

Coda

Part of the motivation for writing this book was to honor those women who made it possible for me to live the life I have lived. I am a member of the transition generation in Spain. For women this was an especially significant period. It was a time when Spain was forced to consider women as equal actors in a modern society, not just uncompensated and underappreciated supporting roles in an anachronistic pageant put on by Franco's regime. I grew up expecting that I would go to college. And when I got to college, I was not restricted to a few female professions but was told that I could be the first in my family to be a doctor, a lawyer, or in my case a historian. I didn't have to drop out of school to raise younger brothers and sisters, or go to work to help feed, house, and clothe a large, extended family. Getting married young and starting a family, a large family, was not something that was forced on me either. I was raised to be independent and taught not to rely on a man to care for me or to define my happiness. These are all privileges that the women I write about did not have. But it is from their sacrifices and their suffering, I contend, that women like me were able to prosper in a still imperfect, but vastly improved, democratic Spain.

Another motivation for this book was to try to tell these women's stories in a way that better reflected my lived understanding of history, rather than my academically trained understanding of what was an acceptable way to report on the past. This is in many ways my transgression. I do not follow a linear, positivistic arc in which I pretend to know and understand a kind of objective truth. The truth, if that is even the right word for it, is in the emotions felt and poured out by these women and the feelings engendered by their experiences in all of us.

