

**SUSAN KOSKA'S *MUJERES EN PIE DE GUERRA*:
RECOVERY OF MEMORY AND HOMAGE
TO THE REPUBLICAN WOMEN OF SPAIN**

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Mujeres en pie de guerra (2004), from the San Sebastián director Susana Koska, fits within a recent trend of documentary production in Spain, as well as with a growing interest in the recuperation of historical memory.

Documentary film production has increased considerably in Spain in recent years. In 2002, nearly as many titles were produced (16) as in the entire previous decade, from 1990 to 1999: 17. José Luis Guerín's film, *En construcción*, which garnered the jury's prize at the 2001 San Sebastian Festival, yielded economic results undreamed of in the history of Spanish documentary film (150,000 spectators). *La pelota vasca. La piel contra la piedra* (Basque Ball. Skin Against Stone, 2003), by Julio Medem, also captured the attention of both the public and the critics. Other distinguished Spanish documentaries from recent years include: *Extranjeros de sí mismos* (Strangers To Themselves, 2000) by Javier Rioyo and José Luis López Linares, *El caso Pinochet* (The Pinochet Case, (2001) by Jaime Camino, *Asesinato en febrero* (Assassination in February, 2001) by Eterio Ortega, *Los niños de Rusia* (The Children From Russia, 2001) by Jaime Camino, *La casita blanca* (The Little White House, 2002), by Carles Balagué, *Extranjeras* (Foreign Women) by Helena Taberna or *Un instante en la vida ajena* (An Instant In Another Life, 2003), also by José Luis López Linares. Several of these films share a political or socio-historical theme, such as *La pelota vasca*, *El caso Pinochet* or *Asesinato en febrero*. Some of them revisit the past of the Civil War or the Franco years -for instance, *Extranjeros de sí mismos*, *Los niños de Rusia* or *La casita blanca*. *Mujeres en pie de guerra* also visits that Spanish historical past, but from a different perspective, the way Helena Taberna did in her documentary *Extranjeras*: giving voice to women. In the film, Susana Koska reclaims the protagonist role of a group of leftist women who participated -the majority actively- in the Republican faction in the Civil War and, later, in the struggle against Francoism. These unknown, anonymous women on the losing side have remained silenced for many years, and Susana Koska restores them to their role as subjects of

history.

This article seeks to approach the film from different angles. First, it is necessary to explore the notion of documentary film -that is, the question of why Susana Koska decides to use the testimonies of this group of women in order to create a 'non-fiction' or 'testimonial' film, instead of producing a work of fiction based on the narrated facts. In this sense, notions of veracity and objectivity play a prominent role in this analysis. In the second place, and relatedly, the film explicitly enters into the debate over historical memory. This debate -initiated upon the discovery and opening of the first common grave with remains of the victims of Francoism on October 28, 2000 in Priaranza del Bierzo (León)- has continued in Spain with the promulgation of the Law of Historical Memory of the first Government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2007), moving it to the forefront of political debate. Koska's film tries to recover the memory of facts erased during many years of official history; it attempts as well to restore rightful dignity and recognition to a group of unknown women freedom fighters who were ignored by official historiography. Finally, the article seeks to engage in issues of gender, in the fact that all this protagonists are women, and as such suffered the silence of repression in a twofold manner -first for being Republicans and anti-Francoists, and secondly for being women.

It is problematic to speak of documentary film, because no clear definition exists for the genre. Many cineastes and critics insist upon their own pioneering spirit, in the sense that they combine elements of reality with strategies borrowed from dramatized films. They also at times appropriate strategies of experimental cinema, such as the autonomy of aesthetic ambience or self-expression. Things being thus, the term 'documentary' reveals itself as insufficient to embrace the variety of works being made, and today this kind of cinema has come to be labeled 'non-fiction cinema.' This term is preferred to 'documentary' by the majority of critics. 'Non-fiction' would be, according to Antonio Weinrichter, "the extensive Zone not mapped out by either conventional documentary, fiction or experimental cinema" (11). *Mujeres en pie de guerra* belongs to this category of non-fiction cinema or, if one prefers, documentary.

According to Antonio Weinrichter:

After a classic stage of relative innocence, the documentary

learned to better imitate reality, thanks to the ideology of non-intervention of direct cinema. But later on, this aspiration to objectivity was revealed as illusory...and the documentary began to recover expressive, subjective and reflexive elements, blurring the borders that separated it from fiction cinema and losing its fear of being presented as something constructed. (15-16)

The aspiration to objectivity that has characterized the documentary since its beginnings has led to all manner of problems, such as questions of manipulation, intervention, expression, and subjectivity.

Mujeres en pie de guerra is directed by Susana Koska and is produced by Koska and José María Sanz, *Loquillo*, who further composed the film's original soundtrack. It premiered in 2004 and has been passed around universities, cultural houses, and art house theaters, as well as festivals and feminist cinema gatherings. It spent two months on the marquee of the *Méliès* theaters of Barcelona and one week in Madrid.

The film narrates, through the voices of eight women (although two of them -sisters- appear together before the camera to relate the same story in dual form), part of the political history of twentieth-century Spain, from 1936 to 1975: the Civil War, Francoism, and resistance, and the 'other' history hidden during the Franco years (though well-documented today). The novelty of *Mujeres en pie de guerra* is that it narrates a history that, to some extent, continues to be silenced today: the history protagonized by women during the war and the Franco era and in the resistance of the vanquished faction. Although more and more academics and historians - women in the majority of cases- are paying attention and dedicating their studies to this period of Spanish history as seen through women's lives, the overall scholarship has been limited. Here it is fitting to mention Carmen Alcalde, Josefina Cuesta Bustillo, Victoria Martínez Rodríguez, Mirta Nuñez, María Pilar Rebollo Mesas, Antonina Rodrigo, Assumpta Roura or Queral Solé, to cite just a few.

We must begin by giving names to these anonymous women who are, in order of their appearance in the film:

Sara Berenguer (Barcelona, 1919) -Militant in CNT and SIA (Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista). Secretary of Propaganda for Free Women (Mujeres Libres). Exiled to France in 1939. Fought in the French

Resistance during the Second World War and later in the clandestine struggle against Franco. The French Government granted her the Cross of the Legion of Honor in 1998 for her participation in the French Resistance. The interview took place in Béziers in January 2003.

María Salvo (Sabadell, 1920). Militant in JSU (Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas). Exiled to France in 1939. Repatriated by force in 1940. Involved with the anti-Franco movement and in 1941 was detained, tried and sentenced to 30 years in seclusion. Spent 16 years in different jails. The interview took place in Barcelona in April 2003.

Rosa Laviña (Palafrugell, 1918). Militant in Juventudes Libertarias and SIA. Exiled to France in 1939. Spent time in the concentration camp at Argelès-sur-Mer. After the Second World War, participated in clandestine activities in solidarity with prisoners of Franco, mostly in Toulouse. The interview took place in Palafrugell in March 2003.

Rosa Díaz (San Sebastián, 1926). Her family had to flee from San Sebastián to Bilbao when their house was destroyed in a bombardment. She was 12 years old when evacuated to France from Bilbao in the boat "Habana." She was adopted by a French family and in 1939, after two years in France, was reclaimed by her mother. During this time her father was imprisoned. The interview took place in Palencia in March 2003. Rosa Díaz is an aunt of the director.

Neus Catalá (Priorat, 1915). Militant in the JSU. Exiled to France in 1939. Crossed the border with 180 orphaned children of Republicans. In France, she was quickly incorporated into the resistance upon the German invasion. She was detained by the S.S. and in 1943 sent to the women's extermination camp at Ravensbuck (Germany). Liberated in 1945. Since that time, she continued to fight against Franco as part of the Unión de Mujeres Antifascistas in France. The interview took place in Rubí in December 2003.

Teresa Buigas (Alicante, 1944). Militant of the PSUC. At age 15, she participated in her first strike. Entered the Community Party and went underground in 1966. In 1969 she went into exile in France, returning upon the death of Franco and incorporating herself into political life in the Comisiones Obreras. The interview took place in Granollers in March 2003.

Carme and **Marçona Puig-Antich** (Barcelona, 1954 and 1960). They were students in Barcelona when, in 1973, their brother Salvador Puig-

Antich was detained for belonging to the MIL (Iberian Liberation Movement). Salvador was condemned for two capital crimes and was the last person executed by the *garrote vil* in Spain on March 2, 1974. The interview took place in Barcelona in April 2003.

Each narrative is distinctive because it tells the personal experiences lived by each woman, but all share common references: war, exile, and repression. Despite the differences, they have many elements in common. For instance, six of these women had to flee to France: four as refugees after the fall of Barcelona, one as an evacuated child and another in the secrecy of the 1960's. However, each woman tells a different and particular story. Sara Berenguer talks of the resistance in France; Rosa Laviña, of life in the concentration camps in France; Rosa Díaz, of the evacuation of children to other countries; María Silva, of life in Franco's prisons and Neus Catalá, of life in the German extermination camps. Finally, Teresa Buigas tells of the clandestine labor struggle during Franco's reign, and the Puig-Antich sisters relate the harsh repression of the dictatorship. We find ourselves amid a polyphony of voices. The interviews of these eight women are interwoven, one adding to another in a chorus together with archival images and the original soundtrack in order to narrate chronologically:

- The participation of women during the war
- The evacuation of children
- The fall of Barcelona (end of the war)
- The entrance of Franco's troops
- The evacuation to France
- Life in the concentration camps of France and Germany
- The resistance in France
- The return to Spain
- The reorganization of the resistance within Spain
- Life in Franco's prisons
- The reorganization of parties and labor unions
- The student anti-Franco movement
- The last Francoist executions: Puig-Antich.

The interviews have varying durations. The conversation with the Puig-Antich sisters is quite a bit shorter than earlier ones. It begins in

minute 60 of the film -the film is 75 minutes long- when a large part of the film has already passed, and it illustrates the last years of Francoism through the story of their brother's execution.

The making of the movie began in Béziers (France) in January 2003, and the interviews took place during that whole year, although Susana Koska was working on the project for many years. Her original concept was to produce a work of theater. However, upon finding herself face to face with the protagonists of the story, she thought that it made little sense to use actresses when the real protagonists were still alive and could tell their own stories better than anyone else. Koska decided, therefore, to construct that story through the testimonies of these women. As she says, "If they can speak, why make fiction out of reality?" ("De cómo se hizo MUJERES EN PIE DE GUERRA... 1ª parte")

This brings us to the very notion of documentary or non-fiction cinema. According to Bill Nichols, "[non-fiction films] make the stuff of social reality visible and audible in a distinctive way, according to the acts of selection and arrangement carried out by a film maker" (1-2). Both fiction and non-fiction cinema seek interpretation, but in addition, non-fiction cinema goes further and needs to "be believed." "Non-fiction often wants to instill belief (to accept its world as actual" (2), continues Nichols. Koska's film seeks to convince us that what is narrated there really occurred, and belongs, therefore, to the world of reality and not that of fiction.

Koska introduces us to the idea of the film as a document that orally captures the protagonists' *real* story. There is a very clear, explicit intent to document, to offer a testimony. At the beginning of the documentary Koska declares -switching her voice to *off* while we see her traveling on a train- "Today, in January of 2003, I travel by train seeking the footsteps of the past, the voice of the women who stood up to fight a war, in the name of peace for a freer and fairer life. Europe between the wars changed their lives forever." Documents, letters, newspaper articles, archival images, and photographs are all continuously mixed in with the protagonists' oral narration. The director constantly wants to remind us that this was real, it occurred, it happened thus and here is the proof. In this sense, the constant recourse to photographs is very interesting. With the presentation of each woman -except the Puig-Antich sisters, who are substantially younger and did not participate directly in the events they narrate- appears a photograph

of the woman in her youth. This device is seen again on the cover of the DVD and in the film's credits. The photograph is something instantaneous, fixing the moment, the instant, trapping it and freezing it as an unequivocal proof of veracity -although less now in the digital age- and thus makes it an ally of non-fiction film, in this case Koska's film. In regard to the use of photographs in non-fiction film, Carl Plantinga follows Barthes to speak of the denotative and connotative character of the photograph: "The image provides evidence because it denotes that certain events occurred, and occurred in a certain way. On the other hand, no photograph used for communication exists purely as denotation; all carry heavy connotational meaning" (62). In Koska's film, the dual character of photography is evidenced. The photographs that appear in the documentary area, with denotative elements, are clear evidence that those facts occurred in that way, that those women were really there, in the Argelès sur Mer camp in France or in the German extermination camp, etc. At the same time, these same photographs are charged with a connotative value when Koska selects them, and they come to form part of the assembly of the film. The images acquire a new dimension. They are integrated into a greater structure: the film, which seeks to be a vindication of this group of women as courageous, committed and fighting women, and a denunciation of totalitarian regimes, barbarianism, and war.

We spoke before of the difficulty of defining non-fiction cinema because of the wide variety of styles it encompasses. Even so, the need to classify has led to the creation of typologies. One of the best-known and most useful is that of Bill Nichols, who speaks of six forms or modes in the documentary: the expository mode, the observational mode, the interactive mode, the reflexive mode, the poetic mode and the performative mode (99). These modes respond to the chronological development of non-fiction cinema.

Nichols says that the different modes do not usually appear in isolated form, but rather as various elements that converge in the same film, although "the characteristics of a given mode function as a *dominant* in a given film: they give structure to the overall film, but they do not dictate or determine every aspect of its organisation" (100).

Mujeres en pie de guerra brings together several of the modes proposed by Nichols. First of all, we must mention the interactive or

participatory mode, named by the French *cinéma vérité*, which is demonstrated by the oral history, when the characters speak directly to the camera and not only with each other. The documentarist is also typically incorporated. This is exactly what occurs with *Mujeres...*, as Susana Koska introduces herself in the film as the interviewer, as the interlocutor, as another character, establishing a relationship of complicity with these women.

The reflexive mode, which grew out of the 1980's and centers around the processes of negotiation between cineaste and spectator, is present as well in *Mujeres...*, as there is an express desire to create the documentary and the film itself gives us clues to this process. In the film's first images, we see Susana Koska traveling on a train, bound for an encounter with the story's protagonists and with the past. Her very voiceover is charged with this emphasis: "Today, in January of 2003, I travel by train seeking the footsteps of the past..." The train voyage becomes a metaphor for the journey, the search. The film ends with the fade-out images of all the protagonists bidding farewell to the director, and we again see Koska returning by car from this voyage of encounters, re-encounters with the past and with knowledge. The journey thus frames Koska's story. This type of documentary ponders questions of representation, objectivity, realism, and its own condition as something constructed.

The performative mode -characterized by diverting our attention from the referential quality of the documentary, with an intent to underline the subjective aspects of a classically objective discourse- is also apparent in this documentary. Koska's presence in the film imbues it with subjectivity in moments such as the images we observe when the director visits the German concentration camp together with her voiceover, when she narrates the experience of Neus Catalá in the extermination camp. These images of Susana Koska moving in front of the camera but not speaking directly to it confer a highly subjective tone to a film in which Koska essentially seeks to prioritize objectivity.

Lastly, the poetic mode -which underlines the ways in which the voice of the cineaste lends a formal integrity and a specific aesthetic to these fragments of the historical world in each specific film- is also present in *Mujeres...* There are various scenes in which the voice of Susana Koska on *off*, reading various letters or narrating the women's experiences in a very

deliberate tone, combines with beautiful, non-referential imagery to create an effect of aesthetic distancing, as in the scene in which we see Susana Koska in close-up watching, from above, Rosa Laviña on a deserted beach in Palafrugell, sitting in a chair and watching the sea. There are many moments in which the film's soundtrack also creates a poetic effect in concert with the images.

The soundtrack is in fact one more narrative element, says Susana Koska, who goes on to explain: "Sometimes the voice of Loquillo is a character that tells what is otherwise unsaid. All of the songs have a place in the documentary; each one illustrates a moment of our history ("De cómo se hizo MUJERES EN PIE DE GUERRA... 2ª parte").

Mujeres en pie de guerra reclaims, from its very title, the active protagonist role of the women, both in Spain's more recent history and in its cinematic representation. The title is polyvalent and polysemic. In the film's genesis, there is an autobiographical rationale. Susana Koska heard her mother and her Aunt Rosa talk thousands of times about stories of the war; oral narratives were passed among women. Later, the encounter with the historian Antonina Rodrigo facilitated her meetings with several of the women who appear in the documentary. Antonina Rodrigo published two books that form part of a trilogy about silenced, exiled, and forgotten women: *Mujeres para la Historia: La España silenciada del siglo XX*, y *Mujer y exilio 1939* (*Women for History: Silenced Spain in the Twentieth Century*, and *Woman and Exile 1939*). This last volume features Sara Berenguer and Rosa Laviña. All this has compelled Susana Koska to want to contribute to the telling of what has been spoken about, but hardly written about. Says Koska: "I want these women's voices, their experiences, and their generosity, to be heard everywhere; we owe it to our history, our memory, both historical and also feminine." ("De cómo se hizo MUJERES EN PIE DE GUERRA... 2ª parte")

This homage to women means that the documentary begins with a quote from the Free Women foundation, an anarchist organization created with the objective of liberating women from "the triple enslavement to which they had been subjected: the enslavement of ignorance, the enslavement as women, and the enslavement as workers," according to the organization's statutes (Nash, 127).

The film ably captures these women's spirit of struggle and solidarity:

"Where there were women, there was resistance," affirms Neus Catalá. "In speaking of women, when they tell you how far we have come, they cannot be stopped," says Teresa Buigas, referring to the first women's strikes of the 1960's in the textile sector. In the presentation of the film, the ex-European deputy José María Mendiluce affirmed that "women tell things differently, in a way that is less epic and 100,000 times more human than the way men would." In *Women and the War Story*, Miriam Cooke refers as well to women's distinctive way of narrating history and talks about how women present an alternative to the traditional, mythic, ordered, and masculine history of war. Says Cooke: : "Women's war stories instead of endlessly repeating tales of roles and experiences in which war mirrors the experience of its predecessors, [...] should allow for the narration of war's dynamism and incomprehensibility" (40). This means calling into question the authority of the experience that comes from the institutionally sanctioned version of the history of the war. Cooke goes on to say:

If women tell and/or write their war stories in such a way that reflects or even embraces the messiness of war, then the women narrators and the scholars who disseminate their histories may be able to interrupt certain static historiographies in order to redefine the categories by which war is staged, waged, and then told. (40)

Gina Hermann, echoing Cooke, adds that "it is precisely because women's war stories are often digressive and complicated, incomplete and fractured, that they acquire their disruptive power" (11). In keeping with Hermann's perspective, women's war narratives distance themselves from the masculine order and instead reveal a complicated, incomplete, and fractured character that responds in some way to the reality of their lives: militant women, but also mothers and those responsible for sustaining the nuclear family. In this sense, the women's narratives that Koska presents are imbued with what we might call "the urgency of the everyday." Sara Berenguer intersperses her retelling of the flight from Barcelona to Figueras, where she met up with the 26th Division, with the detailed memory of chickpeas and ham given to her by the cooperative. Later on, she explains that she preserved the hambone since she had nothing with which to make soup for a child that had accompanied the group of women. It is interesting

to observe not only that this group of women, who left Barcelona with pistols to meet up with the 26th Division -ready to defend the Republic up to its last moments- lingered to pick up food to sustain themselves, but that in addition, the detail of the hambone from Sara Berenguer's story continues to resound so many years later. The "urgency of the everyday" -in this case, the nourishment of a child and the sustenance of all the women- is interlaced with the war narrative in Berenguer's telling.

When telling their own war stories, women cannot put aside that which shapes their own experiences as females. Amid the chaos of war, exile and repression, the experience of maternity is present as well, and -naturally- one of the biological markers of the feminine condition: menstruation. A natural phenomenon becomes transformed into a type of punishment amid the unhygienic conditions experienced by the women in concentration camps, prisons, and extermination camps. María Salvo, relating her stay in prison alongside three female companions -all in solitary confinement- refers thusly to her period: "How were you going to solve the problem of menstruation? Our period is the greatest torment that we women have suffered in prison." Maternity, that other central feature of female experience, is interwoven and insinuated into their experiences as militants and their narratives of war. Sara Berenguer tells of an event that took place during the years of occupation in France. Fully engaged in the resistance, she explains how she decided to travel from Bram to Béziers, a distance of more than 100 km, in order to relay information to companions who were in the *maquis*. "Somebody had to do it," she says. At that time she was six months pregnant and had her three-year-old son with her. She explains that upon returning to the Béziers train station, with all the commotion of a single-day roundtrip voyage, she fainted on the platform, but did not fall because she was surrounded by people, among them German soldiers. Upon coming to, while still carrying her son in her arms, the German soldiers offered her coffee and an orange, which she accepted. Hidden in her bosom was the information that she had to pass along to the *maquis* companions. Her role as a critical link in the resistance movement was therefore intimately linked to her experience as a mother. She could not bear to contemplate the possibility that her son would grow up with a mother behind bars. War stories narrated by men differ in this sense from those of women; the former generally avoid that "urgency or immediacy of the everyday," concentrating

exclusively on battlefield experiences, traditionally considered to be masculine.

The film avoids sinking into nostalgia, and brims with optimism. The format of the narration is an animated dialogue among friends that recovers and revives the past without bitterness or resentment. All these women, still with crystal-clear ideas and lucid minds despite their age -three were already octogenarians when the film was recorded- explain that they would live all that over again if it were necessary; that despite the terrible difficulties they had to endure, they have no regrets about their lives, which they consider full and consequential. There is a total absence of melodrama; the eight women discuss extremely dramatic situations between smiles and jokes. If one cannot watch *The Children of Russia* without emotion filling the eyes with tears, the Puig-Antich sisters, in contrast, talk of their brother's last moments -only hours before he was executed- with a great serenity, even a certain humor. They explain that during that night, the three older sisters -together with their brother- looked over family photographs, laughed together, and steeled themselves against tears, so that nobody would see them crying when it was time to say good-bye to him. Rosa Díaz relates her experience as an evacuated child without evoking the sadness of that separation. Neus Catalá explains that in the extermination camp, not to want to die was itself an act of rebellion, because to die was the first duty of a deportee; she explains also how they sabotaged the munitions while at work. These women did not cringe before adversity. They summoned a great strength to overcome struggle and difficulty. Looking straight into the camera, María says she was tortured and brutally beaten on two occasions, and with a smile she explains how her body changed color: first black, then yellow. Rosa Laviña also smiles while explaining to the camera how the Nationalists, upon entering Palafrugell, burned all the books and magazines in her house. Her father, Martí Laviña, was an anarchist bookseller. All these women, as Koska says, "have demonstrated that a devastating experience can be converted into an experience of solidarity."

Antonia Rodrigo refers to the women as "this invisible army, always prepared for war, which engages in all the battles without reaching victory" (21). In comparing the lives of men and women who fought in the war, in the *maquis*, in the resistance, she said that while men sailed triumphantly into Occupied Paris, leading the tanks and passing into history, being

decorated, having monuments dedicated to them, nonetheless

They (the women) also waged war; they were in the *maquis*, in the resistance, even as they remained silently subject to the vicissitudes of home, family and work. Militant women assumed their political commitments, all without letting go of the reigns of their households -households where penury prevailed, with nostalgia for Spain like a heavy flagstone. But in the history books, women are absent; their 'battles' have not been recognized. (21)

For this reason, Koska says that to tell the history of those Spanish women who gave their life for their commitment to freedom "is an homage, a duty of memory, in order that it be known, that it not become lost and forgotten" ("De cómo se hizo MUJERES EN PIE DE GUERRA... 2ª parte"). The film contributes in this way, as *Loquillo* indicates, "to end that pact of silence known as the Transition." The losing side, above all the women, endured being silenced for too long a time after the death of the dictator. Teresa Buígas also makes reference to that collective amnesia of the Transition: "That which I regret most is that, in spite of the years that have passed since the death of the fascist dictator, justice continues not to be done for those who, with their life and their liberty, made it possible for our children to grow up differently than we did."

As such, *Mujeres en pie de guerra* is inscribed in that recent collective recovery whose aim is to reclaim historical memory, together with the creation of associations and the more official Law of Historical Memory, recently approved by the socialist government. But, in addition to the recuperation of memory, it is an homage to the role played by women during those difficult years of war and post-war, because, as Teresa Buígas says: "There is an entire generation of forgotten people, but within that generation we women are forgotten even more" (Revista Elkarri). Susana Koska therefore desired through this documentary to emphasize the courage, valor, sense of solidarity and justice of this group of women who represent many more women still: forgotten women, silent and silenced women, that "invisible army," in the words of Antonina Rodrigo, were always prepared for war, always prepared to fight, but always in second place, and always distanced from victories. The film not only contributes to airing the past, but

also to tearing down this wall of silence in which women have remained cloistered for many years, becoming an important addition to the study of Republican Spanish women in wartime and during the Franco years. In order to do this, Susana Koska uses documentary film or "non-fiction," as Bill Nichols affirms, to "give a sense of what we understand reality itself to have been, of what is now, or of what it may become" (2), in which notions like reality, truth, and objectivity are fundamental when it comes time to delineate the genre. However, documentary film is not a reproduction of reality, but rather a representation of the world we occupy (Nichols, 20), and thus Koska chooses different modes of representation appropriate to her particular narrative intentions. In this way -and through the use of the interactive, reflexive, performative and poetic modes mentioned earlier- the director succeeds in creating a film that, while containing elements of *cinema vérité* (for instance, when different women tell their stories directly to the camera), in other moments is charged with subjective and personal elements that emphasize the character of *Mujeres en pie de guerra* as something *constructed*. This is Susana Koska's particular and very personal contribution, as a woman and film director, to the debate over vindication and recovery of historical memory of Spanish Republican women.

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