

THE GEOGRAPHICAL FRAME IN *EL JARAMA*:
AN IMPLIED REMINDER OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

KATHRYN G. McCONNELL
Point Loma Nazarene College

The Spanish Civil War was a theme virtually ignored as a primary topic by post-war Spanish anti-regime writers inside Spain. It manifested itself more as an implied presence within the framework of many novels by writers belonging to the generations of the forties and fifties. When Sánchez Ferlosio published his 1956 landmark novel, the emotional injuries and pain of the war had not yet had time to mend. His realistic portrayal of a society caught up in post war apathy and bitter memories serves to underline the even more profound spiritual crisis whose roots preceded the Civil War. The war, however, served as Spain's most poignant reminder of her deepest social, economical, cultural, and political divisions; and although the writers of the fifties' generation did not openly criticize the political realities of the era, their emphasis on social realism tended to destroy the myths propagated by pro-regime writers. Ferlosio's experimentation with the new developments evidenced in the modern European novel, especially those related to the structures of space and time, placed the Spanish novel on the road to recovery, while his articulation of the Spanish social condition reopened or perhaps touched on those «wounds» that were still festering within Spanish society.

Criticism of Sánchez Ferlosio's novel, with regard to the war, has tended to center around the effects of it. The stance to which some critics adhere is similar to that of Schraibman and Little who write «como todas las cuestiones trascendentales, se aborda el

tópico de la guerra civil y la metáfora del río sin acaso darse cuenta de ello...» (335).¹ Yet, inherent in the title of the novel is an implied reference to the bloodiest battle of the Spanish Civil War, the battle of the Jarama. Nevertheless, we know that Ferlosio's work is not intended to be an allegory of the war, but that the story, as Santos Sanz Villanueva states, discreetly remembers the conflict and leaves «su huella en el relato» (360).

The utilization at the beginning of the novel of the literary quotation by Leonardo da Vinci juxtaposed alongside the geographical frame adapted from the nineteenth-century geologist Casiano de Prado, immediately introduces the two major structural components that the work incorporates as well as two principal perspectives on reality: the river as a Heraclitic and subjective symbol of time as transitory, irreversible, and repetitive caught in the present moment; and the objective viewpoint the frame elicits while underlining the specific reality of the spatial setting.² The novel, as Jo Labanyi asserts, focuses on the present events leading up to Lucita's demise, a death that symbolically repeats the destruction of Spanish soldiers who were killed in and around the shores of the Jarama river and the surrounding geographical area (47). The present moment then, stands in relation to the historical past «as if frozen by its effects compulsively retreading the blood stained waters of the civil war» (Jordan 163).

Keeping that in mind, a look at the geographical frame from a historical perspective reveals how its presence might be interpreted as an implied reminder of the war. Within the mapping of the novel are defined not only the finite boundaries of the utilized space within the novel, but the province of Madrid, an area that was iso-

¹ Other critics who deal briefly with the topic include Darío Villanueva who claims the Civil War is seen as «algo lejano y borroso» (126). Matías Montes Huidobro associates the physical violence of nature with the geo-historical setting (150-58), and Gregorio Martín notes the recurrence of war memories by the older generation, which leaves it feeling empty and uncertain about the future (31). Gonzalo Sobejano suggests that «abundan más las alusiones a la Guerra Civil que a fechas anteriores o posteriores» (333), and Barry Jordan states that one of the major themes revealed in the novel is the effect of war that produces a stagnant and calcified society (162-3). In addition, Joan-Lluís Marfany mentions the many war references, and notes the «abúlico» effect the war had on the fictional characters such as Lucio (21).

² For further studies on the Heraclitic nature of time in the novel, see articles by José Ortega (801), Jo Labanyi (47), Edward Riley (208), Santos Sanz Villanueva (353), and Joan-Lluís Marfany (19-20).

lated from the rest of Spain during the Civil War for thirty-two months. The beginning of the frame sketches the areas of the onset of the battles for Madrid in the region of Somosierra in July 1936, which represented the ongoing battle from 1936-39 (figure 1);³ and the latter part of the frame, at the end of the book, outlines the main area of the February 1937 battle of the Jarama (figure 2).

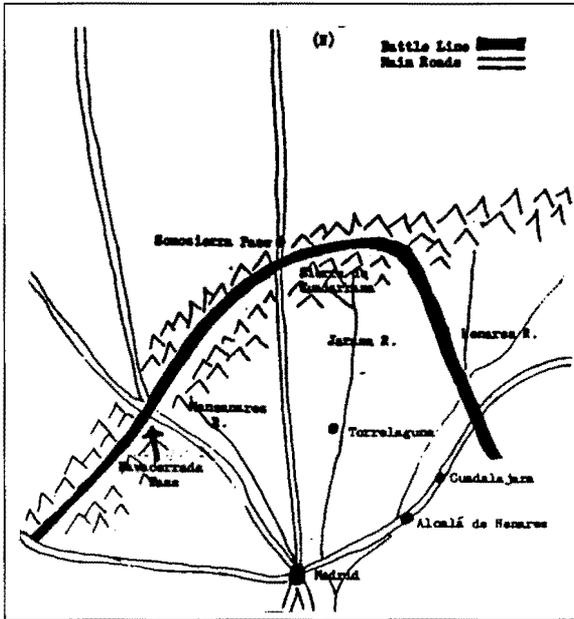


FIG. 1.—Battles of the Somosierra July-August 1936.

Although the various battles are not recreated in the novel, memories of them are evident. Ironically enough, many remembrances are related by the younger generation whose apparent ignorance of the war and its effects on their lives is evidenced in the text. They have received their information by second-hand means through relatives or by other ways not evident to the reader, while

³ Figures represent composite maps and are not drawn to scale. Information for figures 1-2 was taken from *España heroica: Diez bocetos de la guerra española* by Vicente Rojo, *El General Miaja: Defensor de Madrid* by Antonio López Fernández, and *The Spanish Civil War* by Hugh Thomas. Drawings for figures 3-4 were gleaned from *Atlas de Madrid* and from on site investigation.

image of the spatial layout of the present action, and with an understanding of the region's topography and a knowledge of its immediate past, one can appreciate more fully the underlying references to the Civil War contained therein.

The geographical connectors including the Valencian highway, the Guadalajara train line, the Manzanares, Jarama, Tajuña and Henares rivers come into play as well as points in space represented by the river site at San Fernando and the towns of Paracuellos del Jarama and Torrejón de Ardoz. These places are repeated or relocated in various contexts and the constant repetitions serve to give a spatial as well as a temporal orientation to the reality of the characters.

The mapping of the origins of the Jarama river begins in the Sur de Somosierra. It is nestled in the Guadarrama mountains north of Madrid and represents the northernmost boundaries of the frame and the site of the first battles around the capital in July and August of 1936 (García Venero 454-58).⁵ The first two references to the river's origins include a prosaic statement about its source with a later reference alluding to the passage of time. The conversation reconstructs the frame: «—Di, tú ¿no es este mismo el que viene de Torrelaguna? —No lo sé; creo que sí. Sé que nace en la sierra» (39). The subsequent conversation places the river within the context of the war by stating that many people died in this river because it served as a battlefield. To explain these statements more fully, we remember that during the war the mountains provided a natural line of resistance with only two passes allowing northerly entrance into Madrid; the Somosierra Pass and the Navacerrada Pass located a little further south. Although the origins of the Manzanares and Henares rivers are not mentioned directly in the frame, both are born in the same Guadarrama. Geographically connected to the Jarama river, as traced by the frame, the three rivers defined the physical and symbolical boundary lines of the battle front around Madrid. Concretely and spiritually connected, they came to symbolize rivers of death in the campaign to defend the capital.

The second allusion to Somosierra occurs later during the siesta hour where the passage of time notes the direction of the shadows to the north: «Apuntaban al norte las sombras de los árboles,

⁵ For additional information, see Gabriel Jackson (232-53).

a Somosierra» (86). These are the first shadows noted in the text with regard to a place. They are significant because they are related to the beginnings of the river, the movement of time, the origins of the encirclement of Madrid, and function to foreshadow the approaching death of Lucita.

The subtle references to the commencement of the war in Somosierra are further reinforced through one of the young men and his post-war experiences in Morocco. These happenings move us away from the geographical frame, but hint at Spain's interests through its social, historical and economical ties. In addition, they remind us of occurrences related to the outbreak of the war around Madrid. Those circumstances are manifested through Zacarías, a man born in Baghdad, with whom Mely seems enamored during the evening hours at Mauricio's tavern. A rebellious spirit, he brags of having felt the sensation of «vacilar». When Mely asks what that means, he associates it with Larache, where he used to smoke «kif» as a recruit while serving his stint in the «mili.»

The association of «la mili» with Spanish Morocco, considered the Achilles' heel of the Spanish Republic, is a very negative observation on the part of the narrator. Morocco was one of the last remnants of a fallen Spanish empire, a final foreign outpost left after the 1898 disaster and a hotbed for the sale of illegal contraband. Many young Spanish men lost their lives trying to protect their country's economic interests and, for that reason, no one wanted to serve his one year of required military service there (Thomas 17-18).⁶ Zacarías' Arabic background and the fact that he served in Larache are also significant. Larache was one of the four Moroccan cities that were a part of the initial insurrections that occurred before the Civil War broke out on the Iberian peninsula. The Moroccan troops who rebelled were a part of Franco's new African army and they moved onto the continent with a vengeance. Thus, the negative associations of place with military service reminds one of Spain's checkered imperialist history whose past has continued to set the tone for the somber post-war atmosphere while the ever-present military symbols seem to create the illusion of a shroud over the river site.

One of the novel's most important concrete connectors is the Valencian highway, the road that Carmen and Santos use to return

⁶ Refer also to Jackson (232-7).

to Madrid. Leaving the river, they reach the San Fernando tracks pausing to let a train pass. Continuing through Vicálvaro, they cross the Arganda train line (a concrete link to another focal point of the Jarama battle, the Arganda bridge), and then view the hill of Almodóvar (figure 3). We read that the road «corría paralelo a la

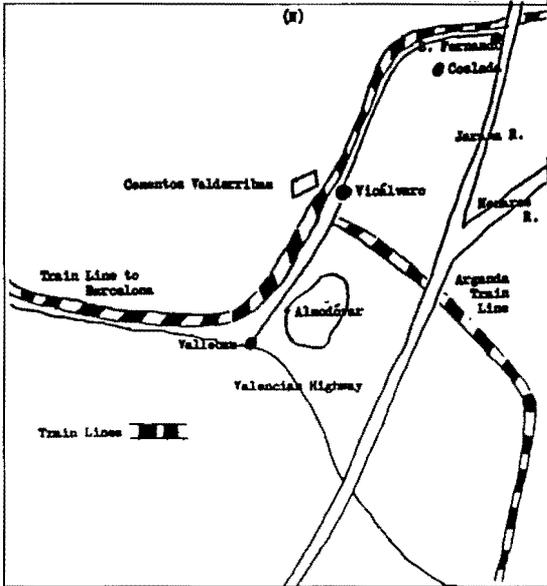


FIG. 3.—Carmen and Santo's Route to Madrid.

sombra de Almodóvar» (242). They climb the hill while the sun is setting in the direction of Madrid and shadows are cast across the Valencian highway toward the Levante. Carmen has never been on the hilltop, but in the ensuing conversation, we discover that Santos has been there on various hunting trips with his uncle, who was stationed at the nearby Vicálvaro barracks during the war.

In February 1937, the battle for the Jarama began in earnest with the Valencian highway becoming the focal point because it was the corridor for all food supplies for Madrid. Largo Caballero's government had already left the capital and fled to Valencia. The road then, as historian Joan Llarch notes, was «el vínculo o cordón umbilical que unía la capital de España con el Levante» (165). The road, as well as the Jarama and Manzanares rivers, became symbolic boundary lines to be defended at all costs. Madrid's destiny,

then, had become intimately linked with that of the rivers and the road. The International Brigades were particularly important in helping to defend these symbolical lines. When they arrived late in 1936, they made their camps on the outskirts of Madrid, specifically Vallecas, and were later to fight in the Battles of the Jarama, Guadalajara and the Ebro (Llarch 156-62).

When Carmen and Santos note that night is upon them, they leave Almodóvar and proceed onto Madrid. They go through Vallecas, turn onto the Valencian highway and then cross the Vallecas bridge, where Carmen is surprised by the bright lights of the city. Santos claims that this is «Vallecas City, ciudad fronteriza...» (349), a title, noted by Gonzalo Sobejano, as borrowed from a 1950 American film starring Gary Cooper, «Dallas, Border City» (336). In his eagerness to be funny, perhaps Santos has inadvertently hinted at the present American influence in Spain while passing through the zone where English speaking brigades made their encampments on the fringes of the city in 1936. Also, upon closer examination of Carmen and Santos' route, we see it to be analogous to one of the escape routes taken by government officials during the early months of the siege of Madrid, though the young people's travels go in the reverse direction, thus allowing no escape from Madrid's present negative influence.⁷ Therefore, the route taken, the references to the war, the lyrical passages describing the sun setting in the west toward Madrid, and the shadows cast across the Valencian highway spreading toward the Levante, all combine to heighten and to enhance the tragic complexion of this area's past while also serving to reinforce the tragedy of the moment.

Other reminders of the siege of Madrid are associated with conversations relating to San Fernando de Henares, Paracuellos del Jarama, and Torrejón de Ardoz. We see the first obvious allusions to the war early in the book during the discourse between Mely and Fernando. Verbally they sketch the battlefront from Paracuellos del Jarama down to Titulcia where Fernando's uncle was killed. This relates directly to the frame, and is reminiscent of the proposed Na-

⁷ Various escape routes existed, though all detours led to the Valencian highway because it was the only road not strangled by Nationalist troops. Ian Gibson notes that in the first days of the assault on Madrid, traffic destined for the Levante took the highway toward Alcalá de Henares until reaching Torrejón de Ardoz, where they turned south on the Loeches highway to pick up the Valencian road (16). Vicente Rojo has suggested other routes passing through Vallecas, Tarancón, and Aranjuez (43).

tionalist military operations in the Jarama area as recounted by Coronel López-Múniz where he states that «forzaría el Jarama entre Vaciamadrid y Titulcia para avanzar en profundidad hasta las alturas de Henares, apoyando los flancos en el Tajuña por el Este y el Jarama y Henares por el Oeste» (66). Mely and Fernando's conversation continues with statements about the number of dead there were in the river in contrast to the present tranquil setting. However, a few pages earlier the narrator describes the turmoil, hysteria and disharmony in the river as witnessed by the sun overhead: «Hervía toda una dislocada agitación de cuerpos a lo largo del río... Un sol blanco y altísimo refulgía en la cima, como un espejito oscilante. Pero abajo la luz era roja y densa y ofuscada» (44-45).

The simile comparing the sun to an «espejito oscilante» and the description of its «blurred» reflected light on the river facilitate a possible interpretation. Both historians and newspaper articles report that the worst day of the Jarama battle occurred, interestingly enough, on a Sunday —February 14, 1937— and was entitled by newspapers as the «Domingo de las Siete Batallas» or the «Día Triste del Jarama.» The waves of attacks by men and tanks and the constant machine gun fire created a line of flames under the unseasonal heat of the February sun (Colodny 124).⁸ Although the narrative description refers to the present action, it appears, at the same time, to be a reflection of past events as well, an allusion to the thousands who died in the waters or by the banks of the Jarama, and to the dense, thick red lines of flames of battle into which the sun has been symbolically converted. The sun, in its position above the bridge, is both observer, reflector of, and a seeming participant in the action below while it refracts its light at various angles. The battle image is further enhanced by the constant motif of smoke as well. It is continually rising from the riverside, from the physical damage wrought by campfires, from cigarettes, from the train crossing the Viveros bridge, and even enters into the physical description of the gentle character Esnáider. We read: «Al quitarse el raído flexible de paja, mostró una pelambre blanca y rala, que le subía como un humo vago desde la calva enrojecida» (145). Although this German ex-patriot is kind by nature, his description links him both concretely and symbolically to this scene, for it was a tide of German mercenaries who literally wreaked devastation on this geographical area, and only a few

⁸ Consult also the article on «El Domingo de las Siete Batallas» (6).

years later it continued to lay waste to the rest of the European continent during the Second World War.

From the riverside at San Fernando we move on to a discussion about Paracuellos del Jarama, the uppermost site of the battle line mentioned previously and the location of political assassinations in November 1936. Mely and Fernando have just visited the San Fernando cemetery and are returning to the dam area to be with the other members of the group when there is talk about Paracuellos. Preceding the conversation is a lyrical description while the shadows of night are approaching and the focus is on the hillside of the town: «Bajaba el sol... Los altos de Paracuellos enrojecían, de cara hacia el poniente. Tierras altas, cortadas sobre el Jarama formaban quebradas, terrazas...» (198). The passage continues by emphasizing the geological disarray of the terrain, and suggests that the area was formed by the picks and shovels of giants. Here, we are projected into a more subjective time and space, when we remember that in Greek mythology the Giants were a troublesome lot. Their place of competition was Plegra, or the burning place, which was always localized in volcanic areas. That idea is reinforced by the sunset and the reddish hues along the Paracuellos' cliffs, while more recent history remembers that it was between the cliffs and the Jarama river that the 1936 November massacres took place (figure 4). Several buses drove up to the site

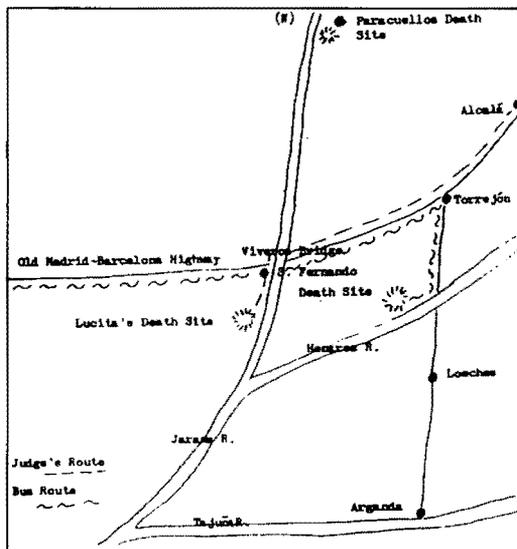


FIG. 4.—The November Massacres.

where trenches had been dug along the bank for depositing the victims; more than a thousand prisoners were shot, and it is reported that many were covered while still alive (Gibson 11-17).

Juxtaposed alongside the lyrical narrative is Mely and Fernando's prosaic conversation. Mely asks Fernando if he has ever been to Paracuellos and Fernando responds: «—¿En Paracuellos? No hija. ¿Qué se me puede haber perdido en Paracuellos?» (198). One question might arise as we read Fernando's response to Mely's question; why should he react so strongly when asked if he had been to Paracuellos? Of course, it is a small, not particularly attractive town overlooking the Jarama river valley. It might not hold much interest for a young man Fernando's age, but inherent in the «se me» of the Spanish phrase, is the implication that a trip there would be too absurd to be considered, and that he would never take responsibility for going there of his own accord.

From a book by Ian Gibson, *Paracuellos: cómo fue*, some answers to our inquiry begin to surface. Although the mass executions were a Republican atrocity, it appears the Franco regime believed the citizens of the town to be responsible for the November 1936 occurrences. In light of a published 1983 interview with the town's mayor, Ricardo Aresté, Fernando's aversion becomes more understandable. Aresté stated: «Paracuellos sufrió enormemente bajo Franco... A todos nosotros nos culpaban de lo que pasó con los presos... Llegaron incluso a fusilar a gente por el simple hecho de ser de Paracuellos» (11). The deplorable Republican acts then were compounded by continued brutality after the war.

At the foot of those reddish cliffs described by the narrator, and within a few hundred yards of the Jarama river, is located the cemetery where ten thousand dead are interred. Like the San Fernando cemetery, it is situated below the town and next to the river so that, as Mely commented in her San Fernando cemetery trip, the dead are residents of the areas most inhabited by the living. It is a constant reminder of the atrocities of this area.

Within a few days of the Paracuellos incident, more assassinations occurred south of Torrejón de Ardoz on the banks of the Henares river. Several buses transported political prisoners from Madrid by way of the Guadalajara highway. Upon reaching Torrejón, they turned onto the Loeches road and were taken to a site now named the Ermita de la Magdalena near the Aldovea castle, which faces the Henares river. A slaughter followed in which the

death toll reached approximately 500 or 600 men. Later their bodies were transferred to the Paracuellos cemetery along with thousands of others whom the Franco government considered martyrs (Gibson 73-118).⁹

In the novel *Torrejón* is seen in a new context, but one that continues to perpetuate a warlike attitude. Mely is wearing slacks, a costume not readily accepted in Spain in the fifties. People are surprised by her apparent lack of decorum, but her friend Fernando quips that people should probably get used to seeing them on women because the yankees are coming to work in Torrejón to build an airport. Mely responds that she has no knowledge of the new military air base, and this is immediately followed by the arrival of a military presence, that of two Civil Guards at the cemetery site where the two young people are talking. Mely is reprimanded severely for not being dressed appropriately and Fernando's virility is challenged by Mely who feels he should have been more outspoken with the guards. However, Fernando's reaction would not have been considered unnatural, for the Civil Guard had great power at this time. They were considered Franco's right-arm-military unit, and it was to the Civil Guard that Franco made his rebellious speech on July 22, 1936. A large portion of his army was composed of this group (Manfredi Cano 8-14). Thus, the authoritarian stance shown in the cemetery and the impersonal mode demonstrated later at the dam site when Lucita drowns exemplify the patronizing and dominant tone of those representing the dictatorial regime.

Fernando's allusion to the future construction of American military bases in Spain, particularly to the one in Torrejón, continues to support the suggestion of war within the novel. These military projects were an offshoot of the Eisenhower-Franco Mutual Security Pact, a military and economic contract signed in September 1953. Because of the Korean War, the United States was anxious to strengthen security by building bases around the communist bloc (Crow 353).¹⁰ That pervasive American influence on post-war

⁹ Carlos Fernández states that of the approximately 1500 «Fifth Column» prisoners who were transferred from Madrid prisons, only about 300 inmates made it to Alcalá de Henares (3).

¹⁰ Pro-regime Spanish newspapers heralded the signing of the pact. Ironically it was seen as a peace measure rather than the continuation of military maneuvers. See «Los gobiernos de España y los Estados Unidos firmaron ayer los convenios que refuerzan la preparación de occidente en el mantenimiento de la paz» (31).

Spanish life is later reinforced when a judge, who comes from Alcalá de Henares to investigate the drowning incident, takes out a Philip Morris cigarette to smoke before he passes through Torrejón. Almost immediately the judge's car is overtaken and passed by a speeding Chrysler filled with Americans. The judge and his chauffeur speak in critical terms about the Americans while they continue their slow pace and pass by the Loeches road to the left (figure 4). Two ideas seem to emerge from this episode: this is the beginning of a love-hate relationship in which Spain resents its dependence on the United States and the influence it will have on the economy and society, and the fact that both governments share a common militaristic attitude makes Spain's future look as grim as its past.

In addition to the river and road systems connecting points in space, we are reminded of the Jarama valley's historical significance by the constant references to the train lines that figure prominently in the novel. Leaving Atocha, the southeast train station in Madrid, and moving in a northeasterly direction, the line joins Vallecas, Vicálvaro, San Fernando-Coslada, Alcalá de Henares, and continues to Guadalajara. The references to the trains are important because not only does the movement symbolize the passage of present time, but the allusions are also subtly connected to references of war. Nationalist Coronel López-Múniz recalls that trains played a notable role in the war; there were only two ways to cross the rivers: by way of the highway bridges, or by way of the trains that ran the length of the Jarama river valley (69). Along with the Valencian highway, the trains were also the means by which food, supplies, and troops reached the besieged capital from the Levante when all other arteries had been cut off.

The first two train stops are extremely important to this study: those of Vallecas and Vicálvaro. Between these two train stops the train crosses the Valencian highway, which runs through Vallecas. We are again reminded of the ultimate failure of Republican Madrid as Carmen and Santos, while beginning their return to Madrid, cross the tracks at San Fernando. The scene switches back to the riverside where Paulina and Sebastián notice the train's arrival as well: «Ya venía corriendo por la recta el correo de Guadalajara. Sebastián levantaba la muñeca y miraba el reloj... Al fondo, en las mesetas de Levante, la luz del sol había abandonado las últimas alturas» (219). Again, a subtle link exists between this con-

crete connection with the Levante, which is becoming shrouded in darkness.

The third train stop, San Fernando-Coslada, is connected to Coslada by the arrival of z.b., the initials the narrator employs to refer to a man called «zapatos blancos». Z.b. has come to San Fernando by walking down the train tracks from Coslada. In Coslada he is the owner of a barber shop, a trade he learned while on the front in Burgos during the war. From his conversation in Mauricio's bar, we discover he enlisted in 1935 and returned after the war to find his mother had remarried, a very distasteful thing for him to accept. From the dialogue, we glean information about his memories of the war, and may infer that he was a Nationalist, for Burgos was the seat of the Nationalist government and the Franco forces.

Furthermore, the site at San Fernando contains the Viveros train bridge, which has constant traffic flowing over it. Two passages with regard to the train particularly stand out. The first, which was pointed out earlier, alluded to the anarchy created in the river by the multitude of bodies found in it. The heat of the sun, coupled with the confusion in the river introduces the arrival of the train where the noise it makes is described as an «ajetreado tableteo, que cubrió toda voz...» (45). García Sarriá perceptively comments that the noise made by the train imitates the sound of a machine gun hammering away and that the river is «un verdadero río de sangre en cuyas ondas la generación de la postguerra se encuentra aun sumergida» (326).

The machine gun noise must have been deafening during the various battles. According to veteran Jason Gurney, who describes his second day at the battle of the Jarama, the bullets used were a high-expansion type that exploded on impact, making more noise than the rifle that did the firing. The shells were made of a nickel alloy and lead which heated up tremendously with the friction inflicting deadly wounds (40-41). We think about the deadening and clattering train sound combined with the uproar of voices upstream where we hear «gritos agigantados y metálicos bajo las bóvedas del puente» (44-45). A similar clamor fills the air at the dam site when the narrator once again describes the voices: «Las voces tenían un timbre nítido en el agua, como un eco de níquel» (60). This area is no less chaotic than the train bridge with bodies lying on the cement dike in what the narrator calls «relajada anarquía» (77),

and comments are made about Sebas' swimming style as if he were fighting with the water.

A poem written by John Lepper entitled «Battle of Jarama 1937» summarizes even more succinctly what our narrator has only suggested:

The sun warmed the valley
But no birds sang
The sky was rent with shrapnel
And metallic clang (133).

In the afternoon of the present action, the «metallic clang» is portrayed by the noise of the train and the strident metallic voices reverberating throughout the arched vaults of the bridge and the dam area. The movement of time, as symbolized by the river's flow and the speeding train, continues forward while blurring the lines between the past, present and the future. Later, time becomes concretized again in the form of a watch with a metal cover, and its silent movement serves as a reminder that death is inevitable. In the patio of the «mesón» during the evening when someone asks Miguel the time, Zacarías grabs Miguel's wrist to look at his watch and exclaims: «—Loco, ¡estás loco tú ahora jugar con esos instrumentos! ¡Eso es la muerte niquelada!» (274).

To reinforce the perception of death, we cannot ignore Paulina's observation, earlier in the day, of the train's reddish colored wagons whose color reflects onto the muddied Jarama waters, or later her impression of the innocent animals trapped in a freight train headed for Madrid, undoubtedly to be slaughtered. The entrapment is significant, for the animals are young calves heading toward their death. There is an implied link between Sebastián's claim that we are all animals, the literal transport of innocent animals to Madrid to be slaughtered, and the fact that many of the young people will travel back to Madrid by way of the train. Encaged by its own environment and by time, this generation is the victim of past atrocities and of a present that affords no hope.

Although the text does not center around the topic of Madrid, we cannot overlook its significance as the geographical center of Spain. All communication lines radiate from its center, and it represents the political, economical and spiritual center of the country. Its isolation during the war provided a rallying point for the Republican cause, and it was hailed as the Numancia of the twen-

tieth century, a measure geared to create antifascist propaganda. During the era of the fifties, Madrid led the country in all areas and its influence spread to its surrounding towns and served as a dreaded reminder of the repression it represented. In his article «Muerte y merienda de Lucita,» García Sarriá suggests the city view, afforded to Carmen and Santos from the Almodóvar hill at dusk, is a key metaphor in accentuating this idea (325). In the text description, the city is compared to a valley of lights whose galactic extensions touch on the neighboring towns. Over the city hovers a tall and diffuse halo which hangs motionless like a large purple slab or a luminous ceiling. Immediately following the somber description, Santos points out the two satellite towns of Vicálvaro and Vallecas, an instant reminder they are about to catch the Valencian highway, thus linking the present image of Madrid with that of a specter of the besieged capital of the past. In their last view of the city, they see that «el halo violáceo flotaba por encima, como una inmensa y turbia cúpula de luz pulverizada» (348). In the scene, one can envision the reddish flames that created «una aureola trágica,» the continuous bombings producing «bocanadas de polvo» and «mantones de humo» (Llarch 136-37), all of which provided for Madrid its own living death, one that has been transposed into the present. The reaction by Carmen and Santos is one of awe, reverence, or possible fear of the overwhelming perception of power.

To conclude, we note that the geographical references are not just arbitrary points in space. They are tied to the novel's frame and function to delineate the utilized space, and they implicitly remind the reader of this region's tragic past. Time and space symbolically interpenetrate and transcend the present moment so that Lucita's senseless death and those of the past become indistinguishable. Furthermore, the rigid grid work of structures maintains the characters as prisoners of their own circumscribed space and time while calling attention to the interrelationship of all aspects of their reality, one where the youth are disconnected from their past, and at the same time, are the unwilling victims of it.

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