

Radio, memory and conflict: Reconstructing the past in *Documentos RNE*

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Abstract

In this article we adopt a cultural approach to radio, and specifically to radio documentaries about recent Spanish history, focusing on an analysis of *Documentos RNE*, which, from 1999 to date, has been broadcasting documentaries that employ the vast sound archives of Radio Nacional de España (RNE). The archives and their use in historical memory programmes represent a true national repository with which to reconstruct collective memory. Through a more detailed analysis of five documentaries broadcast between 2008 and 2014, we examine major topics such as the Second Republic, the Civil War, the post-war period, the Franco dictatorship and the Transition to Democracy. The article shows how *Documentos RNE* included the mentioned topics in its list of programmes and what type of audio-visual language resources were common on the reconstruction of the past.

Keywords

collective memory; communication media; memory mediatization; political conflict; radio documentary; sound archives

Introduction

This article analyses radio as a space for the (re)construction of collective memory. When we refer to reconstruction we recognize that memory does not reconstruct itself, as if it had existed before being narrated; nor can memory be ‘recovered’ as if ‘lost’, since this would imply the reification of a concept as volatile as that of ‘identity’. We can say, however, that memory is constructed from a narrative assembly of oral and written memories, from expert opinions and from historical facts upheld by evidence. Such a reconstruction, furthermore, always occurs ‘under the influence of the present social milieu’ (Halbwachs 1992: 49); in other words, it reflects not so much history itself as the specific period in which this history is narrated. In current times reconstruction is based on interactive and multidirectional dialogue and occurs especially in processes in which memory is mediatized (Hoskins 2009).

Our approach to the radio medium from the perspective of cultural studies is rather unorthodox. When not addressed from a strictly journalistic perspective, radio in Spain has typically been analyzed from historical, political and economic perspectives. In contrast with television, which has been analyzed from cultural and multiple angles, Spanish radio has been somewhat ignored, despite its cultural, social and political impact.

However, radio in Spain has created a collective memory in tandem with other media, most particularly Spanish public radio (Radio Nacional de España [RNE]) and a few other regional (including Catalunya Ràdio) and even private stations (notably, Cadena SER). Our research has focused especially on RNE, given its vast collection of archives, and particularly on its *Documentos RNE* (1999) programme, which has broadcast documentaries about the Second Republic (1931–1939), the Civil War (1936–1939), the post-war period, the Francoist dictatorship (1939–1975) and the subsequent Transition to Democracy. This focus is largely explained by the fact that these periods are sufficiently recent for people to have their own memories or to have heard the memories of close relatives firsthand. In addition, we wanted to note that these periods of convulsive historical events articulate a narrative of the past which is, in the current Spanish economical and political crises, very much problematized. Here, there is an obvious contest in regards not only of the narrative on the democratic transition (e.g. Rovira Martínez 2014), but also on previous traumatic events (e.g. Resina 2010).

RNE has a collection of sound archives of great sociocultural value. Since the station's foundation in 1937, just six months after Franco's Nationalists rebelled against the Second Republic, RNE has collected archive materials, of which a selection was made available to the public on the occasion of its 75th anniversary. *Documentos RNE* – founded in 1999 under the title *Fin de siglo* and currently led by Juan Carlos Soriano – is probably the programme that has created most radio productions on history and social memory (for which it has received numerous awards). In the Spanish radio scene, *Documentos RNE*, as one of the few programmes dedicated to radio documentaries, is an atypical programme in terms of its subject, genre and format and also in terms of its generous use of archives, eye-witness accounts, dramatizations, music and sound effects. In the current radio scene its productive rigour is notable (and even more so in these times of crisis). It is also an excellent model of informative and educational public radio.

In this article we examine, first, the topics that *Documentos RNE* broadcasted between 2008 and 2014 covering the Second Republic, the Civil War, the post-war period, the Franco dictatorship and the Transition to Democracy. Then we conduct a close reading through five documentaries to examine how this public medium constructed a collective memory using a wide range of radio devices and also reflect on the exploitation of sound archives to construct and narrate memories of a troubled past.

Sound archives, the past and community

The German sociologist Georg Simmel attached great importance to the senses and to sensory impressions in sociability between people. This idea fits well with his views regarding interaction and communication in creating a sense of our environment and, above all, in socializing individuals. In fact, according to Simmel, the only way to

acquire knowledge, establish a cognitive framework and develop social relationships is through senses such as sight, voice and hearing. Compared to the other senses, seeing and hearing have an obvious sociological significance in how they generate a sense of belongingness in a community. This feeling of belongingness can develop in an auditorium, in the classroom or in a concert hall, for instance, where participants receiving the same audio-visual input make eye contact and, according to Simmel, feel themselves to be part of the same 'unit' (1997: 17). Simmel referred to face-to-face relations; however, the effect could be also considered for mediatized communicative acts in which the audience can feel like being part of a wider community of listeners that, in a given moment, can enjoy a similar experience. Despite this, and noted by Kansteiner (2002: 193), 'often, the readers of a specific book or the viewers of a particular television program do not form a cohesive interpretative community because they use the same media text for very different ends'. This author explicitly stated (2002: 194) that radio listeners regularly 'forget the source of their memories of historical events' and although they can recall memories, they are not able to identify the original source. Therefore, this should be also taken in account when studying the suitable impact of radio programmes in collective memory. But what is perhaps more interesting from this viewpoint is the author's consideration that collective memory production is also, and sometimes mainly, a process of cultural production. Kansteiner (2002) noted that memory research should turn to media and communication research approaches and, despite he highlighted specially the field of reception studies; we would add that any approach should also take in account production and textual perspectives.

Television and radio generate a sense of community indeed, just as participation in social networks and the online consumption of culture do. We are part of a community of interest, bound by and experiencing the same culture and its products. Exposure to a discourse through a particular technology activates the mechanism for constructing the *imagined community* (Anderson 1983). For the existence and cohesion of a community, it is necessary a repository of shared memories, understood as a social construct (Halbwachs 1992). Without that collectively shared past, the individual does not identify with a community, as noted by Lewis Coser (1992: 21). As a young immigrant in the United States, in establishing friendships and shared interests with a large group of people, Coser realized that although he belonged to that group, there was still a wall between him and his American colleagues because they did not share the same collective memory of history, sporting events, school anecdotes, etc. Coser thus felt excluded from such collective memories, just as his colleagues were excluded from his.

The construction of collective memory through media activates what Simmel (2002) understood as a *feeling of the mass* or as a *collective nervousness* involving common action based on a feeling that may be private but is now shared. These memories may reflect events, emotionally positive milestones or traumatic events. The media 'collectivize' feelings from the pooling of individual experiences. The loss of a family member because of a serious illness, for instance, becomes a collective feeling through a television or radio programme in which patients and their relatives appear as a community that shares similar experiences and feelings. The individual perception that many others also share a given situation generates this image of a community.

Radio broadcasting, whether in the form of talk shows, documentaries and even music programmes, is an excellent medium for commemoration and social

remembrance. Music and other narrative tools play a very effective role in programmes dedicated to remembering particular periods or especially relevant events for the national community. In fact, a programme format exists in which the music track is the pretext for recalling an epoch, a personal experience or a shared event. Music and memories of the social context also generate a discourse about identity (although few studies exist on the topic). Music radio in Israel was, for example, a tool of the first order in constructing identity and collective memories regarding the Holocaust (Neiger et al. 2011a, 2011b). Moreover, radio programmes are a relevant platform for the remembering of important events for the collective identity given that radio listening has been during decades an activity attached to everyday life (Lewis 2013).

Although television and film documentaries have occupied a prominent place in studies of memory, radio and radio recordings have remained in the background. Orality still functions as a means for transmitting culture and radio as a vehicle for transmitting, preserving and archiving, oral culture, traditions and memory in the twentieth century has played a crucial role in reconstructing social history and popular memory. Of course, this use of mediatized eye-witness accounts also has important implications for configuring a shared tradition through processes of deritualization, depersonalization and delocalization as identified by Thompson (2011: 350–51).

Radio recordings have become a primary source of material in remediation processes. Both television and radio now provide inputs into refashioning processes, as pieces of a puzzle that is endlessly composed and recomposed in online platforms and social media (Bolter and Grusin 1999). The recycling of sound recordings in documentaries and in websites, ongoing editing and post-production all result in a reconfiguring of new meanings regarding the past.

Radio archives, in addition, have great evocative power. Undoubtedly, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is one of the corporations that has best exploited radio recordings to create a sense of community in commemorating events affecting the British as a nation. National sound and audio-visual archives function as repositories of the collective memory (Garde-Hansen 2011: 102), with national archives such as those of the BBC having a great advantage over the much more scattered and discontinuous private archives. In the case of the BBC, documentary researchers and journalists can avail of audio-visual archives of programmes that have been particularly vigilant in addressing issues forming the basis for democratic politics (Seaton 2004: 150).

Joanne Garde-Hansen, for instance, analyzed how BBC Radio addressed the issue of the 1966 Aberfan disaster in Wales, when a landslide took the lives of 116 schoolchildren and 28 adults. Broadcast as part of the programme *Open Country*, the *The Aberfan disaster* (2004), based on interviews and personal memories and using all available technological resources, was an example, not only of heritage custodianship and activation, but also of documentation and construction of collective memory. RTVE – Spain’s equivalent of the BBC, despite their differences in scale and quality – and specifically its radio arm, RNE, also offer reinterpretations of the past through the reconstruction of collective memory.

Media and memory in Spain

Historical memory and the politics of memory have become central topics in the humanities (Labanyi 2008). Communication studies are increasingly featuring memory, with television, in particular, leading the way in terms of the study of collective memory as represented in the media. Zelizer and Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2014: 2) noted that we should put a major accent in defining the role of the media and specifically in journalism in this field, because journalism has a central role 'as a primary repository of collective memory in every society in which it finds itself'. A growing body of Spanish television studies refers to historical representations of the Civil War and the Transition to Democracy. Nonetheless, this field has remained fairly unexplored until recent years, when a space for the cultural analysis of historical representations has gradually come to be carved out, as noted by several authors (López 2009; Smith 2009). Moreover, studies of fiction have tended to be preferred over studies of news and documentary genres, with some of the most notable cultural studies of the media focusing especially on fiction (Rueda Laffond and Coronado Ruiz 2009).

Popular television series like *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (2001); *Amar en tiempos revueltos* (2005) and *La chica de ayer* (2009) have been the focus of analyses and evaluations (e. g. Chicharro and Rueda Laffond 2008; Coronado Ruiz and Rueda Laffond 2012; Cascajosa Virino 2012). Their impact on audiences, not to mention the flexibility of fiction in developing a discourse regarding the past and building memory and identity, have rendered this area very productive from an academic perspective. Series set against the backdrop of the Civil War and its aftermath are not a new phenomenon, as indicated by several authors (Montero and Paz 2011; Palacio 2008). However, it appears that researchers now live in a context where they sense a need to review such audio-visual productions. The cultural perspective has been taken to analyze representations of the Civil War (Hernández, 2012a) or the democratic transition in Spain (Palacio, 2001, 2013). There are studies analyzing documentaries on Spanish (Ibáñez 2012), Catalan (Castelló 2012) and Basque (de Pablo 2012) television channels. The issue has also been addressed by Sira Hernández Corchete (2012b) and, in the specific case of Catalonia, by several authors (e.g. Herrmann 2008; Castelló 2014).

Since the 1990s a rash of historical television productions have had a spillover effect on radio programming, although the impact on audiences has been more limited, given that radio documentaries typically have a more restricted audience than television. Among the most important radio-based history programmes we could mention *Documentos RNE* and, to a lesser extent, *SER Historia* (2009), directed by Nacho Ares on Cadena SER, which uses its own archives accessible through its website since 2010. In the last four years, although *SER Historia* has shown a preference for ancient history and social history, it has occasionally covered the recent collective memory of Spain, as evidenced by programmes on Adolfo Suárez (*Suárez*, 18 November 2012), the Spanish Constitution (*Especial Constitución*, 6 December 2012 and 2013), Franco's dictatorship (*Franco dictador*, 29 December 2013) and exiled refugees (*Espanoles en campos nazis*, 2 February 2014). Cadena SER has also addressed Franco's dictatorship elsewhere; its archives include the *La Ventana* broadcast of January 2014 covering a visit by United Nations' envoys to Spain to assess its response to serious human rights violations during the dictatorship (Lafuente 2014).

Also noteworthy is the Catalunya Ràdio programme, *En guàrdia!* (2001), led by Enric Calpena. This programme, launched in 2001, focuses on the history of Catalonia but also has widely covered the Second Republic, the Civil War, the post-war period, the Franco dictatorship and the transition to Democracy. It relies particularly on expert opinions and on dramatizations based on eye-witness accounts, documents, letters and other historical evidence. With a largely magazine-style format, it usually focuses on little-known historical subjects that typically become topical for journalistic or academic reasons. With regard to the Civil War it has similarities with *Documentos RNE*, especially regarding Francoist repression and exile.

Documentos RNE

As indicated by Manuel Palacio (2006: 10) for television, radio forms part of a 'sentimental education', along with the films and drama series that have marked generations of Spaniards. RNE came into being during the Civil War as a Nationalist instrument of control over information and propaganda. Broadcasting started at Salamanca in 1937, where Francisco Franco had his headquarters. During the conflict, RNE broadcast reports on the war; thereafter it held a radio monopoly on information during dictatorship until 1960s (Faus 2007); private broadcasters, relegated to the entertainment sector, were obliged to issue 'official' news reports produced by Franco's regime.

Therefore, RNE has played a key historical role and, in terms of sound archives, is practically the only repository of memory of the Civil War and the dictatorship (now part of what has become Spain's most important audio-visual archives, the Fondo Documental de Radio Televisión Española). In fact, RNE's documentary wealth is such that it forms the basis for key research into aspects of recent Spanish history: Francisco Franco as portrayed in RNE broadcasts between 1937 and 1959 (Gómez García and Navarro Sierra 2014); audience profiles in the early years of the dictatorship (Gómez García and Cabeza 2013); the construction of female identity through public radio broadcasts during the dictatorship (Gil Gascón and Gómez García 2010); and religious radio programmes (Gómez García 2009).

This documentary wealth has generated interest in historical research, but also in archive preservation and sound archive digitization. In 2011, RNE applied the ARCA management system for document archives to enable access by journalists, writers and producers to digitized sound files. Marta Lazo (in Marta Lazo and Ortiz Sobrino 2013) has studied how this software leads to variations in productive routines for live broadcasts and how it improves online audio content. Other authors discuss how to digitally preserve and exploit RNE's archives and leverage its enormous potential as a direct voice in recent memory in Spain (Crespo et al. 2003; Prieto 2007).

A RNE programme that systematically employs all this wealth is *Documentos RNE* (3–4 p.m. Saturdays). The programme, with historical disclosure as its central theme, launched as a relatively new documentary genre in Spanish radio programming in 1999 under the name *Fin de siglo*. It combines sound archives, expert voices, eye-witness accounts, historical recreations, narrative and expressive use of music and sound effects. Its scriptwriting and thorough production have earned it numerous recognitions, among them two Ondas Awards and the Antena de Plata 2010 from the Spanish Association of Radio and Television Professionals, and the Club

Internacional de Prensa and Academia de la Radio de España Awards (RTVE.es 2011).

Table 1: Radio documentaries broadcast by *Documentos RNE* (2008–2014) with a focus on the period 1931–1981.

Documentary	Date
<i>Ifni-Sabara</i>	14 April 2008
<i>Las economías de la Guerra Civil/The economies of the Civil War</i>	17 May 2008
<i>Las fosas de la memoria/The Graves of Memory</i>	22 November 2008
<i>La España de 1978/The Spain of 1978</i>	6 December 2008
<i>Ribadelago: la tragedia olvidada/Ribadelago: The Forgotten Tragedy</i>	28 February 2009
<i>Españoles en la resistencia francesa/Spaniards in the French Resistance</i>	28 March 2009
<i>La reeducación de los niños rojos/The Re-Education of the Children of Republicans</i>	23 April 2009
<i>José Giral y la II República/José Giral and the Second Republic</i>	30 May 2009
<i>Movimientos migratorios en España/Migratory Movements in Spain</i>	6 June 2009
<i>Sábara 1975/Sabara 1975</i>	26 December 2009
<i>La energía nuclear en España/Nuclear Energy in Spain</i>	30 January 2010
<i>El museo del Prado durante la Guerra Civil/The Prado Museum during the Civil War</i>	15 May 2010
<i>La literatura falangista/Falangist Literature</i>	5 June 2010
<i>Marcelino Camacho</i>	20 October 2010
<i>Miguel Hernández</i>	31 October 2010
<i>Los cantautores de la transición/Songwriters of the Democratic Transition</i>	27 November 2010
<i>La Residencia de Estudiantes/The Students' Residence</i>	8 January 2011
<i>23-F, la radio frente al golpe/23-F, Radio and the Coup</i>	19 February 2011
<i>La visita de Eisenhower a España/Eisenhower's Visit to Spain</i>	16 April 2011
<i>La historia del Guernica de Picasso/The Story of Picasso's Guernica</i>	28 April 2011
<i>España en la obra de Hemingway/Spain in the Works of Hemingway</i>	18 June 2011
<i>Los últimos días de Unamuno/Unamuno's Last Days</i>	3 December 2011
<i>Lluís Companys, ejecución de un presidente/Lluís Companys, execution of a President</i>	21 January 2012

<i>70 años de Radio Exterior/70 years of Radio Exterior</i>	10 March 2012
<i>Los Maeztu I/The Maeztu Family I</i>	19 May 2012
<i>Los Maeztu II/The Maeztu Family II)</i>	26 May 2012
<i>El Contubernio de Munich/The Munich Conspiracy</i>	2 June 2012
<i>García Lorca y 'La Barraca'/García Lorca and 'La Barraca'</i>	21 July 2012
<i>75 años de RNE/75 years of RNE</i>	25 August 2012
<i>Aurora Rodríguez y su hija Hildegart/Aurora Rodríguez and her Daughter Hildegart</i>	1 September 2012
<i>Santiago Carrillo</i>	22 September 2012
<i>Samuel Bronston: España es Hollywood/Samuel Bronston: Spain is Hollywood</i>	24 December 2012
<i>López Sierra, el último verdugo/López Sierra, the Last Executioner</i>	26 January 2013
<i>El proceso 1001/Legal Proceedings 1001</i>	15 February 2013
<i>La Codorniz/The Quail</i>	23 March 2013
<i>Elena Francis</i>	6 April 2013
<i>Julián Grimau</i>	20 April 2013
<i>Los maquis/The Maquis</i>	29 June 2013
<i>Seat 600, de la España de alpargata a la de cuatro velocidades/The Seat 600, Spain of the Espadrille to Spain of the Gearstick</i>	3 August 2013
<i>La explosión de Cádiz/The Explosion of Cádiz</i>	17 August 2013
<i>José María Gironella</i>	31 August 2013
<i>Ángel Sanz Briç</i>	27 September 2013
<i>Exilio español en campos africanos/Spanish exiles in African Camps</i>	16 November 2013
<i>El Petróleo de Burgos/The Burgos Oil Find</i>	30 November 2013
<i>Los seriales radiofónicos/Radio Series</i>	1 February 2014
<i>CIFESA (1934–1951)¹</i>	8 February 2014
<i>Especial Adolfo Suárez/Adolfo Suárez Special</i>	24 March 2014
<i>Jorge Semprún, Un Militante De La Memoria/Jorge Semprun, A Militant of Memory</i>	3 May 2014
<i>Manuel García Morente: ética y vida de un pedagogo ejemplar/Manuel García Morente: Life and Ethics of an Exemplary Teacher</i>	31 May 2014

<i>La Universidad desafía Franco/Universities Challenge Franco</i>	7 June 2014
<i>Carmen Díez de Rivera, una musa libre y solitaria/Carmen Díez de Rivera, a Free and Solitary Muse</i>	21 June 2014
<i>Las misiones pedagógicas de la II República/The Educational Mission of the Second Republic</i>	28 June 2014
<i>Los niños de Rusia/The Children Exiled to Russia</i>	20 July 2014

^[1] Compañía Industrial de Film Español (film producer and distributor)

Documentos RNE covers a wide variety of topics, although twentieth century Spanish history is prioritized over other historical periods. Table 1 lists 53 documentaries that directly or indirectly reflect moments and conflicting events in the 50 years of history from the Second Republic (1931) to 23-F, the attempted coup d'état (1981). For these documentaries, *Documentos RNE* made intense use of its historical sound archives, along with direct eye-witness accounts expressly collected for the documentaries – which only further added to the quantity and quality of RTVE's documentary archives. The list excludes many documentaries referring to cultural and literary figures, such as writers, actors, philosophers, etc., except when they were linked in some way with the events studied (Civil War, post-war repression, dictatorship and democratic transition). The table draws on the documentaries as listed in the *Documentos RNE* website.¹ Our thematic analysis covers the period 2007 to date, as although the programmes began to be digitized (and made available online for listening or download) in 2001, this task was implemented more systematically from April 2007.

Regarding the period covered by our research (1931 to 1981), *Documentos RNE* made some 53 radio documentaries that either focus on a particular period or on a topic that cuts across several periods. In recent years RNE has tackled a number of controversial historical issues and has even produced broadcasts that have addressed issues as conflictive as the mass burials of victims of Franco's repression, Spanish exiles abroad (including of children to Russia) and the 1981 coup (which closes our study period).

The covered topics also include the struggle for democracy and the profiles and life trajectories of individuals who were repressed or who opposed the Franco regime, including writers, trade unionists and politicians. *Documentos RNE* also addressed the social history of the country, using economic development and the Cold War as a backdrop. Through accounts like those of Jorge Semprún, Federico García Lorca and Miguel Hernández, *Documentos RNE* also broadcast the stories of Spaniards of the Second Republic who lived through the Civil War and experienced Franco's repression or confinement in Nazi concentration camps.

In the aftermath of the enactment of the Law of Historical Memory (2007) by the Socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004–2011), *Documentos RNE* tackled two especially controversial issues related to Franco's regime: the aim to give a dignified burial to people who had been interred in mass graves and the re-education of the children of Republicans. Both these subjects were also tackled in Catalan television documentaries by the journalists Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis, along with the topic of Spanish and Catalan Republicans who ended up in concentration

camps in France and later in Germany (an issue that was also touched on by RNE at various times).

Five radio documentaries

We analyze five *Documentos RNE* radio documentaries that accurately represent how this programme has contributed to the recent reconstruction of collective memory in Spain, as follows: *Las fosas de la memoria/The graves of Memory* (Pascual, 2008); *23-F, la radio frente al golpe/23-F, Radio and the Coup* (Orduna, 2011); *Lluís Companys, ejecución de un president/Lluís Companys, Execution of a President* (Murga, 2012); *El Seat 600, de la España de alpargata a la de cuatro velocidades/The Seat 600, Spain of the Espadrille to Spain of the Gearstick* (Soriano, 2013); *Jorge Semprún, un militante de la memoria/Jorge Semprún, a Militant of Memory* (Cruz, 2014).

The Spanish desaparecidos

In the immediate aftermath of the enactment of the Law of Historical Memory (2007) and in the context of a heated debate regarding Judge Baltasar Garzón's investigations – from September 2008 – in order to create a census of people shot and buried in mass graves, *Documentos RNE* broadcast *Las fosas de la memoria* (with the subtitle 'Desaparecidos during the Civil War and the dictatorship'), a radio documentary about the struggle of relatives of victims of Franco's repression to exhume bodies, identify their dead and bury them with dignity. The documentary is divided into three parts: an introduction to the Law of Historical Memory, a more in-depth analysis based on numerous expert opinions and especially eye-witness accounts from family members seeking the exhumation of bodies and, finally, a conclusion that revisits the new legislation in more detail and that acknowledges the victims.

Regarding the use of radio resources, the documentary uses three in particular: the voices of experts and eye witnesses, the music and sound effects that set the scene and, finally, archival material, such as Franco's speech to inaugurate the Valley of the Fallen in 1959 (minute 39.40). The documentary intersperses voices expressing diverse and often opposing opinions, including experts like José Varela Ortega (professor of contemporary history and current chairperson of the Ortega y Gasset Foundation) and Julián Casanova (professor of contemporary history at the University of Zaragoza) who express opposing opinions about the actual scope and nature of the exhumations.

The programme maintains political plurality by including parliamentary speeches for (Socialists) and against (Partido Popular) the new legislation and also by including more sceptical opinions from the left as expressed by the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya political party. The second part of the documentary includes opinions expressed by volunteer archaeologists and anthropologists assisting in the exhumation and identification of bodies. It therefore deals not only with ideological and historical issues but also endeavours to be technically informative.

The programme also gives voice to the opinions of historical memory and victims' associations. Dramatizations are not used; rather the programme relies on the voices of family members who have battled – privately and without any institutional support – to exhume the bodies of relatives buried in mass graves scattered across hillsides

and in roadside ditches. The documentary overall is an acknowledgement of the right, denied to date, to moral reparation and social recognition for the families of the victims of mass burials.

Remediating a coup d'état

23-F, la radio frente al golpe (2011) was broadcast by *Documentos RNE* to mark the 30th anniversary of the failed February 1981 coup d'état, widely referred to as '23-F'. This broadcast became part of the large body of cultural productions that have led to a continuous reinterpretation of the coup (see López and Castelló 2014). The documentary, which chronicles the event using material from RNE, RTVE and other media archives, is a clear example of remediation, in this case, by radio. Note, however, that even though RNE was present at the time of the coup, only Cadena SER managed to broadcast *23-F* live.

The documentary recycles much material that chronicles the event, including radio broadcasts, news and speeches (including the King's televised speech at dawn); it also offers a restructuring of the events from available recordings, including those of Cadena SER (from minute 7). This is explained in the documentary introduction as follows:

Today, however, we can offer *new insights* into those moments from two recordings that were being made at the moment that Congress was interrupted: an RNE broadcast presented by Juan Ramón de la Cuadra and a Cadena SER broadcast presented by Rafael Luís Díaz. Recorded from different parts of the chamber, and *remixed using contemporary sound equipment*, they enable us to *relive* those moments of tension almost as if we were actually there in the Chamber of Deputies under attack by the rebels. (Orduna, minute 6: 34, emphasis added)²

The use of sound is a very illustrative example of how the past is mediatized: original sources are enhanced, both technically and discursively, to create a new document, which will also be made available, online. In this way the media use fragments of other media in productions that are incorporated as fragments themselves in yet other products, thus launching an ongoing process of re-mediation in the sense outlined above. This episode does not rely on dramatizations or on eye-witness accounts to recall the facts; rather, the listener's memory is appealed to by chroniclers who explain facts that the listeners remember for themselves.

This radio documentary does not stray much from the hegemonic 23-F narrative dominant in Spanish popular culture. It contains the defining elements of the dominant narrative (León-Solís 2007): the end of the transition and Spain's democratic coming of age, the strengthening of the new monarchy and conceptual understanding of the moment as a collective catharsis and as closure (being the legal proceedings the end of the matter).

Execution of the Catalan President

In *Lluís Companys, ejecución de un president* (2012), the story of the President of the Republican Generalitat provides a unique vehicle for discussing historical memory and the Second Republic. The episode has three key elements: expert opinions, dramatizations and audio documents (some of great documentary value). The episode provides detailed background on this politician and his execution and also offers an interesting review of the events leading to him being handed over by the Gestapo to the Francoist authorities, which had him shot by a firing squad in 1940. Among other notable aspects is the use of an RNE archive that documents how *Lluís Companys* declared, at a rally in the Plaza Monumental in Barcelona in 1937, his support for the besieged people of Madrid: ‘We have just one thing to say. Citizens of Madrid, Catalonia loves you!’.³ Experts include the professors of contemporary history, Andreu Mayayo and Josep María Figueres, and an eye-witness account is provided by the historical communist leader, Santiago Carrillo. Their contributions are led by a narrator who interweaves different audio-visual resources while maintaining a certain distance. Nevertheless, it is concluded that Companys’ trial was a farce (*un paripè*), an opinion very much supported by the experts’ voice.

Continually reinforced is the fact that the Catalan president, even in exile, was always loyal to the government of the Republic and that his vision of the Catalan State (Estat Català) – proclaimed by him in 1934 – was as part of a Spanish federation. Finally, the injustice of his arrest and execution in the Castle of Montjuïc in Barcelona in 1940 is reiterated, especially as he was ‘the only democratically elected president have been executed by fascists’. The report concludes with a dramatization of Companys’ execution accompanied by music and sound effects and followed by a rendition of the ‘Cant dels Segadors’/‘Reaper’s song’ (anthem of Catalonia). The topics, concepts and overall approach in this episode – broadcast in early 2012, just a few months after the Partido Popular (PP) entered government – still reflect the management of Benigno Moreno, appointed to RNE in 2010 (during the socialist government) but replaced in June 2012 by Manuel Ventero as part of a new team led by Leopoldo González-Echenique as president of RTVE, appointed by the new right-wing government of PP.

Desarrollismo without democracy

El Seat 600, de la España de alpargata a la de cuatro velocidades (2013) recounts social history in a topic with various economic, political and social threads. The Seat 600 car, an icon of a rapidly developing Spanish economy, forms the core of a documentary about the 1960s in Spain. The programme reproduced advertisements and interviews with Seat 600 owners from the period. Also consulted were experts like the sociologist Eulalia Solé, who claims that the Seat 600 democratized Spanish society, and the writer and sociologist Vicente Verdú, who, in describing some scenes from everyday life, reflected on the sexual repression experienced by the population.

More than once I was surprised – when sitting in my Seat 600 overlooking the sea or parked in a quiet street – by the flashlight of a policeman who came to check what was going on inside. And I seem to remember that it was in my Seat 600 that a

woman may first have whispered to me those words that seem to belong to the cinema: 'Take me, I'm all yours'. (Verdú, in Soriano, minute 6:57)⁴

The documentary does not skirt political issues, as, among other issues, it highlights the autarky that governed all facets of Spanish life. It also refers to the controversy regarding the location of the Seat factory. For logistical reasons, Martorell (near Barcelona) was Fiat's preferred location for the factory, whereas the Franco regime was concerned about concentrating large number of potentially conflictive workers in this region (as well as having more symbolic concerns). Archives dating from 5 October 1955 explain the operation of the new factory and provide some information on the general economic backdrop and the industrial innovation represented by Seat.

Music of the 1950s and 1960s as used throughout the documentary is contextual and evocative. RNE not only has archived to this music, but also has the right of the most popular jingles of past radio programmes. Its use of this music builds a collective memory on the basis of the individual memories of each listener. Dramatizations of letters sent by customers to the Seat factory, combined with sound effects (typewriters) and music, evoke what it was like to purchase a vehicle in that period (minute 22:40).

The documentary aims to rebuild the memory of a particular historical period and to analyse the phenomenon of the arrival of what came to be a widely used iconic vehicle in Spain. The programme chronicles society in the sixteen years when the Seat 600 was manufactured in Spain, explaining the impact of industrialization on workers and their families, including investigations of workers before being hired, corporate paternalism, the long working hours and the separation of the sexes. The documentary also refers to incipient trade unionism and the first workers' strikes in Franco's Spain. Noteworthy is the fact that the programme tiptoes around the issue of the mass immigration of workers from Andalusia and the fact that only about 20 per cent of the Seat workforce was Catalan.

A militant of memory

We conclude with a note on *Jorge Semprún, un militante de la memoria* (2014), an episode dedicated to Jorge Semprún, the Spanish writer and politician who died in 2011. The figure of Semprún, who was a former Minister of Culture in democratic Spain, serves to review all the main stages in recent Spanish history, from the Second Republic up to the Transition to Democracy. Central to Semprún's life story is his traumatic experience in Buchenwald concentration camp. The documentary reproduces Semprún's own words recalling the bitterness that remained in his life after liberation.

I tried to write, once I returned from Buchenwald, in 1945 or 1946, I wanted to write a book that was both witness and literature. I realized very quickly that wallowing in that memory of death was to risk suicide. So I abandoned that book, that book that was doing me in, as that memory and experience would have killed me. (Semprún, in Cruz, minute 18:20)⁵

The documentary explains how Semprún progressed in his political career (linked to communism) and in his literary career, making reference to his clandestine trips to Spain, his cultural and political activism, his dynamism as a newspaper columnist and his appointment as Minister of Culture in the Socialist government of Felipe González. Overall the documentary is a picture painted of Spanish society and politics that depicts contemporary personalities such as the politicians Felipe González, Javier Solana and Carlos Solchaga and artists like Eduardo Arroyo. The final part of the documentary refers to Semprún's return to writing with the publication of *Literature or Life* (1994) and *Adieu, vive clarté* (1998), both books in which, finally, he 'looks back at his past'. Also dramatized is Semprún's speech in German on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Buchenwald, in which, according to the narrator, Semprún 'is saying farewell to all his acquired identities' (minute 50.00).

Media alcoves of memory

When Halbwachs referred to memory *reconstruction* he used the image of a building constructed using the stones of previous epochs and belonging to other buildings. The reuse of these stones creates a new building and the stones may, in turn, be reused in a future new construction or perhaps recycled for new uses. This metaphor represents a very appropriate explanation for how public radio in Spain is weaving a collective memory based on fragments of various kinds (whether archives, witness accounts or expert opinions) whose seams are being sewn by the narrators of the documentaries. *Documentos RNE*, furthermore, in building an extensive collective memory in recent years, has not skirted around conflictive political and social events and circumstances in its remembering and interpretation of Spanish history.

The programme thus adds to the multiple discourses on historical memory heard by the Spanish people, who have also occasionally participated as witnesses. Even though this type of programme has fairly limited social impact – compared to television – we should not underestimate the importance of what we might call 'media alcoves of memory', defined as niches where narratives of the past are produced and consumed. It is laudable that *Documentos RNE* configures one such niche in the context of a public radio, since this is one of the proper functions of a national broadcasting service. Within the Spanish context, this format is being mostly offered by public stations, like RNE or Catalunya Ràdio in Catalan, and represents a real safe zone of handcrafted radio genre given that the premises of private radio production do not offer the opportunity to invest the time and resources for these cultural outlets.

Documentos RNE acted as a repository of memory with a clear goal of building a national identity. This function, typical of the public media of the past century, continues, in our present context of mediatization, re-mediation and fragmentation, to lend coherence to the discourse on collective memory. Moreover, the great effort invested by *Documentos RNE* in locating witnesses of historical events has the effect of renewing the repository of memory and further adding to the already huge audio archives of the public broadcaster. Facilitating the existence of these alcoves of memory – within the diversity and complexity of Spanish history – is the framework formed by digitized access to the repository of sound archives, the production format (offering adequate time for both pre-processing and broadcasting), the fact of working

only with sound (more flexible and technically simpler than image) and, finally, the fact that the radio (especially outside prime time) is not so often in the political eye of the storm as is television. Reflection regarding the past needs to continue, despite the current difficult context of drastic cutbacks in funding of public media, as such discursive niches, even if limited, contribute greatly to the quality of democracy in a country.

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Notes

¹ See <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/audios/documentos-rne/>, accessed 18 July 2014.

² All translations are by the authors unless otherwise indicated. Original: Hoy sin embargo, podemos ofrecerles con *un nuevo relieve* esos instantes a través de dos tomas de sonido que estaban realizando en los momentos de la irrupción en el Congreso. La de Radio Nacional de España, con la narración de Juan Ramón de la Cuadra, y la de la Cadena Ser, con Rafael Luís Díaz. Tomadas desde distintas partes del hemisferio, y *remezcladas con los sistemas actuales de tratamiento sonoro*, van a poder *revivir* esos instantes de alta tensión casi como si se encontraran dentro de la cámara de los diputados, asaltado por los golpistas. (emphasis added)

³ 'Os decimos tan solo una frase. Madrileños, madrileños, Cataluña os ama!'

⁴ Con todo, más de una vez yo con el 600, cerca de un mar o al fondo de una calle, pues también he tenido la sorpresa de la linterna de un guardia que venía a observar qué estaba sucediendo dentro. Y creo recordar que quizá la primera vez que una mujer me dijo esa frase que luego casi se ha hecho cinematográfica, 'quiero ser toda tuya', esa se produjo dentro de un 600.

⁵ Yo intenté escribir al volver del campo de Buchenwald, en 1945 o 46, quería escribir un libro que fuera a la vez un testimonio y una obra literaria. Me di cuenta muy rápidamente que seguir en esa memoria de la muerte era arriesgar el suicidio. Entonces abandoné el libro, que ese libro acababa conmigo, que esa memoria y experiencia podía acabar conmigo.