an attack of clairvoyant madness, she speaks as Zoilo-uncle. Indirectly, thanks to theatre, this deceased character has the possibility to do what had been forbidden for so long, tell the truth about how he was killed. We thus discover that she is the wealthy owner of grazing land, but that the body of her victim is buried in it. Through this procedure the play confirms that she expanded her fortune with the goods of a reprisal victim, alluding to the immoral gains made by certain supporters of the Regime<sup>22</sup>.

To emphasise this plot line, the clairvoyant falls into a trance to recount the shootings in the holm-oak wood. And although this time it is disappointment in love that triggers her revenge, Ripoll does not stop at this biographic reference. With Perpetua she demands that the dead be buried in a dignified way. But once again grotesque humour is combined with this tragedy’s historic references. Still hurt at not being loved by Zoilo’s uncle, Perpetua suggests they pose together to simulate the wedding photograph that she never had taken when she was young, in an attempt to superimpose an invented reality<sup>23</sup>. It is surprising that Zoilo agrees to pose for

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22. “PLÁCIDO.- ¡Suelte esa bicicleta y salga de esta casa ya! / ZOILO.- No. (...) / PERPETUA.- ¿Y qué les voy a dejar? (...) ¿Y que todo el mundo se entere de que tengo muertos en la dehesa? (...) Si quieren enterrar a los muertos como Dios manda, que se hubieran aplicado y hubieran ganado la guerra ellos” (Ripoll, 2011a: 87).

23. “PERPETUA.- ¿Te harías esa fotografía conmigo? (...) Y tú de militar” (Ripoll, 2011a: 81-82).

this outrageous photograph, the fact that the three siblings fail to fulfil the agreement is not unexpected. When Zoilo comes to take possession of the bicycle, Plácido threatens him with a gun and Perpetua refuses to give him the permission that will enable his uncle to be exhumed. In an allusion to the symbolic readings of the brothers' names, Pacífico is the brighter of the two despite his ingenuousness, whereas Plácido tries to keep things calm, that is, to keep the premeditated lie concealed. However, dramatic irony means that this guarantor of the status quo will be the one to accidentally kill his sister:

*PERPETUA.- Eleuterio Cabrera García, secretario del ayuntamiento... Fosa común del cementerio de Valencia... 3000 desaparecidas... (...) Las muertas de Ciudad Juárez... (...) /*  
*PACÍFICO.- ¡La pistola, Plácido, apártala!*  
*PERPETUA.- Ambrosio Pacheco García, agricultor... Sima... Gabriel Pérez Carra, agricultor... Huesos... Fujimori... Rusia... Cientos de desaparecidos en México... España... Trescientos mil... Zoilo Torres Cifuentes... Zoilo Torres... Zoilo... / Suena una detonación. (...) /*  
*PACÍFICO.- Plácido, has matado a la Santa (Ripoll, 2011a: 89).*

With this series of confessions, the ghosts of the mass graves and the saints she was so fond of invoking lead to Perpetua's death, to maximum satirical effect, by firing squad. Once again, the play's type of humour is screened through the grotesque absurd, a distancing device to denounce the atrocities described in the work. We can see that Ripoll is experimenting with revived characters and she again takes the action into the realm of the supernatural with "muertos vivientes que escenifican el proceso activo, en continua reconstrucción, de la memoria particular y social del conflicto de 1936" (Guzmán, 2012: 2). The production underlines this crazed setting, placing *Santa Perpetua* in the sphere of a fantastic theatre of trances and apparitions, like the ones already seen in other works by the same author. This means we are looking at a grotesque tinged with echoes of expressionism and surrealism, as well as the allegories in the canvasses of Bosch and Brueghel or Goya's black paintings, as well as in a long



tradition of the *tragic grotesque* (Kayser, 1965; Robertson, 1996), with its fondness for supernatural elements. The author knows the wealth of layers in this aesthetic extremely well.

## 6. VOICES FROM EXILE

### 6.1. Dissent in the third generation of emigrants: *La frontera* (2003)

*La frontera* was performed for the first time in the Teatro del Pueblo in Buenos Aires in 2004, one year after the Leyes de Punto Final y de Obediencia Debida were passed. It was suggested that the play should make its début in this city and on this date because of the connection between both states in recovering the memory of victims of dictatorship. In this short play Ripoll's theatre crosses the Atlantic again to portray the story of an old Catalan exiled in Mexico who tries to prevent his grandson living rootless in the country that took his family in. This third generation descendant has left his homeland, Mexico, in search of the American dream and he crosses the frontier with the ghost of the grandfather riding on his back, with the feeling that he is carrying not only the weight of the dead man but also the weight of other reflections he is not prepared to face up to. Ripoll thus develops a variation on this theme with a cross-generational conflict. It raises the issue that there may be cracks in this point of view, and that grandchildren may not always be sensitive to their grandparents' committed legacy. In *La frontera*, instead of seeing these experiences as something to be proud of and whose memory should be recovered, the young man regards them as being from another era gone by.

Faced with the possible case of a young generation indifferent to the tragedy lived by their ancestors, the spectre explains to him that Mexico took him in during the Franco dictatorship and that it became his home country because that was where he brought his children up, accumulated a few possessions and buried his dead. By using assertive formulas, he reminds the young man that the lives of his family are part of his own history<sup>24</sup>. But his attempt at hitting his grandson's conscience fails. Instead, all

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24. "Uno es de donde su madre le canta" (Ripoll, 2003a: 114).

he gets is his grandson's angry response<sup>25</sup>, as he not only reacts insolently but stops carrying him when they reach the lake in a landscape tinged with echoes of the naturalist grotesque<sup>26</sup>.

The young man of Spanish descent and the man resuscitated for the scene play a joint leading role in a play in which we discover that not only has the older man come to beg his understanding of the generations that went before him, but also that he has left his descendant a key, a symbolic object that serves as a link with the past to keep his memory alive<sup>27</sup>. With this symbolic object, the grandfather identifies with the Sephardic community, who kept the keys to their families' houses as a symbol of their rootedness.

## 6.2. Tribute to the exiled in *¡Que nos quiten lo bailao!* (2004)

The musical show *¡Que nos quiten lo bailao!* was first performed in Nave de Cambaleo (Aranjuez) in 2004. In this production, Ripoll deals with coinciding views of the emigration experience with the underlying thread of a radio programme where people dedicate songs on this topic. The sound space is complemented by a cyclorama showing photographs of farewells on a number of railway platforms. This performance technique of graphic superimposition is also used to project "*imágenes de emigrantes, exiliados, pateros*" (Ripoll, 2005b: 76). The use of these techniques highlights that although the 1939 Republican exile was one of the initial themes, the scope of the play's reading is much broader. As an example, in the scene entitled "Trenes", a number of forgotten items are piled up in an abandoned station, while the dates of the known diaspora in Spanish history are recited, along with those of other exoduses (Berlin, Krakow, Quito, Buenos Aires, Kampala). Ripoll calls on refugees in other latitudes (Balkans, Sudan, Palestine, Iraq) in order to remember that the reality of banishment is not exclusive to one region, one time or one particular community. She also underlines the xenophobia suffered by people who are deported in many of today's exoduses and genocides.

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25. "JOVEN.- Son sus recuerdos, abuelo, no los míos" (*op. cit.*, p. 118).

26. "JOVEN.- ¡Viejo, cabrón, no me arañe! Para usted esta tierra. (...) Regrese a la fosa y déjeme en paz... (...) *el Joven consigue desprenderse del anciano, que cae al lodo. (...) Zumban los insectos*" (Ripoll, 2003a: 121-122).

27. "Ha aguantado dos guerras, la cárcel, el campo de concentración, a Franco, el viaje en barco... ha cruzado los Pirineos, ha cruzado un océano" (*Ibid.*).

In putting this production together, Ripoll was inspired by an argument made by Gonzala Martín Scherman, who was also responsible for producing the play. The staging takes the form of a reflection on the testimonies of some members of the company about their emigrant families. She explained that the work “recoge decenas de testimonios, algunos muy cercanos, otros conocidos por los periódicos y por las lecturas compartidas”, to which “se suma la experiencia agrídulce, entrañable y similar de nuestras madres, exiliadas, repatriadas, perdidas, condenadas eternamente a despedirse” (Ripoll, 2005c: 64). In fact, the subtitle of *¡Que nos quiten lo bailao!* is “historia sobre las despedidas”, as it tells of numerous separations, but also of some reunions, and focuses on the lives of two women. The first is the now old woman Amparo, who lived through the 1939 exile and converses with the ghost of her dead husband. Like in other productions by Ripoll, there is a ghost, although this time the spirit is somewhat argumentative: “tú cascaste unos días después. Qué vas a acordarte tú, si ya no estabas” (Ripoll, 2005b: 75). The second is Amparo’s grandson’s young wife. Both characters are played by several actresses depending on their ages and the way they relate exile back then with today’s migrations.

As with other previous plays, it is again the third generation of victims who reclaim the family memory in *¡Que nos quiten lo bailao!*, in which two grandchildren appear, the granddaughter of the exiled grandmother who has set her sights on Tarifa, and Miguel, who talks to his grandmother thinking she is asleep. In parallel, the play tells the story of Ignacio and Marcial, two beggar clowns who get involved in circus-style clowning and introduce an absurd grotesque situation (Reck, 2012: 62) hinging on a not immediately identified object: they entertain themselves playing with what they later discover is the funerary urn of Amparo, who turns out to be Ignacio’s sister. These two copies of Beckett’s Vladimir and Tarragon meet when meeting is no longer possible. This way, sentimental scenes alternate with others featuring these two mistreated clowns.

With this, the play also highlights the desire to incorporate individual and family memory into the public memory. It emphasises that the values of the losers of the war were excluded from the collective imagination, so it is significant that it is precisely the third generation of victims who reclaim their memory in *¡Que nos quiten lo bailao!* through Amparo’s grandson. This makes the play into a way of making silenced histories visible, against the intentions of those who have covered them up and faked

information, causing double offence: after the aggression of the executioners came the attempt to deny their victims the right to be remembered.

### **7. EL CONVOY DE LOS 927 (2009): COLLUSION OF THE FRANCO AUTHORITIES IN THE DEPORTATION OF SPANISH REFUGEES**

*El convoy de los 927* is a radio-phonetic play that was broadcast for the first time in October 2007 from La Casa Encendida (Madrid). It went on to make its live debut in La Laboral Theatre in Gijón in 2008, adapted by Boni Ortiz. The performance coincided with the period in which judge Garzón was compiling information to produce a census of the disappeared and people buried in mass graves and with the time at which the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory) presented its provisional list of victims of Francoist repression to the Spanish High Court, the Audiencia Nacional (Henríquez, 2008). The play's main character is inspired by the testimony of a Mauthausen concentration camp survivor and by the TV documentary with the same title by Montse Armengou and Ricard Bellis, the making of which used an enormous amount of audio visual material as well as the eye witness accounts of around a hundred reprisal victims.

*El convoy de los 927* concerns thousands of Spanish refugees who left Angoulême in a convoy that was intercepted in occupied France by the Nazis, who segregated them into two different locations: the men were sent to concentration camps and the women and children were returned to Spain. More specifically, the play remembers the Republicans who fled Francoist repression and who were detained as prisoners of war and then taken to Mauthausen after Franco's government refused to take responsibility for them. There they joined many other social and national minorities as they fell into the hands of the Third Reich. Ripoll highlights the brutal torture they were subjected to and the collusion of the Franco authorities in such inhuman treatment. She also commemorates the decisive work done by the Spaniards who survived, as they were able to reveal incriminating information, a theme Ripoll recovers in *El triángulo azul* (2014).

The author thus covers a topic that had largely not been addressed in theatre. Other dramatists like Max Aub, had portrayed extermination camps based in France on the stage. However, the theme of Nazi con-

centration camps has come to be dealt with in theatre more recently, with important examples such as *Himmelweg (Camino del cielo)* (2004), by Juan Mayorga, on the space created by the Nazis as a sweetened residential complex to make the world believe it was an idyllic prisoner of war camp. This same period of time also saw Raúl Hernández Garrido's play *Todos los que quedan* (2008) telling the story of a man who, despite fleeing the war, is constantly finding himself and ends up being imprisoned in Mauthausen, and the 2011 début of *Oratorio para Edith Stein*, directed by Ernesto Caballero.

In this context, *El convoy de los 927* belongs to a theatre of deportation. It documents a family's journey in the train mentioned earlier through the voice of Ángel, the main character, who in his old age is remembering the events he experienced as a child. To show this, Ripoll makes it so that this character is split into two ages and his memories on stage take on the appearance of ghosts shown behind a tulle curtain. Ángel tells how his father died in a French camp and that his older brother was taken to Mauthausen. Unlike in *Los niños perdidos*, this means that the character of Ángel Child does not have an innocent gaze, as it is projected by the mature vision of Ángel Adult. Faced with the boy's childish questions, the main character offers definite dates, accompanied by projections of real photographs, maps, tunes and other visual and sound effects. With these procedures taken from documentary theatre, personal and collective memory combine at both audio-visual and stage design level, both aspects that foreground allusion to cello player Pau Casals, who was widely known to be anti-Franco and the lantern with which these passages are illuminated to reinforce what Ripoll seeks to emphasise. On the contrary, the author denies the Nazis any voice, as they remain silent, with the exception of very brief imperatives. Any rights to tell of events is taken away from them and given to those who did not have the opportunity to tell their story.

Flashbacks enable specific historic events to be brought up to date. One of them is the actions of the French government led by Pétain. While Ripoll reflects the cautious greeting given by the French to the refugees from their neighbouring country, French deputies show that their nation was divided on the issue of the Spanish exiles, judging from the mix of booing and applause heard in the scene set in the Parliament. *El convoy de los 927* also shows how the SS receive Ramiro's character and add him

to the prisoners with the collusion of Franco's minister Serrano Suñer<sup>28</sup>.

The work reiterates that the work and extermination camps lacked the minimum conditions of hygiene and health standards. It mentions overcrowding, dirt, hunger and harassment. In addition to being deprived of their freedom, far away from their loved ones and their homelands, and being subjected to subhuman conditions, attempts were made to break them and wipe out their identity by demoralising them and indoctrinating them in the ideology of their captors (Vinyes, 2003: 171). This reflected by the only grotesque passage in the play, as well as other features<sup>29</sup>.

With techniques and devices such as filtering images through a veil, the projection of images and sounds for documentary purposes, the multiplication of some characters at different ages and ghostly apparitions, the set becomes a place for remembering torture, gas chambers and crematoria, abuse that did not come to an end with the intervention of allied powers because those who were able to return remained scarred for life.

## 8. THE WORLD OF NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN *EL TRIÁNGULO AZUL* (2014)

*El triángulo azul*, the play for which Mariano Llorente and Laila Ripoll received the Premio Nacional de Literatura Dramática (National Dramatic Literature Prize) in 2015, made its debut at the Madrid Sur Festival in 2014 and was performed in Teatro Valle-Inclán (Madrid) that same year. The work focuses on the Mauthausen extermination camp, the last to be liberated by the Allies and that was designed as the place for concentrating the enemies of Nazism, namely communists, anarchists, socialists, artists and antifascist intellectuals, primarily from Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia. Although at first most of the people held there were common criminals, over time it started to specialise as a camp for political

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28. "ÁNGEL MAYOR: Cuatrocientos treinta hombres y niños bajaron a empujones aquella mañana en la estación de Mauthausen, trescientos cincuenta y siete de ellos perdieron allí la vida... El resto... el resto está en los libros de historia, o debería estarlo... Los españoles fueron los primeros en entrar en Mauthausen y los últimos en salir, ningún gobierno se preocupó de si estaban vivos o muertos y tuvieron que lucir el distintivo azul: el de apátrida, porque el gobierno de Franco así lo decidió" (Ripoll, 2009: 76).

29. "RAMIRO.- Uno de los SS le quitó a una mujer su hijo, recién nacido, de los brazos. (...) aquel bárbaro levantó al niño y cogiéndolo por una pierna, lo golpeó contra el muro de granito. Su pequeña cabeza explotó como una sandía lanzada contra la pared, salpicando a todos aquellos cuerpos desnudos de sangre y trozos de cerebro de la pobre criatura..." (Ripoll, 2009: 76).

prisoners, people from the upper classes and intellectuals from countries under Nazi occupation.

Llorente and Ripoll pick up the shocking story of the thousands of Spanish who were victims of Nazi reprisals and how they were handed over to the Third Reich by the collaborationist Vichy government. It is a heart-rending theatre chronicle of the horror experienced by our fellow compatriots who, after being liberated, could not return to their home country. As a mark of shame they wore the blue triangle of the stateless with an “S” for “Spanier” in the centre, assigned when the caudillo would not recognise them as Spanish citizens. At the same time, the play highlights that thanks to some prisoners assigned to administrative jobs and to those who did forced labour in the quarries, essential graphic documentary evidence was seized to condemn their executioners and prove their participation in the mass killings. In this, the play emphasises the bravery of Francesc Boix, a Catalan communist photographer who managed to get decisive images out of the camp as proof of the tortures inflicted. He was the only Spaniard to give evidence at the Nüremberg trials and he did so supported by one of the incredibly rare shots that exist of concentration camp life. But this piece of information becomes even more momentous when we find out that Mauthausen was the only camp that documentary information was smuggled out of while it was still active.

The narrator of events is an SS officer named Paul Ricken, an old German professor who was once abducted by Nazism and who in the play is given the task of photographing everyday life in the camp. In *El triángulo azul* he acts as repentant eye witness and testifies to events along with his two assistants, Spanish prisoners Paco and Toni, respective copies of historic figures Francesc Boix and Antonio García. In fact, the photographs they took serve as a common thread and as visual support. Boix was a field photographer and his shots have a fundamental place in the production, they are not only featured in the narration but they are also projected during many scenes. At this point it is significant that Toni has a close relationship with gypsy prostitute Oana, with whom allusion is made to the brothels in the camps and a connection is made with information referring to the presence of women in Mauthausen, but the main stress is on denouncing the holocaust of Hungarian and Dutch Jews<sup>30</sup>. In fact, we meet

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30. “Muchos exiliados hablan de la gitana del burdel de Mauthausen. Nos pareció interesantísimo

SS officer Brettmeier, Head of Security at the genocide collaborationist camp and La Begún, one of the bloodthirsty Spanish *kapos*.

The other plot line of *El triángulo azul* tells how a group of Mauthausen prisoners obtained permission to put on a theatre production, a revue called *El Rajá de Rajaloya*. Against all expectations, this variety show was tolerated by the Nazi authorities. It was a erotic style performance, full of risqué touches but also macabre references, pure grotesque. Along with the actors, a band plays live music, including *chotis* and *pasodoble* numbers, *cuplés*, *coplas*, satirical songs and vaudeville style choreographies, which are once again used on stage to hint at a documented event. It is a historical fact that these music bands sometimes greeted new arrivals on the livestock trains, marched in front of those being led away to be hung or shot, and bade farewell to prisoners as they were taken to the extermination showers<sup>31</sup>. Turning to the musical show to talk about tough topics like forced labour, firing squads and gas chambers is similar to the devices used in Brecht's epic theatre and its distancing effect (Vallejo, 2014). It is also ridicule tinged with grotesque. The dramatic medium chosen by Ripoll and Llorente turns out to be a powerful weapon in this genre, providing an alternative to other more orthodox critical formats. Like in other works by the two authors, humour is used to talk about horror and is complemented by the use of ghosts. It has all been transferred to the stage giving great prominence to the projection of video scenes and expressionist lighting, all in grey tones to hint at the railway tracks carrying the trains on which prisoners arrived, at the electrified fences, the crematoria showers and the granite quarries.

In terms of the sound space, prisoners in fancy dress perform musical numbers that include songs on the supremacy of the Aryan race, *El chotis del crematorio* and *El Pasodoble de los triangulitos de colores*. Again, the evocative function of the music links it with the grotesque factor (Oñoro, 2016; Trecca, 2016: 254) and is aimed at inviting the audience to “participate” in this effect of immersion that is the play.

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que fuera gitana. Además se habla muy poco del holocausto gitano y fue terrible” (Ripoll / Llorente, 2014: s/p).

31. “Las orquestas estaban muy presentes en los campos de concentración. Eran vitales para los nazis, y esta es la paradoja. Las utilizaban para su servicio, y, a veces, para escarnio, befa y burla” (Ripoll / Llorente, 2014: s/p).



## CONCLUSIONS

At present there are plenty of examples in the performing arts on the recovery of Historical Memory, including those written by the author studied. Ripoll's plays examined in this article insist that institutional agents, the history community, civil society with its testimonies, the media and also various areas of the creative community can all provide valuable documents for denouncing the violence and reprisals inflicted. They give voice to the forgotten and to the victims who survived, despite showing that in certain sectors this topic causes feelings of unease. These plays confirm that in today's Spain, questions should continue to be asked about the country is going about the investigation into the disappeared and the victims of reprisals during the Civil War and the dictatorship, and about the indifference still being shown to other contemporary conflicts.

The corpus selected illustrates several forms of repression, such as the physical elimination of the enemy, deportation, incarceration in prisons and concentration camps, persecution, administrative and economic purging, while at the same time showing some of the psychological consequences of being subjected to torture. To do this Ripoll uses a wide range of expressive languages. The grotesque devices employed include carnivalesque humour, animalisation, role inversion, transvestitism and the perception of reality from beyond the grave, from the sphere of possession, visions, madness, ghostly apparitions and in the eyes of children. On many occasions she presents an excessively ornate stage bordering on the Baroque, on others she uses circus elements or devices from the short theatre tradition, submerging the spectator in a nightmarish and crazy space of sound with which she harasses the conscience of the guilty characters. This paper has set out to examine Ripoll's work and show how grotesque humour marks an ironic, critical distance, leaving a trace of bitterness from the humiliating situations shown. In our view, in this kind of work by one of the exponents of recovering memory for the stage, the use of the grandchildren's point of view is exceptional. This is a gaze and a voice from further forward in time, but less confined in a single critical register as well as less conditioned by threats, self-censorship and pacts of silence.

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Recibido el 23 de enero de 2017.

Aceptado el 1 de marzo de 2017.

