ABSTRACT

TITLE:	The Veracity of the Historical Details in Javier Cerca's Novel Soldados De Salamina
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ABSTRACT: The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) left a wound in the Spanish population that has persisted to this day. Less than a decade ago the Spanish government passed the Historical Memory Law which facilitated the exhumation of fosas comunes, common gravesites in which tens of thousands of war victims were anonymously buried. Upwards of seventy novels have been written about the war, including ¡Otra maldita novela sobre la guerra civil! [Another damn novel about the civil war!]. Javier Cercas's Soldados de Salamina (2001) stands above the rest. This critically acclaimed, award-winning narration focuses on the legend of the execution of Rafael Snchez Mazas, the ideological founder of the fascist party that initiated and won the war. Unlike his forty-nine fascist counterparts who were executed by firing squad in a chaotic bout, Snchez Mazas was able to escape unharmed and hide nearby. According to the legend, moments later Snchez Mazas found himself staring down the barrel of a Republican soldier's gun who, for an unknown reason, let him flee. Cercas, a washed-up novelist and newspaper columnist who knows just as little about the Spanish Civil War as his nave readers, narrates his investigation of the incident almost seventy years later. He consults various archives, books, and videos and conducts interviews with Snchez Mazas's family members and the people he met soon after surviving the execution. Despite this, the metaliterary, or self-conscious, qualities of the novel complicate the authenticity of the historical details it presents. Cercas narrates every aspect of his investigation, including phone calls that he misses and even his indecision on what to order from a restaurant during an interview. These meticulous tendencies lead the reader to trust Cercas who, only pages later, admits to lying about some of the most essential details. This presentation discusses some of the sources that Cercas consulted in order to determine how accurately and inaccurately the narrator depicts them. This project also juxtaposes the narrator's and presenter's conclusions about historical and literary truth and discusses how these two types of truth serve to aid the Spanish population in coping with the Civil War even eighty years after its final battle.