

**From the Archive to the Grave:  
Exhumations and the Production of History  
in Post-Franco Extremadura**

PhD Thesis

Zaira Araguete

Department of Anthropology,  
Goldsmiths, University of London

*Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy*

I, Zaira Araguete, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. The photographs used in this thesis are my own. I confirm that where the information has other sources it has been indicated in the thesis.

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines how the traces of violence from the Spanish Civil War, that have emerged in recent years, are shaping new historical epistemologies and creating different political realities in contemporary Spain. The work follows the exhumations of mass graves from the war and postwar periods containing the bodies of the Republican dead. Since the year 2000, civil society groups have promoted these interventions with the help of forensic and archaeological teams and with limited aid from the Spanish state. Focusing on the case of the southwestern region of Extremadura, this thesis explores the way in which different collectives engage in the production of knowledge about the executions, the missing and Francoist repression. It does so by following the search for the dead from the archive to the mass grave, analysing the relation that families, activists, scientists and others establish with the documents, the images, the bones and the objects. All of which materialise the trails of a traumatic past. The process of exhumation, I argue, has opened up a space for novel collections and recollections, creating new modes of historical and political enunciation affected by the enduring force of past violence. I demonstrate that exhumations have prompted the formation of alternative archives, which contests official narratives and hegemonic positions. These new formations are constituted by the interplay of scientific expertise, historical research, intimate memories, and by the political and social relations of different generation groups. In what follows, I analyse how the location, exhumation and reburial of the mortal remains of the defeated in the war speak directly to dictatorial and transitional imaginaries, reclaiming other political, moral and social forms of engagement in the region and the country at large.

*Para Maria y Piedad,  
por su amor incondicional*

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the ongoing trust and encouragement of many people and the support of different institutions. The work presented here engages with the difficult experiences that many underwent during the Civil War and the dictatorship. It also explores the relationships to this past in order to elucidate the social transformations that the country is undergoing. Many have shared their intimate thoughts and life stories with me. Others have given me their continuous attention and have helped me to understand the importance of contesting such concealed histories. Those close to me have accompanied me in my research over the years, learning, as I did, about things that had never been public in Spain.

I am immensely indebted to my family and especially to my mother Maria, who has always believed in me and in my ability to accomplish the work. I am grateful for her constant optimism, fortitude and advice and for giving me a home to write and place to be when money ran out. It is no doubt thanks to her that I was able to come this far. My grandmother Piedad, who has always looked after me, has been a constant source of wisdom, inspiration, and love all these years. Her cherished memories of the family's past enlightened my research and gave new meanings to my own personal story. I am also grateful to the rest of my family who always managed to transmit their happiness to me when things were tough.

The research I conducted in Extremadura, the months of fieldwork, and my participation in different exhumations was indeed possible thanks to the collaboration and interest of many researchers, activists, families and associations. I am first and foremost thankful to the team that formed the Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura (PREMHEX) until the end of 2014. Julián Chaves Palacios, project director, kindly allowed me to participate and follow their work and always offered his support and knowledge. Cayetano Ibarra gave me – from the beginning – invaluable help, taking me to commemorative acts, prospectations and telling me details about his own experience as a writer, politician and a relative of a Republican victim. Candela Chaves Rodriguez and Javier Martin Bastos were patient and kind with me during our multiple conversations, allowing me to learn not only about their intricate

historical work in the archive but also revealing to me their most personal encounters with it. Last, my participation in the exhumations of Extremadura would have certainly been impossible without the help of Laura Muñoz Encinar. I am eternally grateful for her extreme generosity throughout the years, for teaching me the craft of the archaeologist, for enlightening so many discussions about the nature of violence and for her insights into memory and trauma. I have learnt a great deal from her and carry on learning to this date. I will always be grateful to the project team for all of their warmth, aid and friendship.

I also thank all the archaeologists and volunteers I have met along the way. I am grateful to Álvaro Falquina, Dolores Mejías, Berta Silva, Blas Garzón, Raquel Barrios, Samara Ibarra, Laura, Fernando Moreno, Maria Fortuna, Elisenda Gimeno, Celia Chaves, Alfonso Villalta, and all the others from the various teams I have worked with. I am thankful for their useful ideas and opinions, their passion, their amity, and their laughter, which turned every excavation campaign into a unique experience.

I also wish to express my profound gratitude to the associations and family groups I had the pleasure to meet and work with over the years. AMECADEC in Castuera kindly invited me to participate in the exhumation they promoted in 2011 and always made me and other volunteers feel at home and in good company. I thank all those who form the association for their warmth, their insights and support with this research. Researchers Antonio D. López Rodríguez and Guillermo León Cáceres kindly shared their extensive knowledge of the repression in the area, their personal opinions and helped me to understand the intricacies of the history of Castuera and its concentration camp. I am extremely thankful to Aurora Navas, Maria Ormeño, Marielo Gil and Ángel Sayabera for making me aware of their difficult family histories and for opening their homes and their private worlds to me. I also thank José Milara for his help, knowledge, and ongoing friendship.

In Puebla de Alcocer, I am eternally indebted to the families' association that formed to promote the exhumation in 2012. I thank José Sánchez-Paniagua and his family for their wonderful hospitality before, during and after the excavation. I am also grateful to José and all the other families that visited the exhumation site, for

sharing with me their family narratives and their village's history of violence. My knowledge of the exhumation event would have not been the same without the stories of José, his sister Consuelo and their father José, and also those of Luisa Cabanillas Bayón, Esperanza Muga Blasco, Pablo Trenado Cabanillas, Emiliano Bayón Villarejo, Mariano, Mariano and José Gómez Mayoral, Begoña and Jacinto Velasco and all the other relatives and neighbours who retold their accounts to me by the graveside or in the intimacy of their homes.

I would also like to thank the families' association in Garciaz for making me part of their ongoing search for the mortal remains of their relatives in Zorita and for inviting me to the commemorative ceremony celebrated at the end of 2011. I would like to express my gratitude to the group of families in Fregenal de la Sierra and in particular to Andrés Serrano, its president, for making my work possible during the exhumation carried out at the end of the summer of 2012 in the village. Though the thesis did not include this material in the end, this work is also dedicated to them. Last but not least, I thank Libertad González Barroso for kindly retelling her father's story and her family's experiences to me.

In Extremadura, I would also like to thank other important associations such as the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura (ARMHEx) and its president José Manuel Corbacho, who has always shared his time and views with me, enlightening my understanding of the legal complexities of the search for and recognition of the Civil War missing in Spain. I would also like to thank AMECECA (previously PROMECECA) and José Hinojosa Durán for taking the time to speak to me when my research was beginning. I am also grateful to independent historians José Maria Lama and Francisco Cebrián for talking to me about their research into the history of their localities and for generously providing me with some of the records they collected from previous interviews and exhumations in their villages.

The work undertaken for this dissertation was supported by the financial help of the European Research Council and the project *Bosnian Bones Spanish Ghosts* (BBSG) and by the generous arrangements of the Department of Anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London, in the final stages of this research. In London, I

thank the lead investigator of the BBSG project and my supervisor Sari Wastell for inviting me to participate in this venture and enabling me to collaborate with the wonderful range of scholars that have made up the project over the years in Bosnia and Spain. I also thank Sari for her constructive insights into ideas of transitional justice, rights and reparation worldwide and her continuous encouragement throughout the process. I also thank my second supervisor, Roger Sansi-Roca, for his close reading of the material, especially during the last stages of writing.

The task of compiling, analyzing and assembling my visual and written materials was possible thanks to the input of other people who contributed on and off to the development of my work throughout my time at Goldsmiths. I thank Frances Pine for her constant involvement, reading and in-depth comments on different chapters of the dissertation and for her continuous reassurance and assistance. I am also thankful to Chris Wright who helped me to devise the structure of the thesis and to think about my visual and sound material after I returned from fieldwork. Parts of this thesis were read and commented at the PhD Writing Up Seminar at the Department of Anthropology in Goldsmiths. I thank my colleagues there for their insightful contributions and always stimulating and fruitful conversations.

I thank Amy Johnston, Sarah Pena, Stephanie Grohman, Iliana Tsankova, Magdalena Buchczyk, Katie Aston, Alexandra Urdea, Gabriela Nicolescu and William Tantam for their constant engagement and fruitful discussions on anthropological issues that concerned us all and ran at the core of most of our different research. The work and thoughts of these colleagues have been a constant inspiration and motivation to me. I especially thank my colleague and good friend Aimee Joyce, who has been there from year one of this PhD, for her knowledge and her astute judgment, her resilience and her always-contagious passion for life and anthropology. I also thank my colleagues, friends and housemates Souad Osserain, Taras Fedirko and Akshi Singh, who made the last year of teaching and writing possible. I will be eternally grateful for their extraordinary patience and their thoughtfulness, for looking after me during the most difficult moments of the PhD and keeping me sane and happy.

I would also like to thank my dear colleagues and close friends from Materia Prima, Jorge Moreno Andrés, Marina Alberti and Lee Douglas for their knowledge and expertise and our discussions on anthropology and the visual. Getting to know them and working with them has indeed enriched my vision of the world and my practice as a researcher. I thank them all for their help during my thesis, their support during the exhumations and also for their work as part of the *Bosnian Bones Spanish Ghosts* team, which enhanced the findings and connections on the Spanish side of the project.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to all the new and old friends that remained next to me throughout the process and especially during the most difficult stages of writing. In London, I would like to thank Clea House, Arturo Roura, Jo Kurukchi, and Martina Larsson, who never stopped reminding me of the importance of my work and who always manifested their admiration and encouragement. I thank Michael Vine for his companionship and his unconditional generosity from beginning to end. In Spain, I thank my friend Cristina Gallardo for being there and listening to my ideas and for reminding me that one should never stop having fun. I am also grateful to Edu Cervera and Antonio Gabás just for being who they are and to my friend David Medja Fernández, who put a smile on my face on so many occasions and always transmitted his energy, enthusiasm and zest for life to me.

This work is dedicated to these and other people who continue to strive for recognition and endeavour to transform the social history and political reality of Spain.

London, March 2015

## Table of Contents

Table of Illustrations	12
List of Acronyms	14
Map of the Region	15
<b>Introduction – Unearthing the Past in Post-Franco Extremadura</b>	<b>16</b>
Mass Graves and the Enduring Violence of War	22
Reordering Individual and Collective Worlds	27
History Between the Archive and the Grave	34
Following the Exhumation Archive: A Brief Note on Methodology	39
The Ethics of Anthropological Work in Mass Grave Exhumations	46
<b>Chapter 1 – Of Bodies and Memories</b>	<b>52</b>
The Civil War and its Aftermath	55
Memory and Commemoration during the Franco Regime	63
The Memory of the War in the Transition to Democracy	72
The Return of the Civil War Defeated	80
<b>Chapter 2 – Visions of War and Postwar History in Extremadura</b>	<b>90</b>
The Production of Historical Knowledge in 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Extremadura	93
Placing the Archive(s)	98
Excavating the Repression Files	107
Exhumations as Historical Research	116
<b>Chapter 3 – Exhuming the Body of the Unknown</b>	<b>128</b>
Making the History of the Camp	129
Excavating Mass Grave 1 and Mass Grave 3	138
Technologies of the Imagination	149
<b>Chapter 4 – Exhuming Familial Remains</b>	<b>161</b>
The Search for the Village’s Mass Graves	162
Assembling a History of the Executions	172
Identifying the Familial Body	183

<b>Chapter 5 – The Affective Life of Violence</b>	198
The Trails of the Dead in Postwar Memories	199
Writing a History of Trauma	210
Sentiment and Affect at the Exhumation Site	222
<b>Chapter 6 – Reburial and Commemoration</b>	231
Identification and Collective Reburial	232
Reburial in the Cemetery	241
The Rituals of Commemorative Reburials	253
<b>Conclusions</b>	263
<b>References</b>	276

## Table of Illustrations

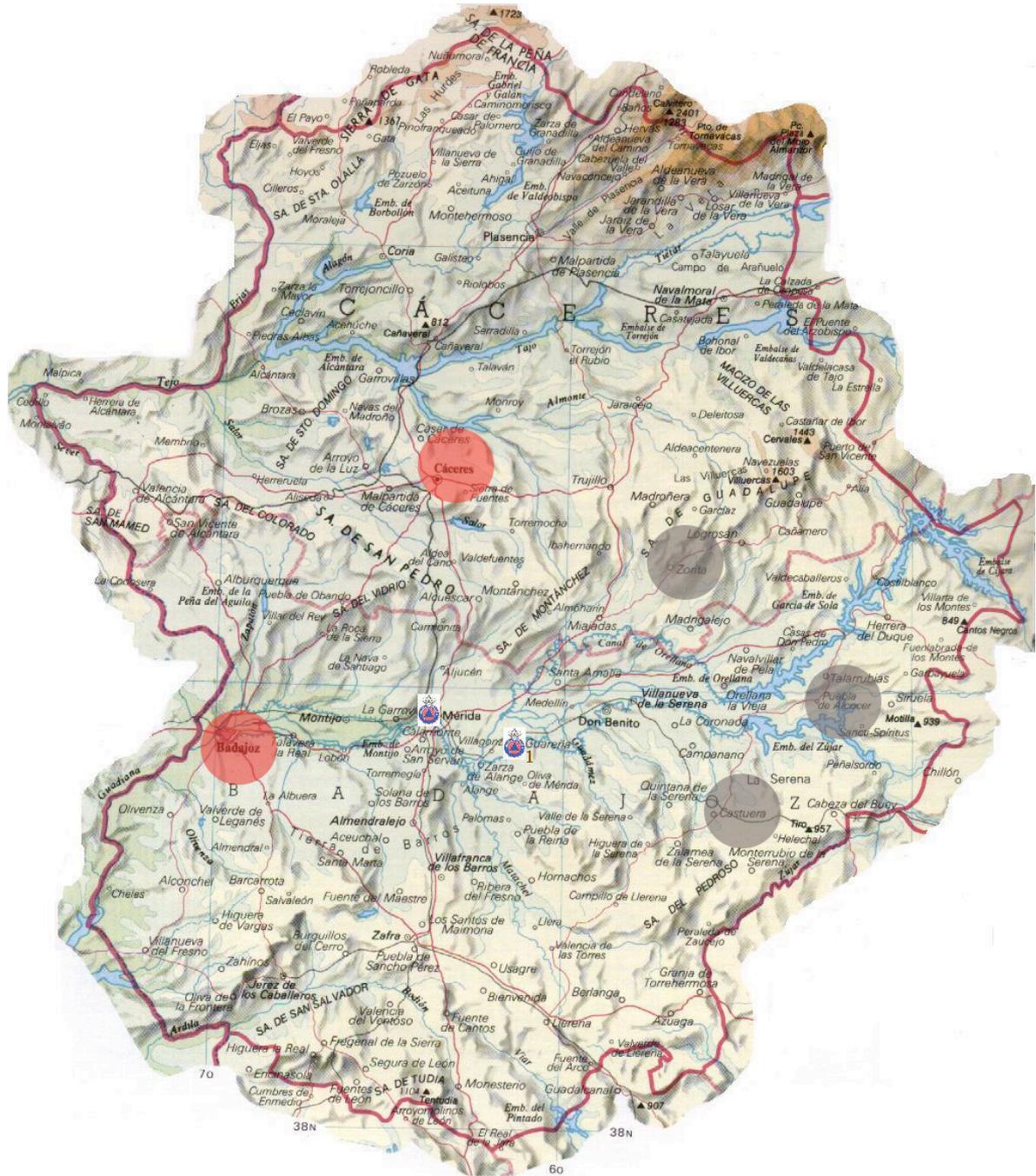
<b>Image 1</b>	Letter from Apolonia Martinez describing the details of her husband's Casimiro disappearance, dated 15 <sup>th</sup> March 1939.	16
<b>Image 2</b>	Act organised by the female section of Falange ( <i>Sección Femenina</i> ) in honour of the "Fallen for Spain". Courtesy of the Photographic Archive from the <i>Fundación Diario Madrid</i>	66
<b>Image 3</b>	Cross of the Fallen in Badajoz	68
<b>Image 4</b>	Valley of the Fallen	70
<b>Image 5</b>	Video still showing the mortal remains recovered at the exhumation carried in Almendral (in the province of Badajoz) in 1992. Courtesy of Francisco Cebrián Andrino.	78
<b>Image 6</b>	Death certificate of Eloy José Gonzalez Barrero, killed in 1939 and inscribed by his family in March 1980, Civil Registry of Castuera, Badajoz. Courtesy of Libertad González Barrero.	106
<b>Image 7</b>	Moral Recognition and Reparation Declaration. Courtesy of Libertad González Barrero.	114
<b>Image 8</b>	Example of the anthropological record of an individual ( <i>Individuo IX</i> ) found in Mass Grave 1 in the village of Castuera, Badajoz. The sheet contains a description of the position and orientation of the body in the mass grave, anthropological details (age, gender), and details about the individual's dental and pathological conditions. There is also a close up image of the individual's skull and fractures. Courtesy of Laura Muñoz Encinar.	122
<b>Image 9</b>	The War Front. Courtesy of Antonio D. López Rodriguez	132
<b>Image 10</b>	Pilgrimage from the village to the camp.	135
<b>Image 11</b>	Archaeological drawing of the mortal remains found in Mass Grave 3. Courtesy of Laura Muñoz Encinar.	143
<b>Image 12</b>	Crucifix found in Mass Grave 1.	150
<b>Image 13</b>	Pencil found in Mass Grave 1.	159
<b>Image 14</b>	Death Certificate of Pedro Sánchez-Paniagua. Courtesy of José Sánchez-Paniagua.	169
<b>Image 15</b>	Second group of bones with no anatomical connection found in Trench no 1 (TR1).	178
<b>Image 16</b>	Cable wires.	181
<b>Image 17</b>	Picture of Rafael Muga Ruiz with other men. Courtesy of Esperanza Muga and José Sánchez-Paniagua.	187

<b>Image 18</b>	Picture of neighbours from Puebla outside the UGT branch. Courtesy of Esperanza Muga and José Sánchez-Paniagua.	187
<b>Image 20</b>	Cross of the Fallen, Puebla de Alcocer.	193
<b>Image 21</b>	Female Prison, Saturrarán. Source: Wikimedia Commons.	201
<b>Image 22</b>	List of prisoners and <i>socorros</i> in Puebla de Alcocer and prisoners' receipt signatures. Courtesy of José Sánchez-Paniagua.	205
<b>Image 23</b>	Ángel's father's writings: "Women and War", published in <i>Extremadura Roja</i> .	218
<b>Image 24</b>	Ángel's writing "Mi Familia" (My Family) where family birth and death dates are recorded, as well as causes of disappearance and death.	218
<b>Image 25</b>	Drawing in Visitors' Book.	227
<b>Image 26</b>	Excerpt from Visitors' Book written by Cayetano Ibarra.	228
<b>Image 27</b>	Mausoleum in the cemetery of Puebla de Alcocer where the 42 bodies exhumed rest. The names of those killed at the mass grave are listed on the top and the inscription at bottom reads: " <i>Compassion, Peace, Forgiveness</i> ".	232
<b>Image 28</b>	Initial idea for a mausoleum in Castuera's cemetery to bury the bodies exhumed in 2011 and 2012. The association is also considering other designs. Courtesy of José Milara.	241
<b>Image 29</b>	Symbolic headstone on columbaria in the cemetery of Garciaz, in the province of Cáceres.	252
<b>Image 30</b>	Families of the dead and neighbours from the village carry the coffins to the mausoleum in Puebla de Alcocer (September 2013).	256
<b>Image 31</b>	Javier Martin Bastos reads a poem by Miguel Hernandez in Garciaz during the commemorative act in December 2011.	259

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

AMECECA (Previously PROMECECA)	Association for a Memorial in Cáceres Cemetery
AMECADEC	Association for the Memory of Castuera Concentration Camp
ARMH	Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory
ARMHEX	Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura
CGT	General Workers' Confederation
El Foro	Forum for Memory
GEHCEx	Contemporary History Research Group in Extremadura
IU	United Left
PP	Popular Party
PNV	Basque Nationalist Party
PREMHEX	Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory
PSOE	Socialist Party
UN	United Nations
WGEID	Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance

# Map of Extremadura



Provinces of Cáceres and Badajoz



Exhumation sites in Castuera, Puebla de Alcocer and Zorita

## Introduction

### Unearthing the Past in Post-Franco's Extremadura

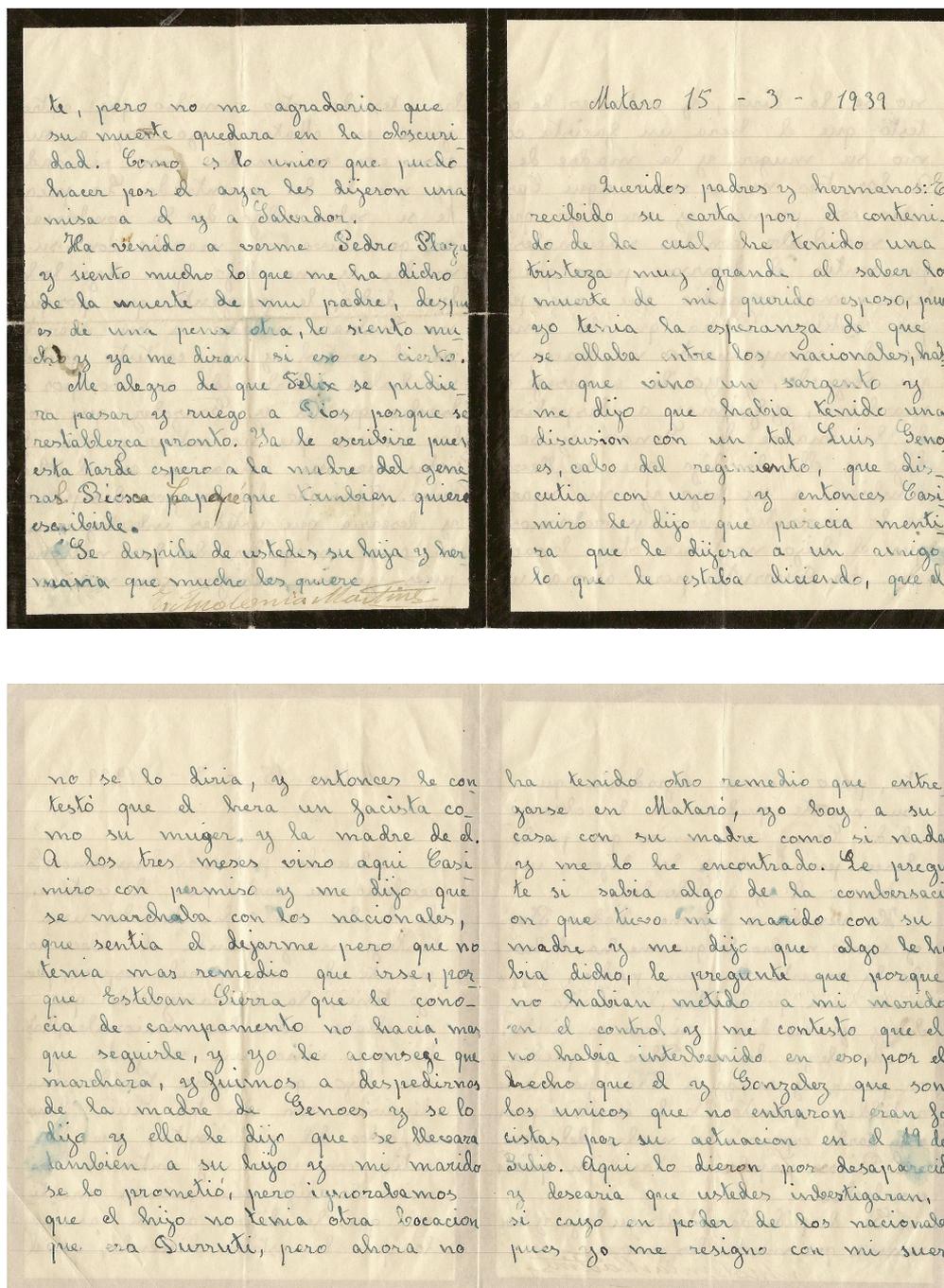


Image 1. Letter from Apolonia Martinez describing the details of her husband's Casimiro disappearance, dated 15<sup>th</sup> March 1939.

In the autumn of 2009, I began to investigate the exhumations of the mass graves containing corpses of the Republican's defeated during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). These exhumation had been taking place in Spain since the year 2000. My doctoral research was connected from the start to the European project *Bosnian Bones Spanish Ghosts*, which encouraged the study of the social experience of these particular events in connection with the transitional politics of Spain and in comparison to cases in other countries like Bosnia. Indeed, as I would later find out in the Spanish case, unearthing the latent mass graves of the losing side had sparked a process of historical inquiry into concealed aspects of the past that challenged official discourse about the war during the dictatorship (1939–1975) and in the so-called transitional years (1975–1979). The presence of these mass graves was a reminder of the three years war, which lasted from 1936 to 1939 and confronted both conservative and left-wing groups, ending with the government of the Second Republic. These mass graves evoked the unfinished reparation of the defeated and their silent history of loss, revealing untold experiences of violence and the crimes committed during the Franco regime. When I began my research, I went back to the place where I grew up, Extremadura, where I would learn about the forms of war and postwar repression that marked the social life of the region for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There, I encountered trails of the war in people's stories and in the writing of historians, in kin-related narratives of violence and in the archaeological records of the mass-grave scientific interventions in which I worked.

As I began my research, I looked for clues that could enrich my understanding of the historical context of the war in the region. As well as historical texts, I searched for life histories that could provide me with personal insight into the social reality of the violence perpetrated on both Republican and Francoist flanks. In 2010, in one of my visits to my hometown in Extremadura, I asked my grandmother Piedad if she remembered anything about the war in the area. Seventy-seven at the time, she could only convey faint images of the moment in which war broke out in 1936. Her memory and experience of events was limited but, as happened in many other cases, she could recall the stories that had been passed on to her by older members of the family. Her personal recollection led me to the story of my ancestors, some of who fought and died during the contest. My grandmother's account, a combination of firsthand and inherited memories, unveiled details about my own family history that neither my

mother, uncles, nor I had heard until that moment. Her knowledge of the events further intersected with the confined space of a fragmented familial archive of letters and photographs, which one of her sisters had kept since the 1990s. As I searched for information about my long-dead relatives, I began to acknowledge the piecemeal character of this historical research, in the latent voices and traces that elucidated parts of the family's trajectory. I would learn later on, in fact, that such forms of gathering and collecting information were, for many researchers and families I worked with, the only way of accessing the most ambiguous parts of the elusive war past. My initial family search would also reveal that the quest for knowledge about the war in Spain entailed, on many occasions, a reckoning with the most personal aspects of the country's repressed history.

The conversations I had with my grandmother at the start of my project mapped out the lives of different family members at the time when the violence erupted. In her stories, she recalled in particular the experience of three of her uncles, who fought in the Republican and Francoist armies throughout the conflict. My grandmother's account was filled with anecdotes about the way in which the three men underwent the threats and hardship of war. She recalled, for instance, how the youngest brother Felix had served in the army in Madrid and was severely injured when he attempted to join the Francoist side, since the city was occupied. She also explained how Juan, the middle sibling, survived the war in Cádiz, where he had completed his military career. Most poignantly, she recalled the death of Casimiro, the eldest of the three men, who was killed in Cataluña, where he had lived and worked as a member of the Republican military forces. I was quickly taken by the story of Casimiro's death, which remained fuzzy and unclear in my grandmother's words. Indeed, though she had learnt about his demise from her mother and her aunts when growing up, she also recognized that the family never spoke openly about what happened to him. She could only tell me he had been killed in an ambush, together with ten other members of his regiment. According to her, the family never recovered the body. Its location and burial remained always unknown. Wanting to delve deeper into the fate of my distant and unfamiliar relative, my grandmother directed me to the letters that her uncles exchanged with one another and with their parents during the years of their military service and around the time of the war.

In 2010, I collected numerous letters from my grandmother's sister's house, scanned them, and set out to read through their pages diligently, hoping to find hints about Casimiro's death. There was something impelling about these old and worn out documents, their inscriptions, and, in particular, the handwriting contained within them. As I read through the more than fifty letters, I unveiled a past that was foreign to me, but which felt, strangely, part of who I was. Each letter revealed some communication between my great-grandfather's brothers and the family over a period of two decades, from 1920 to 1939, speaking in detail about everyday life in the military for my grandmother's uncles, and giving news of their parents from home. The letters also reflected the changing political situation in the country in those years. The instauration of the Second Republic in 1931 was, for instance, celebrated by some of them with handmade drawings and collages that made use of the colours of the new flag and the new emblems of the democratic period. I felt impatient as I went through them. I examined each letter carefully, looking for information that hinted at the social tensions lived during the period that preceded the war. Letters dated 1935 already elucidated the agitated mood in the army and on the streets, but there were only a few of them. Following this, I could not find any letters written between 1935 and 1939. This unequivocal silence and rupture in their communication bitterly conveyed the outbreak of the war.

I had lost all hope of finding new information about Casimiro's death when, in the bundle of documents, I found a letter sent from the Catalan city of Mataró on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1939 and addressed to my great-great grandparents. I was dumbfounded. The letter came from Casimiro's wife, Apolonia Martinez (see Image 1). In it, Apolonia described the events that took place before her husband's disappearance. She spoke about a quarrel Casimiro had had with a Republican corporal and how he felt threatened in his cadre after he was accused of "being a fascist". According to Apolonia, one of Casimiro's peers, Salvador, and he decided to join the Francoist army in a move to save their lives. Apolonia does not provide any other information about the clash Casimiro had with the corporal. Following her account, though, the incident appeared to me to be an ideological strife in the climate of suspicion and mistrust that must have reigned over the convoluted end of the war. Certainly, my grandmother had spoken to me, on many occasions, about the right-wing ideas shared by all members of her father's family. I wondered whether Francoist or in fact

Republican forces had killed Casimiro. And so did Apolonia. Her letter, framed by the black edges that symbolized the mourning of a dead relative at the time, unfolded the frustration caused by the uncertainty that surrounded her husband's demise. In an effort to clarify the circumstances of his disappearance, Apolonia asked Casimiro's parents—my great-great grandparents—to help her to elucidate what happened to him. In despair, she summoned them to inquire about his whereabouts:

They gave him up for disappeared here [in Mataró] and I hoped you could investigate whether the nationalists [sic] captured him. I regret my luck but would not like his death to fall into obscurity. As it is the only thing I can do, I organized a mass for him and Salvador yesterday.

After reading the letter, I showed it to my grandmother and asked her if her grandparents had done anything about this. She was equally surprised, for she had not known about the document. “I think they did nothing”, she reflected. She believed Casimiro's mother's illness and the lack of resources of the family in Extremadura made any search for her uncle at the end of the war improbable. Whether my great-great grandparents ever helped Apolonia, or even how they found out about Casimiro's death, would remain a mystery to me. It was then that I realized that there was information about my past—part of a broader national past—that I was never going to know. The discovery of the letter also struck my mother and some of her siblings, who had never been aware of such correspondence or the existence of these family members. When I took the letter back to my grandmother's house, my mother, she, and I read it together and listened to the memories that the document evoked for my grandmother. I recorded our voices as we read over Apolonia's words. I recorded them time and time again as we tried to decipher her particular handwriting and those expressions that, product by a different time, were unfamiliar to us. The letter, most certainly, came to represent an uncanny shared history and made us witnesses of Apolonia's distressing experience. By recording our experience, I aimed to produce a document of this intimate intergenerational moment, in which the three of us became connected to the war past. The sound recording was also an important document for my research that evidenced the entangled reality of individual and collective histories in the understanding of the civil war.

Re-assembling the history of the region I found the unknown marks of violence in my family's archive and memory. The encounter with the letter triggered the telling of other stories related to the experience of the conflict at home and to the afterlife of the event in the everyday life of my family's postwar household. The appearance of the letter certainly enlivened both my grandmother's accounts and the reconstruction of our personal genealogy. I thought, then, about the potential for material and narrated fragments to activate the imagination and produce a history of loss in the present. I wondered about the force that these encounters exerted on the articulation of a wider historical narrative and on the shaping of social, political, and familial identities. Through my research into the Spanish Civil War and the postwar repression, and through the discovery of the letter, I uncovered the remnants of an unspoken family past.

In a similar manner, I thought, the exhumation of the mass graves I had come to study marked a significant moment, one that confronted Spanish society with the obscured collective history of violence and oppression that took place during the war (1936–1939) and the Franco regime (1939–1975). The excavation of the mass graves containing the dead bodies of the Republican defeated led to the reencounter of many families with the mortal remains and the stories of their disappeared ancestors that spanned many years. The search for and recovery of these corpses marked the beginning of a process of historical meaning-making that drew from other found artefacts in official and personal repositories, from the oral histories of surviving witnesses, and from traces of violence found inside the mass graves. Such historical inquiry drew from familial interpretation and from the historical and scientific analysis performed by researchers and experts that had studied the executions. This investigation into the war past contested the official discourse about the conflict and compelled the exposure of the country's public secrets. The opening of the first mass grave constituted a critical moment in the Spanish sociopolitical milieu that ultimately confronted individuals, communities, and the State with the unresolved reality of a neglected history of defeat.

From this angle, and focusing on the case of Extremadura, this thesis explores the different ways in which searching, exhuming, and reburying the mortal remains of the Republican defeated has brought their identities back into the social realm. In so

doing, it examines how these processes have produced new understandings of the conflict in the present, reinstated family bonds, and transformed the lives of the generations involved. In the thesis, I have opted to focus mostly on the Republican experience of defeat because following the exhumation and treatment of mass graves led me, especially, to consider the idiosyncrasies of this process of historical recollection. Nonetheless, though the dictatorship produced its own version about the conflict, little is also known, about the past everyday experience of those who supported the uprising. Recent and forthcoming studies (see the work of María García Alonso (2011)) already provide some insights into the lives and firsthand stories of Francoist and right-wing collectives. In the present work, however, I only partially deal with Francoist accounts in their official form, as they intersect with the narratives of Republican loss that people shared with me and as they became part, on occasions, of the social milieu of the exhumation.

### *Mass Graves and the Enduring Violence of War*

The first exhumation of a mass grave containing the dead bodies of thirteen Republican men, executed during the war in the Spanish town of Priaranza del Bierzo (Castilla y León) in the year 2000—and those that followed—publically exposed the mortal remains of the defeated decades after the conflict. These excavations, carried out by scientific teams of forensic experts and archaeologists and reported by the media, disclosed the gruesome fate of these corpses—often tied to one another and accumulated in the depths of the mass graves. The sight of these bones and their belongings evoked the violence of the extrajudicial executions that took place in the Francoist rearguard. They conjured the process through which these bodies, once alive, had been killed and placed in unmarked graves, which were hidden from public view in the outskirts of villages and towns and rarely exhumed after the conflict. As in other contexts worldwide (see Kwon 2006; Petrović-Šteger 2008; Wagner 2008; Sanford 2003; Crossland 2013), mass graves pointed to the unceremonial burial of these mortal remains, the absence of any public remembrance, and the impossibility of familial mourning and commemoration. They also evoked the untold story of the defeated, which had often been excluded from public discourse, community life, and even the family realm—where they would often be concealed or else conveyed in

whispers (Ferrándiz 2006) between members of different generations. The unearthing of these mass graves forced society to remember the moment of these killings, the way in which they occurred, and the repercussions they had in the social and domestic milieu after the war and during the transition to democracy. Through these excavations the memory of the violent events embodied in the mass graves unfolded. As the skeletons and their artefacts reappeared, so did the stories that narrated the dramatic effect that these executions and other forms of political repression had on individual and collective lives after the conflict.

In *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective in Contemporary India*, Veena Das (1997) analyzes the way in which violence produces transformations that deeply affect the inner lives of subjects and the social, political, and familial realities they inhabit. For Das, some critical events propel “people’s lives into new and unpredicted terrains” (*Ibid*: 5), in which new constitutions of the self, community, and the state are imagined and enacted. Focusing on the period after the violent Partition of India, Das explores how new “modes of action” emerged in different post-independence moments, redefining traditional categories, values, and discourses at national and community levels. Among these, she highlights, for instance, how statist notions of purity and honour were reconfigured after 1947 in relation to the abduction and rape of women during the Partition, or how new discourses of martyrdom and heroism emerged to reclaim Sikh identity in the 1980s.

In a similar manner, in Spain the violence of the war altered the structure and meanings of society profoundly. The end of the civil war saw the consolidation of a new Francoist state, which sought to eliminate the remnants of the previous democratic Republic in order to install a new regime based on the exaltation of national catholic values. Secular and socialist ideas had to be eliminated, together with those who had supported them. Forms of postwar terror, which included the persecution, trial, imprisonment, and execution of left-wing suspects, became the outmost expression of the New State’s sovereignty. In so doing, a new politics of death—or what Achilles Mbembe (2003) has termed “necropolitics”—asserted the regime’s legitimacy and power over the life and death of its citizens. An overarching discourse of sacrifice led the New State to exhume its glorious dead and celebrate, honour, and commemorate their martyrdom for the Fatherland in national and local

ceremonies. Victory, incarnated in the body of the martyr, became sacred ground for the political formation of the Francoist nation. In the new postwar milieu, Francoist followers would be fervently remembered, whilst the Republican losing side would be condemned, persecuted, and desecrated throughout the dictatorship.

The imprisonment, execution, and clandestine burial in mass graves of Republicans, and their lack of commemoration, deeply affected the postwar lives of those who survived the conflict. Many of the stories collected in the region of Extremadura during my fieldwork and cited throughout this dissertation reveal how these executions were intimately connected to the personal and social hardship, unresolved mourning, and loss that many families, militants, and supporters of the Republic underwent in the years of the Franco regime. Das (2007) and other authors (see Das *et al* 2000; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004) have observed that forms of physical violence (e.g. rape, torture, or mass murder) give rise to other kinds of symbolic violence, which are manifested in the everyday lives of victims after the conflict—as the victims’ sense of worth is impaired or they are deprived of a place in their communities (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Many of the stories shared during the unearthing of the mass graves spoke about the fear and silence that governed public spaces and also the domestic household in the postwar period. The people I met vividly remembered the negotiation of new livelihoods created in a bid to survive a harsh period of famine, the development of formal and informal networks, and the migration of many citizens. They poignantly recalled the strenuous relation between victims and perpetrators, the segregation experienced by some families, and the solidarity felt among others. Throughout the thesis, I approach the study of mass graves by considering the violence that produced them, as well as its affective afterlife lasting beyond the conflict.

Other authors have examined how different types of repression and humiliation continue to impinge on people’s lives through the living memory that remains after such traumatic violence. In her study of the state-led massacres that took place in Guatemala during the violent period known as La Violencia, Victoria Sanford (2003: 15) observes that the brutal events that killed and displaced a large number of the Mayan population between 1978 and 1982—and which continued until

1996—represented the “continuum of lived experience” for the communities she worked with. Sanford’s work, which follows the exhumations that took place during the peace process in the country, explores how the militarization, persecution, and slaughter of civilians in rural enclaves haunted individual subjectivities and everyday social practices after the conflict. Memories of violence often resurged in unexpected moments, as certain places, “reinvoke[d] the physical and psychological pain” experienced (Ibid: 143).

The exhumations I followed in Extremadura revealed how the memory of the executions had affected individuals and communities until the present. The space of the mass grave and its surroundings, moreover, were catalysts of the particular understanding that survivors and relatives retained of the executions. The sight of the mortal remains and their uncanny presence brought back the ghosts that had afflicted individual and social lives for years (Ferrándiz 2006, 2011; Gordon 1997; Cho 2008). The materiality of the mass burial, the bones and their artefacts, prompted firsthand but also inherited accounts—or the “postmemory” (Hirsch 1997; 2012) of descendants (see Chapters 3 and 4). They elicited how Francoist repression had also become part of the lived experience of different generations through the voices and silences that surrounded the events of the war. As Sandford argues, such permeating memories and sentiments are part of the “phenomenology of terror” (Ibid: 121) that moulded the lives and relations of entire families and communities.

Many scholars in anthropology and other fields have observed how certain rural and urban landscapes become “keepers of memories” (Carsten 2007), where absence, violence, and loss materialize and personal, familial, and national histories coexist (see Filippucci 2009; Carsten 2007; Pine 2007; Sebald 2001; Stewart 1996). Indeed, uncovering the mass graves of the war opened a window into personal narratives that made the most intimate details about the killings and other forms of political repression public. Stories about the military occupation, the extrajudicial imprisonment and execution of people, the ill-treatment of women or the postwar violence endured by the defeated were often part of the life-history repertoires of different generations. These narratives elucidated how the violence of the war and the postwar period had lingered and blended with the day-to-day existence of survivors,

but also with that of the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of those who experienced the conflict. Knowledge about the killings and disappearances, detentions, punishments, vexations, and shame, recalling Das (2007), “descended” into the ordinary life of individuals, families, and communities and travelled deeply in the core of familial and social transmission (Hirsch 2012). Later generations made their ancestors’ past their own (Ibid.), making these stories part of a collective effort for the redress of such enduring Republican loss. When these mass graves were exhumed at the turn of the century, past individual and collective experiences of suffering were channelled into civil endeavours for “truth recovery”, which sought to shed light on crimes committed during the war and after.

Mass grave exhumations in Spain triggered the formation of a political community around the war dead, formed by second, third, and fourth generation relatives and activists. These groups have campaigned for the reparation of families, the re-writing of history, and the recognition of the victims in local, national, and transnational settings in recent years. These civil society groups, together known as *the movement for the recovery of historical memory*, have been inspired by other post-conflict processes elsewhere (e.g. Argentina, Guatemala, or Chile). In these places, the recovery of mortal remains after violence has been part of national and international programmes that seek to repair and condemn war crimes. Many of these programmes are part of a “transitional justice” approach to conflict resolution, which aims to secure peaceful and ordered transitions to democracy. Transitional justice processes have often involved efforts on the part of state and intrastate institutions to seek redress through “legal mechanisms and commemorative projects” (Shaw and Waldorf 2010: 3). These include the formation of truth and reconciliation commissions, the forensic exhumation of mass graves, the prosecution and purges of perpetrators, and the moral and economic recognition of victims (Ibid.). The Spanish case, however, stands out as unusual among these state-centred projects, since the government has shown scarce support of civil-society initiatives. State-led programmes and international transitional justice models have also received strong criticism elsewhere for what some have considered to be a lack of engagement they often show with local scenarios, practices, and priorities (Shaw and Waldorf 2010). Nonetheless, others have argued that some national commissions have provided relief to victims by opening a space in which private suffering can be shared publically (see

the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa discussed by Scheper-Hughes 2004: 459; Ross 2001).

Anthropological studies such as those compiled by Das and Kleinman (2001) have further observed that truth-seeking endeavours are part of social and political processes to negotiate individual and community experiences of violence – exploring the complex meanings of healing, regeneration, and reparation in the aftermath of shattering violence or after long, violent regime. Throughout the years, historical memory campaigns have addressed the absence of a domestic culture of rights, reparation, and bereavement connected to the Civil War dead and disappeared. From the start, they have bluntly confronted the regimes of memory and forgetting (Hodgkin and Radstone 2002) around the conflict during the dictatorship and the transition to democracy (1975–1979). They have also denounced the present lack of state responsibility and care, which has mostly neglected the judicial treatment of both war and postwar crimes, the demand for the recovery of the mortal remains of the Republican dead, and their official and symbolic commemoration. The exhumation of mass graves in the year 2000 triggered a process through which these groups, in the words of Das and Kleinman (2001), sought to remake their worlds and those of previous generations more than seventy years after the conflict ended. In so doing, their endeavours redefine the social consciousness about the war and the dictatorship and the legitimacy of present political institutions.

### *Reordering Individual and Collective Worlds*

Recovering, identifying, and reburying the corpses of the Republican dead are regarded as acts that dignify the memory of the deceased and restore their place both in history and in the social imaginary of the nation. A common reference in these processes is the classical play of Sophocles, *Antigone*. In Sophocles' work, Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus, fights for the burial of the dead body of her brother Polyneices against the wishes of Creon, their uncle and new king of Thebes. After Polyneices dies fighting against his brother Eteocles during the Theban civil war, Creon orders his corpse to be left unburied in retaliation for bringing death upon Thebes. Despite Creon's ruling, Antigone attempts to bury the corpse, only to be sentenced to death by her uncle for this very act. Intrinsic to Antigone's suffering and

unrest is a notion of justice bound to the honourable treatment of her brother's dead body. Curtailing the interment of the dead body denies the deceased their humanness; they are "disposed of like a carcass"—as Antigone hauntingly refers to this act (see Heaney 2004). It also means, however, denying the deceased their place in the imagined community of the polis. The prohibition of the burial and of a ritual to remember the deceased brings, in *Antigone*, as in the Spanish case, the rule of law into tension with the norms of kinship (see Hegel 1977 or Butler 2000). Desecrated by the state, the dead and their kin are ostracized from the nation's genealogy. The words and actions of Antigone attempt to restore kinship against tyranny, as she confronts the authority of Creon. In the same way, families and historical memory associations reclaim space to speak truth to past Francoist law and hegemony. In so doing, these collectives are demanding the active support of the contemporary State for their endeavour.

When I returned to Extremadura to begin fieldwork, months after I had encountered my great-great grandparents' correspondence, I observed that remembering, as Michael Lambek (1996) has argued, had become an ethical and moral practice for many of the historical memory groups I met. On the one hand, civil society associations and families organized informative events, collected unheard stories about Franco's political repression, and celebrated acts of remembrance to commemorate the Republican dead in the public realm. On the other hand, remembering the defeated also meant challenging the past legal status of the victims, which was carried through to the post-transitional state—just as Antigone had endeavoured to do. Initiatives from some associations requested the nulling of sentences pronounced by Franco's military regime, demanded the commitment of judiciary courts to mass graves investigations, and contested the Law of Amnesty of 1977, by which all sides of the conflict were absolved of crimes perpetrated during war. The demands of these civil society collectives were voiced in campaigns for "truth, justice and reparation", which pressed for a new articulation of the history of the conflict and the memory of the victims from an institutional and judicial perspective. At the core of these initiatives was an ambition to make individual experiences of violence part of the collective history of the country, to bring personal memories of trauma into social remembrance.

The appeal for the judicial investigation into Francoist crimes attempted to make exhumations an area of legal concern and to make the stories of Francoist political repression and persecution public through the medium of the courtroom—just as had happened in other countries like Argentina, Guatemala, and Bosnia. In some of these countries, the recollection of past traumatic events had gained extreme visibility, in particular through the judicial trials that guided their different peace and reconciliation processes. Some authors, such as Mark Osiel (1997) and Shoshana Felman (2002), have observed that trials have indeed become spaces of confession, narration, and retelling after violence, where memories of trauma are elicited and become part of a common consciousness through speech and performance. For Osiel (1999: 3), for instance, the forms of “legal storytelling” that take place in some post-conflict trials constitute powerful practices that can actively influence the shaping of collective memory and national identity. Osiel argues that court trials are at once a space of social solidarity that provides a forum in which to speak and a place where certain tropes successfully produce long-lasting historical meanings of violent events. In a similar manner, Shoshana Felman (2002) has further considered how trials can subvert past silences in overarching historical discourses through the enactment of private and collective traumas. The connection between trauma and the legal, or between trauma and justice, she argues, is intrinsic to the understanding of contemporary history. For Felman, some trials of private crimes have acquired a collective dimension through their public exposure (she cites the OJ Simpson’s trial as an example). Others, which prosecuted collective crimes (i.e. Eichmann’s trial), moved from addressing collective suffering to liberating private traumatic experiences, “restor[ing] consciousness, dignity and speech” (2002: 7). For both authors, the courtroom is seen as a site in which individual and collective experiences of violence are articulated and dramatically performed (Ibid: 9), providing new legal, judicial, and social meanings to history.

Many of the members of the associations I met, who demanded a judicial investigation into Francoist crimes, were undoubtedly concerned with issues of accountability. Ideas about justice, however, were profoundly connected with a more urgent need to make a silenced past part of a common history. Narrating Republican stories of violence in the realm of the courtroom meant exposing and legitimizing the

voice of those who had been rendered expressionless by Franco's repressive system. In some activist campaigns, the realm of law and the judiciary was regarded, following Felman (2002: 18) in her interpretation of Walter Benjamin, as a context in which to articulate the claim to justice of the oppressed "in the name of a judgment—of an explicit or implicit prosecution—of history itself". A potential trial was envisioned, in Benjamin's terms, as a process of redemption that would unsettle and disrupt an established history of victory and reclaim its "hidden realities" (Ibid: 32). The judicial realm was a place in which new versions of the history of the war could be articulated, new tropes created, and the identity of the defeated and their families recognized. These stories, however, have largely been excluded from legal spaces in Spain, even after the first exhumations revealed the most explicit evidence of such violence. In past years, various attempts by different judges to prosecute cases of mass and individualized repression during the war and in the postwar period have met with reticence on the part of the Spanish judiciary to further inquire into these forms of Francoist violence<sup>1</sup>. Like Antigone, claims by these associations and different families for the memory of the dead have been also hampered by the rule of law in the present.

Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (2003) have argued that the mediation of the past in the public sphere is indeed entangled in a system of knowledge and power relations that determine its representation and recognition. In addition to a lack of concern with these histories on the part of the judiciary, the inaction of different governments has also shown the burdensome character that the memory of the war is seen to have in official circles. The inconsistent politics of exhumation, identification, and commemoration of the dead that different right- and left-wing governments have held since the year 2000 has revealed the marginal place that the victims of Francoism hold in the national historical agenda at large. Authors like Pierre Nora (1989) and Paul Connerton (1989) have spoken about the way in

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2008, for instance, after well-known judge Baltasar Garzón attempted to investigate Francoist crimes and despite the general reticence of many judges, some of these stories were heard in the Spanish National Court (*Audiencia Nacional*). These trials however soon stalled following the dismissal of Garzón – accused of perversion of charges in relation to a different investigation (see Chapter 1). Most recently, international appeals from judges from other countries like Argentina have returned some of the stories of the defeated and perpetrators to the courtroom, though the position of the Spanish Supreme Court has remained averse to such processes.

which societies carry forward elements of the past, which give shape to collective memories and national identities through social commemoration and historical writing. Nora has famously spoken about the *lieux de memoire*, or places of memory, which, as a result of “a play between memory and history” (1989: 19), evoke a social effort to remember certain aspects of the past that give meaning to a society in the present. Material or immaterial (e.g. memorials, archives, celebrations, testimonies), the preservation and signification of these sites elucidate particular visions of a collective history. In a similar manner, Connerton (1989), in his analysis of the performative aspects of social memory and its transmission, recognizes that acts of collective recollection often legitimate social orders and are driven, on many occasions, by specific political ambitions. Following this logic, in Spain the State’s passivity towards acknowledging sites of memory from the war, recovery of bodies, treatment of archives, research into the conflict, or commemoration of the Republican dead has demonstrated an institutional disinterest in engaging in re-signifying the history of the conflict and the memory of its victims. This has relegated the telling and writing of relevant biographies and stories to local and regional realms, where associations, families, historians, and the scientists who work on the mass graves have collaborated in making the war-past visible.

In the absence of legal spaces where witnesses and survivors can testify to past Francoist repression, and which can instantiate an official politics of remembrance, independent initiatives that search for, remember, and vindicate these untended histories proliferate. Commemorative celebrations, acts of protest, exhumations and reburials, and sites of historical production in universities, research centres, and the media, among others, became public platforms from which to disclose individual and collective experiences of violence on the margins of statist action. Personal stories and new historical data shaped a shared consciousness around the history of the war defeated and the nascent identity of a new historical memory movement. Activists, families, and some political representatives strived for the recollection, expression, and endurance of these stories in the fabric of society. As Halbwachs once described (1992), following Durkheim, their aspiration was to remember the events they had experienced and learned about socially, and to situate these histories as part of collective thought. Such shared goals, however, did not give place to a homogenous community with the same desires and aspirations. On the contrary, and as case studies

have documented elsewhere, remembering violence and constructing new versions of the war-past were practices embedded in different and often intense struggles for memory (Jelin 2003).

Anthropological studies on history and memory have long argued, as David Berliner (2005: 200) points out, that people “experience and interpret their pasts from a multiplicity of viewpoints”. In Spain, remembering and writing a history of defeat prompted, first, the citing of different histories that challenged the dominant historical narrative around the war and postwar period perpetuated through Francoist and transitional discourses. Anthropology has also shown the importance of *other histories* in challenging the overbearing western notion of a single, linear, unified history (Hastrup 1992). In this regard, exhumations and the historical memory venture awakened clashing counter-narratives, to use Foucault’s terms (1972), which disputed the normative and formalized history of the regime. These emerging histories created antagonisms between the left-wing collectives that advocated the investigation of Francoist violence, and right-wing groups that disputed the latter’s interpretation of the conflict and the Franco regime. Similarly, memories, retellings, and interpretations of the history of defeat have also been far from unanimous between historical memory associations. Appadurai (1981) and Herzfeld (1991) have emphasized how the past manifests itself as part of manifold contests over meaning in the present, and have shown how it is intricately shaped by contemporary sociopolitical milieus. In this respect, issues of authority, continuity, antiquity, and consensus become paramount in the creation of historical knowledge.

The interviews, commemorative events, book launches, demonstrations, and exhumation projects in which I participated revealed, on many occasions, that the process of writing and remembering such history was also fraught with political tensions at local, regional, and national levels among activist groups. In Extremadura, as elsewhere, associations often differed in terms of priorities (Ferrándiz 2006, 2011, 2013). Some associations had a more political approach to the exhumation of mass graves, the treatment and commemoration of bodies, and the writing of victims’ stories. Others gave preference to familial and kinship bonds, claiming a less political character for their campaigns. It became obvious that, in this region in particular, assembling and remembering the history of the war and the postwar period was first

of all a concern with the recognition of personal histories of suffering and loss. Nonetheless, these concerns were, for many, profoundly entangled with particular individual and collective desires to re-write concrete political histories and genealogies. In the process, just as Antigone experienced in her quest for recognition, new subjectivities were constituted in the struggle between the State and competing historical visions, in particular uses of the past in the present.

Throughout my fieldwork, I worked closely with the institutional Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura (PREMHEX), composed of a team of historians and archaeologists who investigated the extrajudicial and judicial forms of violence, imprisonment, expropriations, and other forms of repression during the civil conflict and immediate postwar period. I also collaborated with historical memory associations whose research into the history of Francoist repression was connected to a social and political agenda. These collectives helped families, who also embarked on personal searches for clues, to recompose their kin's histories. The project, associations, and groups of families I met drew on the logistic and financial aid of local town halls that supported historical memory initiatives. At the core of this community was an intrinsic labour of history-making, which connected the past to the "horizon of expectations" (Koselleck 2004: 2) of a different political future. Experience and expectation, past and future, were bridged through the actions of these social collectives (Ibid.), turning the construction of the past into an activity whereby democratic change could be accomplished.

One of the questions with which I engaged extensively was the issue of how this novel historical production was understood, managed, and articulated. If, as Koselleck (2004) has shown, the semantics of history are entwined with the actions and ideas of the subjects and structures that produce them, then, one of the main aims of this thesis is to examine what particular historical definitions and practices are emerging at the heart of the historical-memory venture in Extremadura. In the process of historical research into the uncertain sources of Francoist historiography, different human and non-human phenomena have become key to the social, familial, and scientific interpretation and experience of these historical events. The quest for collective recognition of personal histories of defeat and the rewriting of the history of the conflict was marked by encounters between families, scientists, historians, and the

material fragments found in personal and official archives and mass graves. These encounters often generated different personal, scientific, and social historical accounts that converged and negotiated present meanings of past violence.

### *History Between the Archive and the Grave*

In the first few months of my fieldwork, I was quickly drawn to the bulk of information that historical memory collectives and PREMHEX had gathered about Francoist crimes committed during the war and postwar period in the region. Exhumations accelerated a process of knowledge production that, on many occasions, aimed to unpack the myths of past and present Francoist discourse and historiography. Indeed, during the dictatorship, the historiographical sources of the regime drew from documents and files of the repressive administration to narrate a particular version of events of the New State. Past Francoist narratives accentuated, in particular, the forms and amplitude of the Republican repression—extensively documented in files from the judicial process of the *Causa General* (General Cause) (see Chapter 2)—obscuring Republican losses and the identity and whereabouts of those who disappeared.

Since the beginning of the last decade, the unearthing of the mortal remains of the Republican defeated has been carried out using scientific expertise and methodologies, which requires inquiry into other historical sources such as archives and testimonies in order to locate, contextualize, and identify the mortal remains in the mass graves. Official and personal files such as letters, diaries, death certificates, summary trial documents, and photographs, among others, became sources through which victims' identities, numbers, and causes of death could be investigated by researchers, and also by families and associations. Testimonies from survivors provide other accounts of the executions, aiding historians in making sense of the often incomplete and distorted state records about these deaths. These oral histories also provide important details for the archaeological and anthropological analysis of the mass graves, often enabling the final individuation of the corpses. The archive, testimony, and mass grave converge in the exhumation process, in an exercise in history, in order to “clarify historical memory” (Crossland 2013). Just as my attempt

to reconstruct the details of my grandmother's uncle's death through my family's letters and accounts revealed aspects of Casimiro's story, the interaction between artefacts, narratives, and people connected to the search for mass graves in Extremadura furthered a new epistemology of the executions and the identity of the disappeared.

Studies of cases in Bosnia and Serbia (Wagner 2008; Petrović-Šteger 2008), Zimbabwe (Fontein 2010), Sierra Leone (Basu 2007), Argentina (Crossland 2000, 2013), Vietnam (Kwon 2006, 2008), or Guatemala (Sanford 2003), have observed in different ways how the excavation of mass graves and the identification of corpses has brought scientific practice together with other cultural, social, and familial expressions to articulate knowledge about violence. In Guatemala, Victoria Sanford (2003) has observed how the testimony of survivors was key in the location of mass graves, and has shown how this archaeological space has also become a site of mourning and remembrance for relatives (Ibid; Crossland 2013). Similarly, Heonik Kwon (2008) has highlighted how the location of mass burials in Vietnam is intimately connected not only to the world of the living but also to the world of the dead, as spirit mediums help teams to locate the clandestine mass burials of the war. In Bosnia, Sarah Wagner (2008) has examined how DNA typing also relies on the memory of survivors to attain positive identification and thus to return the mortal remains of the Srebrenica's missing to their families. In post-conflict exhumations, bones, objects, and belongings are often conceptualized through scientific understanding, the recollection of those who remember the dead, and other historical information in repositories and files in order to produce contrasted visions of the past (Crossland 2013). Indeed, as Paul Basu (2007) has observed in Sierra Leone, the excavation of mass graves is often part of a "palimpsest memoryscape" in which material remains and human intentions interact to create particular scientific, mnemonic, and historical constructions of the past.

Archaeology, physical anthropology, and forensic science have gained a central role in the search for and exhumation of the dead in Spain because, as in other countries, these practices reveal specific details about Francoist violence that do not exist in archives or in familial or collective memory. Through the technical reading of the mass graves and their corpses new evidence about the victims and their killings

could be discerned. In Extremadura, the scientific team with which I worked studied these clandestine burials with the aim of identifying and naming the corpses found within them. They also, however, treated these burials as objects that contained important historical data that could help elucidate the unknown aspects of Franco's war and postwar repressive apparatus in the region. Evoking Bruno Latour (1999), mass graves provided scientists with a distinct place of research in which observation, documentation, and classification—according to archaeological and anthropological enunciation—transformed the understanding and meaning of the terrain, the bones, and other artefacts. In these sites, and later in the laboratory, the work of archaeologists, forensic scientists, and physical anthropologists would draw from the network of human and nonhuman relations that emerged as a result of the venture to reconstruct the identity of the individuals and the history of the violent event. Throughout the thesis I explore how, in an effort to provide certainty, scientific practice engages with different “circulating references” (Ibid: 24) in order to represent individual and collective histories. Following the objects associated with the mass graves, I trace the idiosyncratic character of an on-going process of knowledge production that moves between the archive, the witness, and the mass grave. I examine the way in which these interventions have shaped the development of new archaeological and forensic work in Spain—one linked to a historical quest, but also shaped as a moral and ethical project.

Indeed, the encounter between the material fragments of the conflict and the generations that have found them decades after the war has prompted a continuous negotiation of meaning between scientists, relatives, historians and other groups. Documents, bones, or photographs have been at the heart of a process of signification and truth-making, which has turned them into efficacious evidence of the violence perpetrated against Republican supporters and sympathizers in scientific, legal, and political domains. Following Bruno Latour (1993; 1999), one could argue that these archival and material phenomena have also become “*actants*” or active elements in the shaping of collective consciousness about the war and Francoist repression. They are not only a fundamental element in the construction of a historical narrative of past violence, but also play a significant role in the reordering of the political landscape in the region and the country. These nonhumans have the ability to communicate and

evoke displaced stories, unsettling present political milieus. Their existence is entwined in a mesh of complex relations with humans and their evidentiary regimes, which turn them into factual indexes of past atrocities useable for different purposes (Crossland 2013; Petrović-Šteger 2008). Considering such interactive networks between human and nonhumans in the context of post-conflict societies, however, requires viewing the relation between these actors as more than a simply ordering of historical meanings or social ties. It requires examining the different intensities that these relations attain vis-à-vis the search for and recognition of the victims of Francoist violence. In each exhumation, science, politics, and the social are entangled with the affective responses that human remains, images, artefacts, or paper trails and their entrenched history of trauma, grief and loss provoke in those who come into contact with them. From this viewpoint, the thesis explores how the affective afterlife of these deaths impacts on modes of historical production and shapes the very definition of the human and nonhuman in the context of the exhumation.

When the traces of the disappeared that remained latent in the depths of mass graves and archives first resurfaced, they disrupted and altered the subjective world of the living. Bones were not just objects of scientific definition and hypothesis, but stood for the death of a person with social and familial bonds. Human remains are evidence of death that, as Zoe Crossland has remarked, conjure “the passing of someone who is missing and missed” (2013: 125). The corpse reinstated a multi-dimensional image of the individual killed, who had been absent for decades, summoning familial, social, and individual imagination around that person’s suffering and pain. The dead body became the mediator not only of stories but also of feelings and emotions for relatives and neighbours, scientists, historians, and volunteers who worked on the excavations. In official and personal archives, the documents and files that evoked these murders provided a grievous character to the discoveries, for their inscriptions were often fraught with the euphemisms of the New State. Official and personal archives also provoked other affective reactions around the figures of the disappeared and their fate. Likewise, the few photographs that still exist in personal and public collections have become treasured possessions not only for relatives and activists, who can put a face and body to the missing, but also for the scientific and historical labour of the exhumation. These artefacts, I will argue, became powerful triggers, which, as Hans Belting (2005) has observed with regard to visual images at

large, animated the image of the disappeared and the sentiment of bereavement in those who searched for them. Such intimate images were deeply disturbed by the violence recorded on the corpses themselves, and in documents and photographs, making the search for clues and the making of history a challenging and arduous practice.

These emotive objects and their social entanglements provided a humanitarian and affective dimension to the work of the scientist and the historian (Crossland 2013). In the context of the exhumation, scientific and historical work, as many have highlighted (Crossland 2013; Wagner 2008; Ferrándiz 2006; Kwon 2008), is intrinsically connected to the task of familial and social remembrance and transmission. The work in mass graves and archives in Spain has been fuelled from the start by the curiosity and necessity of knowing the legacy of trauma that exists in many of the families of the missing (Hirsch 2012). As happened in the case of post-Holocaust remembrance, the remnants of violence became, together with the narratives of survivors, mediators in what Marianne Hirsch (2012: 35) has termed “a generational structure of transmission” of unsettling histories. Families and activists engaged with an unrelenting search into official and private repositories, collecting records from civil registries and declassified trials, municipal files, or penitentiary transcripts. Family narratives, which provided intimate recordings of the detentions and executions, often accompanied the information found in documents, in a bid to give a sense of coherence and completeness to the lives of survivors (Hirsch 2012; Skultans 1998). At the exhumation site, archaeological, forensic, and historical endeavours became another source for the work of memory of families and associations, through which other details were incorporated into personal and community accounts about the killings. The exhumation process enabled the assemblage of other versions of the violent events that took place at the time of the mass burial. It provided new spaces—which extend beyond the realm of the mass grave—where new forms of classification, accumulation, and construal of the past developed, where life histories proliferated and expressions of mourning and distress were articulated publically.

Following the journey of the dead body, from the moment in which it is located to its reburial, I investigate how such a quest has led to the articulation of other forms of recollection, in which fragments of official archives commingle with remnants of the mass graves and the imaginations of the living, creating other archives and modes of accretion about the history of the conflict. Such a pursuit, I will show, is often entwined with the necessity of re-inscribing the individual back into history, the recovery of their name and particular story as an act that vindicates their identity. These names are found in official files or through familial accounts, gathered in lists, and later given scientific representation through the archaeological and forensic work carried out in the mass graves. At the moment of the reburial of these corpses and during their commemoration, names are engraved on stone, whilst attendees reconstruct their identities by remembering different aspects of their personas. In and out of the mass graves, the individuation and identification of mortal remains happens by means of association between material fragments and the work of familial memory, scientific and historical inquiry, and social remembrance. Throughout the thesis, I engage with the question of how these forms of reassociation are entwined with what Jacques Rancière (1994) terms a “poetics of knowledge”, or a practice of history through which novel forms of knowing are reclaimed, identities are created, and new political realities vindicated. In so doing, my aim is to investigate how in the process of locating, exhuming, and identifying the civil war dead, history is re-written, collected, and experienced as part of a collective endeavour to transform the political status quo surrounding the war and the dictatorship in Spain.

#### *Following the Exhumation Archive: A Brief Note on Methodology*

The question of the archive has deeply interested me ever since I began my research about exhumations and the historical memory of the war in Extremadura. Through my pre-fieldwork preparation I learnt about the close connection that exists between official files and narratives about the conflict, and the search for the missing and the recovery of their bodies. With a pressing need to contest these official versions of the past, new archival searches, exhumations, commemorations, and publications seemed to bound the historical memory movement and define the relations between associations, families, and political actors. My decision to go back to Extremadura, my home region, to conduct fieldwork was initially informed by the project *Bosnian*

*Bones Spanish Ghosts*, of which my research was part. The project's aim of comparing historical memory ventures in different regions of the country, together with my personal connection to the place, made the region an ideal location to carry out my investigation. In Extremadura, moreover, following the advice of my supervisor and principal investigator of the project, I would be able to narrow down the scope of my "field", since I would be able to observe and follow the search for the bodies, the collection of testimonies, research in archives, and other social events in closer proximity.

Perhaps influenced by a classical understanding of fieldwork and an underlying wish to develop my study within a close-knit environment, by working in the region I sought to establish a more localized research area in which my focus would be delimited by a regional social and political context. Nonetheless, such a localized area was far from bounded and isolated from what was happening elsewhere, and was instead, as Arjun Appadurai (1996) has argued, largely constituted by the national and transnational politics surrounding the memory of the war and the recognition of those who suffered from Francoist repression. The idea that local scenarios are indeed entwined with broader realities has been the subject of much anthropological reflection throughout the history of the discipline (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Marcus 1995; Coleman and Collins 2006). In Extremadura, my research followed the network of relations between the people involved in the historical memory movement and the remnants of the war-past in the region. There, I collaborated extensively with the institutional Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory (PREMHEX) and with the main civil society associations participating in exhumations, commemorative acts and reburials, book presentations, exhibitions, and other events. In tracing these connections, I appreciated that, in the practice and discourses of these collectives, local stories of disappearance were part of a historical, legal, and political quest that had become entrenched in the lives of small communities, national imaginaries, and international demands. In the network of actors and actions that shaped my field of research, the opposition between the local and the global collapsed (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 7) in the making of a new collective history of repression.

My interest in understanding how novel avenues of knowledge production about the past were emerging in relation to the war and the dictatorship led me then to carry out a “multi-sited” fieldwork (Marcus 1995). During my first months in Extremadura, I attended numerous events organized by different historical memory associations and carried out interviews with members of these groups, as well as historians, political representatives, and members of the institutional memory project PREMHEX. These initial interviews allowed me to map out the relations between the members of these groups and to discern the particular concerns and activities of the movement in the region. In this regard the interviews and informal chats that I carried out at this stage enabled me to trace a web of connections and associations that explored the life-worlds of the people with whom I collaborated and the system of which they were part (Ibid.). Moreover, my initial incursion into the field was also informed by my particular conceptual preoccupation with the way the life and death stories of the defeated were constructed in different realms. Exploring how an alternative history of repression was constituted required following the people, spaces, and things that took part in the transmission and interpretation of these memories of loss. George Marcus (1995) suggests in his influential essay that social memory studies in anthropology (e.g. Boyarin 1994) have used a multi-sited research, which caters for narratives and plots as objects of study as well as for social struggles and the places where remembering occurs. Driving my methodological approach was the event I had gone to study, namely the excavations of the mortal remains of the Republican dead. Focusing on the exhumation process expanded my research to more locations; thus I was constantly moving between the sphere of the archive and the grave.

Working on the exhumations was a fundamental part of the second stage of fieldwork. The exhumations led me to collaborate more closely with members of PREMHEX, the project promoted by the regional administration that in 2011 and 2012 led most of the excavations carried out in Extremadura. My focus shifted to the exhumation process as I was invited to participate in an excavation in the village of Castuera (Badajoz) by PREMHEX archaeologist Laura Muñoz and the president of the association who promoted the intervention in 2011 (see Chapter 3). In the summer of 2012, I would work at two more sites, namely, Puebla de Alcocer and Fregenal de la Sierra (Badajoz), with a team led by the same archaeologist (see Chapter 4). In

these different locations, I worked jointly with the scientific team, groups of families, activists, and neighbours and the particular stories of repression of their communities. Most certainly, through my work at the mass graves, the exhumation process gained intensity (Marcus 1995) and took a more central role in my investigation. Work at the site enabled me to follow life histories, scientific interpretations, and historical work, whilst appreciating how people related to mortal remains, how they searched for documents about relatives in archives, or how personal objects emerged in connection to the search for the disappeared. In addition to this, I could also observe and be part of the relation between families, activists, scientists and historians and their endeavours to discover what happened at the mass grave. The work at the exhumation sites enabled me to examine how the situated knowledge and experience of different subjects came together, as different ways of imagining the past converged, diverged, and were negotiated.

Working as an active member of the archaeological team, I learnt basic archaeological and physical anthropology notions about the treatment and study of a mass grave, mortal remains of missing people, and objects found within a burial. The life history interviews and conversations I conducted and recorded revealed, through everyday forms of storytelling, new harrowing information about the violence perpetrated in these communities and the intense emotional character of the exhumation event. Throughout fieldwork, I documented social interaction at the site, recording the feelings and sensations these remnants prompted in visitors and scientists and my own perception of the place through notes, but also making video and sound recordings. The physical and imaginary space of the mass burial became an important element of my research, as I focused on the way these exchanges socially constructed the site, and how the site, in turn, affected the people who encountered it. As I engaged in the exhumation process, I concentrated on exploring the social and personal experience of these spaces and the life of the exhumation event beyond the mass grave—in the laboratory and at the moment of the identification, reburial, and return of the mortal remains to their original communities. Drawing on the conceptual metaphor (Marcus 1995) of the archive, I followed the trajectory of these mortal remains and their stories, through different sites of accumulation and knowledge exchange, whilst I also engaged in the production of new documents about the process of the exhumation.

Coleman and Collins (2006) have highlighted that the presence of the researcher is a key aspect of the way in which the anthropological field is constituted. One's subjectivity and theoretical concerns shape the field, but also shape the methodological approach to the object of study. In my case, as mentioned above, the aim of investigating how information about the conflict was gathered and conceptualized today influenced my decisions during fieldwork, and ultimately the writing of my thesis. This inevitably foregrounded certain aspects of the historical memory process over others (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 15)—for instance, I focused on Republican memories and did not fully delve into the Francoist experience of the war and postwar period. In addition to this, however, the fact that my personal history is connected to the history of the region and the country also conditioned my experience and analysis of the exhumations. Doing anthropology “at home” brought me back to a place I had known since an early age. Nonetheless, narratives about Francoist violence presented a distant and painful reality that I, just like the people I worked with from younger generations, was trying to assimilate and comprehend. As part of a generation that was born in the 1980s and after the transition to democracy, this past seemed so different and alien at first. But, as we saw with the letters I found in my family's archives, it was also part of a collective history of loss in which my life was entwined. My own experience of these sites made me eager to represent these events from my viewpoint as participant-observer.

From the beginning of my doctoral project, I felt compelled to mediate and convey aesthetically the memories and historical expressions surrounding the figure of the missing and their executions through photography and sound compositions. Before I ventured into the field, I had an interest in recording the encounter that people had with the material remnants of the past and the stories these elicited in the present. Using photography and sound allowed me to work with two different mediums, and to engage critically with notions of memory, uncertainty, authority, and affect in connection to the practice of the exhumation. In this regard, the images I produced sought first, as Geismar has noted, to act as “creative actors, and not merely representations, in the development of anthropological ideas” (cited in Morton and Edwards 2009: 4). By bringing images of the exhumation process, the people, and objects together with the sounds of the mass graves and surroundings, I intended to

create an audiovisual document that could help me interrogate and analyze the metaphor of the exhumation as archive. During the editing stage, I grouped the photographs I had taken and brought them together with the sounds I recorded at the mass graves and in the villages, evoking the work of collecting and classifying an archive, and in this way producing meanings, though in a digital format. With regard to content, I created a narrative that allowed for an examination of the way the fragmented history of the executions was perceived, lived, and experienced by families, scientists, activists, and neighbours in different contexts. In so doing, I aimed to provide a different interpretative dimension to the text of my thesis and a more intertwined combination of visual and written ethnography.

The videos *War Histories I* and *War Histories II*, which accompany Chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis, explore, respectively, the co-production of the history of the executions during the exhumations carried out in Castuera and Puebla de Alcocer, in the province of Badajoz. In both pieces, images taken in black and white follow the stories of the families that searched for their relatives at both sites. Their stories are framed by the exhumation contexts in which they emerge and the communities to which the missing belonged. Each video aims to reflect on the main characteristics of these searching ventures, considering the idiosyncrasies of the repressive process, and focusing on the memories that remained of these events for individuals and families, and at the heart of each village society. Both videos explore, albeit in different ways, how certainty and uncertainty are negotiated between families, neighbours, historians, and scientists at the mass graves. They deal with memories but also with materialities, invoking the connection that people establish with the objects in which the past lives. In both pieces an emphasis on the textures and sounds of encounters between the human and nonhuman plays an integral part in transmitting the sense of place of both exhumation spaces. The two compositions aim to explore issues of history-making and transmission connected to enduring violence. They also, however, engage with the phenomenology of the place and the politics of space (Pink 2009), drawing on sensory readings of the site and the interactions that compose the fabric of the exhumation event. Like other visual anthropologists (see Pink 2006, 2009), my focus on a sensory approach to the exhumation process is connected to a desire to understand the way that people experienced the process of

knowledge production in places where past violence persists (e.g. the mass grave, the archive, the commemorative act).

Sarah Pink (2009) has argued that doing sensory ethnography is intimately linked to ideas of perception and embodiment. Examining what a sensory approach to anthropology entails, Pink argues for “an emplaced ethnography that attends to the questions of experience by accounting for the relationships between the body, the minds and the materiality and sensoriality of the [researched] environment” (Ibid: 25). In the videos and images included in the thesis, I pay close attention to aspects such as landscape, the inside of the mass grave, the physicality of the work carried out, and bodily expressions and gestures that accompany the act of remembrance and transmission. In the videos, images explore the remoteness of some of these burials and the centrality of others (i.e. inside cemeteries). Such images also travel between the spaces where memory is articulated and shared: the household, the mass grave, or the commemorative act. The use of still photographs allowed me to play with the temporality of the piece, increasing the connection of the viewer to what can be seen and also heard. Sounds contribute to a sonic atmosphere of these places, engaging with the effects of the wind or the silence of other moments, the noise of conversations by the gravesite, and the biographical voices of individual narrators. Indeed, my audiovisual take on the exhumation is influenced by other works of anthropology but also by art practice—such as the work of film essayist Chris Marker—which inspired my interest in recreating a type of photographic album accompanied by the *soundscape* of the exhumation. In this way, the videos aim to convey the sensations produced by the assembling and remembering of the violent past, appealing to the sight, touch, and sounds involved in these processes.

The use of audiovisual methods and compositions in my research generated other cultural products, which acted as vehicles for the historical memory of the conflict in the social realm. The videos (and the thesis at large) constitute another knot in the archival meshwork of practices and discourses, which contributes to the transmission of knowledge about the process of searching for the Republican missing. As Marianne Hirsch (2012) has observed, as a member of a later generation who did not live through the conflict, my visual works aim to come to terms with the traumatic

stories and materialities unearthed during the exhumation process. The audiovisual productions of the thesis are at once analytic tools and pieces through which I evoke “affiliative acts” (Hirsch 2012: 39) that engage with the memories of survivors and their relatives in the present. Indeed, these pieces locate memory at the core of familial transmission. They also, however, delve into the impact of scientific practice, political action, and social activism on the construction and dissemination of the history of the conflict. Using audiovisual means in the ethnographic study of the exhumation process has allowed me to produce another “fragmentary remnant” that will enable other works of postmemory (Ibid: 37) and mobilize new feelings and emotions towards the uncovering of the remains of violence from the war and the postwar period.

### *The Ethics of Anthropological Work in Mass Grave Exhumations*

Anthropology has long been concerned with issues of representation, especially in connection to ethnographic writing. Indeed, from Geertz (1975) to Clifford (1986), Rosaldo (1991), Abu-Lughod (1991), and Behar (1996), thinking about the composition of anthropological texts has meant considering the way in which the ethnographer engages with the reality and with the people they study, exploring the interrelation of self and other. These debates have often dealt with ideas about the objective or subjective nature of ethnographic constructions and the power relations that determine different cultural interactions. Anthropologists such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995) further consider how anthropological research and writing could be a politically-engaged practice in which issues of ethics and morality become central to the work. In her famous essay for a militant anthropology, Scheper-Hughes argues that doing anthropology in the perilous situations and times in which many communities and individuals live means to carefully listen and account for these experiences with the tools of anthropology. It also means adopting an explicit “ethical orientation to ‘the other’” (1995: 418) and an actively engaged position with their struggles and crises. Though some aspects of her argument have been widely criticised, I find some of Scheper-Hughes ideas around recognition in ethnographic work relevant to my own work in Extremadura.

The idea of ethnography as a practice that *recognises* the needs of the people with whom the anthropologist collaborates has indeed informed the decisions I have made when writing the dissertation. In the thesis, I have opted to use the original names of those I worked with, with their consent. Many of them, especially relatives of those killed and repressed by the Franco regime, preferred their identities to be known, as some explained, because they had already been obscured by years of public silence and institutional neglect. Most certainly, anthropological ethics committees and guidelines (see the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK ethics guidelines for an example) often ask that anthropologists consider confidentiality in relation to the identity of collaborators, in order to protect their privacy and personal accounts. In the context of my research, issues around the exposure and visibility of information, which are key to the work of associations, scientists, and the families involved in mass grave searches, have thus been decisive when examining how best to write about people's lives and actions. In this regard, the thesis complies with the demands for responsibility (Scheper-Hughes 1995) that come with representing and disseminating these historical accounts and the voices of those who uttered them.

Ruth Behar (1997) and Nancy Scheper-Hughes (Ibid.) have described ethnographic work as a way of witnessing, problematising the well-established understanding of the anthropologist as a detached observer. For Behar, for instance, notions of witnessing imply a personal connection to the observed reality, in which the "I" in ethnographic work is taken into account as it becomes entangled with the lives of the collectives and individuals it seeks to portray. The making of ethnographic knowledge, as Sheper-Hughes has highlighted, is inevitably an activity related to an act of giving testimony on the part of the observer, to an active form of eyewitnessing that places the researcher "inside human events as a responsive, reflexive and morally committed being" (1995: 419). My ethnographic contribution is thus deeply influenced by my own commitment to the study of the forms of violence and subordination that occurred in the place where I was born, to finding out about the stories of others, which, in turn, became part of my perception of my own past. Moreover, my choice of a visual methodology to complement the text of the thesis also reveals a view of the exhumation intricately enmeshed with my own personal experience of each site and the relations that I formed with families, scientists, and activists alike. The choice and composition of images thus emerged not only from my

conceptual preoccupations with the space of the mass grave but also from the intimate relationship I developed with it.

Through the archaeological work in the mass grave and the interviews with people who shared intensely private stories and fears with me, I too imagined and internalised these displaced forms of violence, trapped in humans, remnants, and in the landscape. My dreams and thoughts would become entangled with these fatal realities—as did those of other volunteers, neighbours, and activists—affecting my impressions and permeating my day-to-day interactions. Talking about torture, abuse, and killings in these communities provoked a particular personal response to and imagination of these forms of violence in me, which ultimately influenced the type of images I produced. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag (2003) discusses how photographs of violence have the capacity to shock audiences through the atrocities they depict and to cause particular reactions to suffering and death. Images, Sontag argues, have the power to objectify these realities but also to speak of the forms of subjectivity that generate them. Her insights into the imagery of suffering are indeed relevant in order to reflect on how one treats “the pain of others” in particular shots and compositions. The visual material in the thesis was difficult to produce, select, and assemble, as I was aware of the meanings that an explicit iconography of war and pain can attain in public realms, where such images, as Sontag points out, are often compulsively consumed and demanded.

Throughout each exhumation campaign, I took photographs of all the material objects, people, and moments that I considered relevant to the experience of the mass grave. I photographed familial encounters at the burials and the technical work inside the pit. Indeed, by the end of fieldwork, I had also hundreds of images of corpses, which I was not sure what to do with. At the start, I tried to avoid using pictures of bones in the videos and in the text, as whenever I showed them they seemed to attract a curiosity that had more to do with a morbid fascination around the image of the corpse and less to do with the meanings they acquired in the context of the exhumation. With time, however, and with the writing of my ethnography, I came to realise that, in the context of *War Histories I* and *War Histories II*, as well as of the chapters of the thesis, these images needed to be present along with those of people and of the spaces where history was invoked. The exercise of writing and “watching”

(Azoulay 2008) the images I produced made me think critically about these compositions, not only as pieces of anthropological or artistic value to be merely “consumed” or “observed”, but as objects that created a space in which political engagement and negotiation was possible (Ibid.). As part of a project that seeks to investigate the role of different actors in the creation of new political subjectivities and realities, I realised that my images ought also to play a role in provoking a response in the spectator. By creating the two photomontages, which stand alone and yet can be related to the text, I aimed to press the viewer to gaze at them and question them from the civic space that they both inhabit (Ibid.).

The photographs in the thesis are thus another form of ethnographic representation, which allows the interpretation of violence and suffering through a different medium and language. In my attempt to work with the visual, however, I acknowledged a need to be reflective about the way in which images are used and my own position as participant and producer. It is important to recognise the value of these images in relation to the written material, since together they aim to convey the sense and meanings that corpses and stories gained in the realm of the exhumation. Likewise, ethical questions around the remaking of history after a dictatorial regime and in the current democratic milieu connect an anthropology of mass graves and exhumations with a political motivation to understand the project of families, activists, and scientists in the present. In such a way, the ethnographic work presented here is guided by an interest in examining but also engaging with these particular social realities, which are, at the same time, part of my own.

### *Thesis Outline*

The chapters in the thesis deal with the memory and treatment of the Republican body, from the time of the war to the present day, namely in their presence in the mass graves and after their exhumation. To understand the meanings that these corpses have gained and social actions they have triggered, the thesis also focuses on the particular experience of the exhumations as they become a system of information production and generate novel forms of memorialisation.

Chapter 1 deals with the history of violence in Spain attached to the Civil War and the postwar period, analysing the treatment that the bodies and the memory of Republican and Francoist followers received over time. In so doing, it attempts to historicise the different exhumation movements that have taken place in the country since the end of the war and to contextualise the present social and political movements around the recovery of the mortal remains of the Republican dead.

Chapter 2 focuses, in more depth, on the present production of historical knowledge about the past in Extremadura, analysing the work of historians, archaeologists, and historical memory associations and projects in the region. The chapter deals in particular with the politics surrounding the collection of information from archives, the role of documents in historical searches, and the craft of the historian who works with the archives of the Francoist era. Throughout this section, I establish a connection between the archive and the mass grave, connecting the work of the historian with that of the archaeologist and physical anthropologist who works with the mortal remains of the Republican dead to discern their histories and identities.

Chapters 3 and 4 analyse two exhumations in the village of Castuera and Puebla de Alcocer, respectively, which are both located in the northeast of the province of Badajoz (see map of the region). The chapters are accompanied by two videos, *War Histories I* and *War Histories II*. The text and the visual compositions related to both chapters examine how scientific practice, historical research, and the firsthand and inherited accounts of different generations interact to produce a history of the executions. In the case of Castuera, my analysis is concerned with the way in which collective and individual histories are produced around the unknown mortal remains located at the rear of the village cemetery in 2011. In relation to Puebla de Alcocer, my study is concerned with how the exhumation of the mortal remains of familial ancestors was conditioned by the persistent memory that exists about the executions and the identity of the victims in the village community. In both chapters, text and image deal with how the certainty and uncertainty that surrounded each exhumation process are mediated in the assemblage of different stories about the past.

Chapter 5 examines the way in which the enduring violence of the execution affected the lives of those related to the dead and how such violence resides at the heart of historical searches that people carry out in the present. The chapter deals with how these Republican deaths haunted the lives of different generations, as it remained in the bodies and the minds of the living and in the artefacts and spaces connected to the war throughout the years. It considers the ways in which the force of such repression has erupted in the present through encounters that families, activists, neighbours, and scientists have with the materiality of archives and mass graves, and explores issues of transgenerational transmission, trauma, and grief in relation to these distinct groups.

Last, Chapter 6 follows the trajectory of the mortal remains exhumed from the mass graves to their reburial place in the municipal cemeteries of each location. The chapter explores the politics around the identification and commemoration of mortal remains in Extremadura, examining how the process of reburial is enmeshed with the diverse wishes of different actors and associations. The chapter concentrates on the production of different memorials and rituals to commemorate the Civil War dead in Castuera, Puebla de Alcocer, and in a third location, Garciaz—where the location of the mortal remains of the missing was never accomplished. In so doing, it analyses the social relations that constitute these processes, considering these commemorative projects as sites where collective and individual memories are enacted, but also as places of familial and political contestation.

## Chapter 1

### Of Bodies and Memories

In the last months of the year 2000 we received some letters and many phone calls from different parts of Spain. Many people told us they were searching for a disappeared relative...we had a list of people waiting for the opportunity to recover their remains. There was no doubt at this point that Spain was a big mass grave

Emilio Silva, *Las Fosas de Franco (Franco's Mass Graves)* (2005: 72)

In October 2000, Madrid-based journalist Emilio Silva travelled to his father's village, Pereje, in northwest Spain, to gather information about the effects of the war in the area as part of an article he planned to write. Sixty-one years had passed since the end of the war, when Silva visited his grandmother's village with a special interest in collecting the stories of the people who, fearing death, had to flee the place and seek refuge elsewhere (other villages, other towns still under Republican rule, other countries) at the wake of Franco's military uprising. As Silva would recall later in one of his books (see Silva 2005), his own grandmother was one of the people forced to leave her house with her six children, after her husband had been executed with twelve other men in the nearby village of Priaranza del Bierzo, in 1936, in the region of Castilla y León. The investigation into the stories of other people led Emilio to stumble upon the story of the life and death of his grandfather, Emilio Silva Faba. In *Franco's Mass Graves* (2005), Silva retells how his encounter with a friend of the family, Arsenio—a communist militant who had experienced the severe repressive reality of postwar prisons and helped him to find witnesses to the killings—marked a turning point for his search into the history of the area and into his own family's past.

After he had lunch with him one afternoon, he reminisces, “there was a moment when he told me something about the place where my grandfather's body

had been abandoned and buried with twelve or thirteen other men. He also told me how they killed him and who could have been responsible for his death” (Silva 2005: 23). That day, as Silva describes, a last minute change of plans in his interview schedule led Arsenio and Silva on the search for the mass grave where his grandfather and the other men were buried. Hours later, and after travelling around different villages and towns—to clandestine burials and cemeteries—asking elders about the existence of the mass burial, the friends found the person who would tell them where the site was. Soon, after so many years, they would be confronted by it in person. The man pointed Silva towards a tree near the crossing of two roads. “I felt an immense emotion”, writes Silva, “I walked to the tree and rested my hands on its trunk, as if in that way I could communicate with those men.” (Silva 2005: 25). After locating the site, Emilio Silva and his uncle Ramón initiated the process of recovering the remains of their relative and the other corpses in the mass grave. Following an appeal to the village local authority, they received help from the town hall and soon obtained the consent of the owner of the property. Through an article about the story of his family and the mass grave in a local newspaper,<sup>1</sup> Silva got in touch with some of the other families that also had relatives in the mass grave. The newspaper text also attracted the attention of an archaeologist, Julio Vidal, a forensic anthropologist, Maria Encina Prada, and an expert in forensic medicine, Francisco Etxeberría. The three of them offered to conduct the exhumation work in the mass grave with a team of volunteers and to handle the subsequent identification process (Silva 2005) through means of a scientific methodology.

The exhumation of the “*trece de Priaranza*” (the thirteen from Priaranza)—as they came to be known—would be the first one of this kind in the region and indeed in the country. Many would follow after this. In the following months, Emilio Silva joined historian Santiago Macías to create the non-governmental *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* (Association for the Recovery of Historical

---

<sup>1</sup> The article referred to here is, “Mi abuelo también fue un desaparecido” (“My Grandfather also Disappeared”) published in the newspaper *Crónica de León* on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2000. The article retells in detail the story of the death of Silva’s grandfather and how Silva and other members of his family, after locating the mass grave, had initiated the recovery of the body in order to bury it next to his grandmother’s remains in her cemetery tomb.

Memory—ARMH, from now on). The growing requests and the spreading visibility of the association—through their website and the mounting “media fuss” (Ferrándiz and Baer 2008)—triggered the creation of branches in other regions and provinces (Ferrándiz 2006). It also prompted the emergence of other associations of a distinct nature. Among these, another national association, the *Federación Estatal de Foros por la Memoria* (Forum for Memory—Foro from now on), formed by various groups linked to the Communist Party was created in 2002. Throughout the years, the proliferation of multiple civil society groups and organisations at national, regional, and local levels gradually shaped the commonly known *movement for the recovery of historical memory*. The work of the movement, which comprised associations and family groups with distinct aims and political agendas, dug deep into the memory politics of the Franco regime and the so-called transition to democracy. Since the year 2000, exhumations, commemorative events, human rights appeals, demonstrations, and an array of cultural products generated by these groups (e.g. books, academic and newspaper articles, exhibitions, reports etc) exposed the effects of Francoist repression and the absence of a politics of reparation and recognition in the different administrations that had existed since the end of the war in national and international domains. They broke with the silence that had governed the official narrative about the war, which had contained the experience of the losing side of the conflict until then.

To contextualise the exhumations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Spain, this chapter provides an overview of the different regimes of memory and forgetting that have governed the country since the end of the Civil War (1936-1939). It examines the treatment of the Republican defeated in national commemorations and historical narratives during the war, the dictatorship, and the transition to democracy. In the line of other works such as those by Verdery (1999), Laqueur (1994), or Winter (1996), among others, it explores the importance of dead body politics in the articulation of national identity discourses and in the making of different political projects and sentiments. The chapter firstly considers how the conflict between right-wing and left-wing collectives in Spain led to the outbreak of the war. In so doing, it explores how different forms of violence over the body acquired the symbolic political meanings of particular ideologies. The body as a place on which antagonisms were inscribed

became a vehicle for the configuration of new regimes and power relations. Thinking back to Antigone's ordeal, the chapter considers issues around the detention, torture, killing and proper burial of the bodies of Republican and Francoist supporters alike, exploring how their galvanisation or desecration played an important part in the establishment of political orders over time. Last, it returns to the exhumations that have taken place since the year 2000 in order to examine how the reappearance of these corpses prompted civil society groups to reclaim the redress and restitution of their identities against the existing institutional passivity and disengagement with the memory of the defeated.

### *The Civil War and its Aftermath*

On the 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1936, a part of the Spanish military carried out a coup d'état to overthrow the government of the Second Republic with the support of diverse members of the Spanish right wing—including conservative Catholics, monarchists, Carlists<sup>2</sup> and the fascist groups that were part of *Falange Española*. The coup, which would eventually result in a long and bloody civil war due to the unanticipated resistance of the working-class population (Preston 1996), was strongly determined by the growing social, economic, and political unrest that marked the convoluted periods of the Republic from 1931 until the beginning of the war in 1936. The situation during the Second Republic and the ensuing conflict, nonetheless, have to be understood as part of a broader history of social struggle between “the forces of reform and reaction” (Ibid.), which had been commonplace in Spain since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the existing social tensions in the country at the time of the war revolved around class and economic inequalities existing between landowners and industrialists and landless labourers and industry workers. They also had their origin in issues connected to regionalist vs. centralist interests and religious discord (Preston 1994, 1996, 2013; Casanova 1992). In the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Spain was still a country under the influence of a strong oligarchy (large estate owners or *latifundistas*), though it counted a growing progressive bourgeoisie

---

<sup>2</sup> The Carlists, part of the Traditional Communion of the Carlists, were an anti-liberal and anti-modernist movement that reclaimed a return to the monarchic structure and aristocratic values of the Spanish Ancien Regime. According to Preston (1996: 29) their militia, the *requetés*, were trained in Mussolini's Italy between 1934 and 1936.

(Preston 1996) and a fast-developing working class faction (influenced by anarchist, socialist and communist movements elsewhere).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, important antagonisms between traditionalists and military sectors that sought to preserve their privileged status and those who sought to democratise the system caused the country to oscillate between the poles of political and economic stagnation and revolutionary progress, eventually culminating in the outbreak of the war.

The end of the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera and the exile of king Alfonso XIII in 1931 opened the way for the proclamation of a new democratic and republican system. The elections called on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1931 saw the sweeping victory of socialist and liberal middle class Republicans (Preston 1996, 2013) and the instauration on the 14<sup>th</sup> April of Spain's Second Republic. The Republic sought to modernise the country, deeply affected by the corruption of the *latifundista* system and its *caciquismo*,<sup>4</sup> the disadvantaged role of the industrialists sectors, and the inhumane conditions of labourers and the industrial proletariat. The coming of the Second Republic meant the redistribution of power from the oligarchy to the moderate left, formed by working-class representatives, Socialists, and members of the Republican petty bourgeoisie (Ibid.). On the other side of the spectrum, however, other groups formed to protect the interests of powerful members of the right (of monarchist, Catholic, Carlist and fascists tendencies), the Church, and the army. Three different governments determined the development of events during the Second Republic. The first government was the so-called *Bienio Reformista* (the reformist two years) from 1931 to 1933. Governed in coalition by the moderate party *Acción Republicana* and the Socialist Party (PSOE), their programme sought to implement profound changes. Among these, the division of the land, the withdrawal of economic privileges from the army and upper classes, and the limitation of the role of the Church, especially in education, proved highly unpopular in affluent right-wing and anti-Republican circles. Failure to implement some of these much-awaited reforms

---

<sup>3</sup> Authors like Gregory M. Luebbert (in Casanova 1992) have connected the advent of the fascist regime after the Spanish Civil War to the general backwardness that existed in the country, which impeded the development of a strong liberal hegemonic model that could form successful coalitions with the organised working-class movement—just as happened in other countries such as France or Britain in the same period.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, *caciquismo* is the system of domination and influence of a few (*caciques*) over the population of rural areas.

and a surging discontent among the population soon prompted a call for new elections.

The elections of November 1933 gave most of the votes to the coalition of right wing groups<sup>5</sup> CEDA (*Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*). Due to the coalition's fascist tendencies, however, the government was handed to the Radical Republicans—who aligned with the right wing group in an opportunistic move. In such a way, the Radicals acted as a puppet government of the CEDA from 1933 to 1935. This period would come to be known in Spanish historiography as the *Bienio Negro* (the black two years) (Preston 1996, 2013). These two years were characterised by a paralysis of the reforms initiated by the previous government, the general maltreatment of workers by employers, an intensification of leftist protests promoted by parties and trade unions, and its fierce repression by the Civil Guard—especially during the general strike of October 1934<sup>6</sup> (Preston 1996; Juliá 1979). In addition to this, these years were marked by the increasing involvement of the Church in the political realm and the ongoing clash between young factions of left and right wing groups on the street—between socialist, anarchists, and communists, on the one hand, and right wing anti-Republican and fascist sympathisers of Falange, on the other. In these two years right and left wing positions became extremely polarised (Ibid.).

As a result of the escalating social turmoil, some parties from the fragmented left allied for the new elections called on February 1936. Santos Juliá (1979) has argued that it was the “galvanization of the Republican cadaver”—after the violent clashes of the “black years”—that reunited a fragmented left divided at the end of the first reformist government. Different left wing organisations and trade unions<sup>7</sup> thus

---

<sup>5</sup> Right-wing members of this group included those referred to, in some Spanish historiography, as “accidentalists”, who worked for the interests of landowners and industrialists under the legal system of the Republic and Monarchy. These included members of organisations such as *Acción Popular*.

<sup>6</sup> The strike was promoted by the Socialist Party PSOE and its trade union UGT (*Unión General de Trabajadores*) and to a lesser extent by the other representative forces of the left: the anarchists CNT (*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*) and FAI (*Federación Anarquista Ibérica*) and the Communist Party PCE.

<sup>7</sup> The Frente Popular was composed by the Socialist Party PSOE, the Republican Left (*Izquierda Republicana*), the Republican Union (*Unión Republicana*), the Communist Party PCE, the Marxist Workers' Party or POUM (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*), the Syndicalist Party (*Partido Sindicalista*), the Socialist Youth

formed under the Popular Front (*Frente Popular*)—which was inspired by similar initiatives that emerged in Europe to combat the spread of fascism. The coalition, which won the elections of February 1936, shattered rightist hopes for a legal authoritarian and corporative state (Preston 1996: 239). The menace of deep-seated reforms, like those proposed in the early years of the Republic, threatened many on the right, the Church and the army. This triggered a general desire to topple the new government among these groups, which would finally materialise with the army uprising on July 1936.

The army's insurrection of 1936 was profoundly influenced by the deep-rooted ideological conviction that the Republic had crushed the values of the traditional order. Looking back to a glorious imperial time, to the *Reconquista*, those who supported the coup believed that Spain had to be seized from the threat of secession, liberalism, communism, and anarchism. The nation, as rightist propaganda stated, had to be rescued from the foreign Bolshevist, Masonic, and Jewish hands (Preston 2011; Richards 2011) that ruled the country. Moreover, a Catholic moral and hierarchical order ought to be restored in what they regarded as a Republican anarchic and atheist society. Those who orchestrated the coup—directed by General Emilio Mola with the help of Generals José Sanjurjo, Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, Manuel Godea and Francisco Franco—contested that the fundamental pillars of the nation, namely “Religion, Fatherland, Family, and Property” had to be reinstated (Preston 1994: 41; Juliá 1979). In order to achieve this goal, the military uprising would ultimately target all allies of the democratic state. Eradicating all signs of the left-wing movements that had thrived in the first decades of the century became the main objective of those who revolted against the established Republican state (Preston 2013; Espinosa 2003). Violence would thus be directed and systematic from the beginning of the war. As General Emilio Mola ordered when the conflict broke out:

It will be borne in mind that our action will have to be very violent in order to crush a strong and well-organised enemy as soon as possible. Hence all leaders of political parties, societies or unions, not pledged to the Movement will be imprisoned: such

---

Federation (*Federación de Juventudes Socialistas*) and the General Workers Union or UGT (*Unión General de Trabajadores*) (Santos Juliá 1976).

people will be administered exemplary punishment so that movements of rebellion or strikes will be strangled. (in Preston 1996: 75)

Historians such as Paul Preston (1996, 2013) or Javier Rodrigo (2008) have argued that the type of violence perpetrated by both sides was extremely asymmetric during the conflict and reflected the political power of different groups. The superiority of the rebel military and paramilitary groups—formed by members of Falange, the Civil Guard, and other rightist sympathisers—allowed such a ruthless repressive approach to the conquest of Republican areas. Supporters of the coup acquired a powerful position due to their access to the army's artillery, and later, to the foreign aid received from the fascist governments of Germany and Italy. Republican flanks, however, formed by fractions of the military, which remained loyal to the democratic regime, popular militias, and the foreign volunteers that fought as part of the International Brigades, were continuously besieged by the shortage of appropriate equipment and foreign aid. In the development of the conflict, the advance and fierce violence perpetrated by Francoist groups has to be connected to a relentless quest for the ultimate form of power, that which Hannah Arendt (1970, 1973) identified with the law, institutions, and the state. In Spain, left-wing collectives fought to stop the disintegration of the government and to destroy any prospect of a fascist state, whilst right-wing groups organised themselves into the *Movimiento Nacional* (Nationalist Movement), of which Franco became chief and “single commander” (Preston 1996) in the early stages of the war. In the quest for a new system, political repression became a definitive instrumental resource (Arendt 1970), especially in the rearguard of Republican and Nationalist armies during the war.

Republican rearguard repression took place in particular in the first months of the war, before rebel troops occupied the places that remained Republican during the war. Republican violence usually targeted right-wing sympathisers—especially landowners connected to the right, *falangistas*, and clergymen (Preston 1996). These were arrested and, on occasions, executed. In bigger cities, some left-wing groups participated in the establishment of semi-secret detention and interrogation centres called *checas*, where many right-wing advocates were subject to summary trials and further reprisals (Ibid; Ledesma 2003). In the first moments, churches were also burnt and religious heritage destroyed. Brutal manifestations of anticlerical violence against

church sites but also priests and nuns became widespread as many regarded Catholic morality one of the main enemies of the proletariat (see Delgado 2012; Thomas 2012; Ledesma 2003). Many authors have argued that the violence carried out by left-wing militiamen was a form of repression that emerged with the aim of defeating the insurgent movement (Preston 2013) and motivated by a yearning for a revolution (Rodrigo 2008). Voices of Francoist historiography have identified these episodes as part of a broader Republican repressive strategy termed *Terror Rojo* (Red Terror), as some historians have pointed out (Espinosa 2002, 2005). In either case, Republican violence gained different intensities around the country<sup>8</sup> and, as Ledesma (2003) has warned, has to be considered in its context and extent to avoid replicating the mythical definitions it acquired during the Franco regime. When the advancing fascist columns occupied the territories of the Republican zone, brutal acts of counter-repression were often carried out in retaliation. Workers' collectives (waged labourers, miners, factory workers and farmers, among others), often affiliated to a political party or trade union, were targeted and the civilian population quickly subjugated. Landowners, local *falangistas*, right-wing sympathisers and priests often participated in these detentions and executions.

Francoist repression would also acquire different undertones and intensities. Different historians have identified the first year of the war as the bloodiest, especially on the Nationalist rearguard (Rodrigo 2013; Preston 2013; Espinosa 2003)—this was certainly the case in Extremadura, one of the first regions to be taken over. Historians have termed this moment as a stage of *terror caliente* (hot terror) (Gomez Bravo and Marco 2011). Extrajudicial killings became widespread and were the cause of many of the war losses on the occupied areas (see Martin Bastos 2014 for an in depth study of Extremadura). In this period, violence exercised against civilians by Francoist troops and supporters, as Javier Rodrigo (2013: 555) has observed, ended the lives of 130,000 civilians, whilst 55,000 have been counted on the Republican home front.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Francisco Espinosa (2012b: 50) has pointed out, for instance, that in Cataluña, where the coup failed, a double repression took place. The unsuccessful nature of the coup gave place to a revolution that confronted members of different left-wing organizations (i.e. communists and anarchists). Here, Espinosa highlights that Republican terror surpassed Nationalist repression.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted here that the number of combatant casualties on the front line in the same period was 167,000 (Rodrigo 2013: 555).

Extralegal executions were called *sacas* or *paseos*—literally meaning the act of taking someone *out* or taking someone for a *walk*, respectively. The abduction and later killing of suspects often took place at night, in clandestine locations in the outskirts of towns and villages, on roadsides, at the back of cemeteries or in the middle of the countryside. Considering the number of victims and the systematic approach to some of these killings, some authors have argued that, in the Francoist rearguard, these actions were part and parcel of an organised extermination strategy (Rodrigo 2013; Preston 2011, 2013; Espinosa 2002) to eliminate the Republican enemy. *Sacas* or *paseos* carried out by Francoist troops, militias, and sympathisers placed corpses in remote and unknown locations, making the corpse of Republicans effectively disappear. On other occasions, mass grave locations were known in the communities where the killings occurred, as some executions had a semi-covert character—either because some neighbours witnessed them or buried the corpses, or because those who perpetrated the crimes spoke openly about them (see Chapter 4). Other tactics used by Francoist troops and paramilitary to spread the terror during the occupation of territories, at different times of the war, included the expropriation and looting of Republican households; the sexual harassment and humiliation of Republican women—who were often raped, shaved and fed castor oil to make them defecate whilst they were forced to walk in the streets of their hometowns (see González Duro 2012; Preston 2013:142-149)—or the torture, killing and exemplifying display of the corpses of dead Republicans in a village’s streets or *plazas* (town squares) (see Preston 2013: 143).

The violent rituals of the fast-advancing Francoist groups, which sought to desecrate and criminalise the Republican body, transformed over time especially with the proclamation of the *Nuevo Estado* (New State) in 1938 (Gil Vico 1998)—and the consolidation of the Nationalist Movement. After this, extrajudicial practices—or forms of “hot terror”—began to share space with emerging forms of institutionalised repression (Espinosa 2012a; Chaves Rodriguez 2014; Gomez Bravo and Marco 2011). Executions and prison sentences came to be administered through military court-martials and summary trials. They were part of an emerging legal military system that aimed to legitimate the existence of the newly constituted Francoist

state.<sup>10</sup> Law and a new government, recalling Arendt (1970), established the power of the Francoist state, secured its ideology, and validated its acts of tyranny. Judicial processes led to the creation of other mass graves in cemeteries around the country and filled both permanent and improvised prisons in Spain, with many given life-long sentences. Prisons, concentration camps, and work battalions, which had existed since the beginning of the war, housed hundreds of thousands of Republican militants and supporters as the conflict drew to an end on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1939. With the victory of the rebels, concentration camps and the whole detention system became an important instrument for classifying and re-educating prisoners in the new Francoist ideology, whilst building a powerful workforce for the new regime (Rodrigo 2013; Gomez Bravo and Marco 2011). In the immediate postwar period, the persecution and punishment of those considered enemies of the New State continued. Subversion and dissent were harshly contained through a system of collaboration and police surveillance that emerged at local and national levels (Casanova 2002; Moreno Gómez 2002). For one more decade, remaining combating groups hidden in the mountains and valleys of the centre and south of the country formed the anti-Francoist guerrilla that fought against the regime until the 1950s. The profound violence experienced by the defeated would mark their lives and those of their offspring for years to come (Rodrigo 2008).

The Francoist state emerged from the victory of 1939 in a country devastated by war, poverty, and famine. Victory, however, brought with it a pressing need to define the foundations of the new order. In the aftermath of the war, public commemoration became a crucial artefact in the creation of a Francoist social imaginary. Remembering the conflict but, in particular, those who perished in its course, fuelled an official language of sacrifice, expressed through monuments and celebrations, which separated the victors from the defeated, Spaniards from “*reds*”. In the postwar cultural universe, Francoist victims became one of the most celebrated symbols of the regime. Their deaths epitomised the ultimate suffering in rescuing the Fatherland, in restoring the political and religious status quo. Such sacrifice for the

---

<sup>10</sup> Processes such as the so-called *Causa General* (General Cause) aimed to compile information about Republican wrongdoings, enabling ideological cleansing and indoctrination. Most importantly, however, such legal edicts became powerful instruments through which the Francoist order would establish its sovereignty over the previous Republican socio-political system.

nation brought the Spanish historical clock back to zero (Box 2011). For the victors, Spain had been liberated from Marxists hordes and the communist threat that hounded it. It had launched itself into a new period of presumed purity and prosperity led by General Francisco Franco, the *Caudillo*. Victory plunged the country into a 37-year dictatorship, marked by the idiosyncratic politics of the new authoritarian state's ideology. Under *nacionalcatolicismo* (National Catholicism), totalitarian intentions mixed with expressions of utmost religiosity, shaping the particular socio-political system of Francoism (*franquismo*).

### *Memory and Commemoration during the Franco Regime*

Victory was eagerly commemorated in the first months of the regime. Parades, acts, and provisional monuments invaded spaces of mass celebration (Vázquez Astorga 2004, 2006). In the aftermath of the conflict, palpable euphoria dressed public spaces with Nationalist mementos, images of Franco, and fascist salutes. Buildings were covered with the red and yellow flag that substituted the Republican red, yellow, and purple colours. Other flags with the symbols of *Falange Española*, such as the yoke and the arrow or Carlist flags, filled cities like Madrid, especially on the day of the national Victory Parade celebrated days after the end of the war (Box 2011). Numerous writings in right-wing newspapers and magazines praised the achievements of the army, celebrating the end of the War of Liberation with fervent and epic scripts. Victory was the start of a historical beginning that aimed to re-install previous Imperial time (Ibid.). The great feat, nonetheless, soon gained deep religious undertones. The veneration and sentiment for the redeemed nation during the first rituals of April 1939 became profoundly entangled with the Catholic rhetoric of anguish and pain performed during Spanish Easter (Ibid.). As Zira Box (2011) has highlighted, the salvation of the Fatherland embodied in the victors' sacrifice and the salvation of humankind incarnated in Christ's death, quickly became entangled in a common space of postwar spring ceremonies. Moreover, in many of these celebrations, Francoist exploits also came to be associated with an act of God. As if guided in his Crusade by the Christian deity, the General's deeds soon acquired a divine-like quality.

Similarly, victory rituals rapidly turned those who perished on the Francoist side of the conflict into the Fallen (*los caídos*) (Vázquez Astorga 2004). Their deaths became sacred, giving them the status of heroes and martyrs of the Crusade. The fallen, as Box (2011) explains, became ever-present, as their deaths were idolized in Francoist rhetoric. As the famous journalist J.M Sánchez Silva, member of Falange, wrote in an article for the fascist magazine *Arriba*:

The fallen for Spain, invisible, firm in memory. Their flag is always in our thoughts; their chants without words are always heard by all of us. (quoted in Box 2011: 98)

In the *Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, anthropologist Katherine Verdery has argued that dead bodies have the capacity to become important vehicles over which claims are localised, new meanings construed, and political orders established in moments of social transformation (Verdery 1999: 27–28). Their ‘thereness’ and materiality, indeed, as the author argues, allows them to transcend time, making the past palpable and bringing it immediately back into memory. Those who fought in Franco’s army and paramilitary and those who perished on the home front, as a result of Republican violence, were always evoked in triumphal commemorations and as part of the postwar nationalist narrative. In these new rituals, the corpses came to personify the spirit and essence of the New Spain. They embodied a foundational moment and became the origin of myths that sustained the regime’s historicity over time (Box 2011; Reig Tapia 2006; Moradiellos 2004). Through their worship, they became efficacious political symbols (Verdery 1999) through which the regime ascertained the Francoist vision of the new nation, its Catholic values, and the dictator’s particular authoritarian ideology.

The commemoration and glorification of the martyrs and heroes of the Crusade reasserted Franco’s intentions in a climate of, often, divergent political aspirations. For those in Falange, the war dead embodied the torment undergone for the sake of the Fatherland. Their demise opened a path to the great totalitarian, national-syndicalist project that the fascist group had long desired. For those flanks associated with Catholicism, traditionalists, and the Church, these deaths were conceived, first and foremost, as a “joyful offering to God” (Box 2011: 125). Different right-wing agendas between *falangistas*, monarchists, Carlists, and the

Church about the treatment of their corpses and their celebration came then to be intrinsically related to the type of state each imagined. Whereas the Church aspired, from the start, to recover a privileged position in state governance, *falangistas* advocated for a more subordinated role for the religious institution. In an effort to create a balance, Francoist endeavours moved between the patriotism of the *falangistas* and the catholic aspirations of other conservative groups. Such discrepancies were, however, ultimately subordinated to Franco's personal will. The mixed composition of the Francoist political project would hence imagine the dead as those who fought "for God, for Spain and for the national-syndicalist revolution" (Ibid: 138).

The Francoist dead were provided with alternative treatment in national and regional commemorations. They were provided with a date in the calendar, which remembered their sacrifice on the day of Christ the King (*Cristo Rey*) (Ibid.) in the Christian almanac. Likewise, they were recalled as part of the celebration of important battles and other war ventures, which asserted their valour—an example of these were the celebration of the Battle of Belchite and of the assault on the Alcázar de Toledo (Aguilar 1996: 73). At first, these celebrations had a marked fascist slant due to the influential role Falange played in some state departments. Later on, more salient religious gestures dominated these ceremonies, abandoning some of the fascist symbols and rhetoric (Box 2011). From the early years of the dictatorship and under the supervision of the unified party *FET y de las JONS*,<sup>11</sup> however, the deceased were honoured with masses, collective ceremonies, special religious and secular prayers (for instance the prayer for Falange's dead, *Oración por los muertos de Falange*) and intonations (such as Falange's *¡Presentes!*), and multiple material inscriptions. Indeed, those who died "for God and for Spain" received open-ended tributes in each city and town around the country. Their names were engraved on the façades of churches and numerous carefully designed monuments were built for their remembrance. Monuments of austere and minimal appearance that bore symbols like the yoke and arrow, the Spanish coat of arms, and especially the cross occupied all corners of the country's geography. Tombstones, monoliths, and monuments to the

---

<sup>11</sup> Falange Española and other groups such as the Requetés (Carlist army) join together to constitute a single political entity under Franco's governance. The union was consolidated through the Decree no 255 of 10<sup>th</sup> April 1937, which dissolve all other political parties (see BOE 20<sup>th</sup> April 1937)

Heroes and Martyrs were constructed inside and outside cemeteries, in the centre and outskirts of urban and rural localities, and incorporated into the life of different communities (Vázquez Astorga 2006).<sup>12</sup> Among these constructions were the infamous crosses dedicated to the fallen, which reasserted their everlasting ubiquity in the postwar social milieu.



Image 2. Act organised by the female section of Falange (*Sección Femenina*) in honour of the “Fallen for Spain”. Courtesy of the Photographic Archive from the *Fundación Diario Madrid*

The Cross of the Fallen (*Cruz de los Caídos*) was built to honour all those who perished on the Francoist side of the conflict. The decision to create these crosses was inspired, as Zira Box (2011) has highlighted, by the strong Christian tradition that prevailed in Spanish society for centuries but also by the widespread use of the symbol in Western funerary postwar constructions—like on the tomb of the unknown

---

<sup>12</sup> Some important monuments in terms of their dimensions and the meanings they gained in the regime and Falange include: the monument to those who died during conflict at the University Campus in Madrid (*Ciudad Universitaria*) and the Victory Arch, and the monument dedicated to the Fallen—also in Madrid. Additionally, it is also worth noting that one of the first monuments was that dedicated to General Emilio Mola, built in 1939 (Vázquez Astorga 2006).

soldier or the cemeteries created for the fallen elsewhere in Europe after the First World War (Vázquez Astorga 2006). In addition to this, the cross was also idiosyncratic in indicating the influence that the Church was to have in the emergent dictatorial system (Ibid.). Most of the designs<sup>13</sup> incorporated the names of those who had died, adorned with messages that recalled “all those fallen for God and the Fatherland”. Gabriel Ureña (1979) pointed out that these monuments, which embodied the principles of the Nationalist Movement, constituted an “exaltation of the Holy Cross” with a triple meaning: they signified the “rise of religious piety, of an idea of Power expressed on an organic body carved out of stone, which emulated the grandeur of old monuments and that aspired to challenge time and forgetting, and of a colossal structure that expressed the New Regime’s artistic and architectural capacity” (in Silva Suarez n.d.: 21). In such a way, these crosses exemplified their sacrifice but also purposefully recalled, as Ureña also observes, the “crimes committed by reds” (Ibid.).

Moreover, these crosses further constituted a concrete representation of all those who had effectively disappeared in the battleground and on the home front. They became, as Verdery (1999: 5) has observed of other statues, the public *body* of the dead, turning them into timeless icons. As many bodies could not be recovered during the process of search and exhumation that started as far back as 1936—and which became more prominent after 1939 (see Espinosa 2012b)—, the monuments reaffirmed the presence of the missing relative when the corpse was not found. Judicial processes such as the *Causa General* made provisions for locating and unearthing Francoist mortal remains and for recording these deaths on civil registries. In some instances, it did so under the presence of a judge—see the case in the village of Granja de Torrehermosa (Badajoz) in 1937, described by Francisco Espinosa (2012b: 48). When corpses were not found, as stated in some of the legislation, the area of the mass graves was enclosed as a sacred terrain (Ibid.) and their commemoration ensured. In stark contrast, there were many fewer exhumations of the corpses of the defeated carried out in the 1940s, which never transcended the local

---

<sup>13</sup> Local authorities conceived designs for the monuments. Their layout and emplacement were reviewed by the central Department of Censorship and Propaganda—run by Falange—, which ensured that the monument complied with the guidelines and vision of the government (Vázquez Astorga 2006; Box 2011).

domain and remained outside of the state's legal framework and militant propaganda<sup>14</sup> (Ibid.). Gravediggers often carried out these excavations discreetly, returning to the families, Espinosa reckons, the corpses they considered most appropriate. Indeed, the mortal remains of both Francoist and Republican dead received starkly different treatment (Ferrándiz 2014: 22). The exhumations carried out by the regime in the most immediate postwar period strengthened, on the one hand, the ideology and project of the Francoist state through attention and care for the remains of the victors. On the other hand, in the midst of the effervescent commemorative Francoist rapture, exhuming and remembering the defeated became a hazardous practice, which, unable to be fulfilled, left the bodies of the defeated in a permanent state of underground exile (Ferrándiz 2014: 18, 2013, 2011).



Image 3. Cross of the Fallen in Badajoz

---

<sup>14</sup> Espinosa (2012b: 48) also describes, referring to the files of the *Causa General*, how, in 1941, the Public Prosecutor of the Spanish Supreme Court ordered judges from Pretrial hearings to pay “extreme attention [in order] to avoid entering in exhumations related to war actions or repression over red actors, a job that is not responsibility of the *Causa General*”.

The corpses of the victors were also an integral part of Nationalist commemoration. In the first years in particular, the mortal remains of the Francoist dead were marched in their coffins during public events. The corpse of the founder of *Falange Española*, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, executed in the prison of Alicante in 1936 by Republicans, for instance, was atoned through public transfer from Alicante to Madrid in November 1939 (Box 2011; Aguilar 1996). A funerary procession, where *falangistas* carried the coffin containing his corpse on their shoulders, travelled night and day from one city to another, in a journey that took many days. Upon arrival in Madrid, the coffin was taken around the streets of the capital, where people said goodbye to the leader. Later on, the body would rest temporarily at the Monastery of *El Escorial*, outside of Madrid—a place highly esteemed by members of the fascist group for its connection to Felipe II and the time of the thriving Spanish Empire. Bodies also travelled between burials and mausoleums, especially as the regime built new funerary complexes in order to establish the genealogy (Verdery 1999) of the Nationalist Movement. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1940, coinciding with the first anniversary of the Victory, a new decree announced the construction of a monumental compound for the burial of war dead, particularly those who fought on the Francoist side. On the official order, Franco described the colossal structure as the “magnificent temple of our dead” (*Boletín Oficial del Estado*, Spanish Ministry of the Presidency 1940: 2240). The compound, known as the Valley of the Fallen (*Valle de los Caídos*), would accommodate the bodies of thousands of dead transferred from different locations.



Image 4. Valley of the Fallen

Situated in Cuelgamuros, an area of the Sierra de Guadarrama, on the outskirts of Madrid, the Valley of the Fallen was inaugurated on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1959, nineteen years after its official announcement. It commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the conflict. The monumental complex contains a monastery, now looked after by monks of the Benedict order, a Basilica and a monumental 300-metre cross, positioned on top of the crypt.<sup>15</sup> Presented originally as a place to bury those who died fighting on the Francoist side, the monument acquired new meaning in relation to the political agenda of the dictatorship at the end of its construction. If, back in 1940, building the Valley was inextricably connected with the reaffirmation of victory, twenty years later, the pantheon was re-interpreted as a burial space for all war dead. In 1958, a note circulated in an official state bulletin explained that the mausoleum was designed to give burial to those who sacrificed their lives for the Crusade, “without distinguishing the side they fought in, in accordance with the Christian spirit

---

<sup>15</sup> It was designed by the architects Pedro Muguruza and Diego Méndez González and decorated with the religious sculptures of Juan Alava. Many authors have observed how its construction was closely supervised by Franco, intimately reflecting the vision of the dictator—even if some attributed the original idea to other sources (Box 2011; Aguilar 1996).

that inspired that great work [and] as long as they were of Spanish nationality and Catholic religion” (Note on the *Boletín Oficial de Lérida* in Solé 2009: 5). In so doing, the Francoist state sought to downplay the language of victory created during the first years of the postwar period, to place the emphasis of the national discourse on ideas of peace and reconciliation—at a time when new relations with foreign powers were being negotiated. Moreover, authors such as Paloma Aguilar (1996, 2008: 152) have regarded this move as a result of the entangled lives of the Church and the State throughout the dictatorship. As Aguilar explains, it was the Catholic institution who ultimately suggested the burial of corpses from both parts of the conflict in the mausoleum (Ibid.).

In the final years of the construction of the Valley, the central government sent out announcements to civil governors from every province requesting a list of the identified and unidentified mortal remains buried in individual or mass interments or in family tombstones. It invited Francoist and Republican families, who had been able to unearth the mortal remains of their relatives, to bury the corpses of their relatives inside the crypt of the Valley. A new wave of exhumations took place. Human remains of known victims as well as those of unknown Francoist soldiers and civilians, and unknown Republican soldiers, were also exhumed from single and mass internments. Upon completion, the Valley, which was built by Republican prisoners, received the mortal remains of around 21,178 identified individuals. According to recent investigations, there are an approximate 12,669 unidentified corpses. These numbers, however, are still uncertain. Historian Queralt Solé (2009) has argued that information about the movement of these corpses will only become clear when certain files in private and some public archives<sup>16</sup>, are finally made available to researchers. As the end of the project neared, one last corpse was transferred to the crypt. The mortal remains of José Antonio Primo de Rivera would travel again in his coffin, carried on the shoulders of *falangistas*, this time to enter the sepulchre of the Basilica. In the centre of the crypt, between the rows of columbaria where the other corpses resided, the burial of his mortal remains solemnly sealed Francoist sovereignty and its power over the life and death of the regime’s citizens (Mbembe 2003).

---

<sup>16</sup> This is the case, according to Solé, of the private archive of Diego Méndez González, the architect who built the monument.

The control of the fate and commemoration of Francoist and Republican corpses exemplified the regime's dominant ideology and governance. Its power over the dead also mirrored its supremacy over the everyday lives of the living. As many Republicans were trialled, killed, and imprisoned, others were purged and dismissed from their jobs (Molinero, Tinto and Sobrequés i Callicó 2003, Casanova 2002). Many were unable to access new occupations and, for those who did manage to find work, salaries were extremely low. Republicans and their families were widely discriminated against. Throughout the years, their lives became the target of a culture of terror that nourished the New State (Fernandez de Mata 2011). In subsequent years, the focus on peace and the conciliatory discourse that the Francoist state adopted sought to whitewash its oppressive politics and impose an image of tolerance in international circles (Aguilar 1996). The celebration of the 25 years since the end of the war in 1964 put an emphasis on the prowess of the regime to secure stability among Spaniards. Likewise, the different pardon decrees that Franco issued after 1949, which timidly relieved some prisoners' sentences, aimed to shift the dictatorship's image towards that of a government, which had provided the country with "peace, development and legal freedom"—as stated in the preamble of the most important pardon issued in 1969 (cited in Aguilar 1996: 98). Many of these peace declarations were in fact merely rhetorical, as they failed to provide real retribution for the wounded and imprisoned defeated. Peace became a valuable instrument in legitimating and ensuring the continuity of the Francoist system. An emphasis on reconciliation aimed to convince sceptic, disappointed, and dissenting generations that, without Francoism, the country would irremediably experience the outbreak of another conflict. This emphasis on peace and reconciliation would remain constant in Francoist rhetoric in the last years of the regime. At the same time, however, the authoritarian model would still constitute a central pillar of Francoist sovereignty, especially as the imminent death of a weak and aged *Caudillo* forecasted, in the mid 1970s, a much-awaited transition to democracy.

### *The Memory of the War in the Transition to Democracy*

The anti-francoist opposition inside the country and also in exile had promoted the idea of reconciliation. In these circles, reconciliation was intimately paired with a

demand for the amnesty of political prisoners arrested during the war and the Franco regime. Republican leaders and intellectuals living abroad had advocated for reconciliation and amnesty since the most immediate postwar years—as seen, for instance, in the agreement signed by the socialist Indalecio Prieto and the monarchist Gil Robles in 1948 to reprieve all war crimes (Cuesta 2007). Later on, members of younger generations adopted this message, making it a recurrent element of moderate and leftist clandestine campaigns. Indeed, talking about amnesty meant evoking the Civil War again (Ibid.). Josefina Cuesta (2007) has observed how, throughout the dictatorship, the objectives of these two generations, formed by those who witnessed the war and those who never lived through it, would merge into the same “trajectory”. For both, amnesty was a necessary step towards approaching democracy. In the 1960s—and especially in 1969, when the regime initiated its modernising project to open the country to the rest of the world—these requests became more conspicuous and widespread. Dissenting voices would become, as Pere Ysás (2004: x) has observed, an intrinsic part of the political life of this time.<sup>17</sup> In those years when important pardons were issued, the opposition movement requested more from the state. It demanded the full recognition of “fundamental civil, political and union rights” for all, in order to initiate a “real national peace process” (Cuesta 2007: 14). As well as political manifestos and agreements, film and literature acutely criticised the oppressive dictatorship.

Many saw a need for consensus in order to move forward after Franco died. Indeed, in the last years of the regime even the most reformist factions of the dictatorship promoted a view of reconciliation that sought more proximity with the opposition. Before his death, Franco had already arranged for Prince Juan Carlos I to become the new Head of the State, to ensure that the principles of the Nationalist Movement were carried forward into the new order. In this juncture, the memory of the war was once again redefined to suit the democratic rhetoric of the most open-minded groups in government. Paloma Aguilar (1996: 130–137) has argued that, eventually, the regime moved from a discourse that considered the war to be an epic

---

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted here, as Ysás (2004) highlights, that dissent was not something that began in the 1960s. Dissenting voices had existed, according to the author, since the beginning of the Franco regime. Dissent, however grew with time, becoming widespread in the 1950s and more visible and diverse in the 1960s (Ibid.).

exploit to one that portrayed it as an event that should never occur again. This understanding of the conflict provided the Francoist state with a more neutral position in relation to the past. Terms such as Crusade and War of Liberation were progressively replaced by other expressions such as the War of Spain (Ibid: 138), which again downplayed the antagonistic discourse of victory. Not all groups that supported the Franco regime, however, agreed with this new political tendency. Many, especially in the army and the most stagnant factions of the unified party, were loyal to the origins of the Movement and the one-party system. They regarded a possible move to democracy and the parliamentary system as dangerous and conflictive—just as they remembered the Second Republic. Moreover, the emphasis on reconciliation did not entail a shift to recognition and acknowledgement of the defeated, which, in Franco’s view, could never be given the same status as the victors. Recognising the defeated would mean accepting crimes committed in the past, ultimately challenging the regime’s legitimacy (Aguilar 1996).

Since 1969, the crisis of the dictatorship had become visible (Ysás 2004). An increasing wave of protests led by students, intellectuals, and working class collectives made discontent with the system audible. It had become apparent that the economic liberalisation of the regime was no longer compatible with its authoritarian politics. Important transformations would hence take place after Franco died on 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1975. Reforms, which aimed to secure political and economic change in the country,<sup>18</sup> would however take place under the vigilant supervision of the Francoist authorities. A transition to a democratic model was thus initiated, prompting negotiations between the ruling party and the opposition. Throughout the process, the spectre of the conflict haunted many transitional decisions and determined a strong commitment to consensus that, ultimately, sought to “avoid the rupture of the regime and the repetition of war” (Ibid: 165). According to Aguilar (1996), contrary to the situation in 1930, a relative economic stability, the emergence of a middle class, a more distant relation between the Church and the State and the willingness to negotiate on the part of the main trade unions and parties, eased, to some extent, the democratic project. Nonetheless, extreme police repression continued throughout this

---

<sup>18</sup> The so-called Moncloa pacts or *Pactos de la Moncloa*, established between the ruling party and members of the opposition in order to guide the process, were an example of these initial measures.

period, as civil demands and general social unrest became more pressing in the light of the new reforms.

With the transition the regime's structure changed. The new system would come with a bicameral parliament, a new electoral law—which resulted from convoluted discussions between Francoists and democrats—and a monarchy. The country would also be divided into different Regional Autonomies (Ibid.). Political parties were legalised and some leftist leaders returned from exile.<sup>19</sup> A new constitution was approved in 1978, after the first general election in 1977 enabled the formation of the new Parliament (*Cortes Constituyentes*). This first election gave victory to the UCD (*Unión de Centro Democrática*), a moderate party formed by Francoist technocrats that served as a bridge between the most conservative flanks of Francoism and the democratic opposition (Ibid.).<sup>20</sup> Among the new measures discussed and approved in the making of the new constitution were some that directly addressed the reconciliation of the country after the Civil War and the reparation of the defeated. One of the most awaited, the Amnesty Law of 1977, represented, for many, the end the Civil War. After so many years, the law absolved both sides of the conflict from all crimes committed. It granted political amnesty, in particular to those persecuted and imprisoned during the war and under the Franco regime. It also, however, exonerated the victors of the violent acts they perpetrated, failing to recognise the extent of Francoist repression.

In addition to the amnesty, other restorative measures attempted to compensate the defeated. Pensions were provided to the Republican war-wounded and to the widows and offspring of those Republicans who died during or after the conflict (Espinosa 2012b). In these years, other forms of symbolic reparation sought to commemorate the history of the defeated. The commemoration and historical revision of the Guernica Bombardment in 1937, for instance, came to be representative of all the war defeated (Aguilar 1996). Likewise, important

---

<sup>19</sup> All parties were legalized following the Regulatory Law on the Right of Political Association in 1976. The Communist Party did not become part of the associations' registry, and was legalized at the beginning of 1977. During these years, its leader, Santiago Carrillo, would also return from exile.

<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting here that, in the first election after the dictatorship, the Socialist Party (PSOE) came a very close second.

commemorative occasions during the Franco regime, such as the Victory Parade celebrated every 1<sup>st</sup> of April, were replaced by the Day of the Armed Forces. At a local level, newly created town halls in villages and cities gradually began to replace the names of streets and squares that referred to the old regime with new names inspired by the democratic period. These different legal and symbolic measures partially acknowledged the defeated but never fully atoned them for the years of death, ill treatment, and discrimination they endured during the war and the dictatorship. With a pressing and general will to leave the past behind, such laws and initiatives—especially the Amnesty Law—forged what has been termed, in later years, as an unwritten *pact to forget*. Through this unofficial agreement, the political elites of the Transition would have presumably agreed to avoid the use of the past as part of their political strategy (Aguilar 1996, 2006; Gálvez Biesca 2006).

Visual productions of the time, such as the 1979 documentary *No se os puede dejar solos* (You can't be left alone) and its 1983 sequel, *Atado y bien atado* (Well tied up) by Cecilia and José Juan Bartolomé, reflect the jarring expectations held by the public about the transition. These pieces, which show a critical approach to the process, elucidate how the continuity and connection to the dictatorship left many feeling dissatisfied with the lack of reform in some economic and political realms. Others felt disappointed, especially in relation to the limited recognition received by those on the losing side of the conflict. In the documentaries, the apparent consensus championed in national transitional debates remains in tension with the antagonistic social reality that some civil collectives experienced on the ground. The still active and celebratory far-right groups, the widely repressed demonstrations of left-wing collectives, and the stories of past suffering that many people felt compelled to tell through different public media<sup>21</sup>, challenged the widespread transitional discourse of consensus and the idea that the war was an event that ought to be forgotten. Such memory of the conflict materialised most vividly, however, around

---

<sup>21</sup> These documentaries gather testimony of many sympathizers of both the Francoist state and the new democratic opposition. In the video, some members of older generations openly describe their familial and material losses during the war and the lack of acknowledgment of their experiences. Likewise, a look at party magazines of the time, such as *El Socialista* (the *Socialist*), shows letters from readers addressing their experiences during and after the war. In one edition of the magazine, published in 1978, up to four people write to the paper to tell their story of repression and loss. Some also demand more recognition for the victims of Francoism (El Socialista 1978).

the clandestine mass graves that were a result of Francoist repression and which many had wanted to unearth for years. With the advent of the democratic period and the ratifications of laws such as the Law of Pensions of 1979, numerous families set out to inscribe their dead kin in civil registries<sup>22</sup> and to recover the mortal remains of their left-wing ancestors (Espinosa 2012b). Recent studies have documented cases of the latter in Navarre, La Rioja and especially Extremadura, among other locations, between 1975 and 1981. (Ferrándiz 2008; Espinosa 2012b)<sup>23</sup>

These exhumations were, however, extremely localised endeavours. Communities of neighbours who knew about the existence of these mass graves in their own locality would usually conduct the excavations, sometimes with the support of the local town hall. On many occasions, these town halls were governed by the Socialist Party (PSOE), which had secured wide representation in local contexts during the elections. These exhumations, however, never transcended the village setting and were never part of regional and national political agendas. Francisco Espinosa (2012b) has described the exhumations as “urgent” recoveries that mostly concerned those closely related to the deceased. Many others did not want to know about the unearthing of these corpses (Ibid: 48). On visits carried out to some of these villages in Extremadura during my fieldwork, interviews revealed the intricate development of the exhumations. For instance, in some villages, like Casas de Don Pedro, where mortal remains were exhumed in 1978, the women involved recalled the excitement of recovering the corpses buried in the countryside but also the threatening climate and difficulties experienced with other neighbours and authorities.<sup>24</sup> Many exhumations were carried out in the space of a day. During the exhumations, friends and families collected bones and items of clothing, piling them inside different coffins until full, to later commemorate them intimately and rebury them at the municipal cemetery. Many of these events were documented with pictures and home videos, though national newspapers rarely spoke about them. As Espinosa (Ibid.) and others

---

<sup>22</sup> Some people were unable to complete the registration, as the families of those buried in clandestine mass graves often had to provide proof of their relative’s execution (i.e., witnesses of the killing).

<sup>23</sup> Others, like Francisco Espinosa (2012b), have documented the earliest exhumation of this kind in a village of the province of Soria in 1971, where neighbours demanded the unearthing of a mass grave, after plans to build a new road through the village threatened to destroy the burial site.

<sup>24</sup> This information was shared by Felisa Casatejada, the woman who promoted and organized the exhumation in Casas de Don Pedro, in an interview carried out in August 2013.

(see Ferrándiz 2009) have observed, only the sensational tabloid *Interviú* reported some on excavations at the time. The lack of visibility that the unearthing of these corpses had on the national stage—such as Parliament or nationwide newspapers—continued to relegate the treatment and commemoration of the Republican dead to the sphere of the private and familial in peripheral communities around the country.



Image 5. Video still showing the mortal remains recovered at the exhumation carried in Almendral (in the province of Badajoz) in 1992. Courtesy of Francisco Cebrián Andrino.

The exhumations were conducted until 1981, when an unsuccessful coup d'état carried out by some members of the military brought them to a halt. Nonetheless, other exhumations did occur in the 1980s and 1990s in a more dispersed manner, mostly initiated by the mayors of the villages in which they happened<sup>25</sup> and always at the margins of the national administration. Throughout these two decades, the memory of the war, recalled publically as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the conflict, was mainly imbued with the strong messages of reconciliation that formed at the core of the transitional process. In 1982, new elections gave a majority government to the Socialist Party (PSOE), which would remain in power until 1996.

---

<sup>25</sup> During fieldwork in Extremadura, exhumations of this kind were also documented in the villages of Higuera de la Serena and Almendral, both in the province of Badajoz (Extremadura). The first took place in 1984 and the latter in 1992. Both exhumations were promoted by the socialist town halls that governed these villages at the time.

Some authors have called these socialist mandates the years of the “great silence” and of the “non-memory” (Gálvez Biesca 2006: 33), for the question of the victims of the Civil War and the dictatorship disappeared from the party’s political agenda (Ibid.). The wish to consolidate the democratic order in these years, involved a refusal to engage in debate about the war past and its political instrumentalization (Humblebaek 2004).<sup>26</sup> In the second half of the 1990s, however, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war brought renewed interest to the commemoration of certain aspects of the conflict from left-wing parties—an example of this was the tribute organised for the International Brigades in 1996, supported by *Izquierda Unida* (United Left), the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV).

The election of the right-wing Popular Party (*Partido Popular*, PP from now on) in 1996—formed from the fusion of Francoist groups like *Alianza Popular* and others—revealed the unwillingness that conservatives had to revisit the memory of the war. For PP, remembering the conflict constituted a breach of the transitional pact and an attack on the spirit of the transition (Humblebaek 2004). During these years, the conservative government would advocate for a need to consign the past to oblivion, while the war past became a recurrent theme in the political motions of the left-wing opposition. For PP, the war and the dictatorship were contentious topics, as many of its militants and voters had been active members of Francoist groups. The end of the 1990s saw, indeed, a moment of rupture with the consensual silence over the war and the postwar past. The ascent of the right-wing to government twenty years after Franco’s death stirred the memory of past events and brought them back into the political life of the country, making history an active tool available for political action. Issues such as the recognition of different collectives who suffered persecution returned to parliamentary debates, pressing for the review of the transitional measures approved after 1975. Moreover, some of these propositions forced the right wing government to re-evaluate its own political stance and its commitment to the historical justice demanded by the victims of Francoism (Ibid.). These claims, which materialised as part of leftist political agendas, gained further momentum when, in the year 2000, the mortal remains of Emilio Silva’s grandfather

---

<sup>26</sup> This was the case until 1993, when the PSOE accused the Popular Party (PP) of having a history rooted in the dictatorship and the Francoist past, in order to win the general election that year (Humblebaek 2004).

and those of the men buried with him in Priaranza del Bierzo were exhumed. The excavation of these corpses turned the ghosts of the defeated into tangible entities, as the matter of their bones made palpable the crudest reality of Francoist rearguard violence during the war and the subsequent dictatorship.

### *The Return of the Civil War Defeated*

The reappearance of the corpses of left-wing militants and sympathisers killed by Francoist forces and militia had an acute impact on the social, political, judicial, and cultural life of 21<sup>st</sup> century Spain. Anthropologist Francisco Ferrándiz (2011: 532) has eloquently argued that the return of these bodies to the Spanish public realm is deeply marked by their “*radical anachronism*”, as they reappeared in a society profoundly transformed by ongoing globalising and technological processes (Ibid.). In Ferrándiz’s words, they have erupted in a kind of “late modernity”, characterised by the fast-spreading and immediate flow of information of a more complex and interconnected knowledge society. In this context, images of these corpses and their fatal histories quickly spread both nationally but also in transnational circles (Ibid.), acquiring manifold historical—but also legal, political and scientific—meanings. The exhumation practice and historical research at the forefront of the civil society movement, surrounding the historical memory of the conflict, would take the demand for recognition on the part of many families and survivors of Francoist repression outside of the domestic realm—after years of public silence. In so doing, it would redefine the relationship between the collectives associated with the left-wing defeated and the state at local, national, and international levels, creating a new culture of rights, reparation, and recognition around the memory of the Civil War.

Indeed, the actions of these civil society associations that formed to recuperate the corpses and vindicate the history of the defeated are imbued with a desire to address and condemn the crimes committed by the Francoist state. With the first exhumations that took place in the year 2000, these collectives placed such cases at the forefront of political and legal campaigns that questioned the foundations of the transitional project and, to a certain extent, the overarching “transitional culture” that authors like Guillem Martínez (2012) have identified as existing in the country since

the end of the Franco regime. In the absence of an enabling national framework, many of these claims were elevated to a higher transnational domain informed by international human rights legislation. In 2002, the national historical memory association ARMH took the Spanish case to the High Commissioner of Human Rights in the United Nations to demand an investigation into cases like Silva's grandfather killing. It was the first time that the story and identities of some of the war missing in Spain had been heard by a European rights organisation. The cases of a great number of Spanish families and a list of North American *brigadistas* who died fighting in the war—provided by the Lincoln Brigade—was presented to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance (WGEID) towards the end of that year. The intention behind this move, according to Emilio Silva, was to “make the problem international” (Silva 2005: 117), to increase pressure on the Spanish government and invoke their responsibility to implement an active memory politics before the United Nations.

Jane Cowan (2006) and others (see Cowan, Dembour and Wilson 2001) have discussed how international rights discourses and their processes can be both “enabling and constraining” (Cowan 2006: 10). It is certain that the moral universalisms contained in such rights regulations often overlook the particularities of different cultural contexts. In other cases, however, they can provide a structure through which social claims can be officially uttered. In the Spanish case, while only a few cases were finally included in the UN examination,<sup>27</sup> the association managed to raise a strong international appeal and to launch an important set of demands addressed to the lukewarm Spanish administration. These demands included a request for statist infrastructure to exhume and identify the corpses of the defeated; the disclosure of state files and opening of military archives; the removal of the remaining Francoist monuments; and the official commemoration of “all people who fought for democracy against Franco [...] so these families [could] recover their trust in politics” (Silva 2005: 189). At that time, confronted by such appeals inside and outside of Congress, the governing PP leader, José Maria Aznar, positioned his party on the issue by saying that “there was a need to leave behind the ghosts from the past,

---

<sup>27</sup> In their final resolution the WGEID decided that it could only take on inquiries dated after 1945, the year of the creation of the United Nations (Silva 2005).

because Spaniards wanted to look to the future” (Silva 2005: 113). After much pressure from ARMH and the national and international media,<sup>28</sup> the Spanish Congress condemned Civil War crimes and crimes from the Franco regime on 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2002—a symbolic date that once commemorated the deaths of General Francisco Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera. As Emilio Silva recalls in his book, this event was an important step towards the moral recognition of the families that suffered not only the loss and death of relatives but also all those whose lives were affected by the dictatorship’s violent rule (i.e. life-sentenced prisoners, forced-labour workers, exiles or abused women, to cite but a few examples).

These two events—the international appeal and the government’s declaration—constituted important landmarks for ARMH. They were also, in a broader sense, significant in the development of new forms of social activism—in the academic, media and associative sectors—around issues of truth, justice, and the reparation of Francoist victims. Over the years, demands expressed to the UN working group formed the common objectives of the associative movement and strengthened the aim of creating a new social reality for those affected by the history of defeat in the country. As Sergio Gálvez Biesca (2006: 36) has pointed out, these common objectives were consolidated over time to include (1) the moral, judicial and economic reparation of the victims by national institutions; (2) the nullity of all Francoist judicial procedures; (3) a final solution to the exhumation of mass graves; (4) the eradication of “the Francoist nomenclature and symbolism” in villages and towns and (5) the creation of an archive of the Civil War and the dictatorship. After much campaigning, many of these initial demands for restoration on the part of associations such as ARMH, the Foro and other regional and family groups finally obtained a response when the Socialist Party (PSOE) was re-elected in 2004. In 2007, a year after Spain signed the UN International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance—the socialist government passed the Law 52/2007, technically known as the “*Law of 26<sup>th</sup> of December through which the rights and measures in favour of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and dictatorship are recognised*”. The new measure legislated the exhumation of

---

<sup>28</sup> See, for an example, the editorial “Spaniards at Last Confront the Ghost of Franco” in *The New York Times* (Sciolino and Daily 2002).

mass graves and the identification of mortal remains, regulated the heritage and memorialization of the conflict in the country, and issued official moral recognition declarations to those who endured the violence of the war and Franco's regime.

For some, especially in political circles, the law constituted “definitely a step forward”—as a local representative of United Left (IU) told me on one occasion. Nonetheless, the much-awaited law met with objections and disappointment on the part of the main associations (Ferrándiz 2013). With regards to exhumations, for instance, the state would provide only limited administrative assistance and funding for the location, search, and excavation of mass graves. In essence, this established a “human rights outsourcing system” (Ferrándiz 2013: 45) that made associations and family groups responsible for archaeological intervention and the following identification of mortal remains. Moreover, most analysts (see Chinchón 2012: 36; Martín Pallín 2011; Escudero 2011) have also argued that the law falls short in relation to the moral reparation and rights of families and survivors, as it does not consider Franco's repression from a judicial perspective. The law, for instance, does not deal with issues of accountability and court investigation of the crimes committed. In fact, the legal text asserts that the law does not seek to sanction the crime of enforced disappearance but instead to promote knowledge of the past “within the framework of the spirit of reconciliation” (Law 52/2007: 96, cited in Ferrándiz 2010). Transitional ideas of consensus and amnesty in fact condition again the restorative endeavours of the central government. In this context, many of these collectives felt, as Francisco Ferrándiz has argued, that the law never fully complied with their requests for “truth, justice and reparation” and the “dismantling of the ‘Spanish impunity system’” (Ferrándiz 2013: 45). For reason, in recent years, the movement has incessantly battled for public inquiry into these crimes, through permanent demonstrations and prominent campaigns<sup>29</sup> around the country.

---

<sup>29</sup> Such is the case of the project Culture against Impunity (*Cultura contra la impunidad*), which gathered 15 Spanish artists together to create a short documentary demanding the acknowledgement of Francoist victims by society and the State. On the video, each artist recounts the life stories of men and women killed during the war and after (for further information and to watch the video see “La Cultura, contra la impunidad del franquismo” in *Público* (2010).

Soon after the passing of the law, associations also turned to the Spanish National Court (Audiencia Nacional) to request the aid of judge Baltasar Garzón, who, in 1998, indicted Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet for crimes against humanity. In 2008, after accepting different cases, Baltasar Garzón set out to investigate the crimes from the Civil War and the Franco regime, drawing from international human rights legislation on the crime of enforced disappearance and, as in Pinochet's case, in the framework of "crimes against humanity" (Ferrándiz 2010). He argued that enforced disappearance tactics had been "systematically used [by the Franco regime] to hinder the identification of the victims and to impede judicial actions to the present day" (Ferrándiz 2010: 167). He was later accused by the Director of Public Prosecutions of the National Court, Javier Zaragoza, of breaching his legal duties and soon embarked on a legal battle that would end in his dismissal and suspension from work in the Spanish legal system. Through the process and with the media attention it attracted, the Republican dead were again conceived as the *disappeared* of Francoism. Pre-war governmental records (Ferrándiz 2010) already used this term to speak about the Civil War dead. Nonetheless, the contemporary notion of disappearance applied to the Spanish case in the present has undoubtedly been influenced by the idea of *enforced disappearance* entertained in the context of international human rights law. Such conceptions aimed to contextualise the lives and deaths of the defeated in the lexicon of an international human rights *language* and within a transnational culture of rights (Cowan 2006). First with the WGEID recognition of the Spanish cases and later through judge Garzón's process, such a term was, borrowing Francisco Ferrándiz's expression, "*downloaded*" from the frame of international human rights law and re-appropriated by various collectives at grassroots level.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> The expression, however, never stopped being controversial (Ferrándiz 2010). For some family groups and associations the term provided a form of expression that enabled them to obtain more visibility and to integrate their demands into a "wider transnational category, judicially sanctioned by international criminal law in the context of crimes against humanity" (Ibid: 171). For others, the term was too closely connected to the meaning it had acquired in the judicial processes of Chile and Argentina. Some writers and memory activists then defended the use of words such as "*paseados*" ("taken for a walk") or "*fusilados*" (executed) over *desaparecido* (disappeared)—as they argued the former terms were more suited to the particularities of the Francoist repressive strategy and the characteristics of the conflict.

The limited involvement of the central government in the search for and exhumation of mass graves, and in the commemoration of the defeated, and the lack of judicial recognition of the Francoist repression, also prompted the “*downloading*” of other proceedings from the transnational rights framework that informed the activities of the associations on the ground. Aided by financial assistance from the central government since 2007, in some cases by regional administrations with a historical memory programme or in an independent way, associations and their collaborators have often drawn from international practices to carry out work such as the exhumation and identification of mass graves, the reburial and commemoration of mortal remains, or the preservation and memorialization of the war and postwar heritage (Ferrándiz 2011, 2013, 2014; González Ruibal 2007, 2009; Viejo Rose 2011). Francisco Ferrándiz (2013, 2014: 17) has observed, for instance, that with regards to exhumations, many of the scientific teams that conduct these interventions promoted by associations often use guidelines such as the United Nations protocol, which have drawn from the practice of established forensic groups elsewhere like the Argentinean Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF) and others. In a similar manner, González Ruibal (2009) has observed how the policies proposed by the Socialist party or the proposals of associations to commemorate and memorialise the conflict and the Republican dead in Spain are not especially far away from other examples in post-Holocaust Germany or South Africa—even if in these places there was a readiness to remember, which was never prevalent in the Spanish social milieu. Moreover, with an emphasis on the heritage of conflict, Viejo Rose (2011) has compared processes of social reconstruction in post-war and post-Franco Spain to those in countries like Bosnia, observing how the re-signification of previous forms of heritage is a varied exercise in post-conflict forms of the rewriting of history. Recent institutional debates, for instance, around the fate of the Valley of the Fallen reassert this view—for example, the Experts Commission for the Future of the Valley of the Fallen, designated by the Socialist government advised the transformation of the site into a space of “shared memories” (Spanish Ministry of the Presidency 2011a: 6).

At a national level, however, the process of remembering the history of defeat has not always been unanimous and concordant. The activities of different associations have generated conflicting views and disagreements, especially in

relation to how this past and its remnants should be treated and signified. In the early days of the movement and with the initial media boom issues around how best to interpret, record, and remember the war past came to the forefront of debates between associations and other non-governmental bodies. On the one hand, images of the first interventions, exposed bodies, and the visible traces of violence on their bones prompted a negative attitude towards the exhumations realised by some associations. For instance, as some authors have pointed out (Ferrándiz 2007), the Association of the War Archive and Exile (AGE) opposed the practice of unearthing the remains because it considered that exhuming these mass graves was like “erasing genocide” (Ibid.). Likewise, other collective and individual voices defended a non-interventionist approach to the mass graves of the conflict, arguing instead for the memorialization of such sites with monoliths or other markers. This proposed alternative treatment of the burial sites understood the inscription of these places as a way of making mass graves visible around the Spanish territory, as evidence (Ferrándiz 2007; Fernández de Mata 2011) of the executions committed by the Francoist rearguard—as one interviewee explained to me at the beginning of my fieldwork.

Similarly, other conflicts emerged inside the pro-exhumation associative movement as time went on, as there were discrepancies between collectives with regard to the appropriate procedures and actions to follow “*below ground*” (Ferrándiz 2006, 2010, 2013; Gomez Isa 2006: 557). The lack of an official centralised structure for the endeavours of the associations, issues of funding and resources (Ferrándiz 2014) and the diversity of intentions in the movement gave way to heterogeneous approaches to the exhumation of mortal remains and their reburial, the commemoration of the conflict, or the symbolic reparation of survivors. This is apparent, for instance, in the different views that the two main national associations, namely ARMH and the Foro, entertain of the process. For ARMH the focus of the excavation and reburial of mortal remains has always been placed on the families. The association emphasises the kinship bond of children and grandchildren with their disappeared ancestors over the political affiliation of the dead, promoting the idea that exhumations have the potential to heal and offer closure on traumatic pasts (Bevernage and Colaert 2014). Conversely, the Foro aims to help families recover the mortal remains of their *militant* relatives, reclaiming, first and foremost, their political

identities. This follows the founding ethos of the association, which, connected to the Communist Party, was born “clearly linked to the left-wing [...] with a strong conviction to fight against the forgetting of the defeated”—as stated in the website of the association. According to Bevernage and Colaert (2014: 6), who examine the divergent conceptions of time, history, and memory between both associations, the Foro does not place the same emphasis on the reparation of collective trauma. Instead, they have what the authors acknowledge as a clear interest in the teaching of a political history through exhumations, with the hope that political realities like that of the Second Republic might regenerate in future.

Though the focus of this thesis diverges from that taken by Bevernage and Colaert (2014)—especially on the relation between trauma and history-making in local, national, and transnational domains—the authors nevertheless raise the important question of how the complex cosmologies around the exhumation of mass graves have shaped different perceptions and practices of the past in Spain. Authors such as Francisco Ferrándiz (2010, 2013, 2014), who has also researched the diversity of the historical memory movement, have observed that these disparities ultimately manifest in the “political and mortuary rituals” (Ferrándiz 2006) that each collective employs in the location of burials, their excavation, and in reburial. As Ferrándiz observes, for ARMH relatives “are autochthonous and definitive in the organisation of mourning” (Ibid: 9). In the exhumations and reburials of the Foro the politicization of these acts prevails and is apparent through the left-wing symbolism used, such as flags, songs, and hymns or the political speeches uttered (Ibid.). To these contrarities, one has to add particular wishes for other types of remembrance and commemoration (e.g. religious) that might clash with the agenda of some associations. Such social and political differences have also, ultimately, conditioned and been conditioned by the scientific work performed at the mass grave and forms historical knowledge production that characterises the cycle of exhumations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On many occasions, scientific practice has emerged as tool for claiming authority between competing associations. For instance, according to Ferrándiz (Ibid.), associations like ARMH and the Foro increasingly expanded their links with experts in the fields of forensic anthropology, archaeology and other social sciences in an effort to “defend themselves against reciprocal accusations of non-professional

conduct and to give their exhumations a more ‘scientific’ and thus legitimate character” (Ferrándiz 2006: 9). On the other hand, scientific and other activities such as historical research into archives, publications, presentations, or exhibitions have also served to disseminate information about the repression that the mass graves point towards, in order to contravene recent revisionist voices.

Indeed, ARMH, the Foro and their local regional branches around the country have performed most of the searches for the mortal remains of the missing, their reburial, and appropriate tributes. In so doing, they have both worked with different scientific groups such as the Sociedad de Ciencias Aranzadi—led by forensic scientist Francisco Etxeberría—and other independent groups such as the team led by biologist Luis Ríos at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid. The collaboration between scientists and associations has led to the expert analysis of exhumations, which each team has performed differently in the absence of a national protocol. These archaeological and forensic practices have generated new sources of information and reports, which have often become part of the archives of associations and research institutions and publicised through blogs, websites, and other social forums. In addition to this, some regions that have institutional historical memory programmes have also complied with research and exhumation teams based in universities, which has further shaped the process and method of exhumation, adapting it to the particular demands of specific research interests and institutional agendas. In these realms, exhumations are part of historical projects promoted by regional administrations subject to the politics of the governing authority—a relevant example of this is the case of Extremadura, discussed in depth in the next chapter. At the same time, national and regional associations and projects have drawn from the work of local amateur and professional historians, which have surfaced in connection to the exhumation movement. In the same line, other activist associations and family groups in local and provincial settings have also emerged, and are involved in the research and social campaigning with regard to the micro-histories of the conflict and the main protagonists of particular localities.

In unearthing of the mortal remains of the war and the postwar period, the body of the missing has become, as Ferrándiz citing Klinenberg (2014: 18) has

argued, “the place and surface of social truths” in local, national, and transnational scenarios. Devising the history of the war, the number of dead, or the extent of the Francoist repression, has most certainly been an integral aim of many of these associations, which have sought to restore the identity—whether familial or political—of the defeated. In this process, different forms of evidence accretion and acts of recollection have thus emerged to contest past historical imaginings and ritual configurations. The scientific intervention in the mass graves of the conflict, which would set these exhumations apart from those carried out during the dictatorship and the transition, has indeed provided a different avenue for the investigation into the killings. Borrowed from the international network of post-conflict actors and frameworks and adapted to the Spanish context, scientific exhumation methods have enabled a new way of engaging with the history of the conflict, through the study of the human remains of the victims—but also their traces in archival repositories and social and familial memory. In the process of exhumation, assembling the identity of the defeated has become the job not only of the archaeologist or forensic anthropologist, but also of the historian, the relative, and the social activist. These searches have led to other spaces where such histories remain latent, to official archives and household collections. Documents and registers, letters and photographs, edicts and sentences have become a point of reference when seeking confirmation about crimes committed—through their content, but also in their gaps, euphemisms, and absences. The archive has become a meeting place with the ideology of the authoritarian state, its workings, and the legitimating bureaucracy. Personal repositories, likewise, have been turned into treasures for the researcher, who seeks within them fleeting details about these histories. In the midst of this process, the archive and the exhumation site have thus emerged as places of connections and new taxonomies, in which the past is apprehended, reinterpreted, and deeply felt.

## Chapter 2

### Visions of War and Postwar History in Extremadura

Recent works of Spanish historiography have spoken at length about the urgent need to engage with an alternative history of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime. Authors such as Alberto Reig Tapia (2006) have argued that historians today play a crucial role in dismantling what he has called the political and historical “myths” of Francoism. According to Reig Tapia “the propaganda of the Civil War has been so intense that the historiographical effort to overcome so many ideological justifications has to be, necessarily, equally intense and constant” (Ibid: 21). Other historians, who also support this view, have identified further problems with historical writing about the conflict (see Preston 1999; Chaves Palacios 2000; Blanco Rodriguez 2007) and the revisionist revival some of these theses have enjoyed in the last years (see Espinosa 2005; Rodrigo 2004). Underlying the work and intentions of these scholars has been a wish for a change of paradigm, which reconsiders past studies in the light of new analyses and in relation to data and sources that have emerged from the depth of official archives and other repositories.

Michel Foucault (1972) observes in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* that the formation of new discourses within a particular field, in this case that of history, has to be comprehended in relation to the conditions of their existence. Such a discursive field, he claims, needs to be understood within its limits, and in terms of the correlations it bears with other statements and the statements that it excludes (Ibid: 28). Indeed, contemporary historians have linked the development of a Spanish historiographical tradition about the war to the effects of different political periods on the discipline. Moreover, the field of historical enunciation that emerged after the death of the dictator in 1975 spoke directly to the previous Francoist historical practice, and set in motion a different vision both of the conflict and of the Republican experience. After censorship and statist control relegated critical study of the war to overseas academics (e.g. Hugh Thomas, H.R. Southworth, or Gabriel Jackson) in the 60s and 70s—who offered innovative accounts with a tendency to generalize about

the conflict<sup>1</sup> (Blanco Rodriguez 2007)—autochthonous voices emerged to promote more nuanced social, political, and economic studies about the war, which challenged Francoist myths that portrayed the war as a “crusade” or made claims about its inevitability (Preston 1999).

The new democratic period marked an important epistemological shift in the discipline and the development of new methodological configurations and thematic orientations. In the 1980s, with the first election of the Socialist Party, some information repositories in governmental institutions, as well as national, regional, and municipal archives<sup>2</sup> were declassified and opened to researchers (Ibid.). In this period, more witnesses’ testimonies also began to appear. These soon encouraged forms of history writing connected to the international politics of the conflict, while others delved into Franco’s repressive strategies and the coercive mechanisms of the regime’s structural and symbolic order (Juliá 2003). Works such as the acclaimed—and later criticized—*Víctimas de la Guerra Civil*, edited by Santos Juliá (1999), already manifested an open endeavour to compile figures of the deaths that had resulted from irregular and clandestine killings, delimiting a conceptual inquiry, which examined particular events in order to draw a total history of the violence perpetrated against Republicans. These works will become more prominent, I believe, with the exposure of the mortal remains in the mass graves, which engender, in Foucault’s terms, a “system of discursivity” filled with new “enunciative possibilities” (Foucault 1972: 129).

---

<sup>1</sup> Here the three authors mentioned above coincide in the fact that foreign researchers had access to invaluable media sources and testimonies of those who were exiled to other countries after the war, which enabled them to carry out this research. At this time, they specify, many Spanish historians had emigrated during the war and those left in the country were gradually abandoning the profession due to severe censorship and management of archives. Moreover, many of these archives were difficult to access. Only those who sympathized with the regime could use them for state-sponsored research (Preston 1999; Chaves Palacios 2000; Blanco Rodriguez 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Blanco Rodriguez (2007) cites depositories such as the Historical Military Service (Servicio Histórico Militar), the Civil War Section in the National History Archive in Salamanca (Sección Guerra Civil del Archivo Histórico Nacional), and the repositories of the Ministry of External Affairs and Finance (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Hacienda). Chaves Palacios (2000) also makes reference to the civil registries in local courts and town hall archives, which could not be accessed by researchers before this time.

This chapter examines the impact of exhumation work in the transformation of historical epistemologies around the war and postwar Francoist violence, paying special attention to the case of Extremadura. It so doing, it considers how the surfacing of traces in archives and at mass graves has turned the discontinuities registered in these sources into an object of analysis for historians, archaeologists, physical anthropologists and forensic scientists. Such discontinuities have become important not in order to suppress them in the elaboration of a total history of the conflict, but to discern the web of relations and events that precipitated these rearguard killings and other forms of repression (Ibid; Stoler 2010). New historical projects have developed in connection to a social demand to know what happened in the past, turning historians and scientists into active campaigners for the declassification of official files<sup>3</sup>—as has happened in other settings (see Da Silva Catela and Jelin 2002; Verdery 2013; Douglas 2013)—and facilitators of information in familial searches of the past, as well as activist lobbying for the recognition of victims.<sup>4</sup> During my fieldwork in Extremadura, I followed the work of historians and archaeologists and saw first hand their entanglements with family groups and associations in the region. I wanted to understand how information about the war and Franco’s repression was construed and constructed through their engagement with different technologies and proceedings. I examined how this practice was influenced by political and social motivations, and how these, in turn, shaped the treatment of a materiality that contains, as Derrida (1996) observes in a number of documents in Freud’s archive, the sedimented violence and wounds of a censored, silenced, and beaten Republican body.

---

<sup>3</sup> See the recent manifesto *El acceso a los archivos y la Memoria Histórica del siglo XX* (Access to Archives and Historical Memory in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), compiled by the Chair of Historical Memory of the 20th Century (Cátedra de Memoria Histórica del Siglo XX) from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) in 2014, which reclaims the need and importance of opening all official repositories to the public.

<sup>4</sup> An example of these organizations is the association in the southwest of the country *Todos los Nombres* (Sevilla, Andalucía), initiated by the Association for Memory and Justice in Andalucía (MHJ) and the General Work Confederation in Andalucía (CGT), which is working to make knowledge about the past known to the public (see their website <http://www.todoslosnombres.org>).

## *The Production of Historical Knowledge in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Extremadura*

When I asked professor Julián Chaves Palacios, historian and director of the Project of the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura (PREMHEx), to describe his understanding of the widely-used term *historical memory*, he spoke of a transformation in the historiographical tendencies of the past decade and of the novel qualities that history writing had acquired in the social terrain. According to Julián, the number of works written about the violence of the war and postwar has boomed, and has dominated the market of history publications in the region in the last ten to twelve years. This extraordinary hyper-production is bound up, he explained, with the social appeal and action of civil society groups “in need of more information” (Julián Chaves Palacios, Cáceres, 2013). *Historical memory*, however, does not only refer to a form of history exegesis, but also encompasses other definitions. Julián went on to explain:

From the historian’s perspective, we have always worked with the term *memory*, always. People have added the ‘*historical*’ adjective as a complement. I have not much to say about it but let’s not get one thing wrong. When we talk about historical memory we are not only speaking about history, we are also talking about other issues. An exhumation process for instance, transcends mere research – though it is, and brings us information. It has also an important *human component*, ethical: to provide an answer to a social demand. Historical research is important but there are other matters. [Historical memory] is an important phenomenon that has taken place in the last years, but it is not only subscribed to history. History is the past but this history is providing an answer and is *demanded* by families that want dignity for their disappeared relatives. (Julián Chaves Palacios, Cáceres, 2013. Emphasis added)

De Certeau (1988: 11) observed that history is as much a thing of the past as of the present, arguing that public interests and current events provide the historian with the means and context for the labor of writing. Though Julián asserts at one point, “history is the past”, the connection between the production of historical texts and research and the wider social search for information about the war in recent years, as the historian implies, make the history of the conflict very much a thing of the present—at least in Extremadura. This idea is strengthened by the fact that, in the last

decade, the project has had the economic support of regional institutions. This, according to Julián, is a necessary condition that makes the historical and exhumation research programme possible today—though it is not exempt from manifold criticisms on the part of civil society groups engaged in the historical study of the past, as will be seen in later chapters. Moreover, that certain collectives in fact *demand* history—or demand to know—has fostered proximity between historians and civil society members and given place to other forms of evidence-gathering in the study of the repressive past. Hence, Palacios identifies in the fragment above how exhumation practice has also become a site of historical investigation, through the petitions of families and associations looking for the bodies of the missing.

The reading of the absent body in archives and files is complemented by anthropological and archeological readings of the body in the mass grave, as well as the understanding of relatives, activists, and historians alike. Outside of the project, this interest in the historical investigation of war and postwar phenomena has also led to the emergence of new historical interpretations, propelled by families' own research, enthusiasts of the subject in and outside of associations, and members of small communities that emerge as local experts and amateur historians of the war in their specific geographical areas. The convergence of these groups opens up a line of inquiry into how indeed exploration into the origin, or the genesis of violence and bad death—as discussed in Chapter 1—is performed and produced by each group, and also how this exploration is determined by past remains as well as present realities. Not only the work of PREMHEX, but also of other associations and individuals that engage with historical research activities, reconfigure the archaeologies of history (Ibid.) already in place, its discourses and practices and the research technologies employed in the study of the repression in the region.

PREMHEX is the result of a collaborative agreement between the Regional Ministry of Culture, Badajoz Council, and Cáceres Council and the University of Extremadura (UEX), initiated in 2003. It was one of the first memory projects to be supported by a regional government (led at the time by the Socialist Party, PSOE) in the country. Hence—according to some of its members—it was pioneer in creating an institutional infrastructure for the work on exhumations and historical investigation.

The project is hosted by the Department of History of the regional University of Extremadura (UEX), in the city of Cáceres. From the start and until 2012, it also had a Historical Memory office in the town of Mérida, where petitions for exhumations were dealt with. These petitions normally relate to the search for those who disappeared and were violently killed, especially in the Francoist rearguard—though exhumations of Francoist supporters killed by Republicans have also been carried out. Historians and archaeologists work together with Julián Chaves Palacios on research into archives and other depositaries, the exhumation of mass graves, and the collection of oral testimonies from survivors, direct and indirect witnesses, and family members. Throughout my time in Extremadura, I could also appreciate the special emphasis placed by members of the project on dissemination of information through conferences, seminars, books, and articles that aimed, as I was told on many occasions, to “*revert* this historical information back into society”—as archaeologist Laura Muñoz Encinar stated in an interview in 2012.

In addition to this, there is also a clear preoccupation with the quality of the data collected and its interpretation. As Julián observed in our interview, the project aims to document those unknown aspects concerning, in particular but not solely, Francoist forms of violence, and to convey this information from—in his words—a “scientific perspective”. As such, there is a stress on the way the information is obtained and treated, analyzed and written, obeying the precept of “scientific rigour and accuracy” (Julián Chaves Palacios, Cáceres, 2013). Methodology and, in particular, researchers’ discursive outputs are guided by an idea of *truth* and facticity, influenced by the deceitful and concealed nature of some evidentiary sources and their analysis in official dictatorial attempts to write the history of the contest. Additionally, their work is clearly influenced by a long tradition of scientific objectivity, which has influenced History, as well other disciplines (see Daston and Galison 2007).

This attention to the “faithful” retelling of the past is partly related to the type of data encountered in incomplete state files, where much information recorded about political sentences and executions has been skewed by statist agents that contributed to the institutionalization of violence in the New State of 1939. “Rigour” and “accuracy”, on the other hand, imply a wish for objectified knowledge, for a

reconstruction of the past driven by the dictums of evidence and distanced from the type of ideological rhetoric that many historians identify in earlier and present works (i.e. texts of a strong left-wing ideological slant or a revisionist character). Such an objective vision ultimately “aspires to knowledge that bears no trace of the knower—knowledge unmarked by prejudice or skill, fantasy or judgment, wishing or striving” (Ibid: 17). In the research into such a thorny history, the arena of knowledge production becomes a disputed and murky terrain since, for many—as Lorraine Daston (1991: 93) has remarked—facts “are robust in their existence but opaque in their meaning”.

Over the years, the project’s thematic focus has been on the “events related to the death, disappearance, prison or exile of people from Extremadura [...] as well as concentration camps, disciplinary battalions or penitentiary colonies [in the region during the war and after, in the postwar years (*franquismo*)]” (GEHCEx report, II Encuentro Historiográfico 2007: 4). State and familial archival papers and photographs drive the process of inquiry, offering official and personal details about the dead. These archival traces are simultaneously—where possible—scrutinized in the light of first-hand testimonies of those who experienced the violence of the conflict, those related to the missing, and other indirect accounts. Mass graves contain the ultimate material substantiation of the violence captured in the archive and the oral record, through the concreteness of the dead body and the marks inscribed on the bones. Camps, prisons, and work battalions are rich vestiges of knowledge for researchers as their formation elucidates the post-conflict detention system and handling of political detainees.

These are all sources of scrutiny that serve the historian in inferring the events, which took place in the past (Collingwood 1946: 251). They form part of the discipline’s evidentiary protocols (Ibid.), but are also determined by what Engelke (2008: 5)—in his critique of Collingwood—has termed as “the competing pressures and regimes” within the profession and—in this case, I will add—the socio-political and legal milieus. The information produced by the project coexists at all times with associations’ rights and recognition campaigns for the status of those who lost the war. Within the context of the regional memory associations, historical data and

material remains become identifiers and proof that can support claims for legal acknowledgement of the victims of Francoist crimes during and after the conflict. In such a way, these concrete artefacts of historical meaning-making enter a different evidentiary regime (Crossland 2013), defined by the modes and protocols of the judicial and legal fields. The use of these material remains expands from the realm of the academic into other areas of social action, revealing different historical epistemologies under construction. The making of history in Extremadura is hence determined by the interplay between these evidentiary artefacts and regimes and their understanding and use by civil and state actors.

Activists' associations with which I met and collaborated, such as the Regional Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura (ARMHEx) in Badajoz, the Association for the Memory of Castuera Concentration Camp (AMECADEC) in the district of La Serena, and the Association for a Memorial in Cáceres Cemetery (AMECECA, previously PROMECECA) work closely with information from the archive and oral testimonies in order to document their rights and memorialization endeavours. These associations often count local historians and law experts among their members and promote investigations into the politics of memory surrounding archives, the official recognition of war and repression sites in the region, and the moral reparation of families that endured forms of political subjugation during the war and dictatorial period. The emergence of these organized groups has generated a rise in social networking that compiles, exchanges, and channels historical information on the conflict. Within these associations, the collection of historical data is intended to address the systemic neglect and forgetting of these issues in the country. Indeed, the way in which civil registries and historical and military archives are found has activated many of these claims.

For instance, in connection with the deficiencies of civil registries, it is widely stated by some of these groups and their representatives that many of the people killed without a trial or sentence died not only physically but also legally, as the causes and dates of these deaths were never fully recorded after the war or during the transition. According to some sources (Espinosa 2009), even though the decree 67 of the 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1936, allowed families to inscribe these casualties and disappearances already during the war, individuals were generally coerced into disguising the causes

of death of the victims in order to secure forms of economic support later on, such as widow's pensions, or to ensure future opportunities for their offspring in public programmes such as the military service and the like (Ibid.). Many of the descendants I interviewed during fieldwork, however, often assured me that their predecessors, normally mothers, never attempted to obtain their spouse's death certificate due to the state of fear and distress in which they lived. Others refused to complete death certificates attributing a false cause to the death of their relatives. In the case of official governmental national and municipal archives and military sources, one of the main issues with which associations contend, in the present, is the persistent problem of access and declassification of administrative and judicial files, and of historical documents held in private collections of organizations such as the Francisco Franco Foundation or Falange's archive,<sup>5</sup> to name just two examples. In these campaigns, which closely relate the figure of the missing with their identities in paper files of public and institutional avenues, the archive presents itself as a device of evidence accretion, in which information is read against the archival grain in disparate truth-seeking efforts.

### *Placing the Archive(s)*

In 2006, Amnesty International Spain denounced, in their report *Victims of the Civil War and Franquismo: The Disaster in the Archives, the Privatization of Truth*,<sup>6</sup> the poor condition of military and municipal depositories, demanding the assessment, cataloguing, and reordering of the repression files by the Spanish state. The document was produced in the light of the Interministerial Commission for the study of the situation of the victims of the Civil War and Franquismo, undertaken in 2004. It

---

<sup>5</sup> This information has also been contrasted in informal conversations with practitioners in the field, historians, and archaeologists working closely with these vestiges, such as Javier Martín Bastos (researcher from PREMHEX, University of Extremadura), Antonio López Rodríguez (historian and collaborator of AMECADEC), and Jimmi Jimenez (historian and archaeologist, part of the scientific group ARANZADI in the Basque Country), to cite a few.

<sup>6</sup> Original title: *Víctimas de la Guerra Civil y el franquismo: el desastre de los archivos, la privatización de la verdad* (Amnesty International 2006).

called for the modification of the Regulations of State Archives, dated 1901,<sup>7</sup> and the elaboration of a Law of Archives (*Ley de Archivos*) that would enforce the management and preservation of many files that had been damaged, that had disappeared, or been classified, and which contained information about war trials, executions, and imprisonments during the war and after.

According to the report, produced whilst the restorative Law of Historical Memory of 2007 was being drafted, until that date, access to these records was reduced and often complicated by the confusing archival organisation and arrangement of files, and the “arbitrary access criteria” (Amnesty International Report 2006:8) used by personnel in charge of their supervision. This, on many occasions, required long waiting periods, sometimes months and years, on the part of any person seeking to obtain documentation (Ibid.). Through their appeal, the organization advocated for public and immediate availability of these documents to researchers and especially to families and survivors, who, unable to understand the peculiarities of the archival system, often had to enlist the assistance of third parties like historians or specific associations. According to Amnesty, having these papers ready for use allowed collectives affected by the violence of the war and Franco’s regime to retrieve information, which “[could] prove the severe violations and abuses of human rights committed [in the past]” (Amnesty International Report 2006:7). In the line of Amnesty’s paper, documents are thus turned into the objects of “public proof” (Latour 2005) in a legal–political rights discourse and procedure. They are so, first, due to their value as potential items for moral reparation and economic reparation claims. and second, for their capacity to pin down the efficacies of past dictatorial statecraft.

The presence or absence of files containing information about disappearances and killings and their administration in the present also needs to be understood in connection to the type of repression exerted at different moments during the conflict and post-conflict. In his report to the Central Court of Instruction no. 5 of the *Audiencia Nacional* about the state of war-related historical and judicial sources in the country—in support of families’ appeals to judge Baltasar Garzón in 2009—,

---

<sup>7</sup> The report suggests the re-writing of the regulations, created over a century ago, in order to adapt its guidelines to technologies available at present. One of the main requests in recent years has been the digitalization of many of these files for public download.

historian Francisco Espinosa (2009) explains the relation between different repressive strategies and the traces they left in local and national annals. According to the author, in the first year of the war, Francoist executions were backed by War Proclamation Orders (*Bandos de Guerra*), which at a national level provided these extrajudicial killings with a pseudo-legal character (Ibid.). Little is known about how these *bandos* operated at local level, according to Espinosa (2009). *Bandos* and local extra-legal killings left thousands of deaths unaccounted for, with no death transcript in civil registries. Numerous cases were recorded as deferred inscriptions until the 1990s, though with unclear or skewed descriptions about what led to the individuals' death. For instance, many of these deaths were described as the consequence of “a collision with the armed forces”, “a result of a *bando de guerra*” or, on other occasions, “as a consequence of the Glorious National Movement” (the name given to the military uprising). Nonetheless, most of these deaths have not been yet fully quantified, as ongoing research discloses new figures progressively—for instance in recent works by doctoral students such as those working for PREMHEX. Civil registries in judicial archives and municipal repositories hold information about some extrajudicial killings, but not all. They are a source for the analysis of the unbridled violence carried out during and after the conflict for historians and, in addition, archaeologists that work in the clandestine mass graves where these bodies were often buried.

From 1937, many executions were realized through court-martial procedures (*Consejos de Guerra*) and their sentences, in an effort to legitimize and institutionalize the elimination and incarceration of political prisoners and, after the war, guerrilla militias, until 1945. In comparison with the often evasive death records in the archive, resulting from extra-legal killings, the recorded summary trials reveal the workings of a rising military jurisdiction, in which extensive information was included about suspects. Espinosa (2009) further identifies another repressive period that lasted from 1945 well into the 1950s, when the last remains of the guerrilla resistance were severely suppressed. Some authors (Aguilar 2013: 285) have also identified 13 deaths by court-martial—four by strangulation or *garrote vil* and nine by firing squad—between 1958 and 1975. The death penalty was also part of the ordinary justice model in the same period, where 41 verdicts were issued (Ibid: 290). Files produced in relation to these court-martial procedures are encountered in

depositories under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Culture, and offer an insight into the effects of the intertwining systems of military and ordinary justice in the creation and maintenance of the Francoist State (Aguilar 2013).

The complex judicial and police apparatus at the core of the emergent regime generated an exorbitant number of documents from trials and investigations instantiating a convoluted system of archives. Court-martials and their pronouncements form part of a collection of documents produced by the so-called Territorial Military Courts (*Tribunales Militares Territoriales*) and local Military Courts. According to the 2006 Amnesty International report, these archives often enclose sentences and procedural surveys containing additional information such as books, personal letters, or retrieved records from political parties and other possessions confiscated from the detainee (Amnesty International Report 2006: 8). Different territorial dispositions and jurisdictional areas of implementation composed these Territorial Military Courts. There were five main jurisdictional territories.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, each Territorial Military Court covered a number of autonomous communities or regions, relying on other Military Defense Courts at local and provincial levels to conduct their rulings (Ibid.). For instance, the First Territorial Military Court, whose headquarters was located in Madrid, managed the cases and sentences from Extremadura as well as from areas such as Castilla-La Mancha, Murcia, Madrid, and Valencia. Nonetheless, some of the information about the region of Extremadura is held between the General Military Archive in Madrid and Ávila's Military Archive. In addition to these archives, Amnesty also identifies as an important vestige the archival selection of the Court of Exchequer (*Tribunal de Cuentas*), which holds dossiers about concentration camps and work battalions, their expenses and invoices; the ample photographic and documentary fund at the Guardia Civil Archive (*Archivo de la Guardia Civil*); and documents held at the Historical

---

<sup>8</sup> These jurisdictional areas corresponded to five different Military Territorial Tribunals: the First Territorial Tribunal in Madrid (covering the areas of Extremadura, Castilla La Mancha, Murcia, Madrid y Valencia); the Second Territorial Tribunal in Sevilla (covering the region of Andalucía and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla); Third Territorial Tribunal in Barcelona (covering the areas of Cataluña, Aragón, Islas Baleares and Navarra); Fourth Territorial Tribunal in A Coruña (covering the areas of Galicia, Asturias, Castilla y León, Cantabria, País Vasco y La Rioja); and finally, the Fifth Territorial Tribunal in Santa Cruz de Tenerife (covering the Canary Islands) (Information extracted from Amnesty International Report 2006).

Municipal Archives (*Archivo Histórico Municipal*) of distinct provinces around the country (Ibid).

To these collections we should add documents that resulted from other legal decrees and proceedings from 1939 to 1945 and after this, records generated by institutions that monitored opposing political behaviour or dissidence. Among the measures taken to reprove political affiliation during and after the war were the Law and Court of Political Responsibilities (1939), whose retroactive sentences—until 1934—involved extreme incarceration penalties, professional disqualification, fines, expropriations, and even the exile of the detainee to other villages, towns, or regions.<sup>9</sup> In the same years, other laws and tribunals comprised the actions of sometimes mixed (military and ordinary) judicial structures erected in the consolidation of Franco's state. The Law for the Purging of Public Employees (1939) or the Special Court for the Repression of the Masonry and Communism (1940) are examples of this. In addition to this, also in 1940, the *Causa General* was created to investigate crimes perpetuated by Republican militias and sympathizers, generating abundant information until 1960, which was often used to start new judicial trials (Aguilar 2013). Most of these judicial causes against political suspects were supported with dozens of documents seized from regional archives, left-wing Republican parties, unions, and private citizens. These have been held at General Archive of the Civil War in Salamanca<sup>10</sup> since 1996.

At a later stage during the dictatorship, other institutions were created to secure control and enforce ideological and political repression during the regime's modernizing stage. The Public Order Court (*TOP*), created in 1963, is a representative paradigm, administered in the beginning mainly by civil judges (Aguilar 2013: 289).

---

<sup>9</sup> According to Aguilar (2013) in her reading of Lanero (1996), up to 300,000 individuals had a file in the Tribunal's archive as a result of these legal actions.

<sup>10</sup> After the passing of the Law of Historical Memory in 2007, the archive joined the collection of the newly created Historical Memory Documentary Centre, inciting requests that demanded the return of some of these seized files to the regions and archives from which they came originally. This was the infamous case with the documents from Cataluña, confiscated from the Generalitat (Cataluña's regional government) by Francoist troops at the end of the war. In 2006, some of these files were returned to Cataluña, though most recently the region of Castilla y León claimed the unconstitutional character of the transference of the boxes. The claim was dismissed by the Constitutional Tribunal in favour of the restoration of the files in early 2013 (Constela, *El País*, 2013)

Much of the information produced by these institutions is today distributed throughout different official archives, such as the General Administration Archive, the General Military Archive in Madrid, or the General Archive of the Civil War in Salamanca, to cite a few. The ensuing report published by the governmental Interministerial Commission in the summer 2006 on the state of archives,<sup>11</sup> which partly answered Amnesty's demands, made apparent, through the numerous archival sources it cited, the dispersion of some collections, hinting at the taxing experience of researching the footprints of these repressive institutions.

With the enforcement of the restorative Law 52/2007 or the Law of Historical Memory, files from the National Historical Archive—where the papers of the *Causa General* are held—, the General Administration Archive, the Historical Memory Documentary Centre—home to General Archive of the Civil War—and others were digitized, and thus much data was made public virtually. Although some say the conditions of these depositories around the country gradually improved, especially after the passing of the aforementioned law, they did not improve radically. According to Espinosa's 2009 report, military sources, for instance, were then still chaotic. This issue also applies to the civil registries and local court records in which incomplete and inaccurate death certificates elicit the open-ended absences triggered by extrajudicial executions. As a bureaucratic tool for the public classification of citizens, the registry awards official existence to individuals in the ledgers of the nation-state. For many, especially families, the absences found in these ledgers connect these sources with past histories of loss and uncertainty, of revoked legitimacies and social anxiety. The inconsistent and tenuous files symbolize the negative representation and floundered individuation of the defeated, which was perpetuated gradually after 1939.

These gaps and silences in the registry have been the subject of much social and academic interest in the last decade. On the one hand, in recent years, historians have engaged in producing lists of names and figures that give clarity on the issue of such covert deaths, aiming to recompose an intelligible narrative of the confounding historical evidence. On the other hand, the predicaments presented by inscriptions of

---

<sup>11</sup> *Informe sobre Archivos*, Comisión Interministerial 2006.

the war and postwar dead in civil registers became the leitmotiv of protests on the part of associations' demanding the completion of these depositories with the names of those never listed. This required a change in the legislation—a reform of the Civil Registry Law of 1957—that permitted other ways of attesting the causes of these individuals' deaths.

Before the present Civil Registry Law was approved in 2011, these inscriptions were limited to family members and were time-consuming and costly, requiring the testimony of two witnesses that could confirm when and how the person died. For many relatives wanting to register people who had perished as a result of the conflict, this was an arduous task. The long temporal distance between the events and the time of registration meant some relatives could not see the process through or locate witnesses, who, if still alive, might be willing to testify about the killings. After a persuasive campaign led by Andalucía-based associations (e.g. CGT (General Workers' Confederation) or *Todos los Nombres*) and other national collectives (e.g. ARMH)—with the slogan: “All victims of *franquismo* in the civil registries!”—the law enforced in 2011 made inscription protocols more flexible. Now, town halls—as well as relatives—can register these deaths and witnesses are no longer needed. As the regional association ARMHEX in Extremadura explains on their blog, proof of killings has been *softened*, as registries now accept any type of evidence through which “death can be rationally inferred” (Law 20/2011 of Civil Registry, Head of State, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 2011: 81498). Here *soft* evidence refers to those marks, accounts, or remains from the past that no longer offer a direct experience of the conflict and require, just as the papers, files, and photographs of archives, inferential interpretation. The indexical character of the evidence, which mediates the past and “establishes a fact in a situation of uncertainty” (Csordas cited by Crossland 2013: 125) gains prevalence in the process of registering these violent deaths.

Similarly, the files from summary proceedings in court-martials have also been subject of intense controversies. Legal experts and different associations today demand the dissolution of sentences pronounced by Franco's military jurisdiction, due to the disingenuous nature of the accusations and trials performed. For many civil collectives, much of the information generated by the proceedings should be

recognized as illegal, contesting its evidentiary character and reaffirming the invalidity of these sentences. These groups argue that this ought to be contemplated in the text of the Law of Historical Memory of 2007—which considers the trials and sentences illegitimate but not unlawful (Ferrándiz 2011). Such archival materials gain significance when they come into contact with these different motivations and with the making of history itself. Through them history thus acquires, as Steedman (1998: 66)—recalling Le Goff—argues, an active role as a device, a “technology of remembrance” in the construction of a social memory and in the subjective imagination and experience of the past in the present.

Serie D No 099850  
L 005773 **Certificado P. Grato 38**  
(Ley 23/1986 de 24.12)

  
MINISTERIO DE JUSTICIA  
Número 24 **REGISTROS CIVILES**

**REGISTRO CIVIL DE CASTUERA**

**DATOS DE IDENTIDAD DEL DIFUNTO:**

Nombre ELOY-JOSÉ  
 Primer apellido EDUARDO  
 Segundo apellido BARRERO  
 hijo de BALDOMERO y de MARIA  
 Estado CASADO nacionalidad ESPAÑOLA  
 Nacido el día uno de DICIEMBRE  
 de mil ochocientos noventa y tres  
 en VALENCIA DEL VENTOSO

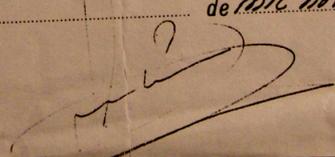
Inscrito al tomo 30, folio 245  
 Domicilio último \_\_\_\_\_

**DEFUNCION:** Hora \_\_\_\_\_ día \_\_\_\_\_  
 de \_\_\_\_\_ de mil novecientos treinta y nueve  
 Lugar CASTUERA  
 Causa Muerte violenta por acción directa del Bom  
como consecuencia GUERRA CIVIL.  
 El enterramiento será en \_\_\_\_\_

**DECLARACION DE D.**  
 En su calidad de \_\_\_\_\_  
 Domicilio \_\_\_\_\_  
 Comprobación: Médico D. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Colegiado núm. \_\_\_\_\_ número del parte \_\_\_\_\_

**OTROS TITULOS O DATOS** El finado estaba casado e  
Rosario Nogales Durán de cuyo matrimonio n  
cieron Juan de la Cruz, Manuela, Luis, Rosa  
José.

ENCARGADO D. JUAN VANDER DE TEJERA  
 SECRETARIO D. RAFAEL JAMBRADO NUÑEZ  
 A las once horas del diez y siete de MAR  
de mil novecientos ochenta

REGISTRO CIVIL DE CASTUERA (Badajoz)

DEFUNTO: ELOY-JOSÉ BARRERO EDUARDO  
 del tomo 30 folio 245  
 de la inscripción 118  
 de fecha 17 de Marzo de 1980  
 en virtud de la autorización conferida al art. 38  
 del Reglamento de Registros Civiles por el Real Decreto  
 de 2 de Agosto de 1980  
 C. J. de Castuera (Badajoz)



Image 6. Death certificate of Eloy José Gonzalez Barrero, killed in 1939 and inscribed by his family in March 1980, Civil Registry of Castuera, Badajoz. Courtesy of Libertad González Barrero.

### *Excavating the Repression Files*

Researchers from PREMHEX and independent historians work closely with the documents of the above-mentioned civil registries, municipal, state, and military court archives, as well as other documentary sources of relevant analysis (e.g. biographies, letters and personal scripts). Among these different files, death certificates and trial sentences bear an intimate connection to the space of the mass grave. The non-existent or incomplete documentation in civil registers and the remaining execution edicts in other state judicial repositories often trigger an image of the displaced body of the missing in furtive burial grounds, both for the researcher and for relatives and activists that engage with these records. The archive, as Carolyn Steedman (1998: 75) observes evoking Bachelard, is a space that allows for dreams and daydreams, in this context, of the violence that transpired in the local and familial scenarios of the conflict. For the third and fourth generations of historians that work in the study of archival texts in PREMHEX, the relation between these objects and the dead is metonymic: it speaks about the repressive project as a whole from the moment of the military occupation in 1936 until the postwar years in the two provinces. For other emerging local and provincial researchers, they also constitute a reminder of the episodes that took place in particular villages and towns.

In mapping these events, the historian becomes an archaeologist of books and drawers, folders and charts, imagining events and tracing sequences in order to interpret the paradigms of civil and military confrontations. In so doing, the historian's work unpacks these files and also places them in the hands of those who actively search for information in official repositories about the missing—whether relatives, activists or fellow researchers—driving these files into novel contexts of reception. The circulation of archival papers carries with it imprints and the signs of past violence. As a space that mobilizes the mind and the body through the imagination, the archive and the documents that move in and out of it stir recondite inner feelings and fears in those who come in touch with them. Visions of the past are inextricably linked to the emotions that the content of their pages provoke and provide. One can trace the dislocated effects of the politics of the repressive order in

the relationship that different people establish with documents and the motivations verbalized in their descriptions and pronouncements.

In an interview with young doctoral researcher Javier Martin Bastos, who worked at PREMHEX from 2005, the historian explained how documents had played a crucial role in the formation of a regional database of individuals who died as a result of Francoist and Republican repression as well as in prisons during and after the war. The purpose was to create a digital search engine in which the profiles of these individuals (with names, places of death and trials) could be located through a web device and online. In the first years of Javier's participation in the project, he engaged in the retrieval of information from all local civil registries in the province of Badajoz and the north of Cáceres. This was a lengthy job that he complemented with an additional search in military and prison archives whilst he assisted colleagues with their collection of death and prison sentences elsewhere. After a few years, Javier was given the task of compiling a "white book of the Francoist repression" (Javier Martin Bastos, Cáceres, 2013) in the province of Badajoz. This would also eventually become the theme of his PhD thesis, where all the data would be analyzed and published.

Observing Javier's work, one can construe that there is a strong interest in producing the figures of the violence perpetrated by both sides of the conflict. Figures, as we will see in later chapters, are too a point of contention between the historians that research Francoist forms of violence and those that have led the more revisionist currents in the country over the past decades. As quantifiable evidence, numbers acquire particular relevance in different academic and non-academic contexts, as they become raw data for accountability allegations and in public debates about the identity of victims and perpetrators. Their value and attraction resides in their capacity to strengthen both distinct historical arguments and the status of the historical knowledge being produced (Jordanova 2000: 95). For Javier, accounting for these deaths is also a way of addressing the information contained in the *Causa General*, which documented the number of deaths generated by Republican forms of repression. Javier situates this number between 1,800 and 1,900 individuals and estimates the number of dead as a result of Francoist violence to be around 11,500–12,000 in Extremadura alone, from 1936 to 1945. Remembering these numbers with

some hesitation, due to the volume of cases recorded and in the absence of his notes, Javier's words bring out the uncertainty caused by the immensity of the job and the conditions of the archive:

I remember separate figures right now. The number of deaths by irregular execution, which is nearly a final figure, is around 9,500. People who died as a result of capital punishments were around 1,700. 800 people died in prison and 200 to 300 died for other various causes: poisoning, beatings and ill treatment and deaths after prison. And finally we have around 200 disappeared. People we don't know what happened to them. We have, for instance, documents that show the transfer of a prisoner to another prison and after that, there is no more information anywhere about him or other prisoners whose file says 'released under the custody of the Civil Guard' and there are no more records about what happened to them. Some researchers have previously interpreted these as executions—however we don't have enough data to confirm this. In other occasions, we have evidence through the testimony of families that some of these individuals were in fact executed, as we compare the details we have from the provincial prison, what is in other history books and the testimony of the prisoner's family. (Javier Martin Bastos, Cáceres, 2013)

For the historian, civil registers cannot be viewed in isolation and ought to be considered in conjunction with oral testimonies and past historical works by local historians, amateur writers, or people that have inventoried these cases locally in the past. Bearing in mind that around 50% of these executions were never registered and there are few records related to the killings, these sources provide important avenues of investigation that recount subaltern realities. In addition, the very real entanglements between these documents and the living disclose other cultural intimacies related to this kind of historical investigation. For instance, for Javier, the contact with witnesses and the account of relatives enabled him to “rethink the nature of his research” (Ibid.). Personal memories from people interviewed, often accompanied by images of the missing obtained from personal collections, reminded him that the individuals on the documents were “not just names on a paper but real people” with vivid histories still attached to them (Ibid.). Testimonies offered proximity to the past, according to the researcher, especially in the most advanced stages of his investigation, when the repetitive counting of thousands of cases had distanced him from the severity of the deaths recorded. This was not the case,

however, at the beginning of his research, when the information contained in the archives disturbed and outraged him. The writing on these papers *shocked* him—as Stoler (2008: 181) has noted, recalling Roland Barthes in her reading of Dutch colonial files—because the files not only spoke of history but also about the harrowing “dramas” of some people’s lives (Ibid.). The feelings of distress were also incremented, according to Javier, by the physical experience of the civil registry itself, which, unlike other archives, was desolate and dusty, making working routines intense and engulfing. Death certificates and other files are embroiled with the sentiments and actions of past authoritarian pursuits, shaping the sensuous and personal encounter of the historian in the present. When these files travel from the archive and registry into the house, they enable private forms of familial reminiscence and perception.

The death certificate in Image 6 shows the way in which these documents were completed. Through a close reading of its rubric and looking to the story behind it, one can observe inconsistencies in the registration process and the frustrations these procedures sometimes cause for families. This particular record certifies the death of Libertad Gonzalez’s father. Libertad is the daughter of José Gonzalez Barrero, a well-known figure in the historiography of the province, for his role as the town mayor of the village of Zafra, in Badajoz, at the time of the Second Republic. Her father, Libertad remembers, was arrested in the village of Castuera on his way back from Madrid when the war had ended. After being imprisoned in a concentration camp built in the outskirts of Castuera, he was taken out by a group of neighbours from Zafra and later executed on the way to his home village (see map of Extremadura for locations). José Gonzalez’s body was never found. In a conversation with Libertad, she explained how for some years her family did not know whether he was dead or alive.

Her mother would learn that Jose had been killed back in 1939 through hearsay, after talking to different people in Zafra and Castuera. Years went by without news about his disappearance. In the silence and austerity of the postwar years, Libertad recalls that her mother talked about the past to her from an early age; she “knew something bad had happened to the family” (Libertad Gonzalez, Zafra, 2011).

Knowing that he had been killed in the vicinity of the village, the family inscribed José's death in the Civil Registry of Castuera in 1980, during the transitional years and after Franco's death. As shown in Image 6, this record contains details about José's birth date and place but scarce information about when and where he died. There is no a concrete date, month of death, or burial location indicating where the body was inhumed. In addition, the section dedicated to the cause of death states: "violent death due to man's direct action as a consequence of the Civil War". Even though his death was inscribed already during the democratic years, it was still then attributed to the civil confrontation and no mention was made of the illicit character of the execution as an act of political repression. This deferred inscription did count, since it had the presence of two witnesses, in this case, "two right-wing neighbours"—Libertad recalled—who confirmed that José Gonzalez had, in fact, been murdered.

A decade ago, Libertad met local historian José Maria Lama, who was writing a book about the war in Zafra and had great interest in José Gonzalez and his socialist mandate before and during the contest. With his research, Lama had been able to locate many files related to the life of the town mayor but also to his death. He had found, among other important records, a different certificate for the death of Libertad's father in Zafra's Civil Registry. The historian passed the file on to Libertad, thus untangling parts of the family's history that had never been appreciated before. The certificate stated that her father had died in 1947 and not 1939. It also showed that José was a labourer and not the town mayor of the locality. The inscription, possibly completed by the local judge or a public notary during the postwar years and filled in with false details about the identity and death of the political leader, made Libertad distraught. For decades, her family, and especially her mother, had been oblivious to the existence of these records and the image they portrayed about their relative. Describing the deceitful depiction of her father in the transcript, Libertad protested: "He was already dead, they had already killed him and they still wanted to humiliate him even more?" (Libertad Gonzalez, Zafra, 2011).

Libertad sees in these distorted details about her father's death a way of dishonoring his persona and the memory of her kin. It makes her immediately recall a childhood and adolescence of public discrimination in the postwar village community. This she associated with the problems she faced in gaining access to her local school

or the fact that her name was changed as an infant to Rosario by civil registry officials during the dictatorship—for Libertad, meaning “Freedom”, epitomized Republican ideals for Francoist authorities. The certificate, as a bureaucratic product of the dictatorial order, embodies the power of the sovereign over the life and death of José, over his body and the trails of his political persona. Notably, however, it also signals an ongoing command over or haunting (Gordon 1997) of his surviving family. The contact with such forms of familial consciousness in the present revives the file’s repressive efficacy and capacity to encumber individual trauma. These sentiments are part of reciprocal exchanges between relatives and historians—as Javier implied—where memories are constructed by relying on data found by the expert and transmitted knowledge and private files of the witness and survivor.

The ramifications of Francoist sovereignty are especially visible in the files of summary trials and other judicial sentences performed by court-martial and special tribunals, where the individual is depicted through the accusations of state prosecutors, the words of the defender, and the statements of witnesses gathered in the form of public complaints, behaviour reports from local authorities (the town mayor, Civil Guard and priest), or individual declarations. In Extremadura, two historians from PREMHEX concentrated on the study of judicial sentences that punished political affiliation to left-wing parties and unions in the years of the war and the postwar period. These two doctoral researchers are Candela Chaves and Inés Fernández, who worked closely with archival information in state military and administrative archives. Candela examined court-martials and summary trials of Republican detainees, whilst Inés studied the files of those affected by the Law of Political Responsibilities (1939)—enforced after the war to prosecute those under suspicion of having cooperated with the Republican regime.

The documents in court-martial trials for instance, as Candela explained to me, elucidate a form of repression until then undocumented in relation to Franco’s military justice. These files not only included the final sentence (with resolutions like prison penalties or execution by firing squad) but also provided access to an extensive array of files that revealed why different people were condemned, how the process was initiated, what the steps were, the impressions of the prosecutor and defender, and

other intrinsic details about the judicial protocol. According to the researcher, the 8,000 cases identified—although not a final number—have allowed the project to “expound the Francoist cleansing process” and its meticulous reach in every village, town, and city of the province of Badajoz. Candela observes that the information in these files has to be carefully read and interpreted, as it is often “biased and inquisitorial, where accusation witnesses, pleas and declarations are given priority over those of the defence” (Candela Chaves, Cáceres 2013). Although Candela explained that she had not been able to work with very many oral testimonies from families or prisoners, she recognizes that those she managed to compile were “illuminating” when deciphering “the darkness of Francoist military justice” (Ibid.). Working with these “cold files”—as she termed them—requires, in her view, the voice of those who experienced these processes to contrast the conniving character of the trials and award a “real” dimension to the proceedings (Ibid.). These files are thus seen as artefacts in need of association with the subjective experience of those who lived the events recorded, to alleviate the bitterness of their existence.

Documents such as José Gonzalez’s death certificate or the files of these trials and sentences also enter other spheres of social, political, and legalistic action that provide them with additional meanings in the present. For instance, the death certificate and summary trial procedures and dictums are concomitantly an important part of the group of papers that families and survivors can collect in order to obtain a certificate of moral recognition from the Ministry of Justice. These certificates, according to the Ministry, are a form of acknowledgement, through which “Spanish Democracy honors those who were unfairly subject to persecution or violence during the Civil War and the Dictatorship” (quoted from José Gonzalez’s certificate in Image 7). These documents began to be issued as a result of the Law of Historical Memory (or Law 52/2007), in an effort on the part of the government to acknowledge, in a legal but nevertheless subtle way, the status of these individuals as victims of the repressive Francoist system. Since then, associations such as ARMHEX in Extremadura have helped people like Libertad to acquire a declaration from the government (see Image 7).

These lengthy and convoluted procedures, however, require the knowledge of those used to dealing with the bureaucratic proceedings of the Spanish legal system. For many associations like ARMHEX, it is somehow paradoxical that the state does not provide easily accessible juridical help to facilitate the proceedings. To this, one has to add that searching through these documents and creating a personal history of violence can become, on occasions, emotionally onerous. Collecting these files for new purposes often means that families have to face the *fever* or *mal d'archive* in the documents—to recall Derrida's words—impregnated with the perverse reasoning of repressive orders. Nonetheless, for Libertad Gonzalez, receiving the recognition of the state was gratifying, even though one of the things she lamented was the fact that her mother was not alive to see it. She wished all of this had happened earlier, as she believed that “all homage and recognition should have been enjoyed by [her] mother”, who, she recalls, never stopped thinking about her husband's fate.

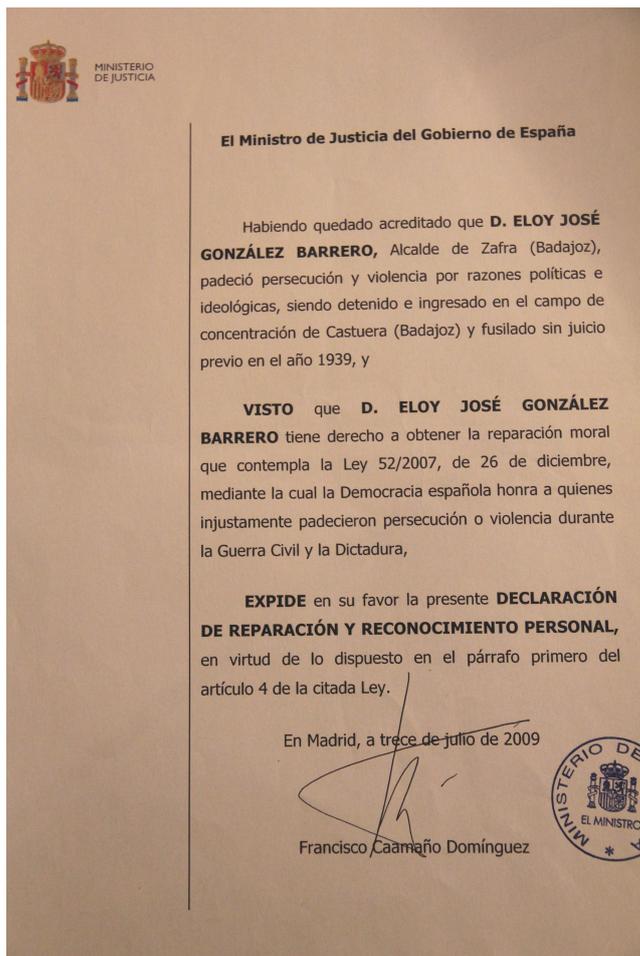


Image 7. Moral Recognition and Reparation Declaration. Courtesy of Libertad González Barrero

Image 7. Translation:

***The Ministry of Justice of the Spanish Government***

*It has been accredited that **MR ELOY JOSÉ GONZÁLEZ BARRERO**, mayor of Zafra (Badajoz), was subject to persecution and violence for political and ideological reasons, having been detained and jailed in the Castuera concentration camp (Badajoz) and executed without prior trial in 1939 and*

**ACKNOWLEDGED** that **MR ELOY JOSÉ GONZÁLEZ BARRERO** has the right to obtain the moral reparation contemplated under the Law 52/2007, passed in 26 December, through which the Spanish Democracy honors those who were unfairly subject to persecution or violence during the Civil War and the Dictatorship,

*[This Ministry] **ISSUES** on his behalf this **REPARATION AND PERSONAL RECOGNITION DECLARATION** by virtue of that stated in the first paragraph of article 4 of the law in question.*

*In Madrid, thirteen of July 2009,*

*Signature*

History-production endeavors have provided the documents encountered in official and personal archives with many social lives. They have become part of individuals' personal collections, where they become props for memory recall (Hirsch 2012). Through other acts of compilation, they have entered present institutional regimes where they evidence the persecution and death of the defeated. In their use, the event of the killing is interpreted time and time again, as an object of historical exegetical writing, a token in the intimate retelling of personal histories, or evidence of a family's tragedy in the eyes of the democratic state. The information contained in their pages represents the marks of the necropolitical order (Mbembe 2003) deployed by the dictatorial enterprise, which superintended the deaths of the defeated and fostered continuing forms of oppression through their exclusion or condemnation in the archive. Upon the encounter with the relative, activist, or historian, the criminal vision of the subject promoted by these death certificates and military sentences acquires other shades and undertones. Searching in the archive becomes, indeed, as Steedman (1998: 73) has highlighted, a "process of identification" and "individuation" that aims to devise the historical identity of the dead through the familial, political, or scientific deciphering of its papers. The space of these archives is inseparably woven with other processes of identification performed by the archaeologist in the physical space of the mass grave. Here the lists of missing

individuals compiled by the historian, the military trials, and oral testimonies are contrasted with the information inscribed on bones and objects and their archaeological interpretation. In the construction of historical knowledge about the conflict, the site of the mass grave emerges as a different place of collection and recollection. To understand the flows of information production about the past in the region, one has to engage with a multi-sited vision of the archive that also considers the materiality and relational properties of the exhumation site as an integral part of the process of historical inquiry.

### *Exhumations as Historical Research*

In Extremadura, the first exhumation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century took place in the Mina de Valdihuero between the villages of Alburquerque, San Vicente de Alcántara, and Villar del Rey in the province of Badajoz in 2003 (see map of the region). In the exhumation of the mine, 16 bodies were recovered—70 years after their deaths—by a team of archaeologists and volunteers and also with the help of historians. This exhumation marked the beginning of more than a decade of archaeological excavations for the regional PREMHEX. The exhumation in the Mina de Valdihuero took place before the project had officially been created and stands as an example of an early endeavour influenced by the rise of the exhumation movement nationwide. Relatives of the missing, as elsewhere, have demanded these exhumations ever since in Extremadura. To accomplish them, they have relied on both the project and its archaeological experts, but also on the work of other independent teams hired on an ad hoc basis by historical memory associations.

In this section, I will concentrate mainly on the exhumation work undertaken by PREMHEX and their understanding and performance of mass grave excavations. During 2011 and 2012 I collaborated closely with their team, attending different prospections<sup>12</sup> and the localization and exhumation of mortal remains. As well as being framed by the goals of the research project, these processes are also bound by the idiosyncrasies of regional and state laws and the political interest they incite. Exhumation processes have undergone different stages in the last decades, marked

---

<sup>12</sup> A prospection consists in the examination of the land or terrain in search of the mass grave. It is the first step in the field and in the archaeological process towards locating the unmarked burial site.

especially by fluctuating governmental support. As already mentioned, the uncovering of bodies of the defeated is not free of controversy or adverse reactions at local, regional, and national levels.

For PREMHEX, while exhumations have been driven by families' appeals to recover the bodies of their relatives, excavations also provide them with materials, which allow for a different interpretation of the past. As archives illustrate the Francoist imaginary through textual manifestations of violence in documents, the discovery of the body in the mass grave offers a raw image of alternate stories of disappearance. Cayetano Ibarra, the exhumations coordinator at PREMHEX, whose work consisted in compiling families' demands and initiating the investigation and location of the mass graves, explained to me that exhumations are crucial in order to document unrecorded episodes of the repression in the archives. Cayetano's collaboration with the project stemmed from his previous involvement with the *Junta* or *Gobierno de Extremadura*, where he held other positions as part of the administration. He was also the socialist (PSOE) town mayor of his home village, Fuente de Cantos (Badajoz) in the 90s, and the author of a detailed book about the history of the conflict in his locality. His implication in the project relates to both his personal interest in writing the history of the war and his family's experience of Francoist repression marked by his grandfather's killing. For the coordinator of exhumations, mass graves are inevitably enmeshed in a project of historical investigation because they contribute to "elucidating other versions of the history that the dictatorship never told" (Cayetano Ibarra, Badajoz, 2013). Mass graves then become revealing, and as such, become the object of historical and archaeological methodologies in the research undertaking. From the project, they are carefully examined in connection to an established *protocol*. Far from being a unified set of recommended guidelines prescribed by a national official entity, the protocol followed by PREMHEX was designed by the regional project, drawing on their knowledge and training and on their own work on mass graves over the years.

Some have considered the absence of a centralized protocol—that is, until 2011, when the state finally approved one—a reflection of the lack of commitment to exhumation ventures on the part of the government. For years, teams have mostly worked according to their own investigative *modus operandi*, informed by the goals

of the actors—whether associations or projects—leading the mass-grave search. Protocols like the one employed in Extremadura—similar to those used by other teams nationally and internationally—involve previous historical research in archives for information about the detentions and executions; the gathering of oral testimonies about the killings; search and location of the mass grave area; securing exhumation permits from local authorities or private land owners; the exhumation and identification of the bodies and objects in the grave; elaboration of reports about the findings that can eventually be read by families and other audiences; and, finally, the reburial of the corpses.

For some archaeologists and forensic practitioners (see Gassiot and Steadman 2008), the disengaged position of governmental actors in the regulation of scientific work around mass graves and thus, in the creation of a suitable and cohesive protocol, means that exhumation processes can often be hindered by the antagonistic positions of local official bodies towards the investigation of these war and postwar sites (Ibid.). According to Gassiot and Steadman (2008: 434), this is what their team experienced in Catalonia, where political opposition subtly hampered the development of their work on various occasions. Moreover, Francisco Ferrándiz (2011: 538) has remarked that the protocols established in different autonomous communities, often heterogeneous and uneven, have “ordered excavations” without clarifying crucial aspects of the work, such as their “juridical regime” (Ibid; Montero 2010).

In 2011, the socialist government that enforced the Law of Historical Memory in 2007 approved a national exhumations protocol, a few months before the end of their mandate. Based on the international 1991 UN exhumation guidelines (*El País* 24-09-2011), this measure nevertheless arrived eleven years after the first exhumation had taken place, with the purpose of providing an accredited protocol for those regions still without one. Indeed, the problem that some of those involved in the exhumation of mass graves have with governmental dispositions is not solely a concern with the creation of a state-crafted set of standards. Instead, it has more to do with the general unwillingness of statist elites to fully endorse the unearthing and study of these past crimes judicially and as a historical project. Archaeologists such as Alfredo González Ruibal (2009: 110) have commented critically that by eluding the

responsibility of implementing, overseeing, and administering exhumations nationwide—and instead leaving these procedures to families—the state has failed to contemplate exhumation work as a “truly investigative labour”, which is part of a long term effort to create a lasting collective memory of the conflict (Ibid.). It seems that the state’s hesitation and vacillation towards the recovery of these bodies are founded on the unease evoked by their prominent bio-presence and by what these corpses represent in political and social terms.

Governmental rulings have had a decisive impact on the way these scientific projects have been accomplished in recent years. For instance, in Extremadura, Cayetano Ibarra described how exhumations have undergone different periods linked to the support and funding received from local and national administrations. During the first period, dating from the beginning of the project until 2007, he explained that it was the regional Ministry of Culture who mainly backed exhumations. Although it did not have a specific budget for “historical memory activities”, it contributed to specific excavations because there was a “vocation to help” (Cayetano Ibarra, Badajoz, 2013). Agreements were also signed with local town halls, so that financial aid could reach them for the coordination of infrastructure related to the exhumation project. The second period, which ran from 2007 to 2011, was marked by subsidies provided by the national Ministry of the Presidency, as a result of the Law of Historical Memory of 2007. These subsidies were available to family groups and associations in order to promote and facilitate exhumations, rendering them accountable for the application process and the administration of the grant and project—including the search for the archaeological team.

In Extremadura, families and associations often rely on PREMHEX—as well as other associations like ARMHEX—to help with these bureaucratic and financial procedures, as well as to solve other practical issues such as the attainment of permits from the regional Patrimony Office or the hiring of an archaeological team. In Extremadura, exhumations are subject to patrimony laws, which adds another layer of complexity to the planning of the excavation, as the law understands these sites in the same way as pre-historic sites and does not regard them as a matter of urgency. Often, the delay experienced due to such bureaucratic processes would cause much exasperation in families and associations (see Chapters 3 and 4). As with the

previously noted certificates of moral recognition, the funding projects from the Ministry of the Presidency were hard-won operations that needed the guidance of those versed in the language and praxis of state forms. According to Cayetano, many of the applications filled in without advice often failed to obtain funding. The abstruse and slow nature and tempo of some of these bureaucratic procedures can have, on occasions, a direct impact on the way people live the process—as shown in later examples—on their hopes and expectations, negatively marking the experience of searching for such long-absent human remains.

The latest period, which runs from 2011 until today, is associated with the dismantling of funds from the Ministry of the Presidency effected gradually by the right-wing government of the Popular Party (PP) since the general election of November 2011. Regional and local elections held in May that same year also gave the victory to PP in many local constituencies around the country. For groups involved in the excavation of mass graves, this meant a return to the beginnings of the exhumation venture. Extremadura is governed today by the conservative PP, and Cáceres Provincial Council does not support the agreement that made PREMHEX possible at the start. This, Cayetano assured me, makes things more complicated, as there is not the same will to exhume in regional governmental frontbenches. Exhumations carried out since then, according to the PREMHEX coordinator, have been accomplished thanks to the team of volunteers that collaborated with the project throughout the years under the supervision of the project's archaeologist and physical anthropologist, Laura Muñoz Encinar. These recourses in fact saved money in the process, as today families no longer receive financial aid from the Spanish state.

During fieldwork, I collaborated on exhumations that in all cases had secured funds from the Ministry of the Presidency. In two of these exhumations located in the villages of Castuera and Puebla de Alcocer, in the province of Badajoz—discussed in Chapters 3 and 4—, the grant allowed for the search and identification of bones and their return to the families, but also for an exhaustive analysis of these sites as spaces of acute historical value—especially for the project and its team members. This was also the case in the example of the mass grave in the village of Zorita, in the province of Cáceres, analyzed in Chapter 6. Nonetheless, here the remains were never found, inspiring other actions of historical enunciation. Certainly, these political, economic,

familial, and academic relations with the past shape exhumations in Extremadura. As Paola Filippucci (2010: 78) has observed in the case of Great War remembrance in France, “a keen consciousness of temporality and keen sense of historicity” determines the way in which some collectives remember the past and project it onto both the present and future.

In contrast to the hesitant attitude of different governments towards the investigation and commemoration of Civil War and postwar deaths caused by Francoist repression, the historical work carried out in Extremadura is fuelled by a wish to make the past public, by a kind of “*historia magistra vitae*” (Koselleck 2004: 26), which aims to exemplify the experience of past generations for those who did not live the conflict, and which is fuelled in turn by a filial desire to reconstitute the identity—whether political or not—of the missing in public and official discourses. Decentralized efforts to remember and study the past emanate from an aspiration to contest an abounding instrumental silence and forgetting. The exhumations led by PREMHEX in Extremadura are at once a locus where political intricacies at different levels are played out and a place for the construction of new historical imaginaries. Just like the archive, the exhumation site enlivens the dreams and daydreams of its participants, who weave a profuse vision of the conflict through empirical and emotional understandings of its materiality and technological treatment.

Exhumation work follows the scientific drive of the institutional project and is deeply entangled with the work of the historian. Archaeologist and physical anthropologist Laura Muñoz Encinar, director of exhumation activities, trained as a historian and sees the exhumation as the last step in the process of documentation—from the archive to the grave—in the study of war and postwar forms of repression in the region. Her work is intimately connected to the research of other project members like Javier or Candela, and also to the studies of local historians in the places where mass graves are found. Working on the exhumation of these mass graves involves contrasting different sets of data provided by the files obtained in repositories, the accounts of witnesses, and the content of the unmarked grave. As Laura observes, the scientific handling of these mass burial sites aids the interpretation of those repressive files such as death certificates, incomplete lists, prison registers, and the like, which on many occasions “do not illustrate the reality” of the executions and extra-legal acts

of violence (Laura Muñoz Encinar, Fregenal de la Sierra, 2011). The materials found in the clandestine burials created during the war and after are constantly cross-referenced (Latour 1999) in a dialectic exercise between the archaeological object and the archive, to shed light on the death mechanisms and repression tactics used by the perpetrators.

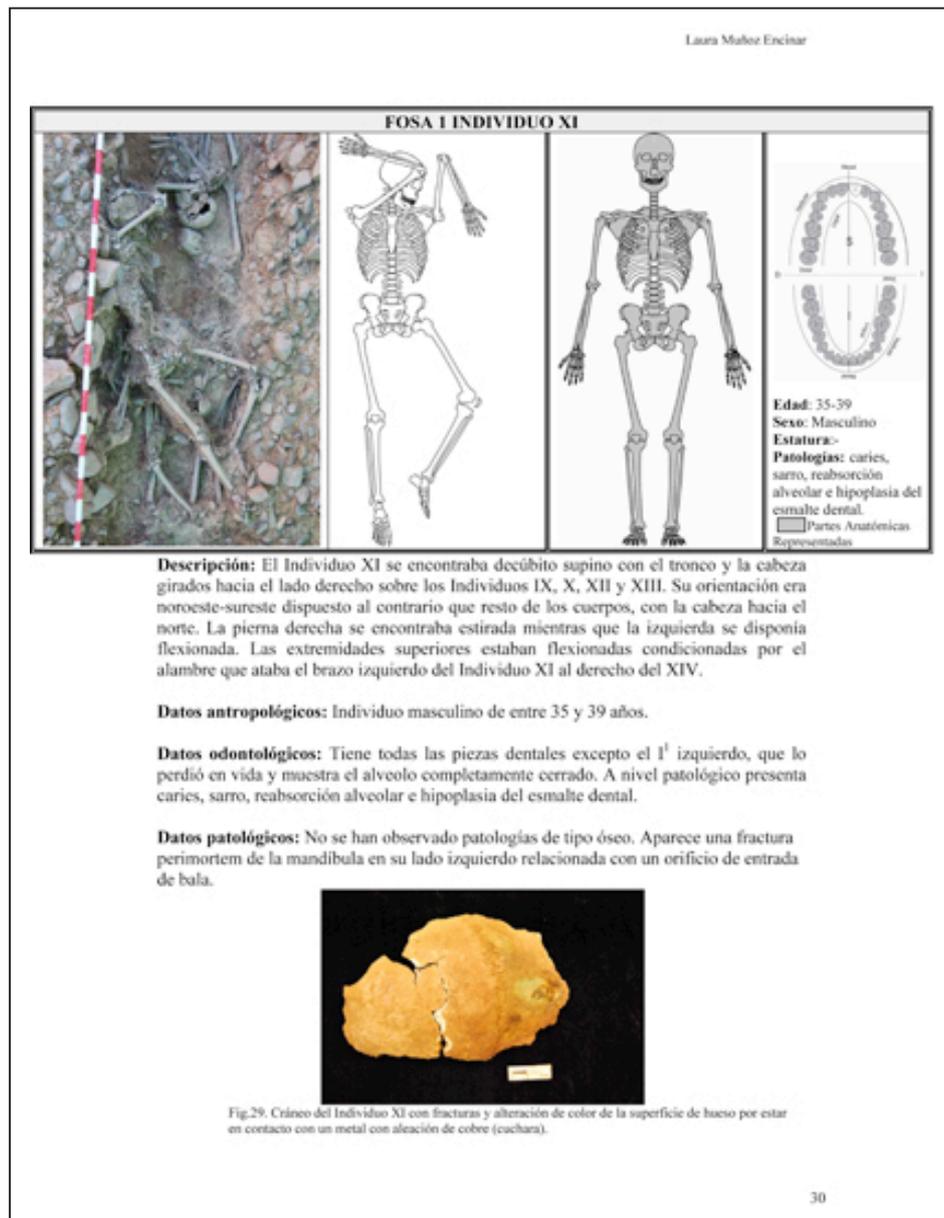


Image 8. Example of the anthropological record of an individual (*Individuo IX*) found in Mass Grave 1 in the village of Castuera, Badajoz. The sheet contains a description of the position and orientation of the body in the mass grave, anthropological details (age, gender), and details about the individual's dental and pathological conditions. There is also a close up image of the individual's skull and fractures. Courtesy of Laura Muñoz Encinar.

As Laura explained to a group of families and neighbors in a commemorative act in October 2011:

To commence the research activity [of the mass grave] we need to produce those lists in which we try to find out the birth date of these people and their death date—which on many occasions does not correspond with the real execution date. [We try to discover] the conditions and the causes of death, since we see how those conditions registered in the archives [...] do not correspond at all with the facts that the scientific analysis of the remains provide us with. For instance, sometimes we find in the archive deaths due to ‘*clash with the public force*’. [But through the body] we can see that this is not real. (Laura Muñoz Encinar, Fregenal de la Sierra, 2011)

Deriving from this view is the idea of the exhumation space as a site of information production. For Muñoz Encinar, archaeological praxis and physical anthropological analysis can bring important knowledge “about the identity of repressed victims and also [help] to discover facts about the repression carried out in the area of study” (Ibid.). The aim of the identification and individuation of the bodies is hence twofold. It consists not only in learning the names of those in the grave but also in situating them in a historical context, “to find out how they were murdered, in which moment, and to know what happened around the time of their deaths and in the course of the repressive process” (Ibid.). Exhumation research thus entails a detailed methodological approach in which the excavation and documentation of these remains is meticulously conducted. Trained in the past as a member of high-profile research teams dedicated to the excavation of pre-historic sites such as the famous *Atapuerca* settlements in northern Spain, Laura’s management of these sites is exhaustive and influenced by her previous professional experience. A careful probing of the terrain and thorough recording are used during each excavation phase to extract substantial information from the burial site. Her methodology is also connected to her work as a PhD researcher studying Francoist sites and modes of repression in Extremadura through mass grave exhumations.

As Daston and Galison (1992) have observed, the painstaking technical procedures used in the gathering and interpretation of bountiful information are part

of a scientific effort to elaborate a form of knowledge that is objective and impartial—part of the research goals of the project. In this context, the scientific method is employed to serve the analysis of these materials, which could be used as judicial *hard* evidence, in future truth-seeking structures of national or international reach—as the archaeologist pointed out on several occasions. In this juncture, the way in which evidence is made visible acquires a significant interest, as the excavation process unveils the idiosyncrasies of another system of information collection—composed by the archaeological handling, classification, and taxonomy of bones and their objects. From the in-depth analysis of materials in the field, and later in the laboratory, where bones and objects are classified and inventoried, the materiality of the exhumation site speaks for itself through means of scientific lexicons and hypotheses that vitalize the interpretation of the past. As Laura explained about her own archaeological practice:

When we find the mass grave, we are going to investigate it in reverse order. We are going to remove the soil and document every event that took place in that deposit from the moment we find the grave backwards. We do this through a vertical reading, a stratigraphic reading of the soil and through a spatial reading of the mass grave. Once the mass grave has been excavated we are going to geo-reference all the objects and the bodies. We are going to see where they are, how they are positioned, the relationship each body bears with the rest and how each body and object are related. We do this in order to reconstruct tri-dimensionally the mass grave and find out how the bodies were buried, how they got there. These bodies, through their objects, provide us with information about who they are, what objects they have, and why. We have to ask why a person dressed in one way and not other, for instance, in order to find out their social status; if they have valuable objects or not, to know whether they were in prison and registered; if they have other significant objects that can point out concrete information, such as pencils—which tell us the literacy degree of that person—or lighters, objects related to the person's habits. There are certain objects that are going to give us information about the traits of the individuals. However, those objects and bodies that we have geo-referenced and analyzed through archaeological methodologies from a global perspective also help us to understand the characteristics of the group and their repression *experience*, going beyond the mere identification of the bodies. (Laura Muñoz Encinar, Cáceres, 2012. Emphasis added)

In Image 8, one can see this methodology and taxonomy in practice. On the sheet, part of the anthropological report elaborated by the archaeologist after an exhumation, the photograph of the corpse in the field coexists with pre-mortem information extracted from its bones and its scientific illustration. Objects are separately considered in an archaeological record of the mass burial site. As elucidated by the example and words of the researcher, once cleaned and restored, bones and objects enter into a process of interpretation in which the age, sex, and pathologies of the skeletons are observed in connection with the cultural and social attributes of the individual, provided by the artifacts they carry. The global study to which the archaeologist refers in this quote encompasses a comparative view of exhumation space. Such a vision associates the characteristics of each single individual to the traits presented by the rest of the group and to the nature of the deposit or burial itself. These aspects are then considered in connection with the social history and the material vestiges in the repressive landscape of the region.

This approach is influenced by archaeological currents favouring a relational approach to the study of conflict sites. In the same way, Laura's study of the mass grave seeks to relate this prime site of repression to other spaces of violence such as the prison or the war front, in order to allow for the construction of a diachronic and integrated vision of the conflict (Ibid.). This treatment of the mass grave is also determined by a growing trend in archaeological circles to consider the so-called archaeology of memory or conflict archaeology—led in Spain, among others, by archaeologist such as Alfredo González Ruibal (2012; see also Crossland 2012; Schofield 2008). The interspersed perception of the materiality of the conflict places the work of Laura at the core of a history-making exercise, but also at the core of an endeavour to recognize these sites as part of the traumatic collective heritage of the contemporary past (Buchli and Lucas 2001) in Spain. As the archaeologist asserts, through this praxis the initial premise that mass graves exist can be proven, even though many people deny their actuality still today. Exhumation research is hence envisaged as a practice with the function of “make[ing] a social identity explicit” (De Certeau 1988: 45) through knowledge generated about the conflictive past.

Indeed, this purpose is in line with the overall focus of the institutional project and with goals of the social movement for the recovery of historical memory.

Nonetheless, the scientific interpretation of these bodies and their objects is understood differently in the socio-political arena in which they exist. This can be appreciated throughout the exhumation process and, finally, in the reburial and memorialization of the human remains and their belongings. In Extremadura, for instance, the reburial is often—but not solely—performed collectively, especially since DNA identification is usually complicated due to the degeneration of the bones in the acidic soil of the region. Other issues, such as the impossibility of finding relatives to obtain suitable samples for identification, make the task of individuation arduous. In most of the exhumations I followed, family and activist associations opted for a group burial and commemoration, emphasizing their significance as artefacts of collective remembrance and political reclaim. Likewise, the post-exhumation treatment of the objects encountered in the mass grave evokes a similar social response. For instance, many families who find their relatives choose to donate their personal effects to the provincial museum with a desire to attain a form of public avowal, as Laura explained in an interview. In other cases, and as I discuss in Chapter 6, their storage in the museum is a contentious issue—especially for intermediary associations who promote exhumations but which might not have direct kinship links to the bodies—since the regional patrimony law requires these objects to be deposited in the provincial depository in the absence of a living relative.

Conceived of and enacted as scientific entities, and existing as part and locus of the political, legal, and familial worlds of the living, documents, bones, and objects incorporate the fragmented details about the killings in the Francoist rearguard. Their presence stimulates a history of violence, whose meanings are constantly negotiated through techno-scientific discourse and practice, political action, and social and familial remembrance. As hybrids—to use Latour’s definition (1993)—which fluctuate between different epistemologies, they can often resolve or generate uncertainty, serve the purpose of political agendas, or alleviate the ongoing searches of families. In the light of the faulty knots that compose such networks of deceitful remnants and skewed politics, following different exhumation ventures can shed light on the entanglements between the official archive and the mass grave, and the effects of these objects on the individual and collective assembling of a discursive system around history of the conflict. Similarly, as indexes of the person that once was, these bones, documents, images and objects have a profound capacity to affect the relations

and reactions that form around the event of the exhumation, as their distressed materiality meets with the traumatic experience of survivors and the personal worlds of those from different generations. The following chapters explore the intricacies of the historical project in connection to two excavations sites and different sociopolitical contexts. Throughout these chapters, the exhumation of different mass graves is treated as a central space in which the identity of the missing is co-produced through material, narrative, and affective expressions that converge during the process.

## Chapter 3

### Exhuming the Body of the Unknown

*Please watch visual piece [War Histories I](#) before reading this chapter.*

During 2011, between 7 and 10 archaeological interventions in mass graves from the war and the postwar period took place in the southwestern territory of Extremadura. With the exception of one site, for which the regional association ARMHEX organised the excavation with the aid of an independent archaeological group, the regional PREMHEX and its archaeological team carried out all of the exhumations and mass grave searches that took place that year. In August 2011, I joined the archaeological team led by Laura Muñoz Encinar to collaborate on the exhumation of two mass graves connected to the history of a concentration camp in the village of Castuera, located in the northeast of the province of Badajoz. The exhumation had been promoted through the advocacy work of an activist association formed by members of different generations that aimed to recover the history of the site and of the violence in the area. The following summer, in July 2012, I collaborated on a second exhumation project, where two other mass graves were unearthed in the village of Puebla de Alcocer, a few kilometres away from the first location. The exhumation in Puebla de Alcocer was organised by a group of families, who searched for their direct and indirect dead relatives in the mass graves.

Chapters 3 and Chapter 4 deal with the study of these two exhumation campaigns respectively. In the analysis of the two sites, the two chapters aim to explore how social, political, and familial regimes influence scientific work and, in turn, how scientific interpretations and methods shape the imagination of the repressive event during the unearthing of the mass graves. In both exhumations, the practices of archaeology, physical anthropology, and history displayed distinct nuances and relevance, directly linked to the intentions behind each body search. In the case of Castuera, discussed in the following chapter, the scientific hypotheses around the unknown mortal remains in the mass grave gained profound relevance in relation to the scarce information surrounding these killings. The scientific intervention at the

mass grave became, as Latour (1999) has observed of other scientific projects, a way to produce certainty about the historical event and to prove the existence of mass executions connected to the camp. Uncertainty marked the careful method of the archaeologist and the constant relation of the mass grave and the archive. It also marked the ways in which these corpses went from being mere bones to social beings, through scientific scrutiny and individuation and in contact with the aspirations of activists and descendents who searched for their relatives in the area.

### *Making the History of the Camp*

The exhumation of the mass graves located in Castuera's cemetery constituted a milestone for activists and researchers who, in recent years, had dedicated extensive efforts to investigating and commemorating the war and postwar history of defeat in the village and surrounding areas. For local and regional historians and also archaeologists from PREMHEX such as Laura Muñoz Encinar, these mass burials were key for the acquisition of new data that could shed light over and corroborate the information already gathered from oral testimonies and archives about the repression in the village. Most significantly, the exhumation sought to find additional clues about the existence of a concentration camp located in the outskirts of the village between 1939 and February 1940. The historical significance of the graves was also salient in work carried out by the activist association who initially promoted the excavation, namely the *Asociación Memorial Campo de Concentración de Castuera* (Association for the Memory of Castuera Concentration Camp or AMECADEC). For some time, the group had worked for the public recognition and memorialisation of war spaces—such as Castuera's Concentration Camp and other detention and war sites—as well as the histories of loss of Republicans who had been imprisoned or killed during or as a result of the conflict. According to various oral accounts and historical information gathered by local researchers, the existence of these mass graves seemed intimately connected, from the start, to the functioning of the camp and also embroiled with the fate of the prisoners who disappeared at the site. As Laura explained in an interview in 2012, though much was already known about the repressive apparatus in Castuera, “the greatest materialization of this repression was found in the mass grave” (Laura Muñoz Encinar, Cáceres, 2012). The location of these burials then offered new avenues for the interpretation of what happened at the camp, the repressive

mechanisms used at different moments during the war, and the broader history of irregular and institutionalised violence in the area.

Renowned otherwise for its bountiful production of the infamous Spanish Christmas sweet known as *turrón* and its wool and olive oil industry, Castuera—with over 5,000 inhabitants at present—was in 1936 one of the most significant enclaves of the Republican government in the midst of the war (Vila 1999; López Rodríguez 2006). When Badajoz fell to General Franco's military occupation in mid-August, 1936, the capital of the south of the region and headquarters of the Republican administration were transferred to Castuera, still under Republican rule (Vila 1999; López Rodríguez 2006). Castuera remained a site of Republican activity until 1938, the year when some of these territories fell in the so-called battle of *La Bolsa de la Serena* (The Serene Pocket)—fought between Franco's military troops and paramilitary allies and Republican forces and militia. The town's role during the first years of the war, as a locus of the Republican governmental administration and its previous convoluted history between left- and right-wing political parties during the Second Republic, is recalled in some testimonies and historical accounts as one reason for the fierce Francoist repression experienced between 1938 and the most immediate postwar years (1939–1945) in the village.

The fall of *la Serena* has become an important temporal landmark for local and regional historians—as new data keeps emerging—for understanding the development of warfare apparatus in both Republican and Francoist flanks in southern Extremadura. Moreover, it has also become a referent in local studies of historical penitentiary arrangements—especially concerning Franco's prisons and camps—and the formal and informal characteristics they acquired towards the end of the conflict (see López Rodríguez 2006 and contributions in the *Revista de Estudios Extremeños* 2011). For instance, the violent struggle for dominance over *la Serena* and the ensuing loss of these Republican enclaves to Franco's military and Falange ended in the capture of numerous Republican collaborators that were soon placed in different prisons, work battalions, and detention camps. In 1939, during the last months of the combat, the disintegration of the Extremadura war front (see Hinojosa 2009) quickly gave rise to the mass displacement of countless Republican war prisoners consecrated

to improvised—sometimes newly created—prison vestiges in several areas in the north-east of the province (see War Front map below).

In this regard, the village of Castuera became a prime location for mass detention. Built between March and April of 1939 under Francoist rule, and situated three kilometres away from the village, Castuera's concentration camp aimed to house the flocks of political prisoners coming from the fragmented war front and other prisons and detention sites (León Cáceres, López Rodríguez and González 2011). The camp, as a number of local researchers told me repeatedly, was employed as a main instrument in the redistribution of prisoners throughout the Spanish territory. Nonetheless, not all prisoners faced the same fate. Whilst some waited to be judged or to be relocated, many others—considered “the most dangerous”, for their political significance in left-wing organisations—were executed and buried in the vicinity of the detention camp. According to certain popular versions and some survivors' accounts, some prisoners were killed and thrown into the depths of the nearby mine of *La Gamonita* (López Rodríguez 2013). Others were executed on the journey back to their hometown—this was the case for Libertad's father, discussed in Chapter 2, who never arrived in Zafra—or killed and buried in impromptu mass graves dug by the roadside leading from the camp to the village or at the rear of the village cemetery.

The camp, however, was not a well-known site, and has never been included in historical textbooks or the social imaginary of the region. As happened in other towns, it was the work of local historians that propelled the search for more information about the site at an early stage. In Castuera, one of the first people to research the history of the camp was historian Antonio López Rodríguez. With links to the University of Extremadura (UEX), Antonio's investigation contributed greatly to the making of the history of Francoist repression and imprisonment in Castuera and its surrounding villages. Over the years, he has also collected the names and numbers of people that were repressed, executed, and ‘disappeared’ in these areas. In an interview with López, he gave me some clues as to why the camp was such an unfamiliar location, not only regionally but also for villagers. He spoke to me of the strong feeling of terror the camp and the violent repressive mechanisms used on its prisoners had provoked in the population of the nearby village. According to López,

neighbours feared being punished by the new authorities, for any affiliation with anti-Francoist ideas under the post-occupation regime could have resulted in one's imprisonment or death. José Ramón González (2006), another historian from *la Serena*, has observed that such a disquieted atmosphere propelled the quick adhesion of the majority of the population to the values and rituals of Franco's New State during and after the conflict in the village. In Castuera, forms of extrajudicial and judicial violence were experienced during the village occupation in 1938 and after the war ended in 1939.

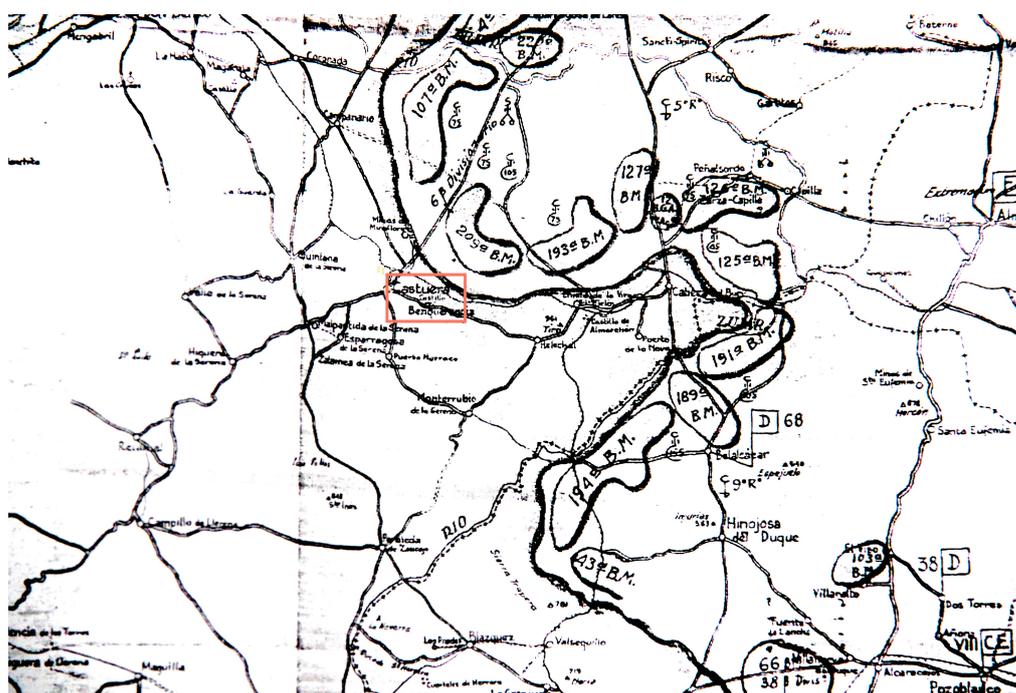


Image 9. The War Front. Courtesy of Antonio D. López Rodríguez.

Moreover, historians and local researchers also relate the lack of awareness and denial of the existence of the camp in historical discourses to a lack of existing information about the prison compound in some of the main official military archives. In the following interview excerpt, Antonio López refers to the case of Ávila's Military Archive,<sup>1</sup> opened to the public and researchers in 1995:

<sup>1</sup> According to the Ministry of Defence website, Ávila's Military Archive was created in 1993 due to the necessity of distributing the files held in the archives of the Terrestrial Army, in order to allow the latter to grow in the future. Ávila's Military Archive has held, since 1994, files related to the Civil War (1936–1939), the Blue Division (sent to support the German government during World War Two), National Militia files, and information generated by the Ministry of the Army between 1939 and 1977 (see the Ministry of Defence website for more information <http://www.defensa.gob.es/memoriahistorica/fuentes.html>).

AL: Here [in Castuera] many people denied the existence [of the camp].

ZA: And is there information in Ávila about the camp of Castuera?

AL: There is, but it is very fragmented. The little information there is, it's interesting because of the absences you find within it ...[For instance] there are four inventory lists (*estadillas*) [of prisoners from the camp] from the end of July 1939 that are *correlative* (emphasis in original). This means that these lists existed before and they continued to exist after this date. However, there are none. No one has been able to find them. They should be inside that same file and they are not. They were mandatory communications sent from here [Castuera] every day at 5pm to the chief military staff. They had to send statutory reports with the information of new admissions and casualties or relocations... Where are they?

For the historian, the military archive becomes an incomplete resource for the formation of a historical narrative—in which the fragmented nature of its files is contested (*Where are they?*)—for he admits the “temporal sequence” (Koselleck 2004) of the events recorded has been disrupted. Indeed, in the case of Castuera's concentration camp, Antonio López wanted to fill in the gaps of the archive in order, in his words, to promote a dynamic discourse about the camp “which did not exist before”. His aim of resolving the suspicious fractures that burden the archival narrative about the camp led him to other sources that contested the attentive mishandling of files and fathomed the uncertainty around the destiny and identity of the camp's prisoners. Through his research, Antonio attracted the interest of those whose lives were inextricably entangled with the violence of the war, the occupation, and the detention site. Many had lost relatives during the 1938 seizure, in the course of the military and paramilitary Francoist domination. Others, from other parts of the region and indeed the country, had relatives who disappeared after being taken to prisons in the village and to the camp. Antonio drew from these, as well as from other stories from relatives and survivors of the camp and prisons, work battalions, guerrilla fighters, or even once-collaborators with the Francoist regime<sup>2</sup> in order to understand the scope of the violence at different moments in time and the functioning of vestiges such as the prisons and camps in the area. Through looking at these life histories,

---

<sup>2</sup> In an interview with Antonio López in 2011, the historian spoke about his work with different people that had collaborated with the institutions of the New Regime. His work with officials, such as one of the guards from the camp, provided him with valuable insights into the daily routines within the detention site.

Antonio gathered information that could be contrasted with that of the inconclusive archive. Conversely, through his research he could also provide traces of past detentions, found in official documents, for those families who were still looking for information about their dead kin and the events that preceded their disappearance.

Antonio López's investigation sparked the interest of a local group of neighbours from Castuera, some of who were affiliated to political parties such as *Izquierda Unida* (United Left, henceforth IU), PSOE and other left-wing organisations. Antonio and this group of neighbours would later form the association AMECADEC—legally constituted in 2006. Throughout the years, with support from families and survivors affected by the conflict, the collective became committed to promoting the historical significance of the camp and the reparation of relatives of the missing and survivors. In an interview carried out with its then president, Guillermo León, in 2011, he described to me how the association initially emerged as “a kind of communion between these new generations and the families of repressed people who had been searching for their kin”, acting as a platform through which these families could channel their demands, especially in the absence of a state-driven mechanism that could support their needs (Guillermo León Cáceres, Badajoz, 2011). Unveiling the history of the camp was also intrinsic to their efforts and work across generations. Throughout the years, the group engaged with different activities to memorialise the camp and remember familial stories of violence. Activities have ranged from organizing annual commemorative events inside the camp or coordinating campaigns to protect the site, to planning and delivering history courses, didactic units for schools, or book presentations in the region. Such endeavours, following Lambek and Antze (1996: xvii), became cultural vehicles through which the memory of the detention site was made apparent. Through these, however, history-making and remembering were turned into powerful collective and dynamic expressions aimed at reformulating social ties and commitments (Lambek 1996: 239).

For instance, in the commemorative events that the association has conducted since 2006, strong messages of personal and political denouncement often filled the eroded footprints of the camp, of which a few traits survive today, turning the space into an arena where different claims for legitimacy were enacted. The event, which

comprises a pilgrimage from the main village square to the site of confinement,<sup>3</sup> is celebrated inside the precinct of the overgrown and deserted plain. Such events, Guillermo León observed in our interview, advocate the “social acknowledgement in the public sphere” of those who experienced direct and indirect forms of political violence, emphasising that the association intends to provide a space of “support” and “catharsis” for families who could not mourn or utter their unsettling sentiments during the postwar years. Upon attending these events, one can observe the decidedly familial focus that the association seeks to provide. The improvised stage near the base, where a concrete Catholic cross once stood as part of the camp’s architecture, was distinctly promoted as a place for the children and grand-children of political prisoners—who died or survived—to share their life accounts.



Image 10. Pilgrimage from the village to the camp

Michael Lambek (1996: 245) has observed in his study on memory, history, and spirit possession in Madagascar how private experiences and their mediation through narrative, performance, or material constructions can provide idioms for uttering “collective experiences and identity”. In Castuera, these voices, which spoke

---

<sup>3</sup> This is the trajectory that prisoners realised when they were transferred from the village prisons to the camp.

about direct experiences of loss, were often interlaced with symbolic representations of left-wing political groups and their claims to the past. Many at these events beseeched a much-cherished Republican past, and like others in associations like the Foro, hoped for its future revival in the country's political realm. The whole range of political references and symbols, songs, and expressions, mixed with personal expressions of suffering, provided the event with manifold social and historical meanings. The numerous Republican, Communist, and other flags waved, the sounds of the *Internationale* erupting from the speakers on the stage, and the use of certain Republican idioms and emblems impregnated the empty space of the camp with the traits of past and present political identities. Together with the speeches of survivors and relatives, militants and activist voices also demanded public condemnation of these killings and disappearances and pleaded for solidarity and support on the part of present public administrations at a regional and national level. The event certainly fitted with the overall "moral" objective of the association that León had identified in our conversation. It also, however, tallied with a collective political purpose, in which past tragic stories shaped a wider appeal for historical recognition, facilitating a space in which the past could be addressed.

The first part of *War Histories I*, the video presented with this chapter, shows a fragment of an event celebrated in 2012 dedicated to the exhumations that took place inside the village cemetery the previous summer, in 2011. In the video, Guillermo León reads a manifesto in which the association openly denounces the inactive role of the State in the recovery of the mortal remains of the Republican missing, when he argues that "these mass graves should have been exhumed by the Spanish State and not by AMECADEC". In León's words, which form the first part of a longer written declaration, the exhumation of these corpses lays at the core of a larger struggle lived between associations, family groups, and the central government. As part of this act of public mourning, mass graves and the bodies of the war dead became symbolic of a laden "democratic integrity"—as the president remarked later in his intervention. In his words, these mortal remains bear the inaction of different governments in the history of the locality. The speech also addressed the resistance that some local political actors had shown towards the memorialisation of the camp, the exhumation of the mass graves of the cemetery, and other association initiatives.

The endeavours of the association with regard to the camp often met with antagonism from local and regional branches of different governments. During my stay in 2011, for instance, some members of the association voiced on several occasions exasperation with the scarce support received from the local governing branch of the Socialist Party (PSOE) over the years. Although at a regional level the socialist administration had supported and instigated the investigation and memorialization of activities associated with the memory of the war, in Castuera, the local socio-political scenario led to a far more complex situation with the work carried out by AMECADEC. As some members and political activists angrily assured me, before the municipal and autonomic elections of 2011 that placed the right-wing *Partido Popular* (Popular Party, PP) in power—in many villages like Castuera and in the regional *Junta or Gobierno de Extremadura*—the socialist town hall had been opposed to actively backing the listing of the camp as a Site of Cultural Interest (*Bien de Interés Cultural*) or to cultural events such as exhibitions and book publications about the camp. In some members' views, the socialist town hall preferred Castuera to be commonly known for its *turrón* production than for the existence of a concentration camp, hinting at the perception of the camp as a type of “negative heritage” (Meskell 2002) in the eyes of some village neighbours and political representatives.

Similar disputes surrounded the exhumations of mass graves promoted by AMECADEC in 2010. When the association began the process of locating the mass graves with the help of the regional and institutionally coordinated PREMHEX and with a grant from the Ministry of the Presidency, the town hall requested that the association, as León explained, give their verbal commitment to *only* open the mass burials after the elections of May 2011 (Guillermo León Cáceres, Badajoz, 2011). Indeed, León acknowledged that some in the ruling Socialist Party in Castuera regarded the unearthing of the mortal remains in the cemetery mass graves as a political risk before voting day. This, as other people agreed, was also the case in other villages in the province around the time of the regional elections. The potential presence of the bare bones awakened feelings of unease in many, as their posthumous lives were still very much entangled with the political meanings they retained from the past and which permeated the present. Mortal remains are, as Katherine Verdery (1999) has highlighted, “protean” and, as such, a central part of the struggle between

groups aiming to offer understandings of the value of Castuera's war sites. As these mass graves appeared to be the ultimate proof of a history of repression in the area, their materiality became a central point through which to articulate competing claims about the bodies' historical significance and their present place in contemporary politics.

### *Excavating Mass Grave 1 and Mass Grave 3*

The techno-scientific search for and exhumation of the mass graves at the rear of the village cemetery, situated on the road that led from the camp to the village, aimed to provide historical depth to the remnants of the camp's architecture, to its fragmented memory and archival trail. In his exploration of the relation between memory and science, Ian Hacking (1996) has argued that scientific expertise can emerge as a technology for discerning the underlying truths of memory. For historians like Antonio López and researchers from PREMHEX, the scientific methodology applied to the study of mass graves opened a line of investigation through which to understand the inner workings of the camp, but also, most importantly, the overall military strategies of the Francoist army in the area and at the nearby front. Additionally, however, these forms of "deep knowledge" (Foucault 1980; Hacking 1996) that historical, archaeological, and anthropological know-how generated, provided new concepts, classifications, and descriptions through which activist motivations and claims acquired legitimacy and through which intergenerational trauma was elucidated.

Unlike other sites that I visited later on in my research, the bodies searched for in Castuera were unknown to those who witnessed the burial, to the historian and more broadly to anyone in the village. Taking into consideration, as López's historical research had revealed, that more than 12,000 prisoners passed through the camp during the year that it was operative, and that many of these men came from other parts of the region and the country (López Rodríguez 2006; 2013), the probability of knowing to whom these remains might belong was especially narrow. When, in January 2011, location works led by Laura Muñoz Encinar brought to light the existence of nine potential mass graves scattered around the back of the precinct of the cemetery, these latent and nameless mortal remains became the object of scientific

and activist historical scrutiny inasmuch as they triggered familial recall. Though aware of the messy reality of the repression and killings in the area, for those families in the village whose relatives' bodies remained unfound, the exhumations constituted a reason to hope for the return of the bones of their dead kin. The unearthing of these graves and their archaeological interpretation elicited past memories and, as Hacking (1996: 72) has observed of psychology and other memory-related sciences, served to reconstruct the inner soul of the living, who still today suffered for these war losses.

The excavation of two of the nine mass graves began in August 2011, after months of frustratingly waiting for permits from the Patrimony Office—delayed due to the municipal elections of May 2011. A team formed by professional archaeologists, student volunteers from the University of Extremadura, and members of AMECADEC conducted the work under the supervision of Laura Muñoz Encinar, the leading archaeologist of exhumation projects for PREMHEX. The excavation was facilitated by the new local town hall, now led by the right-wing Popular Party (PP), with the support of United Left (IU)—to which many activists from AMECADEC were affiliated. Taking into account the history of extreme friction shared by left and right-wing parties in Spain, such a coalition could be seen as an unlikely and remote occurrence. IU's move, however, has to be understood in light of the regional politics at play during those years in Extremadura. As had happened at regional level, where IU's abstention from bestowing their votes to PSOE during the act of parliamentary investiture gave the victory to the right-wing party (Aroca Mérida for *Hoy* 2011), in Castuera, both parties governed in coalition, keeping PSOE out of the local government. The new PP town hall provided the team with storage space in the cemetery as well as some additional logistic support. This was unusual in the context of an exhumation. The PP–IU alliance had prompted a curious response from the right-wing party, which, in other places, had generally avoided and refused to support exhumation campaigns. The coalition, however, had given more headway to the association, who now benefited from some, though still very limited, support from the local government.

The two mass graves excavated, namely Mass Grave 1 and Mass Grave 3, were located near the small cemetery chapel that stood at the centre of the burial ground, which once marked the place where the old limit of the cemetery was drawn.

For years, testimonies of people who visited relatives in the camp had spoken to Antonio López about their recollection of seeing empty dug-out holes next to the cemetery wall that would be hastily covered overnight, suggesting an execution had taken place the night before. Effectively, the perpetrators of the killings deliberately placed these burials outside of the cemetery limits—as also happened in other locations around the region and the country. With the years, these dormant mass graves had been absorbed by the broadening of the cemetery boundaries in 1940 and enclosed in the community of the dead from which they had been excluded (Ferrándiz 2011).

The disposition of the mass graves contrasted with the burial of the corpses of a group of Francoist allies killed by Republican forces during the occupation in 1938, which rested in the crypt inside the same chapel. These corpses remind one of the victorious dead that revisionist rhetoric claims are the “heroes” of wartime Spain, even today, in internet blogs and forums.<sup>4</sup> In the landscape of the cemetery, the mass graves also contrasted with other carefully looked-after niches, adorned with flowers, candles, and individual headstones that bore the name of other village deceased. The disparity between these and the unmarked burials reminded many of the different treatment the mortal remains of the defeated faced after the conflict ended. In this context, scientific practice erupted in the municipal burial ground, unveiling a conflicted *deathspace* deeply embedded in distinct dead body politics (Young and Light 2011: 137). In the terrain of the cemetery, the soil was unpacked and the mass grave hollowed, in order to trace the violent event back from the moment in which the corpses were buried to the moment in which the people themselves were tortured and killed.

The internments located in Mass Graves 1 and 3 had already been connected to a repressive moment through the initial location work carried out in January 2011. As Laura Muñoz explains in the exhumation report produced for the Patrimony Office

---

<sup>4</sup> A well-known priest and local historian of Francoist exploits, Angel David Martín Rubio, who is also the author of various books about the repression carried out by supporters of the Republican Popular Front (see Martín Rubio 2012), has vehemently argued for the remembrance of those who died fighting for the Francoist cause. A new blog, in which the historian collects a list of those killed by Republican forces or militia, advocates for the recovery of the names of the “heroes and martyrs” between 1936–1939.

after the intervention, by 2011 the different skulls and shoe soles that had been found, together with an array of objects such as “coins, fragments of fabric and a zip, a flask, a bullet and handgun bullet shells” (Muñoz Encinar 2011: 15), on the surface of Mass Grave 1 hinted at the site of an execution. Throughout the exhumation, the aim was to corroborate this initial idea through an analysis of information obtained inside the mass grave and Antonio López’s data, including the testimonies he had collected over the years. When I joined the team as a member of the archaeological excavation team and a volunteer social anthropologist recording interviews with the families that approached the site, I quickly became versed in the meticulous methodology that aimed, as Laura explained to us and later in her report, to anticipate different variables in the mass graves, namely the skeletons and their historical context (Muñoz Encinar 2011: 9).

The methodological approach followed was based on the principle of Harris’ stratigraphic units (SU), a common method in archaeological practice, which documented the deposition of the layers inside the mass grave—since layers would provide a temporal sequence of the repressive event through their colours and textures. The stratigraphic study was combined with the recording of the spatial distribution of the cadavers and objects and their individuation (Muñoz Encinar 2011: 9). Throughout the excavation of Mass Graves 1 and 3, progressive observation of the mortal remains as they were uncovered was undertaken as part of a painstaking system that included the careful removal of soil, the constant photographing of the dig, layer by layer, and later, of each body and object. It also combined rigorous note-taking and drawing exercises of the space of the grave, its different stratigraphic units, and finally, of the skeletons and their positions once they had been exposed. Throughout the process volunteers were cautioned with the widely known archaeological aphorism reminding us that archaeology is a “destructive process”. This became salient, especially in the absence of additional data from archives or direct relatives connected to the bodies. Moreover, in the excavation of Mass Graves 1 and 3, the bones and objects uncovered were affected by severe problems of conservation. With no other biographical information about the corpses, the act of digging, documenting, and inventorying the findings in the mass graves became decisive for obtaining information that would later condition the general interpretation of the burial sites.

Indeed, the task of observation on the field became, as Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck (2011) have examined in the volume *Histories of Scientific Observation*, a form of scientific evidence in and of itself, determined by a method, but most importantly, by how that method was applied. Considering the precarious state of some mortal remains in both mass graves, the performance of daily recordings and annotations became one of the most significant tools in the study of these particular materials. As Laura told me in an informal conversation, most of her analysis in Castuera was done *in situ* (i.e. bone measurements or descriptions), since many body parts broke as soon as they were removed from the ground. In such a way, the mass grave became a laboratory (Latour 1999), marked by cords that carefully separated the mass grave into symmetrical squares. Each square had a letter, which helped archaeologists delineate a field of reference. Through a grid of coordinates and its classifications, archaeologists could later compress the elements of the burial site into words and diagrams in their notebooks and final reports (Ibid.).

Working inside these grids was crucial, archaeologists claimed. The soil belonging to each zone had to remain isolated from the rest in order to facilitate the identification of the unknown remains. The content of each bucket was hence carefully sifted and examined separately, in case small materials had been brushed away. All bodies were to be uncovered and their contours outlined, first of all. Their exhumation would be carried out at the end. If we unearthed an object associated with a skeleton, this had to remain where it was found, as it could give vital information about the historical context of the grave and the relation between *individuals*—as bodies were referred to in the archaeological record. Once completely disinterred, each body received a number and was given a “formalised data sheet” (Muñoz Encinar 2011: 66), in which bone measurements and descriptions were included. The mass grave and its skeletons were photographed and drawn—first on a one-dimensional gridded paper and, later, on a digital three-dimensional model, which located them in the topography of the cemetery.

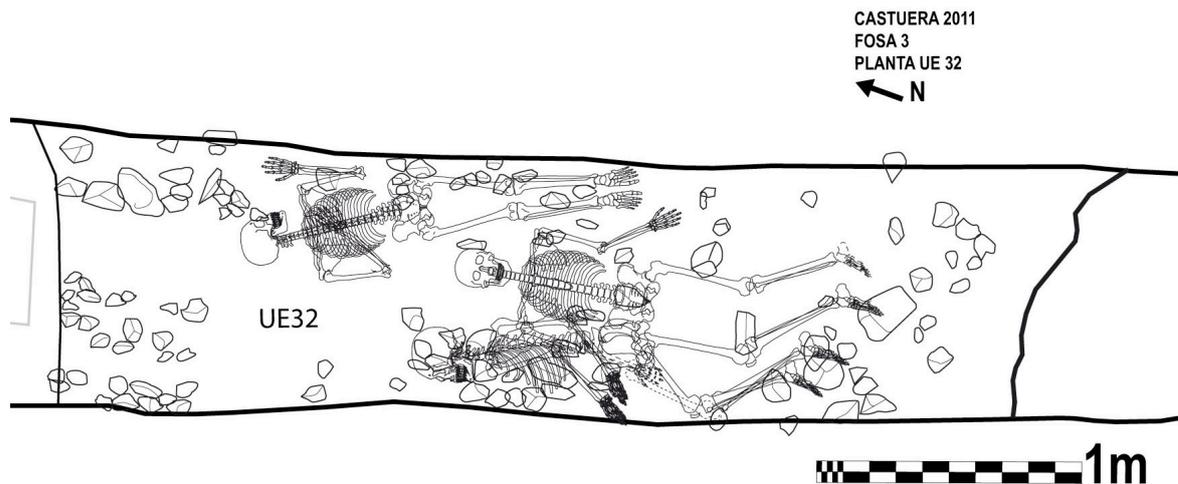


Image 11. Archaeological drawing of the mortal remains found in Mass Grave 3. Courtesy of Laura Muñoz Encinar.

Nadia Abu El-Haj (1990) has observed in her study of Palestinian and Israeli archaeological sites how the methods and the practical logic of archaeology is often entangled with broader political and personal intentions. Indeed, the care with which these mass graves were excavated, from its walls to the bones—where we were advised to use long wooden sticks to avoid causing any damage—spoke of a will to extract every possible detail that could be used as evidence of the killings. Archaeologists sought to discern the *modus operandi* used by the perpetrators, the chronology of the burial, and, finally, the profile of the corpses and their identities—in the event of possible DNA typing. In the final report elaborated by Laura Muñoz for the Patrimony Office after the exhumation and laboratory work had been completed, the two mass graves investigated were confirmed as interments related to the Civil War (Mass Grave 1) and as undocumented executions carried out during the first years of the dictatorial regime (Mass Grave 3). The mortal remains of three men were unearthed in Mass Grave 3, the first grave excavated. The corpses of another eighteen men were found in Mass Grave 1.

The group of individuals found in Mass Grave 1, as the archaeological report shows, was considered a possible “*saca* and execution of a group from the isolated prisoners barracks in the concentration camp” (Muñoz Encinar 2011: 74). This coincided with similar procedures already documented in the study of the area and the

detention site by Antonio López. Recalling the narratives given by some of his informants, Antonio explained to me how, on many occasions, neighbours from surrounding villages came to the camp and selected prisoners from their localities to be executed. Through testimonies, he had documented “how these repressive strategies were articulated through the making of a list by a municipal committee. Then, some came to the camp, took prisoners, and killed them in their villages” (Antonio López, Castuera, 2011). Members of paramilitary groups such as *Falange* performed some of these individual and group abductions. Antonio López deduced that executions would have also been ordered by a judge within the camp’s system—as occurred in other concentration camps elsewhere. These death sentences might have been dictated as a result of a War Proclamation order (*Bando de Guerra*), through which groups of 18 to 20 prisoners were killed every three days. Antonio found some files containing these sentences; nonetheless, according to the historian, there are still scarce records of the proceedings (Antonio López, Castuera, 2011).

As the extension of the burials was excavated the bodies and the objects associated with them revealed other intricate details about the killings and the victims. The position of the bodies, laid down in pairs, superposed and adjusted to the man-made or *anthropic* shape of the dug-out terrain, suggested a type of premeditated planning and organisation of the burial on the part of the perpetrators, to the archaeologist. Moreover, objects related to the abuse and assassination of these individuals made visible the aesthetics of their torture and death. Their forced disposition effected the brutality of their treatment as they appeared to be strongly tied by the wrists individually and to one another by the forearm, in pairs—with the exception of two corpses that were tied around their necks—with metal and cable wire. Multiple bullets and shells found in the bodies and in the surrounding area suggested these men had been executed in the vicinity of the burial ground (Muñoz Encinar 2011). Objects carried by each individual alluded to their personal habits, attire, or care, also suggesting that this unregistered group of eighteen men had been killed as they were being transferred elsewhere, possibly to another prison or detention site (Ibid.).

In a similar way, Mass Grave 3 was found in what could have been the “*área de los desamparados*” or “zone of the helpless”, where poverty-stricken neighbours would be buried, in particular, in the years of extreme famine that followed the conflict (Muñoz Encinar 2011). The remains, placed among other civil interments, coincided with some of the burials recorded in the cemetery registry book in 1943, according to the documentation compiled by Antonio López. Here, one of the entries designated “various irregular burials referred to as ‘*unknown*’ and described as ‘*dead as a result of a clash with the Civil Guard*’” (Ibid: 85, emphasis in original). In informal conversations during the excavation work, the archaeologists and Antonio López pondered the potential relation of these remains to a group of guerrilla fighters or *maquis* who might have been captured and later executed in the postwar years. Later, Antonio would further explore this hypothesis in the collective publication of the exhumation’s results.<sup>5</sup> In his article, the data obtained from the corpses is related to that in the archival record and other historians’ research, such as that of Benito Díaz Díaz (2011), who had documented a similar struggle between the Civil Guard and the guerrilla on the same date in Castuera.

The scientific scrutiny of the mass graves throughout the excavation turned these mortal remains and their significant objects into visible proof of violence, which gained, thereafter, different meanings in contact with activists’ claims and familial experience. For some members of AMECADEC, these finds supported a desire to substantiate Francoist repression against other visions about the past. They reaffirmed the association’s authority over the production of the history of the war in the locality, in a landscape of competing revisionist and political affirmations. Distinct members expressed these aspirations differently. For the families that often attended the exhumation, these finds intensified the individual memory of their kin and their wish to encounter them—as seen in the previous section—even if a positive identification seemed unlikely due to the poor preservation of the bones. In her study of the semiotic understandings of mortal remains in different scientific and social contexts,

---

<sup>5</sup> The book, *De la ocultación de las fosas a las exhumaciones: la represión franquista en el entorno del Campo de Concentración de Castuera*, is a compilation of different articles containing the writings of historians—which provided a sociopolitical context at time—archaeologists, and physical anthropologists that led the exhumations in 2011 and later in the second campaign realized in 2012. The collection was published and presented publicly in the autumn of 2012.

Zoe Crossland (2009) discusses the example of the body parts and skull of Australian 19<sup>th</sup> century bushranger Ned Kelly and the controversy over the meaning of his bones. She points out that the “bargaining [between scientific, social and familial claims] illustrates the way that [the] dead body moves seamlessly from being viewed as person to property to evidence” (Crossland 2009: 70).

As in Crossland and Abu El-Haj’s studies, where archaeological and forensic remains are at the centre of profound political and cultural disputes, in Castuera, the unknown mortal remains of the mass graves often became vehicles for the reassertion of ideological positions. Throughout the exhumation, visits from different political representatives to the mass grave made the value of these corpses apparent in regional and local parties’ agendas. Official appearances from politicians, such as the local PP town mayor, the regional leader from IU, or the national socialist delegate from PSOE, made patent the actuality of a PP–IU alliance at local level or the interest of a weakened regional Socialist Party in claiming the exhumation as part of their own historical memory project. Moreover, for many members of AMECADEC, who felt a common political purpose and shared historicity with the individuals buried in the grave, these corpses reaffirmed a common bond, as well as their role as a *political family* for these nameless bodies. This form of selective kinship was established upon a kind of ideological communion with the Republican dead and the sacrifice they made for their democratic ideas—as different members of the association explained to me. Mainly from third generations, some of these activists were profoundly moved by a need to follow and address a history they considered also their own (Feuchtwang 2011: 176).

Just as kinship metaphors become idiosyncratic of state nationalist discourses that craft imagined communities around land through ancestor-based alliances (see Verdery 1999; Anderson 1983; Yuval-Davis 1997), one could argue here that tracing a lineage with the war killed—sustained by learnt Republican histories and values—created a particular imagined community that actively demanded that these bodies form part of a particular genealogy. The perception of a shared past with the individuals in the mass grave instilled in some members of the association a sense of responsibility and obligation (Feuchtwang 2011: 175), but also a sense of entitlement

over the investigation and the interpretation of the village's tragic past. These sentiments, which were often entangled with present ideological antagonisms and strivings, turned the bodies into clear forms of property that could be owned and protected from other interpretations and ideological projects. For instance, when on one occasion the previous socialist town mayor of Castuera visited the mass grave, accompanied by a reporter from the local press, he was asked to leave the site by some of the members of AMECADEC. Overwrought by on-going dissension over the remembrance of the conflict in the village with the previous socialist group, some members of the association asked the PSOE leader to go, as the bodies, in their words, *belonged* to the association. "These bodies are our bodies!" screamed one of the activists, moved by a burgeoning tone of exasperation that manifested the tensions of a long battle between some members of the previous party and the association in the village.

These corpses seemed to represent, for many, a form of capital whereby historical knowledge, provided by biographical accounts of families and scientific scrutiny, became an important engine for social and political mobilization. The anxiety manifested by some in the association over the production of a historical narrative about the mass graves was apparent even throughout the exhumation process. For instance, when some members suggested—and later demanded—the installation of a Republican flag at the space of the mass graves, for this was the "emblem" of the association, volunteers of the excavation team vehemently opposed the move. Members of the team—some of them with other left-wing affiliations, for instance to anarchist collectives—argued that the flag might misrepresent the political identities of those buried in the mass grave and compromise the "scientific rigour" and objectivity of the excavation work.

This protective attitude toward the mortal remains found in Mass Graves 1 and 3 was part of a contest over meaning involving not only different individual actors and left-wing groups but also revisionist voices in the village and the region at large. According to some members of the association and Antonio López, local revisionist arguments had long connected the dead in the mass graves at the rear of the cemetery with Republican soldiers killed at the nearby front. For historians like Antonio, this

meant to deny the postwar violence exercised by the Franco regime. The results of the exhumation contradicted these assumptions in relation to the way the killings were perpetrated. In Mass Grave 1, for instance, the ballistic study of the site that Laura provides in her report shows how the men were shot with at least six different handguns (Muñoz Encinar 2011), in their heads (kill shots) as well as in the rest of their bodies. As Laura's hypothesis denotes, the weapons used, the profile of individuals in the grave, and the treatment of the bodies suggests that the group "might have been executed by a group from Falange" (Ibid: 74), as executions by the military were often done with rifles—as seen in other exhumations. In Mass Grave 3, the archaeologist identifies a bullet in the ribcage of one of the corpses and the signs of antemortem violence on some of the skeletons. As stated above, the report concludes that, in relation to the documentation found, Civil Guards could have killed these men in 1943.

The case of the unknown mortal remains exhumed in the mass graves of Castuera triggered much uncertainty due to a lack of knowledge about their identities. For this reason, the final conclusions that Laura presents in her report were reached after many exchanges between archaeologists and historians, in which the data and references of the mass grave and the archive were constantly cross-examined. The contradiction and doubt that often conditioned the process of inferring an explanation about the mass graves were jointly negotiated through the superimposition of different sciences, which complemented each other's judgements (Latour 1999). Such exercises ultimately served to ascertain previous suppositions about the history of the Camp, which for many, could now further "disprove", as Guillermo León read in the manifesto, "those who assert that Francoist repression in *La Serena* never occurred". Moreover, uncertainty was also challenged by the appearance of material markers in the mass grave, which triggered other imaginings around the corpse, connecting the mortal remains to other possible identities and histories.

### *Technologies of the Imagination*

In her study of DNA technology for the identification of Srebrenica's missing in Bosnia, Sarah Wagner (2008) has spoken about the role that material evidence plays in the articulation of scientific and familial accounts about a person's identity. In *To Know Where He Lies*, Wagner analyses how the objects and the possessions found with the mortal remains buried in primary and secondary mass graves associated with the massacre are treated within the space of the laboratory to extract as much information as possible, mainly from what the person wore and carried with them at the time of death. Objects such as jackets, trousers, or shoes, cigarette tins and holders, prayer beads, photographs, or books often facilitated the antemortem-postmortem analysis of the expert. According to the forensic scientist with whom Wagner worked, these material remnants spoke about the life story of the individuals whilst living in the UN enclave prior to their flight and deaths, and provided clues about their identity and the way they died—sometimes showing whether they were tortured or how they were killed. Together with the antemortem information gathered from families, scientists make use of these objects in order to connect human remains with their relatives and to proceed to a final DNA identification.

Likewise, in Castuera, the emergence of an extensive variety of objects, especially in Mass Grave 1, had a decisive impact on the formulation of some scientific postulates during and after the exhumation. For instance, the numerous spoons that prisoners kept for their meals, or the coins, which confirmed the existence of an economy inside the detention site—as Antonio López has documented—hinted at the quotidian life within the camp. Other items, of a more personal nature, pointed to the social pasts of these corpses, marking out the individual and group profiles of the bodies in the mass grave. Objects such as a crucifix found in the hand of one of the corpses or the appearance of various religious medals suggested, for instance, as Muñoz pointed out in our interview, the person's confession or creed. In the case of the crucifix, when the archaeologist cleaned and restored the object, in the laboratory, she found an inscription on the cross ("*Jesus, José, Maria – Frentes y Hospitales*"), which revealed that these crucifixes had been produced by the female section of Falange. This led Antonio to consider whether the prisoner already had the crucifix,

or whether it was given to the victim by a priest of the Francoist army that often confessed prisoners before their execution<sup>6</sup> (Laura Muñoz Encinar, Cáceres, 2012). Likewise, the religious medals found with some of the corpses gave clues about the area from which they might have originated, as particular Saints and Virgins evoked specific locations—as in the case of the medal of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Extremadura, and San Jerónimo, encountered with Individual XVII.



Image 12. Crucifix found in Mass Grave 1.

Other objects, such as a military insignia from the Republican Sanitary Personnel (*Cuerpo de Sanitarios de la República*) and another badge from the Railway Workers' Union (*Sindicato de Ferroviarios*) hinted clearly at the Republican identities of the victims (Muñoz Encinar 2013). These two objects pointed to the significant political roles of their owners, whom in both cases were found with multiple other possessions and traces of expensive garments—such as boots. This contrasted with the limited belongings that other corpses carried. Objects such as a

---

<sup>6</sup> In her report, Laura Muñoz specifies that, according to oral testimonies gathered by Antonio López from ex-prisoners from the camp, detainees who were going to be killed were often allowed two concessions: to write a last letter to family members and to visit the priest before they died. According to Laura, Antonio López has also documented the existence of a priest in Caturera's camp in Ávila's Military Archive (Muñoz Encinar 2011: 62).

pair of cufflinks or a wedding ring appeared next to other corpses, who only carried a pencil, a lighter, or a few coins. The different types of possessions that these corpses carried made Laura observe that the group was indeed a mixed group of men from different social backgrounds and occupations. Other enigmatic finds included two small pieces of paper, which remained nearly intact, according to the archaeologist, as they had been in contact with metal in the form of coins, cufflinks, and a cornet found with different bodies. When these were unearthed, one could not help but think of the fortuitous chemical reaction that had allowed them to persist in time, and allowed them to become pieces of distinguished importance for the archaeologist and the historian in the present for the writing they may contain.

Moreover, other objects also hinted at the familial and intimate affiliations of the deceased. For instance, the body of the man who belonged to the sanitary personnel of the Republican Army was found carrying a wallet that contained faded documentation. Later on, during her examination in the laboratory, Laura also encountered a lock of hair between the folds of the leather wallet. The perfectly preserved hair indicated, as the archaeologist would point out to me, an emotive personal relation with someone else—a wife, offspring, a lover—inevitably evoking the image of rupture and a history of loss for the individual to whom it belonged. The appearance of the fragment of hair indeed inspired the hope of a possible identification for the team, as Antonio López had located a family whose relative was a doctor in the Republican army. Considering that the positive identification of all the bodies—whether through DNA matching or “classical markers of identity” in anthropological analysis (Rios, Casado, and Puente Prieto 2010: 27)—was burdened by their disparate origins, the absence of living relatives or the decayed condition of some key osseous parts, this find signified the possibility of ascertaining the name of at least one of the men, through the genetic information contained in the lock and that provided by a potential living relative. For the researchers, this information was invaluable. Such a connection would finally relate the mass grave to a concrete life story, which may be entangled with the history of the camp.

Indeed, when Wagner (2008) speaks about the objects and belongings of Srebrenica’s missing, she observes—evoking Hoskins’ insights (1994)—how such

materiality acted as a trigger or “prop” for the telling of a biographical memory for scientists and also relatives. She acknowledges how the forensic scientist could only represent “the likenesses” of the victim “through photographs or narrative descriptions, so that [their] meanings may reveal themselves to the eyes and ears of the people who possess the intimate knowledge of the missing person” (Wagner 2008: 142). In contact with the gaze of family relatives, Wagner argues, these objects established a new connection between the memory of the victim and his or her death (Ibid: 145). The belongings found with the mortal remains in Srebrenica’s graves activated forms of storytelling about the life of the deceased. They also confirmed, the author remarks, the finality of their deaths for the family, for their materiality spoke explicitly about an intimate past, filled with shared experiences around these items: the trousers someone sewed for the deceased; the tobacco box the person made and that his living son immediately identified; the new wool socks the person wore before his flight. All of these prompted a form of recognition in the living that bones and skeletons could not provoke. These objects made the living remember, making memories the ultimate proof in substantiating scientific analysis and DNA testing (Ibid.).

In contact with the families that often visited the site of the exhumations, in Castuera, the variety of objects encountered in Mass Grave 1 acquired alternative meanings connected to the personal experience of prolonged disappearance of their unfound relatives. The belongings of those in Mass Grave 1 mixed with families’ histories of relentless search, which erupted in the exhumation arena seeking to fulfil a long-awaited individual consolation. The family members portrayed in *War Histories I* are, in order of appearance in the video, Ángel Sayabera, Aurora Navas Morillo and Maria Ormeño, and her daughter Marielo. In the piece, each talks about the unknown fate of their family relatives who died in Castuera during the moment of the occupation in 1938 and at the end of the war in 1939. Their words express how such disappearances marked a life of bewilderment and silence over the deaths of their ancestors. All three stories evoke the feelings of uncertainty they experienced over time due to the broken transmission of familial histories between those who survived the conflict and their offspring. Some of them, like Ángel or Aurora, were never told what happened to their kin. In the case of Maria, she remembers how, although her mother never spoke about it, her brothers and she realized what had

happened to their father (“I never asked her because I knew it”). In Marielo’s case, her grandfather’s story was uttered intermittently, in parts, through her mother’s accounts, and halted by the burden of transgenerational secrecy.

Information about the lives and deaths of their kin returned to these families through the searches into official archives that Antonio López had led for years, and through the investigation led by the families themselves, as in the case of Marielo’s. As seen in Chapter 5, on many occasions these processes of document collection shed light on the relative’s life during the war and before their death. They also revealed information about where and how they died. Searches of the archives aimed to fill in the blanks of these families’ traumatic history and reveal other inconclusive gaps, pointing to the irretrievable absences produced by the act of disappearance. For some of these relatives, such absences marked an unsettled childhood and adult life. The uncertainty over their kin’s whereabouts and death triggered an inner urge to find them, to search for them in different places, and to see them again. Throughout their lives, this need had filled their everyday existence with ghostly visions of their ancestors, which intensified their desire to encounter them alive. Later, through the materiality of the grave in the context of the exhumation, these families hoped they could find the dead bodies of their relatives, to finalise a life-long search and alleviate their unresolved grief. The mass graves in Castuera’s cemetery entwined the story of these families with the presence of such orphan and unknown mortal remains, generating a wish to reencounter their kin among the nameless dead.

Ángel Sayabera’s past was intimately embroiled with the history of the camp and the local experience of war death. Before the war broke out, the Sayabera family had been widely known for their numerous garages and cinemas in the area, first in the neighbouring Campillo de Llerena and later in Castuera. Ángel’s father was also a well-known figure and member of the Communist Party who wrote for news sources such as *Extremadura Roja* (Red Extremadura)—of which Ángel proudly preserved a copy to this day. In the mist of the war, the family split, causing his mother to stay with her youngest offspring in Castuera and his father to travel elsewhere with the eldest. This would be the last time Ángel saw his family, as he described to Laura Muñoz and me in an interview. Ángel’s mother was executed outside of the old cemetery in 1938. A handwritten placard that Ángel made and hung on the window of

the cemetery commemorates the place of her execution. His father and brothers, captured after the war, went missing whilst in Castuera's concentration camp in 1939. Last, his third brother died whilst waiting to be given a reprieve for his sentence in the same year. Similar signs pay tribute to them in the space of the old detention site and at the rear of the cemetery. Eventually, Ángel went to live with his maternal grandparents, who brought him up together with some of his remaining siblings. Recalling the tense atmosphere in the house, he depicted the silence that his grandparents kept around the killings, perhaps, which he observed in order to protect them. As he described, Ángel could imagine the family's tragic past through his grandmother's shattering crying. Nonetheless, the creeping uncertainty that surrounded these deaths launched Ángel into other searches during his adult life:

When I was already married and living here [in the village of Llera], I thought my father had escaped (*estaba huído*) and had sought refuge in the mountains. I am telling you, I often wanted to put up a sign on the backside of my car that said: Ángel Sayabera. In case he turned up on a highway or a road, you know?" (Ángel Sayabera, Llera, 2011)

By attaching a sign with the name of his father to the back of the taxi he drove for decades around Spain, Ángel aimed to attract the attention of his father in case he had survived imprisonment and hidden elsewhere in the countryside or the mountains—as many did after the war. Unlike his mother, his father's trail had been lost at the concentration camp, from where he had sent a letter whilst in detention. The ambiguity around his death in stories and official files left a window open, such that Ángel could believe he was alive. Ángel's continuous search was an indirect product of the undisclosed character of his father's death and also his unknown burial place. In a similar manner, for Maria Ormeño and her daughter Marielo, details about the death of Maria's father, José Ormeño, remained hazy for years, as Maria was only five when he was taken away. The death of Maria's father also remained unclear in the archive, which her daughter researched later on—see Chapter 5. As in the case of Ángel Sayabera, the disappearance of her father, however, haunted Maria throughout her childhood and later, during her adolescence in Barcelona.

Maria's father went to fight at the Republican front with his three brothers. During the occupation of 1938, Maria's family fled the village to seek refuge in other Republican territories. When the conflict ceased in 1939, her mother and one uncle met Maria's father and travelled back to Castuera. Maria remembered that after hearing Franco's message calling for people who had "no blood on their hands" to come back to their hometowns, the family decided to return. Maria described in hesitation and anger the moment of her father's disappearance: "When we arrived", she reminisced, "a man, I think it was a local policeman, took him away". According to the parts of the story that were passed on by Maria's mother to her daughter, after being captive in the village prison for some days, he was taken out (*lo sacaron*) and executed, presumably with a group of other prisoners. Her mother, she recalled, was never officially notified about her husband's death and instead found out through one of her neighbours. Her father's body was never searched for and its burial place is still unknown to this date. For the coming generations, details about his death were vague, as some things, according to Marielo, were "too painful" to be spoken about by members of the family. The perplexity and speculation about his whereabouts later on prompted in Maria, in her words, a "sickly" daily sentiment:

Can you believe, that someone tells you when you are 13 or 14 years old that your father escaped and he is alive and he is living here and there? Then you become obsessed... And you are in a park and see people and you stare at them thinking: will he be one of these men? But I don't think he saved himself. When I went to Barcelona for the first time, I saw a man in the *Plaza Magistratura*—I think that was the name of the square—and I walked and looked at him, walked and looked at him. I thought it was my father and that he was going to recognise me and say something to me. You become obsessed. (Maria Ormeño, Castuera, 2011)

Maria's fixation with the image of her father and her affliction had remained firmly present in her life throughout the years. This was apparent when, in our interview, she also explained how she often told herself stories to be able to fall asleep at night. Like Ángel, María saw the figure of her father wherever she went, as a spectre that never abandoned her or ceased to permeate her imagination. Her wish to encounter him again came up against an unconceivable and dreadful absence. In her analysis of the dead body as evidence for the study of the past, Ewa Domanska (2005) speaks about

the work of the “uncanny” in connection to the Argentinean *desaparecidos*. Much of that which characterises the violent act of disappearance, according to the author, and its effect on the subject related to the person who has disappeared, is precisely this ambiguity over the location of the victim. In the Argentinean case, the acts of repression perpetrated by the government of the military junta of General Jorge Rafael Videla after the coup d’etat of 1976 led to the detention, torture, and killing of thousands of citizens considered opposed to the regime in secret detention centres around the country. The bodies of the victims were often disposed of in places where they might never be found and burnt or battered so they could not be identified. In the aftermath of these killings and under a new government, families’ positions—especially within the movement of the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*—diverged around the possibility of exhuming their relatives’ mortal remains. Whereas some wanted these corpses to be exhumed, others refused to acknowledge that the victims were dead in order to preserve their status as “disappeared”. This would avoid the crimes of the junta falling into oblivion. In this case, the act of disappearance, Domanska argues, situates the body of the missing in a liminal state between life and death, as a monstrous act, in a Freudian reading, which resists the reality of death but does not fully evade it. In similar manner, for the families in Castuera, disappearance became a state, which placed the dead but also the living on a threshold in which mourning and justice became difficult to articulate throughout the years.

Aurora Navas Morillo, the second speaker in the video, lost her mother when the war ended in 1939. Married to Antonio Navas Lora, a famous socialist leader in the town, Matilde Morillo spent the years of the war as a teacher in different villages of Extremadura and Castilla-La Mancha. There, she lived with her sisters, parents, and daughters whilst her husband fought at the front. When Daimiel, the town where Matilde lived, was occupied, she lost her job. After the battle of the *Bolsa de la Serena*, Antonio Navas knew that the war had been lost and proposed that Matilde run away to a different country with their youngest daughter. Matilde’s sisters encouraged her to do this and to then later return to collect the rest of her offspring. At the last minute, as Aurora recalls from conversations she had later in her life with members of the family, she decided to stay behind with the rest of her relatives.

At the end of the war, Aurora's father, Antonio, left for the Spanish Levant to board a ship that would take him to Morocco, where he was detained in different labour camps. Matilde, knowing she had not committed a crime, returned to Castuera with the rest of the family. Upon her arrival at the town's train station, Matilde was arrested and taken to the village prison. Aurora vividly recalls this moment, the noise of the station, the confusion of people and the military men and *falangistas* that waited at the platform, since she was already a toddler. According to Aurora, after this, Matilde was released on the condition that she gave declaration at the police station every day. One day, however, she knew she would not be back, for she gave her watch to her sister, for her daughters. On May 1939, Matilde was executed at the entrance of the village cemetery. Aurora believes that since they could not get to her father, they took revenge on her mother. After this, her body, as she recalls, would never be returned to the family or found:

My cousin, who was 15 at the time, told me that two days [after the execution] she heard people say: 'last night they killed seven and one of them was Mr. Antonio Navas's wife'. Then, my cousin ran home and told my aunts. My cousin's father went to the authorities with his brother and his son to ask for the body of my mother back—we have always asked to have her body back, since the moment of her death. My uncle told them that she already had a niche in the cemetery and that they wanted to bury her in sacred ground because she was a Catholic. The authority turned around to him and told him: 'go away because you don't know what could happen to you if you keep asking for that'. My uncle told him: 'I don't know what else they could do to us!' [...] Then his brother looked at him, put his arm around his shoulder, and told him: 'let's go home because everything has already been decided here'. (Aurora Navas, Castuera, 2011)

The death of Aurora's mother, like that of Ángel's relatives or Maria's father, had remained unanswered since the moment it occurred, prompting her insecurity and hesitation around the events and place of her death. As Domanska points out, in the context of their open-ended searches, the body became the ultimate form of testimony on which the past could finally be inscribed and through which mourning could be completed (2005: 403). When these relatives visited the site of the exhumations in Mass Graves 1 and 3, it was not only the sight of the corpses that awakened the

connection between the bodies and the misfortune of their own relatives. More powerfully, it was the personal objects, which Wagner (2008) observed could place unknown mortal remains into kinship and affiliative associations, that caused families to search for their kin's bodies at the burial sites. In contrast with the persistent state of angst and stagnation provoked by the uncertainty of the disappearance and burial of their kin, the sight of the bones and objects and their scientific conceptualisation offered a chance to find out about the whereabouts of their dead.

Throughout the excavation, for instance, Marielo searched for the boots her grandfather wore at the time of his death among the varied footwear that appeared inside the mass grave. The sight of the different military boots that were unearthed throughout the excavation prompted Marielo to remember her grandfather's attire, which her mother had often recalled for her in previous years. The boots triggered an inherited memory in Maria's daughter, which prompted her to imagine the body of her grandfather in the burial site. For Ángel, it was the presence of a pair of glasses he identified with those his father wore that revived his search for the mortal remains of his parent. The glasses, which were found in the last days of the exhumation, were shown when the archaeologist presented the results of the excavation in Castuera, months after the work in the mass graves had concluded. It was at this event that Ángel realised the object could have belonged to his relative and told the archaeologist about it, with the hope of identifying that particular individual. In a similar way, when different pencils were unearthed in the excavation of Mass Grave 1, Aurora Navas enquired whether a woman had been found among the cadavers excavated by the team. In recent years, Aurora had found out that when her mother was killed she was tied to a painter who always carried pencils and paper with him. For her, these objects enlivened the prospect of a new search, as past attempts to locate her mother's grave led by PREMHEX in the same cemetery had proven unsuccessful.



Image 13. Pencil found in Mass Grave 1.

Families' willingness to reunite with the mortal remains of their missing kin thus mixed with the concreteness of the materials found, eliciting a renewed confidence in the search for their relatives. Such materiality was also, in the first place, the phenomenon that invoked these family's narratives about past suffering. Uttering these stories to archaeologists, volunteers, and historians in the public context of the exhumation was an attempt to inscribe the skeletons within a particular history of loss. Sarah Wagner (2008: 174) has argued, evoking Sartre, that in the absence of the body and of specific knowledge about a relative's death and whereabouts imagination helps relatives to "take possession of the missing person's fate". In so doing, the objects of Mass Grave 1 also embodied the possibility of a positive identification, which could bring certainty to the family's quest and palliate their unresolved mourning through the scientific method. Indeed, the idea of a DNA match prompted hope for new explanations about the postmortem milieu of these families' missing. Confronted, however, with the vastness of the identification task in Castuera, some relatives understood the exhumation also as a space of "catharsis", as Maria's daughter, Marielo, explained to me towards the end of the exhumation. When the campaign drew to an end, Marielo approached the site and asked for a plastic bag

to take a handful of soil from the mass grave in order to keep, in her words, “a token of the exhumation”. The excavation symbolised an event that allowed her to publically commemorate the memory of her grandfather.

In Castuera, the exhumation of the mass graves found inside the cemetery was conceived as a historical project to shed light over the functioning and existence of Castuera’s concentration camp and the repression in the area. The excavation of the nameless mortal remains found in Mass Graves 1 and 3 disclosed how the materiality of each burial site became evidence, which reasserted the legitimacy of the camp’s history and contested different historical and political visions in the present. The scientific interpretation of the corpses and their belongings mixed with the social, political, and familial worlds and anxieties that surrounded the exhumation. The archaeological and anthropological work performed at the mass grave and later on in the laboratory relied on historical information to deduce the ante-mortem story of the mortal remains. As the meanings of the materiality of the grave were negotiated between archaeologists, historians, activists, and families, different narratives started to take shape around the history of these men, their treatment and executions. The presence of such tangible evidence asserted the origin of the dead found in the mass grave. It prompted the telling of stories, which provided the mortal remains of the unknown with other subjective accounts and personal memories, and entangled the dead with the ghostly visions of the living. In the context of the exhumation, scientific evidence co-exists with intimate forms of memory work, placing individual life and death stories into collective understandings of history.

## Chapter 4

### Exhuming Familial Remains

*Please watch visual piece [War Histories II](#) before reading the chapter.*

A year after the exhumation in Castuera, in the summer of 2012, I joined Laura Muñoz's team in the excavation carried out in the village of Puebla de Alcocer. Contrary to the case in Castuera, the bodies searched for in the vicinity of Puebla—as people often referred to the village—belonged to a group of neighbours killed in an episode of postwar violence. Just like the unknown bodies found in Castuera, the men found in the mass graves of Puebla de Alcocer had been executed at the wake of the conflict in 1939. Nonetheless, their identities were not remote but familiar to those in the village community. The memory of the people buried in these mass burial sites was ultimately part of the entangled histories of young and older generations. Their presence had never ceased to exist in the family and even communal repertoire of stories, which imagined the tragic experiences of some of its neighbours whilst mapping distinct kin affiliations and political relations. Marking a landmark in the community's history, some of the relatives, and especially the elders who were still alive at the time of the exhumation, had always known these men's fate and burial place and could remember the events of their detention and execution.

Promoted by a group of families from Puebla, the exhumation was still part of PREMHEX investigative efforts to examine the repressive modes of Francoist violence. It also, however, aimed to recover the remains of the ancestors of members of the locality to place them in the village's cemetery, with other community dead, in an attempt to restore their identity as kin but also as once-members of Puebla's public life. From the beginning, the exhumation was supported by the ruling local socialist administration, which envisioned the exhumation as a restorative act for the collective memory of the village. This bond shared with the corpses shaped the character of the exhumation project as well as the scientific analysis of the mass graves. The knowledge of the killings, which had been passed on between generations, was

definitive in the making of the historical event that the archaeological analysis of the mass graves produced. Scientific evidence, in this case, was negotiated with the certainty of stories about the executions and the identities of those who were found in the grave.

This chapter focuses on the way scientific practice interacted with the social and familial memory of the killings that existed in the village. In so doing, it pays special attention to the way kin transmission and social storytelling engaged with the identification of the dead in order to carve out a place for them within the community's history and collective identity. The chapter continues by discussing a concern with the way in which scientific objects trigger familial retellings of the past, which was introduced at the end of the previous case study of Castuera. Considering—as other anthropological works have done (Cruikshank 1998, 2005; Filippucci 2010; Pine 2007; Bloch 1996; Boyarin 1994; Feuchtwang 2011)—how oral histories enable particular forms of being-in-history across generations, the chapter explores how established kin and community memories about the killings are contested, complemented, and informed by scientific bearings. Ultimately, my aim is to discuss how these social stories, which often overshadowed scientific evidence, ascertained connections between descendants and the missing and validated a biological bond in order to make a claim about the traumatic familial experiences of Republicans in Puebla de Alcocer.

### *The Search for the Village's Mass Graves*

In 2011, José Sánchez-Paniagua Bayón initiated the search for the mortal remains of his grandfather, who had been killed and buried with other neighbours in the cavities of two trenches situated today in two privately own plots a few kilometres outside of Puebla de Alcocer, in the middle of the countryside. According to José, the wish to learn about his relative's body's whereabouts and the possibility of recovering his mortal remains had always intrigued him and been present in his thoughts “as far back as [he] could remember” (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012). Nonetheless, he had collaborated in the search for other victims of postwar violence. In 2006, he explained in an interview, he participated in the exhumation of the body of his wife's uncle, a

guerrilla fighter killed by the Civil Guard and buried in a village in the province of Cuenca (Castilla-La Mancha) on his return from exile in France in the 1940s. Later on, he carried on cooperating with the historical memory association in Cuenca (ARMH Cuenca), who had enabled the previous excavation, in the investigation of other cases and the exhumation of other mortal remains—such as the body of a different guerrilla fighter or *maquis* from Extremadura also killed in Cuenca.

Taking part in these initiatives incited José to actively start the process of recovering his grandfather's remains “and those of his neighbours” (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012), motivated by a personal urge to comply with what he referred to as “an act of justice” (Ibid.) for them and those family members who had wished to disinter them for decades. José's father, also called José, who was, back in 2012, nearly 84 years old, was one of those people who had long hoped for the reburial of his father's remains in the village cemetery. With newly found motivation and energy from the two previous exhumations, José set out to research the history of the executions, their traces in village elder's memories, and in the municipal archive, whose files contained dispersed information about the repression perpetrated by ruling postwar political elites in 1939. After compiling information about the other men in the mass grave, he tried to contact their families—although he admits that it was impossible to find all of them, as some had disappeared and others did not want to get involved in the exhumation. With the support of those willing to collaborate, he created the Association of Families of Victims of [Francoist] Repression in Puebla de Alcocer and later applied for an exhumation grant from the Ministry of the Presidency, approved before the general elections of November 2011 put the Popular Party in power.

When we first met, in June 2012, José told me that the fundraising process had been arduous, as I had already heard from other people in PREMHEX and AMECADEC, though not as complex and bewildering, it seemed, as the process of requesting permits to excavate the mass graves from the Patrimony Office. As happened in Castuera, the delayed release of an official permit to excavate from the regional government caused the association and also José much consternation. José's worry was the matter of time. Five months after applying for the permit, they had not

yet been granted permission and additional documentation was still being requested in June, when we met. José told me that he could not understand the office's ongoing demands for further information and reiterated the need to speed up these proceedings, as some older relatives were already passing away. The widow and daughter of two of the men in the mass graves had died in the months prior to our interview. José's resentment became especially evident as he used the space of our interview, recorded in audio and video format, to denounce the situation. He hoped I could give him an answer, but I had none. By that time, pressure, however, was already being exerted on the Patrimony Office in 2012—especially by PREMHEX—to create a special clause to deal with the specificities of exhumations.

In contrast to this deceptive experience with the regional administration, at a local level the active backing of the socialist town hall heavily influenced the context in which the exhumation in Puebla de Alcocer unfolded. In a small village where public opinion had always been marked by the tensions between left- and right-wing views and the polarised agendas of the two political forces, PP and PSOE, endorsing the recovery of these bodies was a political move in line with the socialist historical memory programme that enjoyed the approval of some and provoked the unease and rejection of others. The town mayor assured me that the exhumation project was a contested issue among neighbours and political representatives. According to him, the historical memory propositions of PSOE had always been met with the dismissal of PP city councillors in the village. He pointed out in an informal conversation that they had “always found [themselves] alone in relation to the matter”. Nonetheless, ultimately, their majority government allowed for the development of contended projects such as the exhumation of Puebla's Republican dead.

On the other hand, as a member of the regional parliament, the mayor was also critical of the role of the Patrimony Office in the administration of permits for Civil War-related excavations. According to him—and as many directly involved in associations also observed after the general election—these projects had been intentionally drawn out and slowed down by an uninterested conservative ruling party. One has to acknowledge, however, that the activity of the Patrimony Office was also slow when PSOE occupied the regional government—as proven in

Castuera's case—however, bureaucratic processes worsened as a result of PP's unwillingness to address activities connected to memory of the Civil War and postwar violence. The town mayor and Member of Parliament ascertained that left-wing parties like his or IU should also press the current government on the patrimony issue—something that is not often done, if at all (Manuel Moreno Delgado, Puebla, 2012). In the village, he noted, these adverse positions could also be strongly felt. In the framework of these disparate ideological positions in regional and local settings, his was clearly a politically-motivated contribution. Nonetheless, it was accompanied by a desire to bring neighbours closer, for he envisioned the exhumation as an act that could “repair” the community's social fabric. As he anticipated before the exhumation started:

One of the problems we will have to deal with is the issue that some people will try—and José knows this—to argue that there are more important things to do right now, that this is not necessary, that where are we going with this... and people would make these comments with those who have their loved ones buried where they should be, in the cemetery, with their commemoration and things... The rest of people don't have them. We cannot forget that they are neighbours from the village and I, as representative of the Institution have the obligation to simply correct that anomaly in the municipality. That anomaly has to be corrected. Neighbours have to be buried in the municipal cemetery, following any ritual, but in the municipal cemetery. I am not going to allow any meddling of that kind from people that might feel now annoyed or uncomfortable... We must do what we really ought to do and what relatives want to do with their loved ones and I think no one can argue with that—and of course, we must do it also at an institutional level [...] This is an anomaly, which one might think doesn't exist because people don't speak about, but it does exist and it needs to be dealt with as soon as possible—at least to give the most direct relatives of those executed, of those repressed, the satisfaction of fulfilling that hope: ‘I can take flowers or I can remember my father and brothers or whoever, whenever’, and this is what we are going to do. (Manuel Moreno Delgado, Puebla, 2012)

The town mayor's words subtly evoke the strained relation between different members of the community and make visible the institutional commitment that would, later on, during the exhumation, affect the type of historical and memory work performed in relation to the killings. As the mayor, José, and other neighbours shared

with me on multiple occasions, much of the animosity between right- and left-wing village families was still marked by issues rooted in the war past, especially among the older generations who had experienced the conflict directly or indirectly. The social struggle around property and class inequality influenced political standpoints before and during the war and caused many of the violent episodes people would later describe to me. After the war, as Manuel, the town mayor, clarified, these disparities increased, especially as the poverty-stricken families of the defeated were subordinated to the “fear and injustice” (Ibid.) of the new local Francoist authorities and their collaborators.<sup>1</sup> Though these confrontations were not as pronounced in the present, some say divisions lasted until the 1990s.

Nonetheless, some also commented that prior to the exhumation, a group of neighbours had attempted to boycott an informative event about the exhumation that took place in the village in 2011. This bitterness then, was still present in Puebla’s public realm. The perseverant tone of the mayor’s words and his will to “correct” what he sees as an “anomaly” should be understood in the framework of such an ongoing social friction. Fear but also disconformity led many, according to the town mayor, to assert that the dead “should not be touched” and “should be left where they are” (Ibid.). Younger generations however, according to Manuel, seemed to have a more forward-looking approach to the unearthing and reburial of the remains. In our first interview, the mayor made a point about the one-sidedness of past commemorative efforts and the resolute reburial and tributes that the right-wing dead had enjoyed throughout the dictatorship. In this light, the mayor implied, the exhumation of the defeated would mend an unbalanced situation and thus, in his words, “advance freedom and a normal coexistence” between neighbours in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ibid.). Thus, for the socialist leader, providing these bodies with a “proper burial” in the municipal cemetery would effectively influence social rapport within the community. According to José, in the context of the village politics, promoting the history of these executions would have been gruelling under a PP government. The

---

<sup>1</sup> During the postwar years, with the implementation of the so-called *Plan Badajoz*, many families were given a plot of land and some livestock in different locations, prompting the formation of new villages—called commonly “colonization towns”—all around the province. According to the town mayor, around 200 families emigrated from Puebla to a new area where these plots were located. There, they built the new village, *Entreerrios*, from scratch. Many of the families that left were families associated with the left-wing Republican past of the village.

impetus given to the search for the bodies in 2011 contrasted with a previous attempt to find the mass graves in 1992. As happened in other villages, back in the 1990s, the then PSOE town mayor sought to collect the signatures of villagers in support of the excavation, in an effort to rally the support of the whole community; however, as José and Manuel explained, “there was still too much fear” among villagers and the initiative never prospered.

In Puebla, the town hall facilitated access to research sources and logistical aspects of the location and excavation campaigns, and made some neighbours more receptive and tolerant towards the initiative. The town hall’s support allowed José to make extensive and in-depth investigation into the files contained in the municipal repository. There, he studied the civil registry and the death certificates issued in 1939 and compiled two lists with the names of the men who had died that year, and whose cause of death read “*dead as result of a clash with the public force*”. Additionally, he was also able to draw on other documentation that displayed the workings of governmental surveillance, the management of suspects, and the administration of prison sentences locally. The archive offered clues that allowed José to piece some parts of the story of the executions together; however, its scattered abundance and the fact that some files—such as those that belonged to the time of the Second Republic—had been burned and destroyed when the war ended, made the information vague and the use of other versions of the story necessary.

In relation to the executions, the civil registry provided José with the names and surnames of the victims and situated the events on two exact days. The first group was executed on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1939, whilst the second was taken out on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 1939. The death certificates of these men were the only information contained in the municipal records about the killing (see the death certificate of José’s grandfather in Image 14). As José observed in one of our interviews, these men, thirty-seven according to the archive, were “detained, imprisoned and killed”, but there was no trail of such punishment, no court-martial or additional processes that might have generated other types of data about their deaths. For José, the lack of other documents—for instance, from a court-martial—exemplified the lack of a fair trial these men had faced, and hence the impossibility of their defending their lives before

a legal court. The archive disclosed the identification of those killed, but it did not reveal the space of their burial or details about how the killings took place. The absence of other documentation, such as sentences or court summaries, buttressed the furtive nature of these deaths, accentuating their incomprehensibility for families.

Compiling information about the killings in Puebla opened a window on the tragic past of the village, but also displayed the trails of a “social history of remembering” (Burke 1989: 100; Jing 1996) that revealed the difficulties and hazards of transgenerational transmission. José’s archival research was paired with an investigation into personal accounts connected to the event of the killings. It was through the memories that some neighbours still had about the executions that José was able to locate the mass grave. Since childhood, José remembered, his father had told him and his sister Consuelo—also part of the families’ association—“more or less” where the bodies were buried. Although José’s widowed grandmother had never shared explicit details about her husband’s murder with her son or grandchildren—according to José, to protect them from potential reprisals—members of the family had always had a general idea about their relative’s death and burial place in Puebla’s countryside. Other village elders seemed to have more accurate knowledge about the location of the mass grave, which helped José to contrast his father’s insights on the whereabouts of the mass internments and expand on the information held in archival documents. Even if many people did not openly talk about these repressive episodes of the end of the conflict, the image of the mass graves had always been present in the collective memory of the village.

REGISTRO CIVIL DE Pueblo de Alevén

Número 84.

NOMBRES Y APELLIDOS

Pedro Sánchez-  
Paniagua Her-  
nan.

En Pueblo de Alevén,  
provincia de Madajoz, a las

y veinte minutos del día cuarenta de agosto de mil novecientos

ante D. Marcelino Martín  
Interror, Juez Municipal Suplente

y Don Mariano del Río Interror Secretario

se procede a inscribir la defunción de

Don Pedro Sánchez-Paniagua Herman

nacido en Pueblo de Alevén el día 14 de Junio de mil novecientos natural de Pueblo de Alevén, provincia de Madajoz

hijo de Don Gaspard Sánchez-Paniagua Alcalde y de Doña Isabel Herman Tarvo

domiciliado en la calle de Pelayo de número  piso

profesión obrero agrícola y de estado (1) casado con Consuelo Caratejada Millán, de cuyo matrimonio nació dos hijos llamados José y Pablo Sánchez-Paniagua Caratejada, solteros y menores de edad;

falleció en  (2) el día veinticinco de Marzo de mil

novecientos treinta y nueve y  minutos, a consecuencia de (3)

según resulta (4)  y reconocimiento practicado, y su cadáver habrá de recibir sepultura en el Cementerio de

Image 14. Death Certificate of Pedro Sánchez-Paniagua. Courtesy of José Sánchez-Paniagua.

According to José and Consuelo, many older people knew where the bodies were because their own parents had told them about the executions or they had worked in the surrounding areas of the mass grave for years. The fact that dead men in the two trenches from the war had been left exposed for some days after being killed and later lightly buried until 1952—when the terrain was partitioned and their new owners fully covered them to cultivate the land—left many with vivid recollections of the shootings and of the presence of the decomposing bodies in the middle of the fields. José also spoke to some of those who had experienced the events originally, like the men’s widows and offspring still alive before the exhumation. The memories of some of these women were especially poignant, for a few of them had secretly, some days after the executions, tried to cover the bare bodies with the little soil they could gather using small wicker baskets they carried with them. Among these women was José and Consuelo’s grandmother. One of them, alive at the time of the search, had told José what she remembered about that day, providing him with additional information about the area where the bodies lied. When he began the process of locating the mass graves, José relied on the testimony of these older informants and, taking his father, other elder neighbours of Puebla and the renting owners of the plots to the large estate, he set the search for the bodies in motion:

I took my father and other four elders—among them, the plots’ owners. They took me to the place and told me: “here they are”. They even told me stories—though they were very young back then—about what they parents told them in relation to the men executed, to where they were [...]. For instance, the owner of the plot where my grandfather is buried told us that he used to go there to plough with his father, to grow cereals (oats, wheat, barley...) and every time they went over the area where the trench is located his father would tell him: “let’s not plough too deep here because we might pull something out, we might find something”. Stories like these... (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012)

The grave was thus found through the information these neighbours provided to José, as no other document existed about the place of the killings. As happened in Castuera, personal experiences connected to the mass graves facilitated the location work and became an intrinsic part of the archaeological process. In her study of the Podhale in Poland, Frances Pine (2007) has argued how intimate memories entrenched in

everyday spaces and features of the landscape can become props for the remembrance of bigger events that affected individual and familial experience over time. In Puebla, *knowing* about the killings became, for many, commonplace, entangled with quotidian village life—especially as many work (e.g. farming, cattle raising) and leisure activities (e.g. hunting) still happen today in the area where the executions took place. During my time in Puebla, and as I spoke to people before and during the exhumation, other stories and rumours about the presence of the graves and bodies in people’s everyday memory elucidated their lingering impression in the community’s imagination. Some retold, on occasions, the way in which other neighbours had found dogs carrying body parts back from the mass graves—some stories spoke of a hand, others of a leg—just outside the village. Many of these stories spoke of the gruesome reality of the killings through these uncanny encounters, evoking the mass graves’ afterlife in the postwar village and the active countryside milieu. At this early stage, when José took these neighbours to the site where the executions occurred, testimonies delineated the excavation ground.

These contrasted with other stories—such as one told by the main landowner of the large estate where the trenches were located—who denied the bodies were there until the moment the mass grave was opened. According to José, before the archaeological prospection of the land was undertaken, with the help of members from PREMHEX such as Cayetano Ibarra, they also used ground-penetrating radar, broadly used in localisation endeavours of human remains in Spain. As José told me, this tool helped them to be “sure” of the location. The radar, which scans the soil, producing an image of the terrain underground with its changes in materials and structure, provided, in José’s words, “a positive report”, as it identified the same area that testimonies had singled out.<sup>2</sup> The technological device seemed to offer a form of validation and certainty for family and some project members. As in Castuera, the presence of scientific technologies and performance comingled with personal

---

<sup>2</sup> For some archaeological experts working in the field of exhumations—among them Laura Muñoz—this technique seems to lack reliability, as it often offers contradictory and vague information about the burials, failing, on many occasions, to determine whether in fact there are or are not human remains in the areas examined. Experts such as Muñoz do not consider this technological device to have a particularly high success rate in relation to mass burial location—at least in connection to cases in Extremadura (personal communication with Laura Muñoz Encinar).

accounts of the past, transforming people's imagination about the executions. As the materiality of the mass graves was uncovered, these stories gained a profuse and expansive character, drawing a portrait of postwar suffering and further repression in the village.

### *Assembling a History of the Executions*

The event of the executions in Puebla had a profound impact on many neighbours' lives, as it affected numerous left-wing—mainly socialist—families in the village. The executions had been subtly recalled in family circles and so their memory had been passed on from those who experienced the event first-hand to later generations of kin and close neighbours. When the exhumation started in July 2012, the mass gravesite was filled with the voices of those who lived through the end of the conflict and remembered it vividly, and the vicarious memories of younger members of the community—neighbours, children, and grandchildren of the people who lay in the mass burial site. The exhumation also attracted visits from people from neighbouring villages, who had heard about the unearthing of the bones. It also awakened the interest of members of the Civil Guard and the judicial police, who filed a report about the bodies found—something Laura had rarely seen in other exhumations, as she would later observe. At the mass grave, people recounted their version of the story of the killings personally to me or as part of small group conversations that formed next to the archaeological dig. In such retellings, one could appreciate the contrasting and similar aspects they all contained. These oral narratives were conditioned by the way in which events had been lived or learnt, by singular anecdotal additions and people's particular interpretations. Nonetheless, they all seemed to share common details about the detention, execution, and burial of these men.

According to many of these stories, most of the men, of socialist ideology and affiliation, were arrested and imprisoned in the spring of 1939, when Francoist troops entered the locality and bolstered the Republican government that ruled the village until the end of the war. After being held in the old prison, situated in what is today the elders' bar (*hogar del pensionista*), they were moved to a convent that had been

turned into a prison, located at the edge of the village—appropriated during the war for military purposes by Republicans and later, at the end of the contest, by Francoist troops. Whereas some stories mentioned the prison and convent, others never addressed it. Many family members that spoke to us during the exhumation asserted that their relatives had never been jailed and instead had been taken straight from their houses for execution. Older members of the community remembered that the weather was already warm when the first group of men were put on a truck and driven to the area of *Cuesta de la Cabeza*, one of the plots where the first trench was located. Days later, two other trucks were filled with the remaining men, so the story goes, and transported to another area, known today by the name of *El Chaparral*. Both plots are today part of a large estate called *Bodegones*, located near an area commonly known as *El Morro*, a point of reference for many in the local community. According to some stories, the men were summoned and driven to the two sites by Francoist military and right-wing neighbours from Puebla. After the men were killed—some stated that as soldiers refused to do it, two young men from the village were placed in charge of carrying out the shootings—the bodies were left exposed and guarded for a few days, until some of the widows managed to evade the appointed military controls on the point known as *Aldeavieja*, in order to cover them with some soil.

At the exhumation site, these stories filled the space, as the team excavated the two trenches, situated within the field of holm oak trees, olive trees, and brooms of *Bodegones*. These accounts, which some uttered and some heard from fellow neighbours for the first time, were made common, unravelling distinct renderings of the executions garnered through familial exchanges over time and forming a collective perception of the events. *War Histories II*, the audiovisual piece that accompanies this chapter, recreates the space of the mass graves as a parallel location to that of the town, where the communal sharing of first- and second-generation accounts, influenced by a history of secretive storytelling and also rumour, attempted to piece together an image of what *really* happened in the past, creating a “shared sense of being-in-time” (Pickering and Keightley 2013: 121) or a “sense of living connection” (Hirsch 2008: 104). As the town filled with families returning for the summer *fiesta* at the time of the excavation, these individual and familial stories entered the public realm, in an act of conscious recollection, becoming incorporated

into the village's social memory. Testimonies and conversations were primarily shared at the exhumation site, though they also penetrated people's interactions in the village scene.<sup>3</sup> At the mass grave, discussions and impressions among neighbours such as José, his sister Consuelo, and other visitors, wrestled with a history that could not be fully grasped, seeking coherence in the certainty and uncertainty contained in these lived and borrowed oral accounts. The difficulties in the transmission of some of these memories, often encrypted by the experience of individual suffering of a previous generation—in the Freudian sense, as discussed by Argenti and Schramm (2010)—especially in the postwar years, marked the speculative character of some of these narratives during the exhumation. As shown in the video, where individual storytelling interlaces with group dialogues, established versions of the events mixed with moments of hesitance where gaps in people's knowledge of the killings motivated the on-going work of the collective imagination. During fieldwork, I became interested in the nature of these at-times fragmented and blurred accounts, and especially in the ways in which people aimed to conjointly resolve these cracks, through the untangling of incoherent clues found within the stories, the archive, and in connection to the findings of the archaeological team in the mass grave.

In such a way, unmediated and mediated narratives about the tragic event coexisted throughout the exhumation, elucidating the way in which intergenerational acts of transfer occurred within families and neighbours and intra-generational encounters happened among members of second generations (Pickering and Keightley 2013). The formulation of these oral accounts within the group setting displayed, on the one hand, forms of recall attached to a lived past by elders who gave testimony of what they saw when they were younger. On the other, there were inherited memories acquired from elders' life histories—whether relatives or neighbours—by the children and grandchildren of the defeated, which, as Marianne Hirsch (2008: 107) has observed when describing the concept of *postmemory*, are “not mediated by recall but

---

<sup>3</sup> On an occasion, this became problematic for José, as a neighbour, presumably of right-wing affiliation, had told a well-to-do family of Puebla, after he had visited the site, that another neighbour interviewed at the gravesite had slandered the family. José, saddened and angry, spoke to the concerned family to clarify that what they had heard was an unfounded claim. He would later also confront the man who created the rumour, calling him a “liar”, whilst the man responded that he was unsure about where he had heard the rumour or who had told him about it at the excavation site.

by imaginative investment, projection and creation”. Other families however, were inevitably distrustful in sharing their family’s past and often guarded their stories, as they feared that the exhumation and the telling of some stories might “awake the revenge of others”. In such a way, the story of the killings was assembled through exchanges across generations and between members of the same age groups, articulating the village collective mnemonic imagination (Pickering and Keightley 2013)—formed by heterogeneous views about the past and how it should be articulated.

Moreover, these perceptions and experiences of the past also differed in terms of their ideological standpoint, since not all socialist neighbours and families that attended the exhumation shared the same versions and these manifold visions were also constructed in relation to the views of right-wing neighbours who, on occasion, also visited the gravesite. The memory of the killings was, in the words of Michael Rothberg (2009: 3), multidirectional and “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing” between those who came into contact through the exhumation. As *War Histories II* aims to show, the assemblage of a historical memory of the executions was a dialogical and dialectic exercise between the members of the community and the material objects found—such as mortal remains or documents. These encounters often revealed tensions, which emerged when distinct portrayals of the past were brought into contact with one another. They adverted the idiosyncrasies of a social identity engendered through years of conflict but also through coexistence between neighbours.

When the team began to excavate the first trench in the area of *El Chaparral* (named TR1 in the archaeological record), the first human and material traces that appeared within the zigzagging trench disconcerted scientists and villagers alike. As mentioned above, according to elders’ stories, two trucks took a group of men who were killed and buried together inside the trench. This is the story that second and third generations like José’s—as he explains in the video—learnt and retold until the day the mass grave was unearthed. The list of names that José compiled from the municipal archive, which suggested the apparent split and execution of these men into two different groups and days, consolidated the belief that the bodies of twenty-six

men were buried in the first trench whilst the mortal remains of twelve other individuals had been inhumed in the second, located in *Cuesta de la Cabeza*. This seemed highly likely for those such as José and his family, closely involved in the historical research process and thus aware of such archival information. The appearance of only eight corpses in the first excavated area of the trench filled families, and particularly José, with a deep sense of incredulity and mistrust when they approached the mass grave.

As the team worked to expose the bones and their belongings, José and other visitors discussed where the rest of the bodies might be. Doubts concerning the possibility of finding all the corpses started to emerge, causing a palpable sense of unease among families. From the beginning, and as the inside of the mass grave was hollowed, Laura Muñoz prudently shared with me her own qualms about the situation. For scientists, this uncertainty—as seen in Castuera’s case—was also implicit in the nature of the archaeological work performed in the context of war and postwar mass burial sites. For the archaeologist, the repressive pattern that the archive evoked (i.e. the killing of such a large group at once) was rare, as her experience in previous exhumations of similar nature had shown that the so-called *sacas* were realised in smaller numbers and on different days. As the team continued working further down the trench line, another group of eight bodies appeared. The disparity and contradictions between neighbours’ assumptions, archival data, and the reality that the mass grave expounded provoked people’s insecurity, for some established inferences about the killings had been overturned. As José reflected during an interview after the exhumation had taken place:

I even thought we would not find what we were looking for. When we found another [group of] eight and so there were sixteen, I thought [the excavation] was going to finish there. I thought it would finish there because we were not sure about where the trench ended, for according to elders, it ceased before what we then saw. I thought: if I have the death certificates of 26 or 27 [men], we are missing 12. When I saw this I was *stunned*. (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012)

The unexpected content of the mass grave made José feel at a loss. In this situation, archaeologists decided to open the whole of the trench, mainly, in Laura’s words, for

the “families’ peace of mind”. As archaeological labour progressed, however, more groups were located along the first trench (TR1). Four groups, each containing the mortal remains of 8 to 10 individuals, were found in the area of *El Chaparral*. Likewise, a group of 12 was later encountered in another trench (named TR2 in the archaeological record) in *Cuesta de la Cabeza*. Through the stories of neighbours, archaeologists had been able to understand some of the events recorded in the mass grave, invoked by the corpses and their disposition. For neighbours, on the other hand, archaeological practice provided a source of confirmation or negation of the stories they knew. For instance, when the first trench (TR1) and the second trench (TR2) were unearthed, numerous corpses emerged severed and bore no anatomic connection between their body parts. This situation occurred in every archaeologically-delineated zone in the two trenches. In each area, piles of scattered bones and objects, where legs, arms and skulls were amalgamated in a chaotic disposition, appeared next to discarded limbs, bodily fragments, and incomplete skeletons. These dispersed parts, which were labelled “de-contextualized” in scientific argot or described in neighbours’ observations as “ramshackle”, summoned the image of wild rabbits, dogs, or wolves “pulling them out”, as recalled by some accounts in the audiovisual piece (“and how many disappeared eaten by wolves as they were left there!”). For scientist, the exposure of the bodies spoke of the exemplary meaning of these killings in the specific postwar milieu. For families, the tangle of mortal remains made this lurid part of the story evident and shocking. These muddled remnants, which could only be recomposed into a coherent whole by the physical anthropologist, became, once again, as in Castuera’s case, a testimony (Domanska 2005: 403) of the damage caused by vermin to the bodies’ physiognomy.

In Castuera, scientific evidence confirmed the functioning of the camp in a world of uncertain historical data and instilled hope in connection to the inconclusive searches for disappeared kin. In Puebla, the scientific finding of the mass graves challenged a deep-rooted social and familial knowledge about the executions that had been part of the experience of different generations. In his study of how the Merina in Madagascar experience history, Maurice Bloch (1996) has argued that the group shares a dual perception of a person, which leads them to conceive history as both a changing and static practice. Drawing on philosophical ideas from Plato and Aristotle on the understanding of the external or internal constructions of memory, Bloch

argues that whether the Merina conceive events in history as something that transforms a person during her young life—“endlessly modified by the moment and the imprint these moments leave on it” (Ibid: 227)—at old age and through burial, the person becomes immortalised, securing their permanence in their social group. History is thus understood as a fluid process in which the individual is immersed throughout life and comes to a fixed state near death, which secures social regeneration, kinship ties, and traceable genealogies.



Image 15. Second group of bones with no anatomical connection found in Trench no 1 (TR1).

In a similar sense, one could argue that in Puebla, the overarching presence of some mnemonic accounts, their frequent retelling and recurrence among some families and members in relation to the suffering of their ancestors, provided some stories with strong fact-like qualities and an immobile character, thus asserting people’s “shared historicity” (Skultans 1998; Fabian 1983) and their own kinship genealogy. Confronted by the opened mass graves, well-established familiar narratives about the killings, passed on by members of previous generations or through hearsay, became perturbed and unsettled. The sight of these corpses and their scientific interpretation became important elements in the negotiation of new

meanings about the executions, which were adopted by relatives and neighbours throughout the exhumation. Such a process of substantiation pressed people to confront a different perception of their own history, as it validated some stories and turned others into myths.

In *War Histories II*, José's sister Consuelo Sánchez-Paniagua, her husband, Antonio, and Mariano and José, the grandsons of Mariano Gómez Mayoral, one of the men buried in the mass grave, discuss the authenticity of a widespread rumour that spawned in the village in the wake of the murders. During the exhumation, many neighbours retold in different forms the story that some of the men taken to the trenches might have survived the execution and escaped. Some believed this to be true—on occasions retelling full stories about the vicissitudes these men underwent during the years they spent in hiding. Others categorically denied the incident. In the conversation included in the video, part of a longer discussion about the executions, when Mariano hints at the event of a likely escape the rest of the group argues for the impossibility of this having happened, referring to the materials found in the mass grave as evidence contesting the rumour. Arguing that they had all been given a “kill shot” (*tiro de gracia*) after the execution and that they had been firmly tied by the wrists and arms to one another—in a similar manner to the bodies found in Castuera. Consuelo and Antonio, who followed the development of the team's work daily, decidedly referenced the objects of the mass graves to sustain their claim:

Mariano: Maybe some could have escaped...

Antonio: No, they didn't, they received kill shots. They came back to finish them off.

Consuelo: Don't you see that a Muga was wounded...

Antonio: They are all tied! From here and from here [pointing at wrists and forearms] according to Laura...

Consuelo: Besides, they are there! [Pointing at the mass grave]

In contrast to the cases described in the previous chapter, where objects contributed to the imagination of the death of a relative and their identity, here it was the traces of violence found on the skeletons that superseded survival and ghostly visions of families in the past. For Jacinto and Begoña Velasco Sánchez-Paniagua, the disappearance of their grandfather, Pelayo Velasco, was surrounded by rumours about

his possible escape from the site, as some people told the family he had only been wounded in an eye and had later been healed by someone in the countryside. Begoña ascertained that it was her grandfather's sister "who later started the rumour", for she stated she had once seen him working in a cafe in San Sebastian, in northern Spain. Begoña and Jacinto's grandmother, the siblings explained, never believed this because she was sure that her husband would have returned home, had he been alive.

For Pablo Trenado Cabanillas, another man who lost his grandfather, Mariano Cabanillas López, and uncle, Felipe Cabanillas Herrera—two leather workers who made packsaddles for draft animals—his mother's hope, conversely, was that his brother Felipe "would have survived". When some neighbours went to bury the men killed, they assured Pablo's mother that the bodies of Felipe and another man were not in the mass grave. Later on, when the family moved to Madrid, Pablo recalled, his mother thought she saw him in a flea market and later on the streets, although Pablo himself never believed his uncle was alive. These predicaments over a likely escape reflected the different ways in which grieving relatives dealt with such uncertainty, as in Castuera. When Begoña visited the mass grave, however, she was impressed. For her, seeing the corpses and the cable wire, "confirm[ed] that [her] grandfather could not have escaped" (Begoña Velasco, Puebla, 2012). Pablo also doubted it when he saw "the way they were tied" (Pablo Trenado Cabanillas, Puebla, 2012). As in the case of the mass graves excavated in Castuera, the cables used to join the prisoners, tightly knotted with a navy technique—as recognised by one of the archaeologists—enraptured visitors and provoked an emotional reaction. Their sombre presence pushed inner reworkings of the family's past.

Discussions by the graveside also reflected an ongoing concern with figures. Many of the neighbours who gathered around the mass graves often deliberated about the number of people killed and their identities, tracing a genealogy of the men whilst devising their common kinship relations. For years many had argued that more men were killed in *Cuesta de la Cabeza* than in the lower area of *El Chaparral*. Some spoke of forty, other eighty, and even hundreds of deaths. Forty-two bodies were eventually exhumed in Puebla, of which thirty were found in *El Chaparral* and twelve in *Cuesta de la Cabeza*. Nonetheless, the total number of people who died as a result

of Francoist repression in Puebla—counting those executed in other towns and prisons—amounted to more than 120 people. The controversies derived from a need to prove the ferocity of Francoist repression in this localised scenario and, as in Castuera, in contraposition to the number of right-wing dead in Puebla—thirty-seven men from right-wing families, as neighbours explained, were killed at the start of the war in the village. Talking about numbers also led people to articulate the names of some of those in the mass grave.



Image 16. Cable wires.

Some of the stories heard from those who had witnessed the creation of the mass grave or lived the event firsthand, as in the case of a man called Mariano, nicknamed “Conejo” (Rabbit), exemplified the way in which the identity of some of the dead men had travelled as part of the most enduring memories. In an interview carried out with Mariano next to the mass grave, he reminisced about a time when he, aged 13, and two other friends went to inspect the mass grave days after the killings had taken place. He remembered the hats (“we saw many hats stained with blood”) and recognised one man, Vicente Muga—who was killed together with his brother and father—by the “jacket his was wearing”. Many other stories made reference to

the way in which other people also identified their relatives in the grave. José's grandmother, for instance, had identified her husband, according to Consuelo, also "by his jacket's lining" when she ventured to hastily cover up the bodies. These forms of identification, socially recalled in many oral accounts, evoked a dislocated recognition of the body through a materiality nearly lost inside the mass grave in the present. Mainly durable fragments of garments, such as buttons, shoe soles, zips or a safety pin, among other personal objects, remained existent at the time of the exhumation.

The scarce number of objects in both trenches made the archaeologists' work of identification more complicated, as their absence limited the possibility of delineating a personal profile for the victim. In Puebla, in contrast to Mass Grave 1 in Castuera, only a few significant belongings that could be salient for the identification process were found. Objects such as a medal, a set of pieces carved out of tiles to play a game, or a pair of scissors threw some light on to whom the mortal remains of each individual might have belonged—however, not enough to enable a full identification. To the issue that not all the families of those believed to be in the mass grave could be contacted—some were no longer traceable—or that other relatives chose not to get involved in the exhumation—something often criticised by the families who visited the site—, one had to add, again, the bad conservation of the bones in some zones of TR1 and TR2. In some areas, many of the bones had effectively turned into dust. The prospect of the positive identification of most of these skeletons thus became faint and scientists relied heavily on accounts from direct witnesses that provided physical and personal details, which aided recognition of the individuals inside the grave. Family and neighbours' accounts retraced the memory of the defeated, unfolding clues about their physiognomy, occupation, and habits, as well as about their personalities, village and kin relations, and their political affiliations. Testimonies could estimate an identity and also point to the cause of the death, enabling Laura's historical analysis of repression in this part of the region.

### *Identifying the Familial Body*

I was entrusted with gathering interviews to help the team to collect archaeological and anthropological information about the corpses and their deaths and to map the social relationships woven around the mass grave. The formulation of interview questions, however, was an on-going collaborative effort between archaeologists and social anthropologists. When I spoke to witnesses or relatives of the men executed, questions about the individual's age, pathologies, customs, or professional occupation mixed with descriptions about these men's political activities, their social role within the village's networks, or the family's intimate experience of their arrest and disappearance. Interviews and conversations with those eager to share their version of the events made the act of recollection significant, not only for the value of what was said—which spoke of the personal traits of the deceased—but also for the relation established with the past through telling—which unravelled aspects about the identity of the storyteller in the present.

Questions that aimed to collect information that could be contrasted with the materiality of the mass grave demanded an ingrained understanding of the physical condition of the executed, as well as his lifestyle or aspects of the moment of his death on the part of the relative. When José and Consuelo, for instance, described the story of their grandfather, they recounted how, just before he was executed, he was taken for interrogation and during the questioning someone broke most of his teeth with the butt of a rifle. This retelling, which was painfully undertaken by the siblings, showed the emotional affliction the event had been for the family. Retelling it, however, was intimately connected to the mass grave, as trails of the story could have been found in the bones, had they been in better condition. Moreover, my interview also included questions about these men's possessions or what they had at the time of their death, for such objects could appear in the mass grave. As it turned out, however, most men carried little with them. In José's grandfather's case, whilst being in jail, he gave his pocket watch to his sister, Escolastia, during one of her visits to the prison. As both brother and sister recalled, knowing he would soon die, he left his last possession to his family—just as Aurora Navas's mother did before she was killed in

Castuera. His wish was for his son José—Consuelo and José’s father—to look after it. José, at a later age, would give it to his son with the same purpose. When José (the son) spoke to me about the family’s past at his house on various occasions, the watch was taken out and shown, as another fragment through which the story was articulated.

Sarah Wagner (2008) has observed how, often, during ante-mortem interviews, memory can play tricks on informants, making them mistake traits of the missing person or forget personal details altogether (2008: 133). In Puebla, decades after the conflict and bearing only the information they had learnt, other second- and third-generation relatives did not know much about the objects or clothing their kin might have worn when they died. Some speculated that they probably did not have many belongings, as some had been taken straight from their houses in the middle of the night or after a day’s work, or could have been searched if they had been imprisoned—back in the mass grave, the appearance of spoons suggested, like in the camp, that some men could have spent, in fact, days in jail. Many relatives hence kept scarce information about their kin’s belongings or physical attributes. For instance, the brothers Mariano and José, grandsons of Mariano Gómez Mayoral, kept only an image of their grandfather. Likewise, Begoña and Jacinto Velasco’s family had preserved only a wooden barrel built by their grandfather, Pelayo, and a picture of him at a young age. The existence of images of the men executed in some families’ archives prompted José to collect them for his own historical inquiry. Likewise, these old images, sometimes taken with a camera and sometimes painted on canvas, became also an important element in the process of archaeological and anthropological assembly. In the absence of firsthand descriptions of their physiognomy, these images enabled the depiction of a face and a body that aided the imagination of the person by scientists and neighbours alike, even if bones and skulls were badly damaged by erosion in the mass graves.

Family records also provided other images in which some appeared in a different disposition and situation. As opposed to the portraits, which showed most men in classical individual profile and full view, posed or otherwise, in groups in a studio or in the village’s streets (see Image 17), other images, such as Image 18,

evoked a political sentiment, bringing the ideological past of some of those in the mass grave closer to present generations. Image 18 shows a group of neighbours from Puebla standing and sitting outside the old branch of the *Unión General de Trabajadores* or UGT (General Worker's Union), the trade union with affiliated militants in the village. The image is part of Sofia Sierra's collection, the daughter of Baltasar Expósito Sierra (as known in the municipal and civil registry<sup>4</sup>), a shoemaker from Puebla de Alcocer also killed and buried in 1939 in *Bodegones*. The same image was also part of Esperanza Muga's family archive. Esperanza was the daughter of Rafael Muga Ruiz, a tradesman also killed in the *sacas* of spring 1939.

Sofía and Esperanza's families had given the image to José to aid his historical investigation into the executions. The photograph, as Sofía's son-in-law explained to me when he visited the exhumation with Sofía's daughter in August 2012, was taken in 1929 and shows Baltasar sitting on the left hand corner of the table, accompanied by other men and women connected to the union, with his left fist raised. Rafael Muga Ruiz, Esperanza's father, is sitting on the right hand corner, reading a newspaper. He also appears in Image 17, identified by his name, which is typed where he stands. As his daughter Esperanza recounted in an interview, Rafael was killed with his father, also called Rafael, and his brother Vicente. Esperanza believes the three of them were killed because of the position another brother, Eugenio, held as the socialist (PSOE) town mayor of Puebla during the war, from 1936 until 1939. Eugenio was also killed by court-martial in April 1940 in the city of Mérida.

Moreover, although I never had the chance to interview Baltasar's daughter, Sofía, as her delicate health did not allow her to come from Madrid, where she lived, to the exhumation, many people commented on Baltasar's death to me at the gravesite. Some described how he disappeared after a fellow neighbour invited him to have a coffee from which he never returned. Emilio, Sofía's son-in-law, explained to me that Baltasar held an influential position within the trade union (UGT). According to him, all the people in the photograph were killed or repressed in some way after the

---

<sup>4</sup> When the family visited the exhumation, they said his surname "Éxposito" was a surprise to them, for he had always used "Sierra". "Sierra" is also the name that was passed on to his offspring and to later generations. "Éxposito" was a name that they did not recognize as theirs, and this triggered a sense of bewilderment over their relative's identity, registry, and life history.

war ended, suggesting that Baltasar's death, like many others, was politically motivated. The image provided a peek into an otherwise only imagined political past—that is at times also eluded by some families—, sharpening the outline of these social identities and bringing them back into focus (Hirsch 2008, 2012).

Indeed, traces of these men's political identities, embodied in captured gestures, as in the case of Image 18, or in the oral accounts that remained, were often invoked in people's mnemonic exchanges. Broken accounts offered a brief encounter, like a Proustian involuntary flash, into their political and social aspirations, composing a fuzzy history of the relations between left- and right-wing groups of neighbours before, during, and after the war. These narratives turned the dead men into characters through which the theatre of confrontations and social unrest existing at the time, in the village, unfolded. The biographical stories people told at the gravesite—but also in the closeness of their living rooms, during some of our interviews—often hinted at a broader context in which national and local histories were entwined (Pine 2007; Skultans 1998). Through the stories that were shared between families and researchers and among family members, firsthand and learnt memories situated the mass grave and the bodies in a pre-war and war milieu, sketching not only individual traits but also a historical topography, in which the particularities of the repression in the area were delineated. This was essential for Laura's "diachronic reading of the mass grave" (informal conversation with Laura Muñoz Encinar, 2014) in which local events were considered in relation to other cases in the region.

Many relatives' tellings of their kin's past, just like in Image 18, associated these life accounts with their political involvement in a period of intense class conflict. In a joint interview with José and Consuelo Sánchez-Paniagua and their father José—who is affected by Parkinson's disease—the first two helped their relative to recall aspects of his father's active participation in village politics during the Second Republic. Consuelo recounted how her grandfather, Pedro Sánchez-Paniagua, was a miner who founded the *Casa del Pueblo* or People's House, where workers from different left-wing groups gathered for meetings. José's father described this as "the place where the poor met to talk about their things". Historian Fernando

Sánchez Marroyo (1990) has located the emergence and rise of these institutions in the 1920s. These places, according to Marroyo, “were used as headquarters for diverse trading societies and they were the centre for the irradiation of the associative influence in general and socialist influence in particular” (1990: 128) in such rural enclaves. According to his relatives, Pedro Sánchez-Paniagua also created a student music group, who sometimes serenaded the rich, singing critical songs that challenged their favourable position in village society. Some of these songs, as José’s father recalled, chanted for the “bread, work, and freedom of workers”. José, his son, and his daughter identified his active political commitment to the interests of Puebla’s working class as one of the main causes of his murder.



Image 17.  
Picture of Rafael Muga Ruiz  
with other men.  
Courtesy of Esperanza Muga  
and José Sánchez-Paniagua



Image 18.  
Picture of neighbours from Puebla outside  
the UGT branch  
Courtesy of Esperanza Muga,  
and José Sánchez-Paniagua

It is important to note that the lives and deaths of these men were intimately entangled with a social conflict that also affected the region and country more generally. These tensions, as Francisco Espinosa Maestre (2007) has pointed out, were profoundly determined, among other things, by the crisis around land distribution and the consequences brought about by the Land Reform Law of 1931, which produced an open-ended brawl between farmers and landowners up until the outbreak of the war in 1936. Many of the measures promoted by the new law—regarding labour costs, hiring and working conditions, and land expropriation—enraged landowners, who saw their capital privileges being threatened and their personalities undermined, especially in Extremadura. Land workers' collectives, who mostly adhered to socialist ideas in the province of Badajoz, for their part, soon grew disillusioned with the slow transformation of workers' rights over the land—locked in the hands of a few—promised by the first left-wing coalition government of the Second Republic (Espinosa 2007). This led to a growing sense of discontent—as poverty and unemployment grew among the working classes. Social despair led to the emergency occupation and settlement of privately owned terrains by some farming groups—especially ploughmen (Riesco 2006)—, during the first *Bienio Reformista* (Reformist Period).

From 1933 and with the start of the conservative *Bienio Negro* (Black Two Years) that would last until 1936—the repression of the worker's movement by landowners and right-wing parties alike was widely felt on a micro level. In Puebla, for instance, the Socialist Association was dissolved in 1933, as part of the restraining campaigns of the government all over the province, which closed down many *Casas del Pueblo* and suppressed workers' initiatives more generally (Espinosa 2007: 65). In a village where over 54% of the inhabitants were farmers (mostly ploughmen, day labourers, guest farm workers or sharecroppers)—according to José—one can imagine the difficult situation lived between different social groups. Some like Espinosa (Ibid.) have shown that the efforts made in the run up to the general election of 1936 by all political organisations indicated that much was at stake after these tumultuous periods of reform and counter reform. The election of 1936 became decisive for left- and right-wing collectives and votes, as the historian suggests. In the

particular case of Puebla de Alcocer, Espinosa cites the example of the village's Land Registrar, originally from Mérida, who though not inscribed in the list of registered voters, nevertheless imposed his ballot for the right-wing party *Acción Popular* (Ibid: 94) at the voting desk. In our interview, Pablo Trenado Cabanillas explained how he believed his grandfather, Mariano Cabanillas López, and uncle, Felipe Cabanillas Herrera, were killed because his grandfather refused to sell his family's votes to right-wing neighbours—presumably prior to the general election of 1936. In his story, Pablo explains how his grandfather, of socialist ideas, had “nine children and so their votes were worth a lot” (Pablo Trenado Cabanillas, Puebla, 2012). According to Pablo, they killed his grandfather and uncle because of these political clashes.

Pablo acknowledges that the subject of the war and killings were, in his words, “taboo” in his household. Though his mother had recounted to him how men from the village took father and son from their beds while they were sleeping, the reason for their execution remained unclear to him. Pablo's family's history of extreme repression needs to be understood within the framework of the abovementioned political intricacies. Apart from Pablo's father Mariano and brother Felipe, two more of Mariano's sons, Luis and Pedro, were killed in other cities of the province by court-martial and three of his daughters jailed—first in Puebla, and later in a prison in the Basque Country. Pablo's mother, Agustina, was one of them. According to him, his mother was also imprisoned “for giving her vote to the socialists”. Doubtlessly, as Pablo retold his story one could perceive the connections between the fragments he recalled from transmitted accounts and the bleary village reality archaeologists and I, members of a later generation, began to discern in relation to other experiences and historical records gathered as the exhumation advanced. Pablo and José's accounts hence needed to be threaded with the information that other neighbours from older generations provided about past disputes and in the context of a pre-war society.

When talking to other neighbours, especially those from older generations, many ascertained that the roots of the conflict between right- and left-wing neighbours could be traced back to clashes that occurred between landowners and workers over a terrain that was commonly owned by the village but later sold to private owners, after the war, known as the *Casa Carrasco*. Some of the older

witnesses who remembered what happened suggested that problems with this plot caused many of the deaths in the village when the war started. In an interview with Emiliano Bayón Villarejo—a 95-year-old man who was an adolescent during the years of the Second Republic in Puebla and worked the fields with his father as a ploughman—he remembered well the moment when, aged 14, and after the Land Reform was approved, “things got better for workers”. Labour, he reminisced, was more abundant and paid more generously, especially as many farmers benefited from the partition of some landowner’s untouched large estates, rented out as part of the government’s plan for agricultural intensification (Espinosa 2007).<sup>5</sup> In Puebla, Emiliano remembered, the expropriation of *Casa Carrasco* was a trigger for later confrontations between neighbours. According to Emiliano’s account and others, neighbours from the village “knocked down the walls” of the plot to claim it back during the Second Republic. It is not clear to me from people’s stories whether the plot was occupied as a result of the process of collectivisation propelled by the new Land Reform in 1931—which aimed to re-distribute common property privatised as a result of the Spanish *desamortización* or liberal agrarian reform from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ibid.)<sup>6</sup>—or whether this occurred at a later stage, at the outset of the conflict. As Emiliano remembered:

They said that the *Casa Carrasco* had always belonged to all people in the village. When the Movement broke out—I remember it was during the Republic—people went there and they knocked down the walls. There were many people and they knocked the walls down. That cost plenty of deaths... that and the plot... The *Casa Carrasco* was the cause of the majority of the deaths there [at the mass grave].

---

<sup>5</sup> Sergio Riesco (2007) has noted that many other ploughmen who did not benefit from what was commonly known as “la agraria” (Land Reform Law) constituted an active group of land petitioners and a strong occupying force, which led to the non-violent invasion of private plots from 1932. Their demands would be felt then and again after the election of 1936, when another intense wave of invasions occurred (Ibid.).

<sup>6</sup> The process of *desamortización* aimed to privatize many of the properties held for centuries by the Church, signatories, nobility, and municipal institutions, with a clear economic and political purpose, as Espinosa points out (2007: 17). There were two important stages in the process of *desamortización*, one led by Medizábal in 1836—mainly of Church properties—and by Madoz in 1855—of a civil character. In Extremadura, as Espinosa observes, citing Juan García Pérez, the *desamortización* “meant the transfer of around one and a half a million hectares to private owners” (Espinosa Maestre 2007: 18). Large estates were acquired by a reduced number of owners, who “opted for a profitable and safe agrarian capitalism around pasture as the unit of production” (Ibid.). Such an oligarchic regime persisted until the start of the Second Republic in 1931.

Because there were people who thought that that [land] was not theirs [the landowners’], that it had been bought with fake witnesses and so on... And it brought many, many deaths and politics too. When the Movement broke out, it was people’s land and during the Republic, since the first election I knew, when Azaña’s government won—the first Republican president—the *Casa Carrasco* was knocked to the ground and all the people in the village had their animals there... (Emiliano Bayón Villarejo, Entrerrios, 2012)

Stories depicted the allotment as a grazing land where neighbours could keep their livestock for a small fee paid to the town hall. As Mariano “Conejo” explained to me “whoever had a cow or mare [...] or sheep would put them there because it was the village’s plot”. According to him, most villagers participated in the “knock down of *Casa Carrasco*”—as he referred to it. It seems that during the Second Republic neighbours enjoyed *Casa Carrasco* as a common property until, as Emiliano implied above, the “Movement” (Francoist uprising) broke out. It was in those years, Mariano also claimed, when “right-wing lawyers and public notaries appropriated the land”, dividing it among a few well-to-do neighbours from Puebla. It is also not clear from my interviews and notes what the direct relation was between this widely-observed event and the executions of the men in the mass grave (e.g. who participated and were involved in the occupation and eviction of the land). Most of these narratives were broken, for temporal distance contravened some of these witnesses’ mnemonic recollection—this was also often acknowledged by second generation kin, who recognised the discontinuities in some elder’s narratives. It was apparent that the repressive acts recalled in Puebla were set against this background of land and political disputes; however, there was no trace of these events in the municipal archive, as José explained to me—since most of the archival files prior to 1939 had been burnt or destroyed in an effort on the part of Republican authorities to protect neighbours when the war was lost. José, whose research into the executions led him to reconstruct parts of the pre-war archive, had not been able to find town hall minutes or any notes about the “*knock down*” in any of the regional depositories he consulted. He could only obtain documents about the moment the property was bought in 1942, when the terrain was privatised and later partitioned for renting. The discord over the *Casa Carrasco* would remain enigmatic and only present in the memory of elders and younger generations who had learnt faint details about the expropriation.

Working with some of these firsthand oral histories often entailed piecing together distinct incidents in order to understand the nature of the killings. For instance, Emiliano also thought these deaths were an act of retaliation for the detention and assassination of 37 right-wing neighbours in Puebla in 1937. One could infer from his words that the issue of ownership over the plot also triggered the killings perpetrated by the left at the beginning of the war: “they should have not killed them, there was no reason for it, it all happened because of the *Casa Carrasco*... because others said they [landowners] took things that were not theirs” (Emiliano Bayón Villarejo, Entrerríos, 2012). Elders’ stories described how some left-wing villagers had gathered inside the church to elaborate a list of right-wing counterparts and vote on whether they should be killed. According to Emiliano, when the power shifted to Francoist authorities after the war, right-wing neighbours and those who then supported the new regime arrested and killed most of the men who were in the mass graves in an act of revenge. This cause-and-effect relation remains fuzzy. Nonetheless, the connection that people make between both murders elucidate how, for some, speaking about the killings of those in the grave meant evoking these other dead—whose pervasiveness was manifested in the way they had been rehashed through these narratives and materialised through the carved names imprinted and commemorated at the bottom the Cross of the Fallen, next to the church’s courtyard, since the postwar period.



Image 20. Cross of the Fallen, Puebla de Alcocer.

Some stories had survived in people's imagination for the fascination they awakened within the community, turning some of their protagonists into referents of narratives of Republican loss in Puebla. A case in point is the figure of Esperanza Muga's uncle, Eugenio Muga Ruiz, whose role as town mayor during the years of the war was widely invoked in accounts given by neighbours but also family relatives. Executed by firing squad after a court martial celebrated in Mérida in 1940, some elders spoke of Muga as a revolutionary man, who helped to spread socialist ideas in nearby villages and around the province—people like Muga, as Sánchez Marroyo (1990) has observed, were key in the expansion of the socialist movement in the region. Some elders' narratives identified the town mayor as the instigator of the killings of the right-wing detainees in 1937, ascertaining that the remorseless treatment he and his relatives received after the war ended was a consequence of his

mandate as socialist town leader. His life and death story were haunting for the extreme violence he and his family members endured. When Muga was arrested in the village in the aftermath of the conflict, he was jailed and beaten before being taken to Mérida to be prosecuted. Three other members of the Muga family, namely his father Rafael and two other brothers, Rafael and Vicente, were killed during the same period and buried in the trenches of *Bodegones*. Muga's biography was entangled with his family's painful fate, often retold by visitors who confronted the grave and the potential remains of the three men it contained.

At the mass grave, people depicted the moment when, after the execution, one of the brothers, Vicente—the person Mariano “Conejo” would recognise inside the mass grave days after the execution—, still alive, called for his father (“father, father!”), attracting the attention of the perpetrators, who returned to “finished them off”—as Consuelo and her husband Antonio recount in the video. The Muga's history of violence also evoked other death stories. One of the most frequently recited accounts was that connected to Muga's partner, Maria Quiteria, with whom Muga had a child. Nearly every visitor that came to the site repeated, in the same sequential order, the details of her ghastly death. The story of Maria Quiteria was known across generations, exposing the affective potency of these postwar violent episodes in the articulation of a social history of suffering in the village. As most versions agreed, Maria Quiteria was also taken to prison at the end of the war, where she waited to obtain the endorsement of a right-wing family friend, which would grant her release. According to neighbours, the night before her reprieve arrived, her killer—knowing her acquittal was under way—, took her out of prison to execute her. As villagers explained, three right-wing neighbours from the village led her to the cemetery accompanied by members of the military.

The accounts I collected all described how she ran around the cemetery trying to evade her captors, screaming, as the military fired gunshots into the air. When she was seized, it was the neighbour who had urged her execution, a man brought up with her as a half-brother—they had both been fed with Maria Quiteria's mother's milk when they were born—, who shot and hurriedly buried her in the cemetery. Some retold her last words to her killer as he stained his shirt with her blood: “that blood

will be with you forever”. Others summoned the image of her dead body half-buried, with her long hair still visible through the earth. The image of her decayed corpse contrasted deeply with the beginning of these accounts, which usually emphasised how beautiful and loved she was. Fragments of the story repeatedly asserted the pervading effect of the perverse on people’s mnemonic imagination. The reasons for her killing were, as in many other cases, still a contested issue: some said she had been murdered because she embroidered the Republican flag; others because her half-brother was in love with her, but as she did not return his feelings, he killed her out of jealousy; most neighbours acknowledged, however, that her death was prompted by her relationship with Muga and linked to his political activity.

In the testimony of Esperanza Muga, the daughter of Eugenio Muga’s brother, Rafael, she attributed her family’s adversity first of all to the envy others felt of her family’s prosperity before the war—highlighting her grandfathers’ blooming tobacco shop or her uncles’ access to education. Nonetheless, later in our conversation, Esperanza recognised that her father’s death was directly connected to the role her uncle had as the socialist town mayor of Puebla de Alcocer during the war. She mentioned on several occasions that the family did not go into exile in France since they didn’t think anything would happen to them, for it was only Eugenio who held a political position. Ascribing the motive for her family’s killing to material envy or the political ideology of her uncle resembled a move to depoliticise—whether consciously or unconsciously—her kin’s past, as authors like Leyla Renshaw (2011) have argued occurred in other Spanish contexts. Indeed, this obscurity around Esperanza’s father’s political identity could be interpreted as a consequence of a postwar reality where Republican political ideals became hazardous and harshly punished. It could also be understood as the result of the family’s silence around some aspects of her father’s death. Esperanza’s frail memories stood in contrast to the image of Image 18, where her father reads the paper on the doorstep of the branch of UGT in the village, surrounded by other trade unionists.

The stories collected in Puebla during the exhumation spoke of the way in which living memories from first generations and learnt accounts from younger generations were turned into a form of data, in order to gain historical “depth” with regard to the executions. Andrew Lass (1994) has pointed out in his study about the making of history in Czechoslovakia after the events of 17<sup>th</sup> November 1989 (or the “Velvet Revolution”) how individual memory became an important element in the creation of collective representations of the event. In so doing, Lass argues, individual actors became active historical agents, who through lived personal narratives and the appropriation of others’ recollections (e.g. in memoirs and other cultural products) crafted formalised histories. Indeed in Puebla, relatives and villagers’ life histories came to be active traces in the composition of the temporal sequence of the killings. In the process, however, and as Lass also observes in an indirect manner, these narratives also reasserted specific political positions and opened a common ideological bond that some children and grandchildren felt with their kin and other personalities of the village. Some, like Esperanza, expressed this subtly, for example when she hinted at her unconditional voting for the socialist party over the years. Others purposely established a genealogical link with their relatives’ socialist ideology, as something that “runs in the family” or that they were born with. For many, ideology was congenital, accentuating the commonalities between kin not only through the physical attributes that the scientific praxis sought in the formulation of a positive identification but also through a sense of a shared morality and worldview.

On some occasions, this continuity between past and present identities was accentuated when discussing the consequences of the conflict, for instance when it was pointed out that “*we* also killed people!”—assimilating a timeless political connection. In this regard, these men’s political identities were also connected to the profound antagonisms that, still in 2012, existed between right- and left-wing neighbours and which many neighbours talked about at the exhumation. The at-times cautious or more explicit commitment to a socialist ideology on the part of relatives made these corpses very much part of the village’s socio-political present. Ideological connections between present and past generations were often claimed on the basis of blood kinship, as something inherited and passed on. This provided the mass grave and its exhumation with a sacred character—just as it had acquired for the

*political family* of activists in Castuera. In both scenarios, the exhumation and the stories shared connected the living and the dead across a temporal divide (Cruikshank 1998; Fabian 1983).

In the context of Puebla, familial and neighbourly stories elucidated the way in which these deaths had secretly lived on in private transmission between generations. The collective imagination formed about the killings, through interaction between local stories and archaeological evidence, was fraught with particular uncertainties over the murders and their mediation—as archaeological reasoning entered the social history of the village. The act of retelling the past aided archaeologists in understanding the story of these deaths, but also helped them to contextualise, in relation to other histories and archival records, the intricacies of the executions in *Bodegones*. The unearthing of the mortal remains, however, was also marked by the way in which the dead bodies had haunted generations after the war and until the exhumation. The production of historical knowledge through the practice of exhumation is deeply imbued with the subjective experience of these deaths and the trauma of different generations. To study these forms of history-making is to examine their emotional, sensual, and emotive worlds, which are forged by facts about the haunting violence of the killings and the pain and suffering they provoked. The story of death and disappearance in Puebla or Castuera is not solely contained in the past of the executions but expands into the lives and histories of the living, eliciting the affective strength of these deaths in the shaping of collective and individual experiences of violence.

## Chapter 5

### The Affective Life of Violence

In the context of the exhumations of Castuera and Puebla de Alcocer, one could say that in order to understand the murders of those in the mass graves and the impact of those murders on people's lives and identities, one needs to transgress the space of the mass burial and follow the trail of these deaths into the stories of postwar repression and familial mourning that were articulated at each excavation site. In his famous work *The Order Has Been Carried Out*, Alessandro Portelli (2003) sets out to investigate the massacre of the Fosse Ardeatine in Rome, where Nazi forces killed over three hundred Italian prisoners, presumably in retaliation for each of the German soldiers who died as a result of a partisan bomb planted in via Rasella (Rome) in 1944. In the book, Portelli explains the need to contest the nature of this story as a "single, self-enclosed event" (Ibid: 12). His purpose then becomes that of expanding the rigid boundaries—the fixed beginning and end—that the story of Fosse Ardeatine acquired in its different popular and official versions, in order to understand the event in connection to the broader spectrum of circumstances that surrounded both mass killings from a historical viewpoint. As in case of Fosse Ardeatine, the story of the killings in Castuera and Puebla did not start and end with these men's executions. In both scenarios archival and oral narratives about the deaths hinted at a previous context to which the killings needed to be related, but also to a later time in which these stories and their repercussions remained latent in each locality.

In the case of Castuera, the most immediate context was provided by the events surrounding the end of the war and the management of prisoners through the emerging military justice and detention system near the disintegrated front of Extremadura. In Puebla, the killings have to be understood in the context of the local confrontations where these *sacas* or executions took place—also at the end of the war. The encounter with the mass grave by those of later generations, especially the children of the defeated, prompted other types of vivid reminiscence, marked by the absence of these relatives in the family and by a history of starvation, poverty, discrimination, and presumed solidarity in Franco's Spain. Moreover, these

experiences of familial absence provided a context for the traumatic historical search that many relatives have carried out in recent years and which, ultimately, gave a strong personal meaning to the exhumation practice. The accounts of families that could not find the bodies of their relatives in Castuera and the life histories shared in Puebla evidenced the haunting and affective afterlife (Gordon 1997; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Das 2007; Hirsch 2012) of these mass and individual killings in familial relations, in each village's social politics, and in the mournful experience of the relatives of the defeated over time, from the postwar to the moment of the exhumation and beyond.

### *The Trails of the Dead in Postwar Memories*

For the archaeologists, the compilation of stories about the postwar period was again in line with the project's aim, and thus with Laura Muñoz's approach to the study of the mass grave: taken not in isolation but as an element that was part of the wider repressive Francoist apparatus, which extended into the postwar period. Stories of postwar repression shared at both sites blurred the established ending that the event received in many narratives—among them, those from Francoist historians—which have presented these killings as an occurrence that did not transcend the war. The harsh reality of the postwar period, however, was a widely cited issue in the accounts provided by many family members I interviewed. Indeed, conversing with relatives made one aware of the difficulties most had in describing how their kin had been killed. As Chapters 3 and 4 have shown, most of the narratives from the direct descendants of those who disappeared or were executed evidenced how time, secrecy, and fear around the telling of these events had dispersed details about these brutal deaths over generations. In contrast, the subject of the postwar period was vividly invoked as a moment of extreme suffering and endurance, whose experience was crucial in the shaping of the subjectivities of those who survived.

Certainly, during interviews, people would prefer to draw from personal stories, which delved into the quotidian character of the postwar period, associating hardship with the absence of their dead kin and the decrepit conditions in which the war left their households. These narratives emphasised the effects of war violence, especially disappearance and death, over these families' futures. They elucidated the

way in which the living, as Veena Das (1996: 88) has pointed out about the lives of sexually abused women in India, “build a world that he or she can inhabit” in the aftermath of violence. In a situation in which neighbours who had supported the legitimacy of the Second Republic had to coexist with those who backed the uprising and Francoist regime after the conflict, people’s everyday lives became marked by the onerous nature of these relations and the pressure exerted over the lives of those connected to the Republican past. Violence, recalling Das (2007) again, descended into their ordinary lives, leading to decades of hardship. According to many accounts, in such conditions life became more strenuous and unbearable than death when the conflict ended. This, as the great-granddaughter of a woman who was imprisoned for 14 years explained to me in Puebla de Alcocer, was especially the case for women in Puebla, for most of those killed in the village were men. As Luisa Cabanillas Bayón, a 74 years old woman, also from Puebla, whose father was killed and mother sentenced to 30 years and a day in prison after the war, explained in an interview:

My mother used to say: “the years I spent with your father were the happiest”. She could not feed us, five girls, sometimes... When she was released from jail, I heard her say on more than one occasion: “How comfortably you rest Luis, you got two shots and everything ended for you, but I...” (Luisa Cabanillas Bayón, Puebla, August 2012)

The words of Luisa’s mother resonated with the postwar experience of many other families I met in Puebla and elsewhere in Extremadura.<sup>1</sup> Portelli (2003: 9) has also stressed the role that women have played “in surviving and remembering” experiences such as the massacre of the Fosse Ardeatine. In Puebla and Castuera, women’s narratives retold the history of a struggle for continuity in which the reforming mission of the Francoist authorities politically contained the lives of these widows and their offspring in the public realm. Luisa’s story, for instance, was representative of the punishment that some wives and daughters of socialist men killed at the end of the conflict underwent in different prisons around the country.

---

<sup>1</sup> At a later exhumation, in the village of Fregenal de la Sierra in September 2012, Fernando Brazo, one of the men whose father had been buried in the mass grave in the cemetery of the village, poignantly said to us in an interview: “Those who were killed at least died, but the ones who stayed [mainly referring to his mother] remained dead whilst still alive” (Fernando Brazo, Fregenal de la Sierra, 2012).

Luisa's mother, Presentación Bayón Villarejo, had been married to Luis Cabanillas Herrera, who was trialled by court-martial and killed in Badajoz in 1940. Presenta, as people knew her, was arrested in 1939 and jailed with her sister Dolores, Luis's sister Agustina—Pablo Trenado's mother—and other fellow female neighbours, first in Puebla and later, after their military trial, in other prisons in cities like Durango and Saturrarán (Basque Country). As happened to many women, Presenta learnt about her husband's execution in prison. As an infant, Luisa grew up with Presenta in prison, staying with her until she was four years old. Her cousin Pepa was also with her aunt Agustina. When Luisa visited the exhumation site she still remembered those years vividly and even sang, next to the mass grave, at the moment of the exhumation, the songs of longing the inmates used to intone in Durango and Saturrarán. She recalled living in prison and going to the prison school, which was run by nuns, the poor conditions and malnutrition inmates sustained, and the threat of being given to another family for adoption—her cousin Pepa was nearly taken away, she remembered, as nuns tried to convince Pepa's mother she would be happier with a more affluent family in the Basque Country. Agustina was eventually released after four years, and Presenta was released after she completed the first eight years of her thirty-year sentence. The girls were sent back home earlier. Images of the prison never escaped Luisa's memory, who still remembered its rooms and corridors, the bedside table where her mother kept her father's letters, and the bridge they crossed to reach the sea.



Image 21. Female Prison, Saturrarán. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

When Luisa spoke about her own return to Puebla without her mother, aged four, she summoned the image of her poverty-stricken family. Whilst their mother was in jail, her grandmother and two of her aunts looked after Luisa and her four sisters. From an early age, she remembered strongly the image of two of her sisters, who lived with one of her aunts, who had a shaven head, were barefoot and only wearing a shirt, weakened by the famine that devastated the family: “if they were sent to the fountain to get water, they couldn’t: they fell because they could not walk!” In the postwar-related stories people told, hunger was a recurrent theme and temporal marker—stories often recalled the “years of famine”, 1941 being the most taxing moment—which brought out information about the conditions in which the war left the region and the subsistence economy that gradually emerged in Puebla and other villages. Reflecting on time and subjectivity in *Life and Words*, Veena Das (2007: 95–107) discusses how people’s narratives of suffering reveal a perception of time that is enmeshed with their personal experience of collective and individual violence. This phenomenal time, which ultimately defines the affective qualities of past events in the present, often brings specific moments into sharp relief whilst portraying broader accounts of daily struggle. The reference to hunger in Puebla, then, should be understood as a continuing experience, which marked people’s lives and was deeply entangled with other forms of poverty, exclusion, expropriation and inequality that deeply affected Republicans—“widows, orphans, those exiled and the victims of repression and their families” (Agustí and Mir 2005: 75).

Many authors have attributed the dramatic situation in the country in those years to the lack of provisions (Molinero and Ysás 2003; Agustí, Gelonch and Mir 2005). Some have observed that the depuration of many workers considered hostile to the regime during the war, their dismissal for previous affiliations in the postwar period, or the extreme salary reductions during the instauration of the Francoist regime led to the “extraordinary deterioration of wage earner’s daily lives [...] in a climate of general dearth” (Molinero and Ysás 2003). José’s father, for instance, remembered working just for food during those years of famine. Moreover, the regime’s rationing system, approved in 1939, was highly deficient, giving place to a soon-established and long-lasting black market (Ibid.). Molinero and Ysás (2003: 17) have further argued that the New Regime chose to enforce these supply policies in

line with its autarkic project, which also enabled it to gain social control over the population. In Puebla, José Sánchez-Paniagua's mother-in-law, who often visited the exhumation, explained how she remembered begging, shoeless, for food on people's doorsteps when she was still an infant. This experience has also been recalled by Ángel Sayabera in Castuera, when, after his parents and brothers disappeared, he begged with his blind grandfather. Everyone I interviewed spoke about how people went to the grazing lands and valleys located next to villages to pick up thistle, which was then peeled and cooked in water, or how others ate fried potato peels. On many occasions, people uttered their pain through these stories of scarcity and hunger, making the past feel very present (Das 2007). They often wondered if their lives might have been different if their kin had not been killed.

For many, these circumstances were aggravated, as some have observed (Renshaw 2011), by the looting and theft of belongings and property of Republican families at the end of the war. These forms of expropriation that many identified in their accounts had been firstly informally carried out and later legislated through the *Ley de Responsabilidades Políticas* (Law of Political Responsibilities), as punishment for their "political crimes" (Renshaw 2011: 99). In Castuera, Maria Ormeño and Aurora Navas recalled how their families' houses were seized and confiscated, retelling how fellow residents of the village had taken and distributed their possessions amongst a few. As pointed out also by other life histories, Maria remembered seeing her family's clothes and furniture in other people's houses. In our interview she remembered how people could not usually claim these items back, though her mother, with the help of a neighbour from a well-to-do family, managed to recuperate her double bed, owned by a man who had acquired it after its expropriation. According to her, when her mother went to reclaim the item a second time—after the man had refused to give it to her on the first occasion—she told him that, if he did not like to own things that belonged to "reds", he should hand the bed back to her, for she was one. Talking about the loss of these material possessions was also a way of articulating the complex negotiation of one's previous being and identity in the new political milieu. Her mother's desperation and sense of urgency in recovering the bed for her household, where five members of the family shared one bed, prompted this moment of political labelling and differentiation. Nonetheless, Maria also recalled the impossibility of claiming other belongings imbued with

memories of a pre-war lifetime, when as a young adult she walked on the street where her old house stood, and looked at, it regretting:

I was born there and lived there for three or four years, my parents got married in that house [...] You could not say that. (Maria Ormeño, Castuera, 2011)

In the stories of second and third generations these episodes of *miseria* (misery)—as people often referred to them—also mingled with expressions of aid and cooperation among some neighbours, as Maria’s case suggests. In Puebla, when grandchildren from third generations like Begoña and Jacinto Velasco reflected on their grandmother’s life without their grandfather Pelayo, they remarked how the memories they had were associated with her continuous “battle for survival”. Begoña explained that in the first years after the conflict, their family, as many others, sought shelter in some of their closest neighbours, especially those who lived on the same street and were in a similar situation. Since they did not have much to share, Begoña added, “they fed their spirit rather than their hunger” (Begoña Velasco, Puebla, 2012). The story of Begoña’s grandmother invoked reciprocity gestures through the lack of goods and food, uniting some in the community around their experiences of dearth. Other stories, however, described the development of informal networks of favours and exchanges among neighbours, embedded in the asymmetry of the social relations that emerged between victors and the defeated after the war.

In Puebla and Castuera, seemingly selfless acts of patronage and other forms of social advocacy co-habited in the social realm with state practices that aimed to alleviate the effects of poverty and starvation. In connection to this institutional aid, many authors have discussed how new forms of social assistance that emerged as a consequence of the statist economic project—which were backed by the State and the Church (i.e. *Auxilio Social* and *Acción Católica*)—tapped into these collectives, providing help but also demanding an ideological commitment to Franco’s national-syndicalist (Giménez Muñoz 2009) and national-catholic cause and its “re-christianizing activity” (Montero García 2005: 117). Other types of aid, as some historians like Julián Chaves (2005) have observed, such as the so-called *socorros* or limited maintenance subsidies given to prisoners throughout the war were used, at some points, as propaganda to prove the benevolence of the New Regime towards the

defeated. The documents shown below, compiled during José Sánchez-Paniagua's research into Puebla's municipal archive, exemplify these forms of institutionalised assistance given by the Civil Government of the province to those arrested in the village. The list includes neighbours' names—among them Agustina and Luis Cabanillas Herrera, Luisa's father and aunt—and an amount in old *pesetas* next to each person's details for collection. The back of the document shows the signatures of those listed, who collected their contribution.

AYUNTAMIENTO DE PUEBLA DE ALCOCER		PROVINCIA DE BADAJOZ.	
NOMINA de los socorros devengados por los detenidos en este Deposito Municipal, durante el mes de Octubre de 1.939, para su abono correspondiente a los interesados.			
NOMBRES DEL DETENIDO.	Socorros.	Precio.	TOTAL PESETAS
1 Felix Cabanillas Donoso.	31	1-15	35-65
2 Balbino León Luengo.	31		35-65
3 Vicente Cabanillas López.	31		35-65
4 Luis Gutiérrez Sánchez.	23		25-45
5 Mariano Prieto Luengo.	31		35-65
6 Enrique Serrano Martínez.	31		35-65
7 Juan Mora Sánchez.	31		35-65
8 Mariano Muñoz Gutierrez.	31		35-65
9 Pablo García Luengo.	31		35-65
10 Gratiano San Segundo Muñoz.	23		25-45
11 Felix Merino Gutierrez.	31		35-65
12 Cándido González Caja.	23		25-45
13 Pedro Prieto Murillo.	31		35-65
14 Fidel Ramírez Ruiz.	23		25-45
15 Francisco Cerrato Sánchez.	31		35-65
16 Felix Claudio Osmazo.	31		35-65
17 Victorio Sánchez Cabanillas.	31		35-65
18 José Maoroño Malina.	31		35-65
19 Felix Cabanillas Herrera.	31		35-65
20 José Torres Cerrato.	23		25-45
21 Juan Cabanillas Herrera.	31		35-65
22 Juan Antonio Luengo Sosa.	31		35-65
23 Ignacio Sanchez Campos.	31		35-65
24 Eugenio Murillo Sanchez.	31		35-65
25 Elias Pastor Pedrosa.	31		35-65
26 Alejandro Mora Sanchez.	31		35-65
27 Jacinto García Tamurejo.	31		35-65
28 Marcelino Córdoba Moreno.	31		35-65
29 José Paniagua Lloro.	31		35-65
30 Mariano García, Ursa.	31		35-65
31 Felix Gomez Jaroso.	31		35-65
32 Luis Cabanillas Gutierrez.	31		35-65
33 Eugenio Luengo Casatejada.	31		35-65
34 Camilo Sanchez Paniagua.	31		35-65
35 Epifanio Sanchez Sanchez.	31		35-65
36 Adres Sanchez Sanchez.	31		35-65
37 Julio Trenado Luengo.	31		35-65
38 Juan Delgado Hidalgo.	31		35-65
39 Angel Gutierrez Marin.	31		35-65
40 Felipa Murillo Casatejada.	31		35-65
41 Agustina Cabanillas Herrera.	23		25-45
42 Luis Marin Garcia.	31		35-65
43 Emilio Sanchez Corvillo.	31		35-65
44 Marcelino Millan Moreno.	31		35-65
45 Antonio Solis Bagace.	31		35-65
46 Maria Sanchez Rodriguez.	23		25-45
47 Mariano Pérez Trenado.	31		35-65
48 Victor Cabanillas Donoso.	31		35-65
49 Ruperto Cerezo Alcobendas.	31		35-65
50 Alejandro Corvillo Banamonde.	31		35-65
Suma y sigue.	1.486.		1.708-90

*Enquina Atarilla*  
*on Cabanillas*  
*Juan Antonio Luengo*  
*Luis Cabanillas*  
*Camilo Sanchez*  
*Mariano Garcia*  
*Juan Delgado*  
*Huella dactilar de*  
*Alfonso Gomez*  
*Arlejandro Corvillo*  
*Emilio Sanchez*  
*Victor Cabanillas*  
*Huella dactilar de*  
*Santiago Garcia*  
*Julio Castille*  
*Juan Francisco Pastor*  
*Huella dactilar de*  
*Alfonso Gomez*  
*Pedro Torre*  
*Pedro Garcia*  
*Pedro Atarilla*

Image 22. List of prisoners and *socorros* in Puebla de Alcocer and prisoners' receipt signatures. Courtesy of José Sánchez-Paniagua.

Narratives of survivors also retold informal exchanges that took place between neighbours at local level since the end of the conflict. In the postwar period, according to some accounts, it was mostly those well-to-do families considered to be right-wing, who could provide aid for the families of the defeated, and to prisoners too. For instance, at the end of the war, many prisoners secured their release through a

written endorsement from someone trusted and well regarded by the new authorities in the village—usually from one of these wealthy families in agreement with the new order. Securing this endorsement was key to the release and for them to be able to return to their village of origin—as some, even if freed, were forced to go into exile in neighbouring cities or villages. In Puebla de Alcocer, Presenta, Luisa’s mother, Agustina, and all those who went through jail—others like Emiliano had also been imprisoned in Castuera’s concentration camp at the end of the war—secured this endorsement from people who had been family friends in the past and aligned, after the war, with the winning side of the conflict. However, according to Luisa, this aid was often hindered by the power of others over the lives of Republican families. Luisa often recalled that her mother was the last of the women to be released from Saturrarán, as the endorsement for her acquittal was held in Puebla for years by the local head of Falange. These forms of civil endorsement or *avales* were mentioned in all stories of detention. *Avales* certified the trustworthiness of those considered the enemy, though in many cases—as happened to Ángel Sayabera’s brother in Castuera, killed before his warrant reached him—local and prison authorities neglected them. The contrast between the acts of cooperation between some families and those influenced by the intentions of Francoist authorities and neighbours were always at odds in the subjective experience narrated by those members of the left-wing families who survived. Relationships between neighbours, as in other contexts (Das 2007; Sanford 2003), were constantly negotiated around the communities’ public secrets: the past atrocities committed, betrayals, and ongoing forms of postwar violence and coercion in the community.

When Presenta returned home, Luisa remembered, she had nothing. The same people who secured her discharge also offered her some land on lease to grow cereals. She lived with Luisa’s grandmother and recovered her five daughters whilst she worked her wheat field, made bread, and sold it on the black market (*estraperlo*). Many women I interviewed, who were in the same situation, were eventually given work by some of the village’s wealthiest families or by neighbours within the new regime. Many even worked for those who had denounced their relatives early on. Others, like Aurora Navas’s aunt in Castuera, with whom she grew up, married members from Falange or right-wing men who helped them in the postwar period and

provided an education for their children. Moreover, in numerous cases documented in Puebla, working in life-long positions as maids or as property guards in the countryside, in the case of men, became commonplace. José and Consuelo's grandmother, for instance, worked as a maid for a Francoist teacher called Doña Nati almost until the end of her life. The teacher was recalled in numerous stories for the help she gave to families of socialist neighbours killed at the end of the war.

Esperanza Muga also fondly remembered the figure of Doña Nati, as she became a friend when many discriminated against the family for their political past. In Esperanza's account, Doña Nati's aid was significant, especially after her mother and uncle were arrested on suspicion of collaborating with the anti-francoist guerrilla gathered in the nearby mountains, known in the village as *los de la sierra* (*maquis* or people on the mountains). Allegedly, it was someone from the community who falsely accused and reported them to the police, in an act of rancor. Both mother and uncle spent months in prison. According to Francisco Cobo Romero (2005: 42) the denunciation—or *delación*—of “the enemy or unwanted neighbour” was promoted as a form of civil collaboration with the new authorities. It became common practice, which, as the author highlights, was often moved by pre-war controversies and articulated through trivial accusations (Ibid.). After Eperanza's mother and uncle were taken away, she and her brother stayed with their grandmother, for she was their only relative alive and out of prison. Doña Nati assisted the family and alleviated the children's loss, especially since in the ensuing months the family experienced ongoing harassment from the local Civil Guard after their relatives were detained. Their menacing treatment marked Esperanza's perception of the postwar years:

At night, the three of us slept on the same bed because we were so scared. I slept with my grandmother on the upper part of the bed whilst my brother slept at the bottom. In the middle of the night, they came banging on the door to make us even more frightened. My grandmother said ‘shhh’, so we remained quiet. They banged on the door at night with very loud thwacks... they just wanted to make us all scared! (Esperanza Muga, Puebla, 2012)

Certainly some people connected some of these charitable acts described to me to the kindness and solidarity of the person who performed them. Others seemed to me to be

embedded in the emerging humanitarian expressions of the New Regime that aimed to consolidate its salvation rhetoric. In reminiscing about this postwar reality, humanitarian narratives were mixed with vigorous descriptions of the coercion many endured from other neighbours. Postwar stories of fear, depravation, and familial suffering that many life histories such as Esperanza's depicted gave other meanings to the deaths of the men in the mass graves, verbalising the haunting force of their absence (Das 2007). In Puebla de Alcocer and Castuera these stories, retold at the excavation site and in people's houses, conjured the affective memory of the dead in these village communities during the dictatorship and pointed to the effect of their absent presence on social politics and familial distress. Moreover, the voices of those who experienced the agony and ubiquitous insecurity of the postwar period, found, in the arena of the exhumation, a space from which to finally denounce the identity of those who perpetrated the crimes.

As opposed to other studies such as Renshaw's (2011), which shows how second and third generations never addressed the names of perpetrators at one of the mass graves the author analyses, in contexts such as Puebla—more than in Castuera—, for instance, these names occupied the same space as those of the men executed, with survivors' or those of the neighbours who provided help to left-wing families after the war. The exhumation site provided a certain sense of intimacy in which a form of accountability could be uttered. In Puebla, on repeated occasions, these narratives spoke about the neighbours and military men who accompanied the prisoners to the trenches when they were going to be killed and their behaviour in the aftermath. Many neighbours recounted how, upon returning to the village, the perpetrators celebrated the murders, evoking the popular ritual of the “pig killing”—or *matanza*<sup>2</sup>—whilst they drank and ate in one of the village's bars. Often when recalled, perpetrators were remembered for their role in community affairs, for their wrongdoings, and for the way they died. In these cases, their deaths were explained as if their lurid endings had followed from the bad deeds they committed. For instance, in Puebla, many talked about how one of these men died when a bolt of

---

<sup>2</sup> *La matanza* is popular event in Extremadura where a year-old pig is sacrificed to produce meat for its owners. It is common for those who kill and butcher the animal to get together before the killing in order to eat a hearty breakfast accompanied by alcoholic drinks such as moonshine or liquor—to warm up in the cold winter months.

lightning hit him as he walked around during the annual livestock *fiesta*. In such a way, the lives and fates of victims and perpetrators were continually woven, composing a vision of social contention and its impact on familial and individual existence over time.

Other stories also recounted different forms of persecution, surveillance, and punishment during the postwar years, involving the police, the Civil Guard, and the local authorities. For instance, many endured the constant vigilance of the regime's authorities, though some were oblivious to it. The police and authorities, for instance, monitored Luisa's mother, after she was released from jail, for the entire duration of her original thirty-year prison sentence. Her family, however, only learnt this later on, realising her sentence had come to an end, in 1969—three years after Presenta had passed away. For most surviving relatives, the adversity they underwent prompted them to leave their home villages and migrate to other cities in the country, partly because of the poverty that overcame these rural areas and due to the stigma bestowed upon them by the political past with which they were associated. In the case of Maria Ormeño in Castuera, as she mentions in *War Histories I*, she left the village when she was an adolescent and never came back to live there again. In our interview, she expressed on several occasions how the arduous reality of village life triggered her departure, explaining how she only came back to see the family she left behind. In other cases, many stories told by second and third generation relatives at the exhumation site emphasised the positive treatment that their relatives and families had enjoyed in the village and the fondness they felt for the town. When these experiences were recounted, they starkly contrasted the descriptions that many official files and propaganda conveyed of their Republican ancestors. Many stories willingly or unwittingly reasserted the goodness and integrity of the widows, children, and grandchildren of the defeated, resisting and contesting other Francoist visions. As seen in *War Histories II*, stories such as Luisa's at the end of the piece point to the esteem and love that defined her relationship with others in Puebla's community, for her mother never "passed rancour" onto her offspring. As Luisa further explained to me in an interview:

This village, Puebla the Alcocer, was formed by landowners and then all the poor. I worked for all of them [landowners] and I got along with all of them, but many of

them knew what they had done. Nonetheless every one of them treated my mother really well... if you ask anyone in the village about my mother they would say: 'Presenta, the best woman there is...'. (Luisa Cabanillas Bayón, Puebla, 2012)

Experiences such as Luisa's and Maria's draw out the "burdens and tensions" (Portelli 2003: 13) of the postwar milieu and how the unrealised mourning of those left alive shaped their experience and that of later generations. Postwar stories told by the gravesite and elsewhere evinced how "singular individuals inscribed themselves in a [social] history" (Miñarro and Morandi 2013: 22). Theirs and other stories helped me to discern during fieldwork, as other authors have recognised (Miñarro and Morandi 2013), how guilt, untold pain and shame articulated subjective feelings during the postwar period, forging a culture of trauma, which imbued the relation between survivors, descendants and their communities. Such an underlying grief determined the memory-work of different generations. In more recent years, it has also structured the process of information collection on the part of the children and grandchildren of the defeated about their familial histories. For descendants, the information in archives and oral accounts—and later at the exhumation—embodied the suffering of the dead and the traces of a past fully fathomed or completed. In their inquiry, their experiences of familial transmission shaped the assemblage of personal biographical narratives, in which ancestors' stories were written and such suffering confronted. These acts of searching and writing performed by some relatives were thus suffused with an unrelenting desire to place the defeated, and also themselves, in history.

### *Writing a History of Trauma*

Throughout the time I spent in Extremadura in 2011 and 2012, interviews and informal conversations, especially with second- and third-generation descendants of those who lived the violence of the war, unveiled the different ways in which the past had reached them as part of familial exchanges. Some psychoanalytical studies such as Miñarro and Morandi (2013) have argued that knowledge transmission is essential in the formation of identities within the family nucleus. These authors discuss, inspired by Freud, how transmission in filial relations "operates through identification" (Ibid: 83). Within the family, such processes of identification, which

create affective links between its members, are based on the unconscious appropriation of parental attitudes, behaviours, or emotional traits. In the case of the transmission of traumatic experiences, these authors observe that a lack of words or narratives about the disturbing events of the war gave way to the unconscious appropriation by children of parental pain and suffering.

Many stories I heard retold the way in which parents' distress travelled between generations, impregnating family bonds and making an imprint on children and grandchildren's feelings and knowledge about the past. A man who I met at a commemorative act in Castuera, for instance, once told me that he could feel his father's affliction—caused by his experience as a prisoner in different concentration camps and later in forced labour battalions around the country—because he vividly recalled the endless bitterness (*estaba siempre amargao*) that filled the house when he returned home from his imprisonment. Similarly, at a different commemorative event, another woman recounted to me how distress about the past had always been marked by the times when she asked her father about the war and he, unable to speak about it, closed his fists in anger until he made his hands bleed (*cerraba los puños con fuerza hasta que le sangraban*). People's accounts often pointed to the effects of a perpetuated silence, as well as the explicit ways in which some sentiments were manifested—not only through fragmented narratives but also through gestures and actions that impressed everyday routines.

Trauma moved through transgenerational forms of affective transmission, toying with secrecy and spreading through different genealogies (Cho 2008). In some cases, words would be articulated in incomprehensible parts. In others, expressions of sadness and despair would manifest, as above, through the enactment of pain in a quietened familial space of transmission. This deadened space, in which transmission was hard to articulate and suffering never explicitly uttered, was transformed when many relatives of the defeated began to compile files, stories, images, and writings about their ancestors' war and postwar experiences to create personal archives and produce narratives about their life histories. These activities of collection and recollection were directly entwined with the uncertainty that surrounded their kin's past and with the impossibility of placing their own lives in a historical continuum. As

Marianne Hirsch (2012: 31) has remarked about the search for the past in post-Holocaust generations, these acts and objects are part of “transactive and transferential processes” that not only “transform history into memory, but enable memories to be shared across individuals and generations”. The memory that results from these elaborations, Hirsch argues, are not identical to those from the first generations of survivors, though they resemble “their affective force and its physical effects” (Ibid.).

This historical quest opened other avenues for the experience of a dislodged trauma, as the new information found was enmeshed with the politics of the official archive and the anxieties trapped in the accounts of the war and postwar period, in which the trails of the dead and his or her absence survived. As in the case witnessed in Chapter 2, where the documents that certified the death of José González Barrero disturbed his daughter Libertad due to the inauthentic details found in them about his killing, the process of information gathering carried out by those families that frequented the exhumations in Castuera and Puebla de Alcocer revealed the affective capacity of these sources in the transformation of relatives’ experience of the past. Considering these personal searches into their familial pasts involves the retracing of how and when these stories *returned* to their everyday or how the story of disappearance or death came to be owned by later generations again after a long period of silence. The process of recollection these relatives embarked upon is undoubtedly linked to what Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996) has termed the historical power of trauma. Forged through the latency and abeyance of disturbing or tragic events—in the stillness and cracks of postwar remembrance—a sense of lived and inherited trauma propelled the pursuit and accumulation of clues about a perceived yet unknown troublesome past. In this context, and as the author argues, trauma becomes not so much a symptom of the mind in the aftermath of a distressful occurrence but of history itself, as its belatedness made its experience only possible in relation to “another place and another time” (Caruth 1995: 8).

For the relatives I met in Castuera, for whom the disappearance and death of their kin had been filled with so much perplexity from the start, the assemblage of information threw light on a blurry familial reality and its place in the society of the time. Just as for the children of Holocaust survivors discussed by Hirsch (2012), it

unlocked a process of constant re-imagination of an uncertain past through testimonies and archival materials. In the case of Maria Ormeño's daughter Marielo Gil Ormeño, the last two women to appear in *War Histories I*, discovering new information about the past of her mother's family, as she compellingly described, was "like, suddenly, finding a room in your house you had never seen before" (Marielo Gil Ormeño, Castuera, 2011). In an interview, Marielo explained how throughout her life she had pieced the story of her grandfather, Antonio Ormeño, through the scattered information she had received from her mother when growing up and from the stories she heard as a young adult. Marielo observed that when chatting to her mother the stories she told about her father's disappearance and the events that preceded it were never linear. The atmosphere in the house, she pointed out, was never apt for the telling of some stories, as the widespread silence over these events during the dictatorship, but also the fact that her father was, in her words, "a very right-wing man", conditioned her mother's disposition to speak.

Later on in her life, Marielo started working on a family tree. Her research there would confront her with the serendipitous reality of her mother's family story, which comprised not only the killing of her grandfather but also of three of her grandfather's brothers. After requesting information from civil registries about her relatives' deaths, she learnt that out of the seven brothers registered in her mother's family only some had death certificates. These "anomalies", as she referred to them, made her abandon the idea of the family tree and instead concentrate on a search for information about the relatives who disappeared at the end of the conflict. It was through Marielo's research that the memory of her absent kin returned to the table in conversations held between her and her mother Maria. Her adamant interest led her to contact different historians around the country and in Extremadura through internet forums and sites where names and details about those who died and disappeared are shared between researchers and families. In our interview, she vividly remembered the moment when she found a historian who held information about one of Maria's disappeared uncles, José Ormeño—who was allegedly Castuera's town mayor from 1937—and what she felt when, at the same time, she realised that, after much searching, no information remained about her grandfather's death:

When I started researching, I didn't know where to start. I hardly knew anything about the Civil War. I only had a general knowledge of it. Then, the internet became everything. I searched and found a historians' forum. In a similar way as when you throw a coin into the air, I sent an email to the list asking: 'Does anyone know José Ormeño?' I thought no one would answer. It feels unbelievable to me now... The next day when I opened my email I had a message that read: 'I have information about José Ormeño'. I looked at the subject of the email for a minute, without having the courage to open it. I felt so emotional that I didn't dare to open it. When I finally did, this man tells me that he is a historian writing a book at the time called the *Column of Death [La Columna de la Muerte]* and that in his files the name of José Ormeño appeared together with that of his brothers... I wrote back to him and he provided me with information about where they had been imprisoned, their military death sentences... He gave me the dates when they were executed and where they were buried and again, I encountered the disappointing reality that there [was] no information about the whereabouts of my grandfather" (Marielo Gil Ormeño, Castuera, 2011).

The historian who provided her with these documents was Francisco Espinosa Maestre, a researcher who has broadly written about the development of the war in the province of Badajoz. When Marielo read the historian's message aloud to her mother, she said Maria "burst into tears as if her uncles had been killed that very moment" (Marielo Gil Ormeño, Castuera, 2011). Maria had never known details about the trial or executions of her uncles in the towns of Mérida and Almendralejo. She had encountered these unfamiliar events for the first time, after listening to the information extracted from the official archive that the historian had provided her daughter. Such an archival retrieval created a dreadful image of their execution never envisaged before through the pronouncements of their trial files. With the documents that the historian had passed on to Marielo, she was then able to further structure the family's story and ask her mother concrete questions about those aspects that remained doubtful. Indeed, the public images and narratives of the official files became, through the work of the historian, mediators of "intimate familial transmission" (Hirsch 2012: 30).

Many of these documents stood in stark contract to her mother's testimony and to other files that the historian Antonio López from Castuera provided her—such

as the *avales* or endorsements her uncle José Ormeño received, whilst in jail, from right-wing neighbours he had saved from imprisonment and death during his time as town mayor at the beginning of the war. The documents from her uncles' court-martials and their sentences had, according to Marielo—and as Candela Chaves, the researcher from PREMHEX, once warned me—to be carefully examined. When Marielo spoke about the papers recovered from José Ormeño's trial, for instance, there was apprehension in her description of the information they contained. The accusations that the document comprised, she assured me, were general and customary, as shown in other court-martial sentences she had been able to review. Among other crimes, many people like her uncle were accused of “military rebellion”, which to her made his indictment tenuous and premeditated. For Marielo, his accusation was highly representative of the aberrant character of these procedures and their equivocal nature. In his trial, she added, the public prosecutor rejected the civil endorsements presented by his defence, obliterating any chance of his being acquitted. For Maria's daughter, these processes were a “farce”, which made the reading of these papers ultimately, in her words, “depressing”.

Such documents helped, as Carolyn Steedman (2008) has argued evoking Ricoeur, to narrativize “absence into presence, and into time” in familial chronicles, just as historians materialised their information as part of a concrete social context and chronology. Their fraudulent kind triggered an analysis in conjunction with other sources, as Marielo's conversations with her mother elucidate, and also in relation to other materials present in the insidious archive. In their contact with archival sources, some families learnt to discern the language of the dictatorial regime and the contradictions held within its pages. Nonetheless, their search and their reading were challenging and unsettling. Just as the fever in the archive, in Derrida's terms, manifested itself in the exploration of files—but also in the practice of searching, attending, and living in the archive—for the professional historian (Steedman 2001), the quests initiated by these families led them to develop a similar relation to the source, in which such *mal d'archive* (Derrida 1999) was magnified through the effects of their personal grief. Entering the imagined space of the official archive and confronting its authority required an ability to figure out and decode Francoist commandments but also a strong will to face them. These documents had come into

family's archives, like Maria and Marielo's, shaping a new historical consciousness and a retelling of familial stories of loss.

In the case of Ángel Sayabera in Castuera, for instance, files that documented the death certificates of his mother, father, and two brothers, whose deaths were inscribed in 1943, and which stated they died as a result of a “*clash against the public force*”, coexisted with the array of additional documentation he had collected and written over the years. During our interview, Ángel spoke about the documents: he led us through the files of the civil registry provided by historian Antonio López; through his father's writing for the regional communist newspaper *Extremadura Roja* which he had recovered; through the last letter his father sent to his brother from Castuera's concentration camp (see *War Histories I* and Chapter 3); and through the diversity of letters and pages Ángel himself had written (see Image 23 and Image 24). The latter formed a diary that recorded and retold the family's birth dates, details about their disappearances, and also the way they died. Other writings accounted for his present frustrations and demands for public acknowledgement of stories like his. Among Ángel's writings there were tales “to future generations” that aimed to tell, “the truth about what happened in the past”—as it was expressed in one of the documents. There were also letters addressed to local political representatives, such as the previous socialist town mayor in Castuera, and letters to the central government demanding the recognition of victims of Francoism. Ángel's compositions elicited his need to express himself, in his words, in a “space where one can talk again”, provided by the recent of historical memory movement. The intensive assortment and production of documents, in Ángel's case, resembles the infinite search of Sebald's Austerlitz for the traces of his mother. As Hirsch (2012: 44–45) describes, Sebald's character becomes fixated with a need to authenticate the presence of his mother at the concentration camp of Terezín, where the Nazis deported her, only to encounter blurry and fuzzy images of her persona. Documents, images and other remnants provide for Ángel, as for Austerlitz, a space of “projection, approximation and affiliation”, which has retained the aura of their relatives (Ibid.).

Documents from the official archive travelled to the sphere of the domestic, where they interlaced with familial re-interpretations of their official narratives. Their content became part of a different private archive that aimed to evince the existence

of relatives' disappeared ancestors and contest the uncertainty of the state files. In the case of Aurora Navas Morillo from Castuera, who only found out full details about her mother Matilde's death in 2002 ("until 2002 she was my great unknown"), only three files remained with information about her kin in state repositories. Aurora had been able to locate, with the aid of historians and members of the administration, her birth and death certificate and Matilde's Teacher Purge File or *Expediente de Depuración*—with which she was dismissed from her position as a teacher in the town of Daimiel (Castilla La-Mancha). In an interview, Aurora explained to Laura Muñoz Encinar and I how the files she possessed clearly revealed, in her words, "the pantomime" of the administration at the time. When showing some of these documents to us, she carefully described the way in which her mother's death certificate and her Teacher Purge File—provided to her in this case by historian Julián Chaves Palacios—were fraught with discrepancies and contradicting indictments, making the search for information about her mother's fate futile and asserting her distrust in these sources. The Teacher Purge File, signed on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1939, cleared Matilde and set her free from any charges. Upon returning to Castuera however, she was captured, incarcerated, and killed. Her deferred death certificate—made in 1946—establishes the date of her death on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1939, days before she had in fact signed her purge file in a different location. Against the perverse logic behind these antithetical inscriptions, other written papers and tokens in Aurora's collection constructed the trails of a counter-memory in her familial archive.

Examples of these counter-memories are the biographical notes Aurora read aloud for us at the beginning of the interview. In them Aurora had written the story of her father Antonio Navas, who had to go into exile due to his significant role in the socialist party PSOE and the trade union UGT. To craft her father's history, Aurora drew on files, provided by Antonio López, which included her father's correspondence with members of the party whilst in exile. In the story she connected her mother to his life, creating a familial memory of Matilde as a mother, wife, and exemplary teacher. Just like Ángel, Aurora assured us that she wrote her father's biography for her grandchildren, so they could know who their great-grandfather and great-grandmother were. In such a way, the text stood as an emerging space for future transmission, elaborated in a third space, between the official archive and other

familial remnants. In the absence of reliable documents about her mother’s death, stories held in archival records would also stand in contrast with the memories and



Image 23. Ángel’s father’s writings: “Women and War”, published in *Extremadura Roja*.

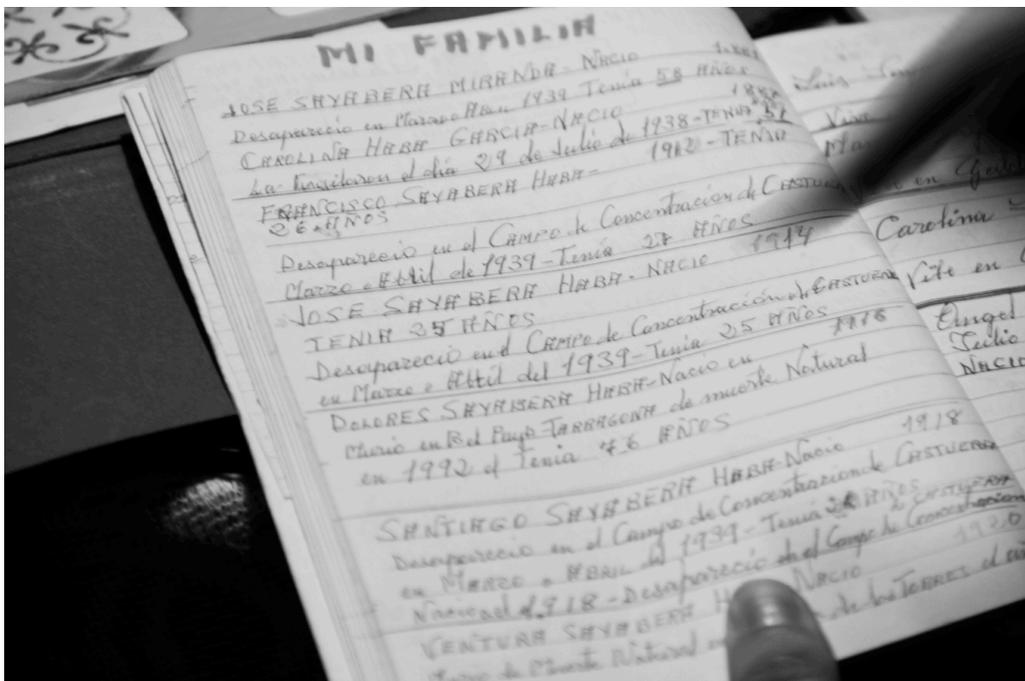


Image 24. Ángel’s writing “Mi Familia” (My Family) where family birth and death dates are recorded, as well as causes of disappearance and death.

anecdotes shared in the inwardness of the home, where Aurora lived with her mother's sisters. The creation of these counter images, as anthropologists like Antoinette Burton (2003) have pointed out, turned the house into a space for history making throughout the years and in particular from the moment Aurora began her investigation into her mother's killing. The house was not only felt as a safe space to talk and intimately remember—especially after years of Francoist containment—but also a space in which recollection could be crafted through the things that belonged to the deceased. In relation to the official file and their portrayal of Matilde's life and death, other objects and images in the house evoked her mother's presence and personality, thus confirming, in Aurora's words, that she *existed*. Her calligraphy books, the poems she read, and the images Aurora had managed to salvage helped her to construct a memory of her mother in which she believed and cherished. For Aurora many of these things connected her to Matilde and her feelings, to the person she was. As she told us before reading aloud one of her mother's favourite poems by Heinrich Heine:

I love reading this poem because my mother read it, because she also held the book like you and I are holding it now. There are so few things she touched that I can now touch. (Aurora Navas Morillo, Castuera, 2011)

Much of the writing, reading, and collecting with which families engage reclaims the memory of the deceased in an exercise of restoration—in conscious and unconscious ways. Much of the knowledge created in so doing relies not only on what is recorded or said in archives and oral narratives but also on the sensual and affective experience of these sources, on how they *feel*. The trail of the dead haunts the family archive, giving form to a reading of the past mutually constituted by the uncomfortable information in state files and involvement with other sources that evoke a trustworthy and emotive image of the deceased. The emotional engagement with the past generated through the research and recording of these stories determined contemporary representations of the defeated in familial but also social settings. In other cases, such intimate processes of collection and recollection transcended the realm of the family, making these explorations into the past part of a social project.

In Puebla de Alcocer, for instance, the research carried out by José Sánchez-Paniagua into the executions gave him motivation to assemble his family's story and create a compilation of the community's history. As already mentioned in Chapter 4, when José set out to investigate the killings, he aimed to discern, through the civil registry, the identities of all those buried with his grandfather. With time, however, his work led him to collect other documents, which spoke of the community as a whole and the intricate political and social relations that built it over time. Through the archive he discerned a myriad of events and fragments of particular life histories unknown to many families in the village. His research took him from his own family's past into the past of other neighbours. His contact with the archive also triggered an incessant search, moved by a personal desire to make Puebla's memory concrete. As he argued in our interview:

This memory should never be forgotten, never. I am trying to learn all of Puebla's memory and I want to write about it... All of that memory will be read and seen and talked about. This is the most important thing. (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla de Alcocer, 2012)

His research into Puebla's municipal archive helped him to deal with some of the uncertainties that the exhumation of the bodies presented—since through the archive, he trusted, he could identify the number of bodies found, which had not been accounted for at the start. The excavation, however, as seen in Chapter 4, also revealed for José the unreliability of the archival record in providing a faithful reading of the event of the killings. His experience, as he implied in one of our interviews, had showed him the importance of crosschecking, of comparing information with other historians' databases, and of “delving deeper into the archive” (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012) to articulate a contrasted vision of the ambiguous aspects of Puebla's repressive past. Before and during the campaign José had been constant and mechanic in his treatment of the information, working with the diligent demeanour that I had observed in some of the historians I had interviewed before.

José firmly denied that he could be considered a “historian in the making” as I suggested to him, even if his developing skills in the archive and in collecting social

histories presented a different reality. His extensive selection of carefully organised documents and recorded interviews, together with his writings about the exhumation and about some of the village stories on his online blog clearly reflected an emerging vocation that surpassed a mere new-found love for the craft of the historian. His work before, during, and after the excavation materialised his wish to articulate the town's history in an act of securing future recall. For José, historical consciousness was key to the village's existence, and he stressed that, "a village that forgets its history is doomed to disappear in the end" (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012). His research was thus based on a vision of the continuity of the community through a collective awareness of the past. This will to foster the village's collective memory, also supported by the town hall, would later, after the exhumation, lead to the in-depth reconstruction of Puebla's municipal archive, destroyed in the wake of the war. José's work would then consist in the assemblage of the archival fund pre-1939, to throw light on the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century in Puebla.

Puebla's social project, however, was not exempt from the predicaments caused by the violence contained in the archive. Delving into the municipal repository and reconstructing its afflictive pages would mark José's inner experience of the past and of the town in the present. The documents found by José in the humid cavities of Puebla's town hall were filled with familiar names and their sinuous and entangled stories of repression in the war and postwar-period village. As in the cases above, their content often triggered José's need to "constantly imagine what the person [on the document] underwent, their suffering...", especially when those examined spoke of his direct and distant relatives (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012). José's research practice prompted the work of his individual imagination through the gruesome details he encountered. Much of the information about the repression in the village would transform his perception of the town as he knew it, its neighbours and spaces. Simultaneously, the historical flashes that unfolded through each document and image, when compiled, would unsettle his inherited memory.

For José, as for many of the families that embarked on research into their own histories, the making of such familiar and lineal narratives was filled with a frustration provoked by not knowing and exacerbated through the archive's "paltry truths"—to evoke Ann Stoler's words (2009). The absence of the defeated and the

reverberations of their deaths lived in these processes of collection and recollection, as part of an unrelenting search fraught with grief. Through these acts of acquisition, accumulation, and interpretation the story of the defeated and the descendant were co-written. Such explorations into history created emerging representations of different familial pasts whilst shaping, conversely, the subjective worlds of those who engaged with them. The story of the dead and disappeared, as Portelli (2003) suggests in relation to Fosse Ardeatine, persisted and lingered through contained mourning and trapped emotions, marking the experience of the familial archive and, later, the day to day processes of the exhumation campaign.

### *Sentiment and Affect at the Exhumation Site*

Previous chapters have discussed how knowledge about these killings was constructed at the excavation site, emphasizing the dialectics between local histories and scientific expertise. This knowledge, however, was also impregnated by the haunting trails of these deaths and the suffering they invoked—not only through the materiality registered in the mass grave but also the emotive stories of loss attached to it. The experiences of absence and adversity their presence recalled were part of the fabric of the exhumation space. They marked the perception of the site and its atmosphere, as well as the intimate relations people established with the mass grave and among themselves. The history concocted about the executions was hence also assembled through the sentiments and sensations produced in the interaction between the place, its materiality, and the subjective worlds that convened at the gravesite. The exhumation site, as well as the archive, was a harrowing space, in which the latent trauma that spread across generations overwhelmed the day-to-day of the excavation and the feelings that emerged in contact with it. Exhuming these mortal remains in Puebla de Alcocer and Castuera gained an intense and affective character for families and civil groups that promoted the historical memory project. It also deeply marked scientific practice and the intimate involvement of the archaeological team.

The everyday at the exhumation revealed the subtle forms in which “complex affectivities” (Navaro-Yashin 2005: 134) were engendered and acknowledged. When I talk about affect, in this section, I mean to refer to the capacity of these spaces,

materialities, and stories to make people feel and do different things. In this context, however, one has to take into account that bones are not just bones, or personal objects just any common item. They are part of the universe of these violent and personal histories and, as such, contain a strong emotive charge, which determines the intensities they irradiate. For instance, on an occasion, after a day's work at the excavation site in Puebla de Alcocer, Lola, an archaeologist hired by PREMHEX to help Muñoz in the direction of the campaign, reflected about her excavation experience in comparison to other sites at which she usually worked. Lola explained to me that in relation to the pre-historic sites to which she was accustomed, exhumations had an emotional load, which distressed the team and conditioned the dynamics of the work carried out. Indeed, she was not the first to acknowledge this. Previously another archaeologist, Álvaro, had stressed to me the sense of historical proximity these sites acquired through the familial and community narratives shared by the mass grave.

For archaeologists, the excavation of these mortal remains often awakened feelings of unease, especially when the space was filled with war and postwar stories of families and survivors. Like Álvaro, Lola acknowledged how the act of retelling these disturbing events, together with the severe reality of the mass grave, impacted on the nature of the excavation. Nonetheless, her observations spoke further about how the exhumation affected the emotional responses of those who took part in it. In our conversation, Lola highlighted that one thing that astounded her was the profound capacity some of these stories had to stir all members of the team and even bring them all to tears. Lola expressed something we had all experienced in this and previous exhumations, especially when the space and the corpses were enveloped by the histories of direct relatives of the dead.

When José Sánchez-Panigua's father, José, came for the first time to the mass grave, silence overcame the excavation ground as he uttered his hope of being reunited with the mortal remains of his father. It was not only the harsh details of his detention and execution or what José recalled from his father's life history that moved those present at the site, but the flaring pain that erupted as he approached the excavation ground. Throughout the telling of his testimony, outbursts of tears and lament overcame his body, giving in to a tangle of nerves and shivers, triggered by his

encounter with the mortal remains. Moments like this were difficult to negotiate in- and outside of the excavation ground. Such surging bodily expressions were the materialization of a lurking grief, which mixed with the uneasy sight of the corpses and defined the texture and feel of the space of the exhumation. For many members of the team, as I recorded on my field notes, the mass grave was at times a “sad place” from which an “uncomfortable energy” emanated.

Enmeshed with the landscape in which some of these stories were set, in the remoteness of the countryside in Puebla de Alcocer or connected to the moorlands of the concentration camp in Castuera, the experience of these exhumation spaces was marked by the ill-fated aura they exuded. In Castuera, likewise, stories of prolonged disappearances and their repercussions on people’s lives determined volunteers’ engagement with familial emotions and the careful treatment of some of the information conveyed about the mass graves. In most cases, it was Laura Muñoz who communicated the initial hypotheses about the progress of the excavation, in an effort to avoid any ambiguity over the identity of the bodies in the graves. Though the archaeologist tried to maintain a distance with relatives’ stories during the exhumation, for the impact their content could have on her work, Laura did indeed deal with the hopes and uncertainties of families and activists on a daily basis, negotiating the meanings of the mass grave and the emotive responses of those involved in the campaign.

Away from the image of the exhumation as a dehumanized process, in which the body is simply turned into an “object of study” for scientific analysis, as some media discourses portray it (Domanska 2005), these exchanges with families displayed the typical subjective character of scientific work in mass grave excavations. Indeed, the intimacy of the mass grave was also another realm in which transmission was performed and where affective materialities and memories challenged the sensibility of the researcher and volunteer. At the exhumation site, at times, members of the team assimilated themselves with the suffering contained in these histories of loss, in the form of storytelling, where the close sight and touch of these mortal remains triggered their imagination. The haunting effect of the dead encouraged an affinity and identification with such familial affliction, generating other anxieties in connection with their excavation practice.

Maria, one of the volunteers in Puebla, for instance, explained to me that experiencing the reaction of relatives such as José's father, at the gravesite, made her acutely regret the bones she had accidentally broken since the excavation started—as their poor condition and preservation did not make their treatment easy. The underlying emotional quality of the space and the human character provided to the bones through the stories conditioned in many ways the ethics of care and precise handling of these bodies. As Samara, another volunteer, said to me during the same exhumation, “even if we treat corpses as a material thing in our everyday practice, it is inevitable that we see them as people, because that is what they are” (Samara Ibarra, Puebla, 2012). In a conversation with her one afternoon after a long morning at the mass grave, she explained to me how that day, whilst she excavated, she reflected on what she was doing and, in her words, “gained consciousness” of her actions. She looked at the corpse she had worked on for a long period of time and she imagined the person whose skeleton she excavated in the past, at the moment of his death, remarking how she envisioned what he might have been wearing. “I could see him dressed”—she affirmed—through the remnants of his clothing: through the buckles, buttons, boots and other objects, which lay with his body. Moreover, looking at his hands, she said, she could also imagine how he might have touched his family before the execution.

Intimate perceptions of these mortal remains were often enlivened by the ongoing touch and sight of their emerging physiognomy, as well as by the repetition of memories about the executions that some volunteers, like Samara, also had in their own families. The personal entanglement with the mass grave through the senses and the effect of learnt and owned stories propelled an active imagination of the human condition of these mortal remains. In such a way, the corpse transcended its qualities as a nonhuman being, which simply “swaps properties” (Latour 1999: 16) with the living—as something that is made by and, in turn, makes the human, in the sphere of scientific practice. Instead, it was conceived from the start as a human, whose remnants were always enmeshed with the image and aura of the person. This entanglement between the definition of the corpse as dead or alive was also born out of the ideological commitment of many volunteers. Such sensitivity towards the

mortal remains shaped an even more careful scientific practice and method. The preoccupation with the excavation of the corpses also surpassed the space of the mass grave, seizing the dreams of volunteers at night. As a volunteer inside the mass grave, my own dreams were often overshadowed by an urge to overcome the difficulties I encountered in the excavation of some body parts.

For those who visited the site, the disposition and care towards the mortal remains on the part of the teams in Puebla and in Castuera contrasted with the extreme maltreatment registered on the corpses and in stories such as those collected in *War Histories I* and *War Histories II*. In Puebla, for instance, the agitation provoked by the mass burial was recorded in a visitors' book, where people wrote messages about their impressions—something inspired by the work of the national historical memory association (ARMH) on mass graves. In the book, people often wrote comments, but also made drawings such as those in Image 25 and Image 26. In these representations one could trace the “affective discharge” of the exhumation space, as Yael Navaro-Yashin (2005) has observed in relation to the remnants of conflict in northern Cyprus. In the message shown in Image 26—written by Cayetano Ibarra, the exhumation's coordinator at PREMHEX—the land, the mass grave, and the bones are portrayed as the containers of the tragedy throughout the years and of a truth only they can reveal: “the land speaks and wants to tell us sad stories about the cruel tragedy lived by these fields and holm oak trees”. The gravesite, his comment suggests, listing the body parts one can see as the evidence of the crime, has its own voice as it shouts, “Here they are!” The words of the message enliven the role of the material in the construction of a history of the executions and in the articulation of a political desire—as these “residues” from violence are rendered as the “foundations of freedom” (Image 26).

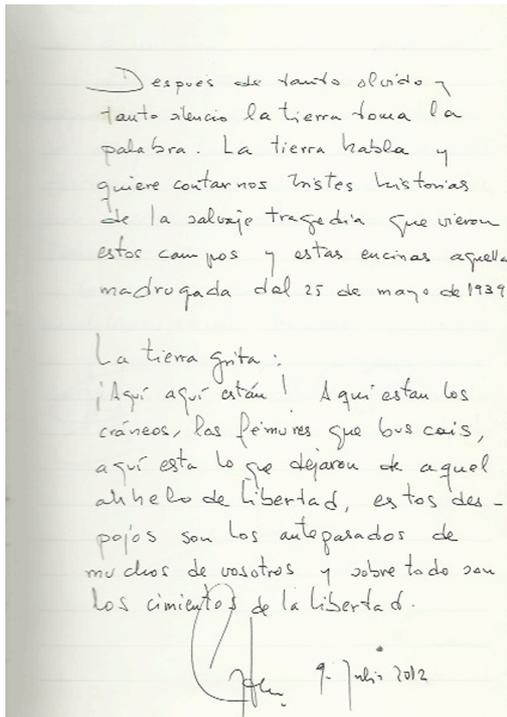
Many of the comments in the book highlight how these corpses frightened and astonished people. Others retold how some neighbours who visited the site had been sick or could not eat after seeing the corpses. The violence recorded in the mass grave incited physical and intimate reactions, which unhinged people's physiology and psychology (Brennan 2004). Some recognized the political efficacy of such an affective discharge. In the light of a rapidly disintegrating economy, many feared a

quick indifference towards the Civil War and postwar mass graves on the part of official institutions and society at large. One of the volunteers in Puebla, for instance, wished the sight of these bodies were never “normalized” and dispossessed of their capacity to affect people in social and political realms.

The treatment of these bodies by the perpetrators who tied them, beat them, and lined them up to be executed—as Cayetano Ibarra’s drawing below imagines the execution in Puebla’s visitors’ book—coexisted with the gestures of precise and scrupulous management of the bones articulated by the scientific team: unearthed with screw-drivers and, later, thin sticks, when bones were visible; protected against deterioration by cautiously covering them and placing glasses filled with water inside the grave to preserve their humidity levels; carefully removed, bubble-wrapped, and classified with a number in separate carton boxes ready to be transported to the laboratory at the moment of the exhumation.



Image 25. Drawing in Visitors’ Book.



Translation:

After so much forgetting and silence, the land speaks. The land speaks and wants to tell us sad stories about the cruel tragedy lived by these fields and holm oak trees that early morning of 25<sup>th</sup> May 1939.

The land shouts:

“Here they are!” Here are the skulls, the femurs that you are looking for. Here you have what they left of that desire for freedom. These residues are the ancestors of many of you and above all, they are the foundations of freedom.

Image 26. Excerpt from Visitors' Book written by Cayetano Ibarra.

Varied methods were applied in order to protect the information contained in the bones, but most importantly to secure the skeleton's individuation and its final burial. The scientific treatment of these mortal remains became entrenched with the morality that surrounds death and dying in western and, more concretely, Spanish contexts. Through care, these archaeological technologies restored and dignified the corpses in the eyes of relatives, neighbours, activists and other groups who visited the exhumations.

Mortuary rites and their social importance have been widely examined in classical and contemporary texts on the anthropology of death, dying, and burial (Hertz 1960 [1909]; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Bloch and Parry 1982; Rosaldo 1989; Seremetakis 1991; Sheper-Hughes 1992; Robben 2004). Even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, studies such as Hertz's (1960: 27) were identifying how Western traditions rejected a view of the body of the deceased “as carcass” and instead encouraged its “specific care [...] and correct burial; not merely for reasons of hygiene but out of a moral obligation”. Quigley (1996) has described the particular processes of preparation, display, and disposal the dead body undergoes in western

settings. As in other places in the Mediterranean, traditional mortuary practices in Spain have also included the appropriate washing, scenting, dressing, and laying out of the body for the wake, funeral, and its later burial in the cemetery. Nadia Seremetakis (1991: 134) has also observed how these practices bring the living closer to the soul of the dead and constitute an “extension of the kinship ethics of care and tending” when the corpse’s preparation is carried out by direct relatives.

As in the southern Peloponnesus, this is also the case in Spain, where family members have looked after the dead for years, especially in rural areas. These practices have coexisted with the ongoing medicalization of death and the appearance of the morgue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which placed the treatment of the corpse under expert management, reconfiguring much of the relationship established between relatives and the dead body (Ibid; see also Prior 1989). Moreover, in Spain, Catholic rituals and commemoration such as masses, prayers, and offerings have been an essential part of mourning for the deceased. Confronted with these scattered bodies, which embodied memories of violence and a lack of “funeral atonement” (Kwon 2006), families and activists perceived the work of scientists as an act that could rescue the dead bodies and return to them their integrity, through “laborious work” and “expertise”—as people pointed out throughout the campaigns in Puebla de Alcocer and Castuera. Archaeological work, for some, secured a peaceful continuity of the deceased into their afterlives. As Luisa Cabanillas Bayón wrote in Puebla’s visitors’ book, to the team:

I am really grateful to you for recovering the memory of those forgotten, who paid with their blood for their ideals. Thank you for your humane work. It will help them to rest in peace forever. With love and affection from your forever friend. (Luisa Cabanillas Bayón, Visitors’ Book, Puebla de Alcocer, 2012)

Marked by the overbearing effects of the political violence registered in the mass burial and in the footprints of transgenerational despair, the exhumation was another site where the affective load of the past was felt and internalised. At the exhumation, the spectre of death was turned into a concrete reality, transforming the subjective experience of disappearance for all participants. Through its harsh materiality, the mass grave evoked a time, a place, and an event until then only vaguely imagined,

and stirred other forms of knowing through *feeling*. In contact with the stories, but also the hopes and expectations of families, the site became a place through which to engage publically with the construction of history—also through the emotions. Since the executions had taken place, the absent presence of the defeated conditioned the day-to-day lives of the living and their latent war traumas. These absences also marked the agony and bitterness felt by later generations, whose need for a *postmemory* would drive them to unrelenting searches for information.

The searches will start, for many, in the archive, among its damaged documents and images, revealing a world of burdened descriptions and relations, of hurtful words and declarations. These searches will continue at the mass grave, where the material manifestation of violence on the human corpse stirred sickly sentiments and revived the pain and anxiety of the living. The archive and the mass grave surfaced as new places of transmission in which the story of those killed and their affective memory lived on in present endeavours to know the past—and then on, into the realm of the future. In the subsequent acts of reburial and commemoration, when mortal remains entered the cemetery, a third space emerged for the transcendence of these stories of repression. Here, other familial, personal, and political desires loomed in relation to the identification and memorialisation of the war dead and disappeared.

## Chapter 6

### Reburial and Commemoration

Since the beginning of the exhumation movement in 2000, parallel acts of commemoration have occurred as part of a collective effort to address and memorialise the war and postwar past, all over Spain. Acts such as the one that has been celebrated in Castuera every year since 2006—discussed in Chapter 3—emerged as communal spaces, on the margins of statist action, where distinct generations met to remember disappeared and dead relatives and to publicly denounce a history of violence and pain. Commemoration has indeed become a decentralised practice (Kwon 2006), promoted and fulfilled by civil society groups—members of second, third, and fourth generations. As shown in *War Histories I*, these acts vigorously demand further involvement from local and national authorities in the search and recovery of the mortal remains of the defeated and their remembrance. This lack of a state commitment around the atonement of Francoist crimes also shaped the experience of returning and reburying the mortal remains found in the mass graves of Castuera and Puebla de Alcocer, as well as their commemoration.

Unlike in other contexts, such as Bosnia (Wagner 2008) or Argentina, where the search for and identification of mortal remains from the conflict was endorsed by statist actors or, in the case of the Balkans, by the international community, in Spain, those who search for their blood and “political” kin are liable for the scientific analysis of mortal remains and their reburial. Though the projects in Castuera and Puebla de Alcocer received financial aid from the Ministry of the Presidency, which in many cases covered DNA typing, the central government provided neither logistic aid nor general support for the project. The funerary rituals and idioms that emerged in connection to their reburial were filled with expressions of grief and rights claims over their historical recognition. In the two cases discussed throughout the thesis, as well as others documented in Extremadura, identification and reburial were further affected by the condition in which many of these corpses were found inside the mass graves. Their corroded physiognomy greatly impacted on the way in which the

individuation of corpses was carried out and influenced the choice of burial performed in different locations. This last chapter examines the act of returning the mortal remains exhumed to the ground of the cemetery, focusing on the experience of three reburial projects. In so doing, it explores the distinct moralities at play in these endeavours, tracing the meanings and material outcomes these reburials acquire in connection to the motivations and desires of families, activists, and the State.

### *Identification and Collective Reburial*



Image 27. Mausoleum in the cemetery of Puebla de Alcocer where the 42 bodies exhumed rest. The names of those killed at the mass grave are listed on the top and the inscription at bottom reads: “*Compassion, Peace, Forgiveness*”.

As in other post-conflict scenarios, the act of reburying the bodies found in war and postwar mass graves in Spain is preceded by the individuation of each corpse, the anthropological study of the bones—of their antemortem, perimortem, and postmortem traits—and later, DNA testing and matching. Sarah Wagner (2008, 2014) has discussed how DNA identification reattaches a name to a set of mortal remains and associates it again with the family to whom the person executed was connected.

The search for, identification, and return of mortal remains to families has united scientific practice and social expectations in the restoration of disrupted kinship relations. It has also further entangled the lives of survivors with the aspirations of the state. In particular instances, such as the Srebrenica genocide, authors like Wagner have pointed out how DNA testing has become a key technology that “speaks to the state’s capacities to regulate and respond to the need of its citizens” (2008: 255). In her analysis, however, Wagner is critical about how such use of DNA identification and individuation techniques reasserts states’ authority in a landscape of different political claims and conceals previous forms of governmental inaction or disdain in situations of emergency—like in the event of war or a natural disaster (Ibid.). Indeed, this “technology of repair”, as Wagner calls it, is placed at the mercy of political agendas (Ibid.). In these contexts, the use of an advanced identification technology such as DNA turns sovereign power into an authority that allegedly *cares* whilst concealing past negligence, especially in the aftermath of extreme violence—political, ethnic, religious, or otherwise. In Spain, the lack of a statist commitment to exhuming and identifying the war dead—first during the Socialist Party mandate (2004–2011) and after 2011, with the Popular Party—has placed the individuation of corpses and their DNA analysis in the hands of independent scientific teams and association since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

DNA testing has played an important role in the identification of mortal remains found in Spanish mass graves, especially in cases where conditions were most favourable—i.e. where bodies are well preserved and living relatives can still be found today after so many years. Due to the temporal divide between the killings and the exhumation, forensic scientists working on war and postwar mass graves in Spain have advised that DNA testing cannot be taken in isolation and instead needs to be “targeted” or related to other types of presumptive and osteological identification attained through the cross-referencing of archival sources, testimonies, and the osteological study of bones and dentures (Rios *et al* 2010). Some case studies such as Rios *et al* (2010: e27) have further highlighted that identification processes in Spain depend on numerous factors, just as in other international contexts, which determine their successful accomplishment. Elements such as the number of bodies found in the mass grave, their preservation and related belongings, the methods available for their

analysis, and the “quantity and quality” of antemortem data; or “the availability of financial support and living relatives” for DNA analysis are key to securing a positive identification.

A close look at the reports produced from excavations carried out in distinct geographical locations of the Spanish territory by different scientific teams reveals the idiosyncratic character of such identification processes, which are determined by the variations of each burial and social context. In some cases, when positive identification can be achieved, DNA results can confirm existing hypotheses drawn from presumptive data about the identity of individuals found, for instance, in archives, especially when dealing with large groups (see Rios *et al* 2010 for an example). In others, it can act as the only method for matching the identity of the victim to that of his or her relatives, particularly when there is a small number of corpses—see for instance the case of the exhumation in Aibar-Oibar (Navarra) discussed by Etxeberria *et al* (2012), where the absence of antemortem data led to DNA testing to find a match between the four bodies encountered and the families present at the excavation. In further cases, in which DNA proof cannot be obtained—due the poor conservation of bones, an absence of living relatives of the deceased or a lack of funds—only forms of osteological and presumptive identification can be performed.

As Berta Silva—a member of the excavation team from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid led by biologist Luis Rios and who has also collaborated with Laura Muñoz Encinar in numerous exhumations in Extremadura—explained to me, the cases they have dealt with in exhumations principally in northern Spain, have allowed her team to complete a DNA analysis of mortal remains regularly. In fact, as she observes, individual identification through DNA is performed every time it is possible and not only when families demand it, as it is “part of their working procedure” (personal communication with Berta Silva). Indeed, the possibility of obtaining a positive identification of the dead, in particular through the certainty provided by DNA testing, has prompted a re-encounter between numerous families and their kin more than seventy years after their deaths. As Berta further described, many families claimed their relatives’ mortal remains in order to inter them in private

familial gravesites. Nonetheless, the archaeologist clarified that in the cases she had worked on, a common mausoleum was usually built to accommodate identified, partially identified, and unknown mortal remains. There, corpses, especially those whose families cannot be located, would be buried in individual coffins, with relevant scientific information about their human traits, ready for future exhumation and identification.

For instance, in cases such as the excavation of the Central Prison of Valdenoceda in Burgos carried out by scientists from Aranzadi, the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and with the support of ARMH, where a vast number of corpses were exhumed and analysed, the families' association took responsibility for the burial and commemoration of those that could not be returned to their families. Many of these corpses were identified through existing presumptive and osteological data, but a positive identification could not be concluded, as many relatives were not found. Nonetheless, volunteers from the association continue, still today, searching for relatives in order to secure the DNA analysis of corpses—as the blog dedicated to the exhumation describes (<http://exhumacionvaldenoceda.com>). Time has dispersed families and made these searches arduous in the present. In other instances, it has also eroded bones and objects and damaged telling documents that can shed light on the identity of those captured and their killings—as in the case of the prisoners of Castuera's concentration camp. Such contingencies are contemplated in the exhumations' protocol issued in September 2011 by the outgoing PSOE, which further connects questions about the identification of the Civil War and postwar dead to their final fate and resting place. As part E of the last section of the protocol advises:

#### E) Final Resting Place of Mortal Remains

Once mortal remains are studied and identified, depending on whether they have been identified or not, their burial will proceed as follows:

1. Identified [mortal remains]: families will receive them and perform the ceremony they consider appropriate.

2. Not identified: [mortal remains] will be inhumed at the cemetery of the location where the mass grave is located. The most adequate containers will be used, according to the recommendations of conservation and restoration experts. Each body will be buried individually, together with their personal belongings, with an identification that allows their location in future exhumations. This identification should include in all cases their case-study number.

Likewise, authorisation from the Autonomous Community or relevant Local Entity will be required for the transportation of mortal remains as well as for their re-inhumation or cremation. (Excerpt from the Exhumation Practice Protocol, Spanish Ministry of the Presidency, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 2011b: 101917)

Hence, the re-inhumation of mortal remains from Civil War and postwar mass graves in Spain is largely influenced by the precepts of their identification as well as the legal context of the place where they are interred.<sup>1</sup> Authors such as Wagner (2014) have observed that the complexities encountered in some processes of identification—for instance in reference to her study of commingled remains in Bosnian secondary mass graves—have in fact generated the creation of innovative burial practices and forms to cater for the dead and its mourning socially. This was often the case in Extremadura. Certainly some exhumations, as in the case of that in the village of Villasbuenas de Gata (Cáceres) (personal communication with Laura Muñoz), have resulted in successful DNA matches and identification. Nonetheless, in the exhumations in which I participated in Castuera and Puebla de Alcocer, several factors hampered DNA analysis and anthropological examination. In Castuera, uncertainty over the identities of the bodies found, and an absence of clues about the killings in the civil registry and of direct relatives rendered identification unlikely. In Puebla de Alcocer, it was the state of many of the corpses reduced to osseous splinters and also the difficulty in locating all families that led to the same problem.

---

<sup>1</sup> In Extremadura mortal remains are returned to families or the associations that promote the exhumation and reburial. As an activity regulated by the Law of Patrimony in the region, however, the outcomes of these exhumations are also overseen by the administration. As opposed to what is advised in the national protocol, bodies in the region are usually buried without their belongings. Following article 53 (e) of the Law of Patrimony, and as a measure to secure their protection, objects are kept at the pertinent provincial museum in the absence of direct relatives to recover them.

From the beginning, the reburial of the mortal remains found in Puebla and Castuera had been conceived as a collective act, since a positive identification seemed so far-fetched. In Puebla, where there were some families connected to the men in the mass graves, identification was perceived as a time-consuming and costly procedure. Having only located half of the number of families of the 40 men he identified on the files of the official registry—some of whom did not want to be involved in the exhumation—DNA typing would require more time to search for other families and funds. Moreover, José acknowledged that in the event of a DNA test, he would almost certainly obtain the mortal remains of his grandfather and his granduncle, but wondered what would happen to the remaining unidentified corpses, which belonged to other neighbours from Puebla. There was a sense of urgency with regard to fulfilling a much-desired end: to bury these mortal remains at the village cemetery, as many relatives from older generations were quickly passing away.

For José a collective burial in a mausoleum, like the one in Image 27, was a fair option, since all of the bodies could rest and be commemorated as a group. For many of those to whom I spoke, burying and mourning all the corpses together made sense, since, in José's words, "they died together, [had] been together and [would] remain together in the cemetery, where they should be" (José Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012). For other relatives like Pablo Trenado Cabanillas, a collective burial meant that all could be gathered in the same place, especially considering the manner in which some corpses had "turned out"—fractured and worn away (Pablo Trenado Cabanillas, Puebla, 2012). Their collective reburial involved the design of a hollow structure where they would be stored in individual coffins with a case number, but without a name attached to them. As the protocol suggests, they would be prepared for examination should any relative wish to identify the bones of their dead kin in future. Their unnamed boxes inside the crypt would symbolise the identity of the many men who died in Puebla's trenches. The names found on the death certificates from the archive and corroborated by testimonies would be carved on the stone that covered the exterior of the monolith (see Image 27). An excerpt from a conversation with José, his sister Consuelo, and Esperanza Muga Blasco during a visit to Esperanza's house in the summer of 2012, elucidates how the idea of these communal

internments were negotiated—and what happened when they came into contact with individual wishes for a positive identification—when people imagined how the mortal remains of their ancestors would be returned after the exhumation:

ZA: Esperanza, what does it mean to you to recover the remains of your relatives?

EM: Well, what I don't know is... how do they know which bones belong to one family and which to another? The bones, I mean, it must be because of the bones...

ZA: Yes, after they have been exhumed, it is the archaeologist who studies them and tests them.

EM: But bones, I don't know what evidence must be in bones...

CSP: Did my brother not mention to you how it will be done? Did you not tell her, José?

JSP: Yes, yes I told her but she might not remember now... We will build a common burial site in the cemetery. The bones will come out from the ground where they are. They will take them to Cáceres, where they will be analysed. They will classify them and place them inside small numbered boxes and bring them back to the cemetery. At the cemetery, we will build a mausoleum where they will all be buried together. So you will not receive the mortal remains of your father, grandfather, or uncles. They are all going to be together in the mausoleum. You will know your family is there, but for now, you will not know exactly who they are.

EM: [to José and Consuelo] And your grandfather, will he be there too?

JSP: Yes, our grandfather too.

CSP: Your father's bones will be all together because they will know which bones belong to each body. But you will not know which body is your father's because in order to know that you need a DNA test and this costs a great deal of money.

JSP: and time...

CSP: Let's imagine you say tomorrow "I want to know and I am going to pay to identify my father". Then they will take them out, because each one is classified in a box, and they will find out.

(Esperanza Muga Blasco and José and Consuelo Sánchez-Paniagua, Puebla, 2012)

The difficulties faced in the process of identification altered the expectations of some families, such as Esperanza's, who, on several occasions before and during the exhumation, made clear her hope of fully identifying her three relatives—father, uncle, and grandfather—at the mass grave. Throughout the campaign, Esperanza was eager to learn what tests archaeologists would run on the bodies to reveal her

relatives' identity. She had asked about the possibility of a DNA analysis on several occasions after my first visit to her house with José and Consuelo. Even when we spoke about it during our visit, she seemed familiar with the term, demonstrating the wide reach of this scientific method and its presumed efficacy in many social milieus. This was not the first time someone had manifested a clear familiarity with DNA technology. Many had referred to it at different exhumations, associating the sight of the mortal remains with their forensic meanings and treatment. Many members of the scientific team attributed this local knowledge of practices such as DNA testing to their regular presence in mass media (e.g. in series such as *CSI* or the news). Their observations coincide with the view of some authors like Jacque Lynn Foltyn (2008), who have pointed out the role of the corpse and its forensic treatment at the centre of popular culture productions. The ascent of the dead body and its scientific meanings as a theme of public interest, Foltyn argues, has also reasserted the authority of DNA evidence and examination.

Explaining the limitations of these identification methods, especially in difficult contexts such as that of Puebla's mass grave, contested the image of outmost certitude that some cultural representations of such scientific activity generated. In our last weekend in Puebla, I accompanied Laura Muñoz to Esperanza's house one more time. It was clear by then that a DNA test was not really an option. Laura explained to her that an individual identification had to be considered a "remote possibility", since acquiring additional information that could help to individuate those in groups that were in better conditions—in order to perform a DNA analysis—was extremely complex. Moreover, Laura explained that many of the bones needed for a positive DNA extraction, like dentures or femurs, were missing. The archaeologist added, though, that if indicators that associated a corpse with a specific family emerged during her study of the mortal remains—for instance, they knew Esperanza's father had a limp—then a DNA test might be carried out on that concrete set of mortal remains. Esperanza aspired to recuperate her relatives' mortal remains but also recognised the difficulties that the dearth of information and the uncertainty over these men's antemortem traits and their executions—as the archaeologist explained—had caused in the identification process.

Collective reburials of individuated mortal remains are ensnared with the predicaments of time, place, and conservation and the social politics around these war and postwar dead in Extremadura. These internments prompted the creation of new spaces of remembrance, in which a distinct commemorative culture emerged. The act of re-inhuming these mortal remains together celebrated the individual identities of the defeated but also their common histories, stimulating the imagination of a new community—in Benedict Anderson’s terms (1999)—of mourners around the mortal remains. In a different article about the identification of MIA soldiers in the USA, anthropologist Sarah Wagner (2013) has discussed how DNA technology has contributed to identifying the bodies buried in the Vietnam crypt of the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington’s cemetery, redefining the modes and meanings of national commemoration in the country. Collective burials, such as the one performed in Puebla de Alcocer and also in places such as Castuera and others, recognised the individual identity of each of the men found in the mass graves, but also turned the corpses into symbols for the making of a collective history and identity. Families, activists, and sometimes local political representatives came together in the organisation and realization of these events, manifesting the heterogeneity of intentions and desires at play in the creation of these funerary vestiges and acts of reburial.



Throughout fieldwork, most families and activists I met in Extremadura understood the reburial of the mortal remains in the village or town cemetery as a way of honouring the defeated. They often recalled the Republican dead in mass graves for the loathsome way in which they were buried, emphasizing their displaced condition. These men and women were still today lying on roadsides and outside of cemeteries “just like dogs” (*tirados como perros*). José Sánchez-Paniagua, for instance, said to me on various occasions that people should be interred inside the cemetery, as only “animals” were buried outside. Likewise, indifference towards these deaths or a refusal to recover a relative’s mortal remains from the mass graves on the part of some families, for instance, in Puebla, was strongly criticized by some, as an attitude that demonstrated a lack of integrity and care for the family ancestor. Returning these dead to the cemetery constituted a dislocated act in time to restore their legitimacy and humanity, but it also complied with a certain “morality of death”—to evoke Heonik Kwon’s (2006) expression—based on the belief that these bodies, as kin, fellow militant or neighbour, had endured a form of “*undignified*” death and burial for years.

As in the case of the familial rituals and commemoration around those killed and buried in mass graves in Vietnam, which Kwon (2006, 2008) discusses, these internments, their design and commemorative rituals aimed to re-signify the negative meanings associated with their violent deaths. Situating these dead bodies inside the realm of the cemetery bestowed upon the mortal remains a sacred and solemn character. As an established place for the dead in each locality, the cemetery was not only conceived as a space where “good deaths” found their burial but also a place that secured a respected afterlife for the dead, from the point of view of the community of the living. Municipal cemeteries have been imbued with different secular and religious connotations from their origins in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries—when they were built after burial conditions under churches’ grounds became insalubrious (Granjel and Carreras Pachón 2004). In Extremadura, as elsewhere, they also acquired dynamic meanings in connection to the social relations that determined their changing landscapes—as some authors have observed of similar funerary compounds (Rugg 2003; Buckham 2003). In past years, the transformation of these sites has been

apparent as multiple memorials and monuments have been erected to commemorate the Republican dead.

Historian Susan Buckham (2003) has emphasised the important role of cemetery constructions such as memorials in the representation of the dead and in the portrayal of the social affiliations and familial identities of the bereaved. Within the cemetery, memorials have allowed the bereaved to express and feel their unique connection to the deceased in particular social contexts. The need for recognition and reburial of the war defeated is entangled with what many relatives and activists see as a right to have a commemorative space inside the cemetery's boundaries. That Puebla's town mayor considered the mass burials in the trenches, in his words, an "anomaly", was prompted by the same belief and wish to gather these uprooted bodies in the cemetery, to create a space where their deaths could be grieved as part of the village community. For some, even their return to the cemetery was controversial, making their reburial a matter of dispute between families and local political authorities. For instance, relatives like Ángel Sayabera in Castuera had always wished for the construction of a monolith in remembrance of those who, like his mother, father, and brothers, had disappeared during and after the occupation of the village. In an interview, Ángel told me that he knew finding and identifying his relatives' remains through DNA analysis would be highly unlikely, because they could be anywhere among the vast number of prisoners buried at the back of Castuera's cemetery or in mines next to the Camp. In addition, at the cemetery, many corpses had been removed in construction and renovation works throughout the years, making their location even more troublesome. Ángel believed that since he, like many other families from the village, might never find his relatives' mortal remains, a monolith should be built in or outside the cemetery where their kin could mourn. Ángel had wanted a monument even before the exhumation had taken place. When he and others wrote to the socialist town mayor in Castuera before the 2011 election to suggest the building of a monolith, the town mayor expressed his unease with the instalment of the structure in the cemetery, arguing that "the Republic had nothing to do with cemetery" (Ángel Sayabera, Llera, 2011). Ángel explained the town mayor argued that putting a plaque on the wall of the village's town hall would be a more appropriate form of commemoration. For Ángel this suggestion betrayed a lack of consideration of grieving families' needs. As he described:

I wrote to the town mayor and told him that perhaps the Republic and the cemetery may have nothing to do with one another, but our dead and the cemetery have everything to do with each other, you know? They wanted us to put a small plaque on the town hall's doors. I said: 'what would you think if all of us, pariahs (*apestados*), took crowns and bundles of flowers to the town hall?' It seems commonsensical that this should be done in the cemetery. (Ángel Sayabera, Llera, 2011)

The political meanings attached to the mortal remains of the defeated, their connection to a pre-war past, and the Republican political aspirations of younger generations in the present triggered an anxiety around the memorialisation of these dead and their history, especially on the part of many in governing circles. These attitudes towards the commemoration of the defeated, for some like Ángel, perpetuated the treatment of these families as outcasts—a feeling experienced by many relatives that, since the postwar period, had endured the stigma of other members of the community. These anxieties were also felt when, in the process of reburial, collective decisions were made about the location, design, and composition of memorials built to re-inter exhumed mortal remains in the cemetery. In many cases, as Ángel's example above also denotes, the visibility of the tombstones became a central issue in negotiations between families, activists, and political representatives about the configuration, exhibition, and reception of the monument. After all, these monoliths and the bones contained inside their vaults indexed a traumatic part of each locality's history, inscribing memories of violence, absence, and loss on the landscape of the cemetery. Having a permanent place that pointed to this part of the village's past, especially inside the burial ground, awakened the angst and disquiet of some, who still feared remembrance of the conflict and, in particular, the stories of those who suffered defeat.

In places such as Puebla de Alcocer, where the village's town hall backed the exhumation and reburial project, the space designated for the mausoleum was one of the most central areas of the cemetery. Many, including the village's socialist leader, envisaged the reburial as an act of justice and equality. As he explained to me, it was "wrong" that a community should have some of their neighbours buried in the middle of the countryside in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Manuel Moreno Delgado, Puebla, 2012). For

the town mayor, returning these bodies to the village's cemetery complied with a morality and obligation intimately connected to a notion of modernity and progress. Marking the space of the cemetery with this construction materialised a political wish to pay tribute to these deaths, but also symbolised the triumph of democracy.

In such a way, throughout the process of creating the monument, designed by PREMHEx exhumations' coordinator, Cayetano Ibarra, Cayetano and the town mayor envisaged the mausoleum in a focal zone of the compound—a not too crowded area, surrounded by palm trees that accentuated the majestic look of the memorial (see Image 27). Its design and salient placement also conformed to a need, as José Sánchez-Panigua and the town mayor agreed, to “make history” in Puebla de Alcocer—José, for instance, believed that the place where the mass grave was located, in the countryside, should also be marked as part of the same effort to register past events on the village landscape. Recalling Paul Connerton's (1989) practices of remembrance, these reburial designs act as “inscribing practices” that seek to evoke and incorporate the story and identity of the defeated and their families in the collective imagination of the village. In Puebla, the granite structure was presided over by an epitaph that conjured the personal struggle experienced throughout generations and a message that spoke of a desire for reconciliation. On top of the mausoleum one can read: “We opened your mass graves and closed our wounds. We write your names and recover your memory”. At the bottom, a succinct caption summons readers to: “Compassion, Peace, Forgiveness”.

As a structure designed to empower familial mourning, the memorial in Puebla de Alcocer shared many features with the tombstones of other deceased from the community. Like on the other gravestones—and in a similar manner to the Vietnam Memorial Wall of names—, listing the names of the deceased was an essential part of recalling who they were, especially considering their identities had been perturbed in so many state files. As Thomas Laqueur (1994) has observed, as early as the First World War, the hypernominalism or recurrent use of names on the inscriptions of the individual internments and collective memorials to fallen soldiers aimed to represent the “collectivity of the dead” and to provide a primary site of mourning for families who could not recover the mortal remains of their kin. The

monolith in Puebla fixed the names of the executed to a concrete place, making their identities visible again whilst creating novel affiliations among living neighbours. The co-existence of these names on the surface of the stone pointed to each individual story of deprivation of dead and living relatives. It also, however, brought different families together—who might not otherwise meet—in a pressing collective endeavour for reparation. The lengthy register of names and the eulogies etched on the stone spoke of a communal and familial desire for historical and social acknowledgement that challenged the socio-political status quo around the Francoist past (“we write your name and we recover your memory”). Inspired by other reburial projects in Extremadura, such as that realised in the village of Llerena, the monument in Puebla spoke to the past struggle of these men and the present struggle between living relatives and the national administration.

In other cases, some of these memorial designs stood out for their originality and the significance they acquired as new technologies of historical enunciation. For instance, in the case of the reburial monument envisioned by some of those who promoted the exhumation in Castuera, the idea for the memorial was inspired by the techno-scientific finds of the excavation. In Castuera, AMECADEC commissioned a young architect, José Milara, who had also collaborated as a volunteer throughout the exhumation campaign, to design the memorial structure. Though the design has not yet been agreed and the memorial has not been built, the initial concept—characterised by its high-tech design (Image 28)—aimed to remain intricately enmeshed with the scientific, political, and familial experiences of the mass grave and its memorialisation. Following AMECADEC’s brief, Milara set out to create a design inspired by the association’s wish to bury each corpse individually, and, just as in other cases, with their relevant anthropological information, to enable future DNA identification. In so doing, the project, as in other artistic ventures elsewhere, such as the case of the “etoy” project in Zürich discussed by Maja Petrović-Šteger (2012), rendered the mortal remains of the defeated as a site of information storage (Ibid.). Here dead bodies and their belongings were objects of mourning and remembrance but also cognitive props or fragments for an exploration into the village’s history of repression.

For Milara, the association's guidelines evoked an idea away from the classical monolith and more closely connected to the multidimensional features of a QR code, where "pixels, squares, and pieces such as those in a puzzle eventually form a whole image" (José Milara, Castuera, 2012). The memorial would have two façades. A large cement QR code would compose the first side, with compartments made out of glass to include human remains and objects. The second side would have a footbridge to allow people to access the top sections of the four-metre memorial. The bottom area would include a list of names of all those who disappeared in Castuera. José's design aimed to move from the concrete to the generic and vice versa. In the project, the meaning of the exhumation and history of repression as a whole would be represented by a matrix QR code, which was complemented with information about each body and its belongings in its "drawers" or "pixels" and provided with other codes. Through the QR codes, archaeological reports, history writings and images of the process, corpses and objects would be individuated and their story broadly disseminated, turning the function of the memorial into that of an archive of particular and collective histories. Each QR figure—the complete image as well as smaller ones—could then be photographed with a mobile device and the information accessed on-site or from a website. As Petrović-Šteger (2012: 80) has observed about the "etoy" project, this way of representing the dead is paradigmatic of "a moment in which the dead are routinely managed through reassociation, classification and identification technologies" worldwide. The monument would hence have a physical presence in the cemetery and also a digital form on the internet—encouraging a type of displaced memorialisation. This novel technology of remembrance would exist between the realm of the concrete and the virtual, distributing, as some have noted, "the 'life-force' of the dead person" (Petrović-Šteger 2012: 78; Gell 1999) into other realms and future generations.

This historical approach to the memorial also influenced the physical location of the monument. In his study of the social life of Holocaust memorial sites over time, James Young (1993: 7) has observed how such monuments have impacted on spaces, becoming a "point of reference" "which create[s] meaning in land and recollection", especially at the moment of their creation. In Milara's design, the space of the monolith occupies that of Mass Grave 1 in the cemetery. For the architect, siting

the memorial in the same place as the mass grave defines the history of the mass burial in correlation with other war vestiges like the concentration camp, challenging the spatial disposition of the cemetery. The position and orientation of the monolith, whose location faces that of the camp on a straight diagonal, attempts to encumber the cemetery's apparent order and signify the latent ruination of the war past in the locality. Its material semblance was created to transform the landscape of the cemetery, among the other familial mausoleums and tombstones in the burial ground. Moreover, the monument, as a funerary construction, aimed to connect with the stories and personal needs of family members such as Ángel Sayabera and others. Features such as the engraved names under the footbridge intended to reinforce the personal and familial value of the object whilst accentuating its proximity. The monument, as Milara expressed, would conform to families' desires, providing a site that is at once a repository of past stories and a concrete place where the dead and missing can be mourned. As he explained:

When thinking about the location, the most appropriate place I thought of was that where most remains were found. I then thought of playing with the orthogonal order found in the cemetery... You enter the cemetery and think that everything has always been ok and tidy; that there were always good relations and no one ever did anything bad, but it is not like this. [The place] inspired me to change this orthogonality, so that the object, being so closed to the concentration camp, broke with the linearity of the cemetery and hence, of the dictatorship and transitional years; to begin to highlight landmarks that had not been considered in the village until recently, such as the concentration camp. The monument at once remembers all the families that did not have a place to go and cry for the deaths [of their relatives], whilst it also connects the viewer with the camp and even other sites [...]. Although we incorporate innovative elements such as the QR codes, we must understand that many people feel closer to what is tangible. So for instance, the simple fact of having the names engraved on the granite stone makes [the monument] feel closer, like you even want to touch it. (José Milara, Castuera, 2012)

The technical design proposed by Milara was, nonetheless, still problematic for some—and even for the architect—who feared families might not be able to identify with such an intricate construction. The design of the memorial was enmeshed at all times in a process of negotiation in which the expectations of distinct groups and

generations conferred and collided. Memorial designs are ultimately fraught with the manifold desires of local groups administering the construction process and, above all, with families' petitions. For instance, when the architect presented the design to members of AMECADEC, there were divisions about the aesthetic value of the monument and its functionality. According to Milara, some people agreed that the object should be built, because it was a "work of art". The majority argued that, before a decision was made, families should be consulted on whether they felt comfortable with the memorial's design. For the architect, the most important question was to think the construction in collaboration with those who would use it most, placing an emphasis on the "wants and feelings of the relatives who [had] waited for so many years" for a place to grieve. The object of commemoration, according to Milara, should be a response to these families' demands, instead of solely to the requests of ideological groups or local administrations that might contribute to the realization of the commemorative project. As Milara added in our interview: "for all we know, families might just want a commemorative plaque or no monument at all" (José Milara, Castuera, 2012).

This exploration into memorial building expounded the central role familial needs and action play in peripheral forms of commemoration outside of state response. Such processes also evidenced the divergent positions and the sense of entitlement that influenced decision-making around the commemoration of the history of the war and the Republican dead. As Young (1993) has also pointed out, memorials can elucidate how the interactions of different opinions confer and collide to settle upon what the memorial should communicate and who should really dictate that message. Ideological, economic, and personal interests tainted the tone of many of these debates, unravelling the messiness of the "'us' who remembers and commemorates" (Jelin and Langland 2003: 15) in these decentralised settings. Following the process of construction of these monuments indeed evidenced the type of relations that produced them. During fieldwork, other memorial projects exemplified how commemoration can increase familial distress and strain the relationship between the members of historical memory groups, as well as between these groups and the local and national administrations.

In 2011, I followed the construction of another memorial in the village of Garciaz (Cáceres) (Image 29). This memorial was conceived after a search for the mortal remains of 17 men and 2 women from the locality was unsuccessful. These men and women had presumably been killed and buried in the nearby village of Zorita, kilometres away from Garciaz, in 1936. One of the men in this group was the great-grandfather of historian Javier Martin Bastos, the researcher from PREMHEX in charge of the study of extrajudicial killings in the region (see Chapter 2). After several frustrated attempts to find the corpses, the families' association led by Javier decided to build a memorial in the cemetery of Garciaz using funds from the Ministry of the Presidency to carry out the reburial process. Javier did not consider the idea of building a memorial at the beginning—for the anger and distress he felt after the failed search made him want to forget the location and exhumation pursuit. With time, however, he and the other relatives agreed to place a commemorative headstone in Garciaz's cemetery.

For the association, and especially for Javier, who oversaw the memorial project, its construction was not a straightforward undertaking. Building the monument in the cemetery caused the researcher problems, not only with the village mayor and his Popular Party cabinet, but also with the Ministry that had awarded the funds to the families in the first place. On the one hand, the issue of the visibility and appearance of the tombstone became a point of contention again, as in Castuera's case before the exhumation, between the association and Garciaz's conservative mayor. In contrast to the case of Puebla, when Javier tried to secure a plot in the cemetery, the mayor of Garciaz asked the families to buy three niches "in perpetuity", preferably located in a remote space of the burial ground. Hostile to the idea of having a commemorative site for the village's Republican dead, he advised Javier "not to write the cause of death" on the headstone "to avoid the discomfort of other village neighbours" and recommended that he opt for niches that were "less seeable" in the cemetery (Javier Martin Bastos, Cáceres, 2012). Again, the inscription of the names of the Republican missing and the epitaphs to their deaths awakened the anxiety of the local town hall, which understood the memorial as a subversive structure inside the cemetery. Even in the absence of bones and material belongings it was the abeyant social memory of the conflict that shaped the order of commemoration.

The construction of the structure led to further conflicts between central government and the families' association. As Javier explained to me in an interview, after the project had been closed and half of the budget returned, due to the fruitless exhumation, the Ministry of the Presidency penalised the group, requesting an extra payment for spending funds dedicated to other activities in the original budget on the building of the memorial. The Ministry further supported their claim by stating "there was no need to build the memorial if the bodies had not been found" (Javier Martin Bastos, Cáceres, 2012). Various conversations ensued between Javier and the state department, until the former decided to make a formal complaint regarding the government's decision, clarifying the budget imbalance and accompanying his statement with a report, which included, in his words, "historical, anthropological and psychological references to explain why the monolith should be built even if the mortal remains were not found" (Ibid.). After this, Javier never heard back from the Ministry and took this administrative silence to be the end of the dispute. The process, Javier told me, exhausted him. Without knowledge of accounting or management of these administrative and legal procedures, he concluded that the arduous bureaucratic complications, together with the burdening tempo (Bourdieu 1979; Herzfeld 1991) of some administrative doings, first surrounding the exhumation project and later the building of the monolith, only exacerbated the fatigue and emotional weariness provoked by the inconclusive search for his relative's mortal remains. The body emerged as an ultimate form of material evidence needed in order to commemorate the past. Moreover, the state's requirements for a body to mourn evidenced the vagueness of the commitment to the memory of the conflict in national commemorative agendas.

The memorials in reburial processes, or commemorative events dedicated to the death of Republicans, gave place to a novel funerary heritage in cemeteries with distinct spatial, aesthetic, and political signification (Young 1993). The presence of these buildings inside village graveyards reflected the collective endeavour of families and other groups to create a space for the mourning and remembrance of those killed as a result of Francoist repression. The intimate and enclosed public memory acts of these historical memory communities had distanced them from other modes and tropes of national tributes and celebrations. This novel burial heritage evokes different affiliations and is charged with the apprehensions and aspirations of

families, activists, researchers, and statist actors involved in their production. These memorial buildings are further signified in the context of the commemorative acts that envelop them. Here new idioms and rituals momentarily inhabit the cemetery, turning the space into a platform where familial bereavement, historical reclamation, and public denunciation converge.



Image 29. Symbolic headstone on columbaria in the cemetery of Garciaz, in the province of Cáceres.

### *The Rituals of Commemorative Reburials*

The moment of the reburial of the corpses is often accompanied by a varied secular liturgy of acts in which families, association members, researchers, scientists and, at times, political representatives remember the deceased and their executions. Political and historical references interlace with the imagery created by the gestures, material manifestations, and messages enacted. In these acts, bodily practices—as Connerton (1989) termed them—and oral expressions entwine individual stories and experience with a wider concern for historical recognition and a demand for the state to *care* for the defeated and their families. They also, however, exposed the divergent desires of members of historical memory associations, who were not always unanimous in their thoughts about the reburial of the corpses. In the two acts that I attended in Garciaz in 2011 and Puebla de Alcocer in 2012, both ceremonies were marked by the results of the exhumation campaigns, the context in which the organisation of the memorialisation project had taken place, and the visions that each individual had of the act of commemoration.

In Puebla de Alcocer, the act began with the movement of the corpses from the cemetery's autopsy room, where they had been briefly kept for the purpose of the tribute, to the mausoleum. In an emotive manner, relatives of the dead and some village neighbours carried the small wooden coffins that contained the corpses one by one, personally transporting the dead to their final resting place. Each box, decorated with a Republican flag and a red rose, was then placed next to the monolith while a cellist played classical pieces to accompany the event. Once the boxes were piled and arranged by the monument, some relatives, local politicians, and members of the research project read the texts they had prepared for the occasion. After the participants had spoken, a line of men and women, including the archaeologist, Laura Muñoz Encinar, passed the small boxes with the mortal remains to be deposited on the shelves inside the crypt of the mausoleum. The small number objects encountered in the mass graves were exhibited in the *Casa de la Cultura* (House of Culture), a village communal building, where personal belongings acquired the meaning of historical relics for the neighbours who went to visit them.

In Garciaz, the absence of the mortal remains of the defeated encouraged other ceremonial gestures and messages, from relatives and other participants in the project. The act brought together many neighbours from the town to uncover the granite gravestone listing the names of those who disappeared. Members of the families' association stood next to the headstone, facing a crowd of people intensely engaging with this reencounter with the memory of defeat, at the symbolic reburial act on a cold day in December. Like in Puebla, relatives, mainly from third and fourth generations, recalled the stories of death that had been transmitted through their families over the years and read passages from books and the pieces they had written. Stories of repression were often interspersed with other references to the role of contemporary official institutions, reflecting the social tensions that surrounded the display of the headstone in Garciaz's cemetery. In both villages, reburial acts were followed by communal meals and other commemorative celebrations. In Puebla, those who organised the exhumation, together with the archaeologist Laura Muñoz Encinar, led an informative session in the village's *Casa de la Cultura* about the research and exhumation work carried out in the summer of 2012. In Garciaz, relatives read other passages and texts, in the intimacy of the restaurant salon that the families' association had hired for the gathering.

In both locations, these celebrations were civil ceremonies without religious symbols, homilies, or enactments, which instead drew on other material and discursive elements marked by the familial and political character of the burials. Nonetheless, in both cases issues around the type of ritual performed did emerge in connection to some relatives' particular desires for a more religious burial, as in the case of Puebla, or a more political ceremony, as in Garciaz. In both acts, however, subtle Republican imagery and political references were eventually preferred. As the town mayor of Puebla told me in our interview, the day was meant to be a day for the families and not one dominated by political speeches and messages from party representatives. In Puebla, flags were only used as attire for the coffins. Nevertheless, political messages were still heard, as not only relatives but also political agents took to the stage. In Garciaz, only some participants carried Republican symbols into the cemetery. As Javier had explained to me, however, some would have preferred a more visibly political ceremony. The character of the memorial and the event was thus a much-negotiated matter. Nevertheless, the messages that people transmitted

generally addressed the Republican identities of the dead and the political affiliations of the living, eliciting the importance of these left-wing histories in the contemporary political subjectivities of members from different generations and affiliations.

Just as the exhumation became a space of discreet commemoration, the realm of the funerary memorial emerged as an important place, where tributes to the dead were fervently performed. One could understand the significance of these rituals much in the way Durkheim once argued, for their capacity to integrate “individuals into communal life” (Metcalf and Huntington on Durkheim 1991: 28). Indeed the pressing demands for acknowledgement uttered by these collectives turned reburial events and their commemorative rites into bonding acts that sought the inclusion and continuity of a community of mourners for the war dead in the regulating social order. The tense relation between families, activists, and the state, however, exemplified how these events were more loci of resistance and disruption through which the strenuous ties with other groups and institutions could be devised. As Nadia Seremetakis (1991) suggests, drawing from the insights of historian Philippe Aries, death rites can be analysed as “deep structure” and regarded as a realm of “social contestation” (Ibid: 14–15) in which distinct social entanglements can be explored. By taking the same approach, I propose, like her, to examine these performances around the war dead through the eyes, gestures, and words of the families and activists that take part in these reburial acts. In doing so, one can begin to understand the relevance these events gain for its participants not only as spaces to articulate a temporally dislocated commemoration of the war and postwar but also as a place where judicial, historical, and moral subjects are constituted in relation or opposition to the established social order. As Seremetakis contends, through this approach to ritual one can explore the institution of death—in connection to the Republican dead—as a “critical vantage point from which to view society” (Ibid.).



Image 30. Families of the dead and neighbours from the village carry the coffins to the mausoleum in Puebla de Alcocer (September 2013).

In Garciaz and Puebla de Alcocer the messages expressed by those who publically addressed the crowd exemplified the important personal and social value many participants gave to these actions. In Puebla, for instance, the regional leader of the socialist PSOE, Guillermo Fernandez Vara, who was invited by the town mayor and the families' association to attend the event, recognised that these acts provided the work of historical memory collectives with all its virtue and efficacy. As he implied, anyone who wants to understand what it means to talk about the historical memory of the war must attend a reburial event. For the PSOE leader it was coming into contact with families, when the mortal remains of the dead were returned to the cemetery, that the social significance of remembering the Civil War past could be gauged. In Garciaz, on the contrary, in the absence of mortal remains, Javier Martin Bastos ascertained that the importance of the event resided in the very act of returning their memory and, in particular, their names back to their village.

In both cases, these practices had a place-making capacity, for they consecrated a space for the deceased within the wider community of village dead

(Connerton 1989). For many, these acts were the realization of a much longed-for yearning. As Consuelo Sánchez-Paniagua in Puebla de Alcocer noted, the reburial was the conclusion of years of waiting for José, her father, who finally lived to see the burial of his own father's mortal remains and the construction of the mausoleum. For others like Esperanza Muga Blasco's brother, Pedro, the act, which reunited him with his father, grandfather, and uncle's mortal remains, marked a beginning, rather than an end. For Paul Connerton (1989), the performance of ritual is embedded with a collective need to initiate new periods and social realities, to question the "trials of old regimes", and to constitute a new form of collective living. In the words of Pedro, reburial indeed marks a passage from a regime of occultation to one of disclosure through which the dead can have a respected place in the community of Puebla's dead. As he invoked during the event in Puebla:

Today is a great day for us. It is a glorious Saturday because we have brought our ancestors where they needed to be, so everyone and all of us can know where and who are those who died for their democratic ideals in this village. Here, on this mausoleum, engraved with their names, a page about the Francoist disaster will be written for future generations. I want to remind you that today is not a day for mourning, for they already died and were already grieved... Today is a day for happiness because with this act, we accomplished their eternal rest next to other relatives and friends in this sacred place, where there are not ideological distinctions. It is a return to equality. (Pedro Muga Blasco, Puebla, 2013)

As Pedro's words elucidate, the reburial ground is an important space for the making of a personal and collective history. Reburials allowed relatives to fix their history in time and space and express their own experiences of absence. In these ceremonies, personal feelings of bereavement often spoke of a common history of hardship with the deceased that marked familial trajectories. Many of these individual interventions were marked by intense emotion, expressed through the playfulness and poetics of the language used, which as Connerton (1989) has highlighted, is usually part of the performance and liturgy of commemorative rituals. In these contexts, such expressions sought to fulfil a personal tribute to the dead and also to strengthen the solemn character of these reburials in the public context in which they took place. These messages drew on the rhyme and weaving of their prose, on occasion

addressing the dead directly to emphasise the proximity with the deceased. For instance, when Pedro spoke to the gathered public, his words entangled his family's postwar fate with that of his father's, and summarised the profound connection he felt with his father, especially after his death. As he expressed at the start of his speech:

Hello father, you must like it when I call you father. The word sounds nice. I have never pronounced it in public. I do it today because I am again next to you, years after evil separated us, taking you away from home, to end with your life when I was four and my sister was two. However you and I know that, many times, crying about my mundane weaknesses I have called on you when I was alone. Just by saying 'father!' you understood the content of my call. You have never stopped protecting me and with your help I overcame my problems. This is why some people said they have seen me alone but never crestfallen. They silenced your tongue with your death but not your sentiment that exists beyond life. I have always received your protection and with support and love of your wife, my mother, I have got through life uprightly in such a perverse situation... I send you a kiss and with all the love in the name of our family I receive your sacred human remains together with those of my grandfather and uncle, your father and brother. You will stay forever in this place, to rest eternally near your wife, who, like a heroine fulfilled her duties with your children, being a father and a mother, shaping my personality and smoothing any hatred over, to make me into a good citizen for society... (Pedro Muga Blasco, Puebla de Alcocer, 2013)

The words Pedro dedicated to his father exemplified a need to proclaim and confess the impact of the relative's absence on the speaker's upbringing, on his life and personality. Faced by his father's mortal remains, he spoke to him as if they were meeting one last time before his reburial, to tell him he had never forgotten him. His warm recollection accentuated his dead father's affective presence in Pedro's day-to-day and in his reflective thoughts and introspection. His words made his families' suffering public, seeking to restore his father's virtue and legitimacy. Familial eulogies enacted a sense of duty and indebtedness with the dead. This kinship obligation also reflected many people's social and political commitment to honouring the causes for which their relatives lost their lives. As in Castuera, many of the texts and speeches pronounced in Puebla and Garciaz identified these men's deaths as the ultimate sacrifice for a democratic order—something that also resonated with forms

and idioms of national and international war commemoration elsewhere (see Wagner 2013; Connerton 1989; Verdery 1999; Winter 1996; Anderson 1983).



Image 31. Javier Martin Bastos reads a poem by Miguel Hernandez in Garciaz during the commemorative act in December 2011.

Though Pedro expressed during his address that burying these men at the cemetery returned them to a “place where there [were] not ideological distinctions”, these acts succinctly converted the location of the monolith into an arena where contemporary ideological beliefs were also conveyed, contested, and celebrated. Speakers’ expressions often reflected individual experiences of the exhumation and memorialisation process and of the politics that surround these undertakings. In Puebla, for instance, many of the families who intervened thanked the town hall for its support in recovering the mortal remains and for enabling families’ mourning. Though everyone agreed with the way the exhumation had been performed, many families also expressed concern with the way in which the mortal remains had been publically mourned. For instance, at the end of the act, in a crowded and stuffy room of the House of Culture, where people gathered to hear the presentation of results,

Luisa Cabanillas Bayón stood up to ask why the ceremony at the cemetery had not been presided over by a priest. Luisa explained that she would have liked to have bid farewell to the mortal remains of her kin with a religious ceremony—just like the ceremonies other dead received before they were buried. The wishes of Luisa, of Catholic faith, indeed collided with those of other families and members of younger generations, for whom a civil ceremony seemed more suitable for burying the mortal remains of these Republican dead. At the event, the town mayor, interestingly, explained to Luisa that a non-religious burial had been chosen in accordance to the wish of the majority of the relatives that had been located. This incident revealed how the decision of a collective burial is often fraught with the conflicting visions of different participants and how the political traces of past identities and the political aspirations of present generations can shape the outcome of such commemorations.

In Garciaz, for instance, where relatives of the Republican dead never found their relatives' mortal remains, these messages were filled with an overreaching sense of pain and frustration for the inconclusive search and connected to disputes with local and national administrations around the building of the memorial. Here, written texts shared space with spontaneous interactions from members of the public, who uttered their stories publically for the first time. During the event, Javier spoke of the long process the families had gone through in their search for the corpses. The archaeologist who led the location works, Sara Rodriguez Hidalgo, also addressed families, deeply afflicted by the impossibility of locating the mass grave. Many other people in the public intervened, identifying the names of the relatives, giving impromptu testimonies of their disappearance, and even cursing perpetrators—though names were never given. Many of texts that had been prepared by relatives explicitly condemned past atrocities but also present struggles, reclaiming the memory of their ancestors' deaths from the antagonistic political powers absent at the act. As Antonia Serrano Fernandez, the granddaughter of one of the men who disappeared, expressed in the text she composed for the event:

No one should see this act as a revanchist endeavour or simply to stir up the past. Some people talk about opening old wounds, but in what heart is that wound? Is it in the executioner's or in victims and families' hearts? They should only see it as an act of justice. It's about building a future for all but not over an interested forgetting or

over an imposed collective amnesia. We have tried to get them out of the place where they threw them in the most ignominious way but so far, the excavations carried out have been fruitless and certainly, our possibilities are each time more remote... Today, the remains of our loved ones are not behind these nameplates, there is only the metaphorical emptiness of their absence... This [monument] will remain as space for memory and against the atrocities provoked by war, especially wars that confront brothers against brothers and neighbours and against neighbours. We are going to have the honour to remember them with this act and to leave proof that they were murdered with impunity, without an accusation or the possibility of a just defence. They were killed in 'Luca's Sewer', in the farm called 'el Zorro', between Zorita and Logrosán, on the road to Conquista, in Cáceres, in the "Roble" and in other yet undefined places... They all died defending their ideas of social progress embedded in the Second Republic, with its virtues and flaws. But especially they died defending democracy and freedom; we honour their memory today... (Antonia Serrano Fernandez, Garcia, 2011)

At the commemorative act, stories of repression acquired, to recall Julie Cruikshank's (1998) expression, other social lives as part of the rights petitions and endeavours of civil society collectives. Their retelling at the event was a way of providing evidence about the reality of the killings, the suffering of the families, and the need for remembrance—even if the bodies had not been found. In this setting, as Paul Connerton (1989: 58) has observed, liturgy, with its imperative force, was a potent call to action and a response to the expressions of the official institution—back then still PSOE—and the local PP representative: a proposition to actively engage with this history publically for participants at the event and, most importantly, for those beyond the realm of the commemorative space. Indeed the ritual choice also revealed that the controversies of these acts were imbued with both intimate and public interests in signifying the mortal remains of the Republican dead. The civil ritual chosen by relatives, however, shared many commonalities with other commemorative ceremonies elsewhere—see for instance the still prominent D-Day and World War I celebrations, or the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies around the world. The use of certain material forms, bodily performances, and literary and oratory styles evoked their historicity and their relation to similar historical memory events in other parts of the country.

The commemorative reburials I attended in Extremadura stood out for the innovative practices, designs, and idioms they incorporated to remember the deaths of the Republican defeated. The form and meanings of their monuments and acts were intricately ensnared with the social context in which they took place, on the margins of national memorialisation, and in connection with varied desires for historical validation. Their secular character provided them with a different quality in the realm of the cemetery, reflecting the role that these commemorative occasions played as important scenarios where civil, political, and moral demands were enacted. Certainly, some families I met still preferred a combined funeral officiated by a priest to worship the dead in the Catholic tradition. For many others, the civil acts that accompanied the funerary monuments and re-interments represented the wishes of most participants, who preferred a non-confessional ceremony—as for many, the values of the Second Republic did not tally with the doctrines and involvement of the Catholic Church in the conflict and ensuing dictatorship. Nonetheless, the collective reburial and commemoration of the deceased sought to return the mortal remains of the Republican dead to the cemetery to make their memory sacred. These acts and the material inscriptions in the cemetery gained significance as performative and symbolic manifestations of the recollection of such a traumatic past in the present. For many, they will remain documents—part of a growing surrogate archive—that testify to the horrors of the Civil War and the social experience of different generations. Reburial acts became another space where historical knowledge about the executions was assembled, and where a new culture of bereavement was articulated by the heterogeneous community of mourners that came together in concern for the Civil War dead.

## Conclusions

Exhumation processes have indeed opened up new avenues for research into the history of the Spanish Civil War—not only in Extremadura but also in the rest of the country. The task of searching for information about the Republican dead and missing, excavating their mortal remains, and reburying their corpses in cemeteries has triggered the emergence of new epistemologies around the traces of the violence of Francoist repression. In this process, the meanings of past historical regimes have been confronted and also redefined, in an endeavour to reclaim the names, histories, and bodies of those who lost the war. When I went to Extremadura to study exhumations, I observed how scientific practice, familial recollection, and archival research convened to produce new types of enunciation, in order to challenge past official narratives and political realities. Indeed, such processes revealed other relations and information networks that were in the making, through which the identity of the missing was negotiated and constructed, socially. To me, the activities in which families, archaeologists, historians, and activists engaged in order to produce knowledge about the war past seemed to delineate the contours of a new archive, which, as Michel Foucault (1972: 130) observes, constitutes an alternative “general system” in which new statements are formed and transformed. As seen throughout this thesis, thinking and tracing this new archive sheds light on the way in which these exhumations aimed to re-signify the violent and obscure deaths of the Republican defeated. It also, however, elucidated new political subjectivities that were still in the making and the emergence of different political spaces where those affected by such history of loss articulated their claims and concerns.

In order to understand the reach and importance of the act of unearthing these mortal remains in the present, we have to return to the moment when violence erupted, and to the aftermath of the war. The exhumations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Spain, as we have seen, cannot be taken in isolation as bounded events but must instead be considered in relation to the treatment that the Republican body—whether dead or alive—received over time. The scientific, legal, mnemonic, and political regimes that formed around these mortal remains in the past decade speak directly of the sovereignty of past governments, of their memory politics, and of the social

imagination that has existed around the war victory and defeat. The event of the exhumation can be traced back to the decades before the conflict, to clashes of different mentalities and moralities at a time of extreme social inequality and disadvantage. Locating the history of the Republican body hence elucidates past differences, which are often connected to present struggles around the so-called “recovery” of the memory of the conflict.

Chapter 1 showed how the Republican body, and in particular the mortal remains of those who were killed, was part of the particular mortuary universe that emerged as a result of the civil conflict. Throughout the war, violence became an inscribing practice, through which different powers were manifested and reasserted control and authority. Male and female bodies came to be the ground on which ideological antagonisms were avenged: a site of regeneration and destruction on which legitimate and illegitimate orders were disputed. The victory of Franco’s military uprising, which relegated the Republican dead to a form of “underground exile” (Ferrándiz 2011), gave new meaning to the nation and to the history of the war, through the exhumation and commemoration of the Francoist fallen. Such forms of commemoration marked local and urban landscapes, establishing a national-catholic political discourse, which made some of the ideals and values at the core of the Nationalist Movement hegemonic. Though such discourse acquired nuances over time, the silence around past atrocities, the lack of recuperation of the mortal remains of the defeated, and the lack of reparation and redress of families and survivors of the war and Francoist repression remained unchallenged. Dominant ideologies shaped the political pulse of the country, pacts made during the transition to democracy, and the culture of consensus that has prevailed in the country since 1975.

Unearthing the mortal remains of the Republican dead in 2000 led to contestation of hegemonic positions surrounding the memory of the conflict, demanding political and social transformation. Certainly at a national level, as seen in the cases of ARMH and the Foro, and in the case of other regional collectives in Extremadura, the associations that promote these exhumations in the present have opened a new civil space and created a new voice, which draws on the language of international human rights laws and on the example of other countries, where transitional justice models have been applied, in order to challenge measures enforced

in the wake of Franco's death. In their appeals, we have seen a desire to destabilize old amnesty agreements and pacts of silence, to press for recognition of the Republican victims, and to acknowledge their story in the collective history of the country. Campaigns such as those taken to the UN and others that, at a national level, condemned the oppressive law of the dictatorial regime and its abuses, undermined the transitional status quo and demanded the active involvement of the Spanish judicial and administrative institutions. Over the years, these associations' have battled to dismantle old regimes of truth, altering and influencing past and present state decisions, regional regulations, and local politics.

The search into official and personal archives, the gathering of testimonies, and the archaeological and forensic study of mass graves has allowed for other forms knowledge production, and situate historical research and writing at the centre of this social project. Some of these actions only became possible through the visibility the movement acquired in the last decade. The declassification of state documents, the appearance of new witness accounts, and the opening of mass graves have all been affected by the contexts in which they have occurred. The level of involvement of different governments throughout the years, with the passing of the Law of Historical Memory in 2007 under the PSOE government and the dismantling of all measures since the election of the right-wing PP, has most certainly shaped the conditions and experience of assembling an alternative narrative of the Republican past. Limited aid from the central administration at different moments has meant a lack of a centralised and consistent approach to these searches. Leaving the work of investigation and exhumation to independent actors, associations and, on occasion, particular institutions led to the formation of very heterogeneous approaches. In comparison to post-conflict scenarios elsewhere, the Spanish case reveals how these independent exhumation and memorialisation strategies, crafted as part of a bottom-up approach (Ferrándiz 2013) to reparation, are constantly negotiated between the desires of individuals and local, regional, and national associations and institutions.

As discussed in Chapter 2, early on in my fieldwork I realised that different political, scientific, and social realities and aspirations indeed affected the production of history. In Extremadura, the political agreement between different institutions since 2003, first under the PSOE government and then after 2011, to a lesser extent, under

the regional administration of the Popular Party, secured the ongoing research carried out by historians and archaeologists from PREMHEX, part of the University of Extremadura. Such a platform, which did not exist in every region, facilitated the work of compilation and research into forms of Francoist repression, but also the location, exhumation, identification, and reburial of mortal remains. Nonetheless, after the Popular Party took over the regional government, many of these projects were delayed and postponed. Different institutional backing provided particular frameworks for the historical memory enterprise in the region. For over a decade, institutional aid mostly facilitated a space in which the information gathered from archives, but also testimonies and exhumations, could be centralised, analysed, digitised, and made available publically. It also prompted regulation of exhumations by the Law of Patrimony, providing a way of legally and officially accounting for these actions. These initiatives, however, were sometimes at odds with the wishes of historical memory associations and families in the area. As seen in Chapters 3 and 4, on occasions, the project's work was contested by the political agendas of local associations, and the bureaucratic demands and time exigencies of the Law of Patrimony often clashed with the feeling of urgency of aging relatives.

Such exhumation projects aimed to establish a new type of research and *modus operandi*, devising protocols and guidelines in the absence of a national historical memory plan. They also aimed to formalise the character of historical inquiry into the war past realised in the region. As seen in Chapter 2, the specific approach that PREMHEX took to the investigation of the conflict placed strong emphasis on the production of objective knowledge. This was partly connected to the professional profiles and training of its researchers, who had strong backgrounds in the fields of history and archaeology. It was also connected to their aim of producing a type of knowledge that was not laden with ideology. Nonetheless, the treatment of the archive, of testimonies, and of mass graves, was also, as members of the project agreed, intertwined with a humanitarian desire to help families and support associations. In such a way, the work of these scientists was entangled with personal motivations fuelled by the historical memory quest. Objectivity and methodological precision were tools for the acquisition of a kind of truth—a truth that elucidated the effects of Francoist violence in order to legitimate the war and postwar histories of suffering on the part of Republican relatives and survivors, as well as to accredit the

project's work, the quality of the research produced, and the authenticity of these results in a landscape where multiple visions of the past coexisted.

The ethnographic cases presented in Chapters 3 and 4 exemplify how the exhumation site was a space in which interaction between different methods, knowledge, and intentions occurred, where different actors converged, and diverse versions of history proliferated. For the historians and archaeologists at PREMHEx, these two sites were part of a broader map of excavations, through which repression patterns in the region could be discerned. The unearthing of these mortal remains was also entangled with the relations between PSOE, IU, and PP in the region, and long searches on the part of local families. The comparison I drew between these two exhumation projects showed how the traces of the missing in documents, stories, and inside the mass grave gained different meanings. Both cases demonstrated how temporal distance and uncertainty, which underlies the whole process of searching for the dead and their histories, was negotiated for particular purposes. Traces were examined and spoken about in order to generate certainty about the executions and compose lasting narratives from scientific evidence, analysis of the archive, the story of witnesses, and inherited accounts of second, third, and fourth generations of relatives and neighbours. In each context, however, the presence or absence of material and bodily remains, the existence of relatives connected to the corpses, or memories of the killings shaped the way in which new visions about the executions were assembled.

In Castuera, the appearance of numerous mortal remains, unknown to researchers, family relatives, or the archive, prompted an inquiry within which archaeological and physical anthropology analyses guided the interpretation of the mass grave, defining the identities of the mortal remains and their relation to the concentration camp that once existed outside the village. The bones—and in particular the objects found—were viewed in correlation with the testimonies that the historian had previously gathered from ex-prisoners and witnesses, and with documents from official registries and archives, in order to “fill in the blanks” of the historical record. Scientific information helped to establish a narrative about the camp, reasserting its existence and turning the materiality of the mass grave into

evidence of the events and killings that occurred during the postwar period. It also attributed to these corpses a possible identity, defining their human persona—for instance, through the objects they carried. For researchers, this meant a development in the creation of a history of the camp. For historical memory activists, who supported the exhumation, acquiring such scientific evidence was a way of claiming entitlement over re-writing the village's past in the contested local political arena, where the claims of the PSOE and other right-wing revisionisms were articulated. For the families of those who disappeared and were never found, the mortal remains and objects found evoked stories of long-gone relatives and the possibility of their return. In the interplay between bones, storytelling, and scientific interpretation, archaeological constructions of the mass grave led young activists to reclaim the political identities of these mortal remains, and prompted families to reconsider the fate of their disappeared relatives.

The presence and materiality of corpses and their adjacent objects, once exposed in the excavation process, unleashed a plethora of firsthand and transmitted memories, which in turn unveiled the kinship and social relations of the dead and the powerful social life of these stories of repression. In the case of Puebla de Alcocer, discussed in Chapter 4, stories transmitted about the killings throughout generations were an important element in the scientific analysis of the mass grave. Stories negotiated the scientific meanings lent to the space by the archive, and the force of the mass graves became apparent as people tried to relate new scientific information to the version of the execution story they had always known. The limited information found in the mass grave, due to the badly-preserved bodily and material remains, meant that storytelling became a way of situating and contextualising the killings for the scientists. Political alliances or conflict between neighbours before the war mixed with stories of repression that recalled the way that people had been killed. Stories depicted the traits of individuals in the mass grave, identifying their familial, social, and political personas and pointing to the link that present generations felt with the deceased. These accounts had a capacity to instil a sense of time and continuity for some relatives, but also contrasted with the silence of others, who felt reticent about speaking by the graveside. They also provided families with a sense of historicity within the community, and revealed how individuals imagined themselves in time and as part of the village's collective life. Stories, as Cruickshank (1998) has argued,

reunited younger and older generations over the sharing of a past and of memories of the deceased obscured for decades.

The mass graves in Puebla and Castuera became spaces of transmission between generations, in which emerging stories—but also new scientific interpretations—were incorporated into the memory of the event. Exchanges between neighbours, scientists, and relatives led to the reassertion of local interpretations of the executions, but also turned others into mythical constructions. Scientific analysis, but also the sight of the skeletons and their dispositions, challenged the assumptions and veracity of some accounts—for instance, and in particular, those of survival, which were marked by the ambivalence that a disappearance triggers (Domanska 2005). The making and unmaking of the event by relatives, activists, scientists, volunteers, and visitors turned the space into a collective laboratory in which experts and non-experts produced meaning about the past. Just as Bruno Latour observed about the work of scientists in other laboratories (1993, 1999), the mass grave became a space in which the interaction between bones, documents and objects and the living erased the distinction between science and politics, between the knowledge of archaeologists, historians, activists and families, and between people and things. At the mass grave, moreover, a political ontology emerged—in Latour's sense—around new matters of concern, which diverged from the political culture fostered since the transition to democracy and was affected by the heavy weight that the past had placed on the lives of different generations.

The force of the postmemory of these events motivated the impulse through which the past was continually re-invented by the graveside. The emergence of these new objects triggered a need to know and to grasp a past that could not be fully comprehended. This drive to make history was, in my view, fuelled by a war past that could be felt even if it could not be lived, and which expanded through time to become part of the everyday lives of the living during the postwar period and the time of the exhumation. The presence of these uncovered traces of violence evoked an image of the disappeared, a reminder of their absence and a will to complete the memory and the story of the missing. Images, documents, bones and objects were indexical of the person that was killed, though only in fragmented and partial ways.

These offered hazy glimpses of fatal experiences of death, an unfinished vision of the fate of the missing and of their persona. The encounters with the materiality of the archive and that of the grave generated other expressions of the uncanny, exposing the uncertain histories of past relatives, militants and members of the community in different contexts. Families, scientists and others were moved by the urge to solve what these images and objects “lacked” —recalling W.J.T. Mitchell (1996)—what they could not show and that the living desired to know. They were, as I explored in Chapter 5, moved by the affective force of violence, which permeated the actions, feelings, and emotions of people for years and conditioned the most intimate searches for clues and mortal remains in the present.

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated that these forms of making history are not ordinary endeavours but efforts enmeshed with an unresolved experience of trauma, caused by the absence of bodies, the absence of signs, and an elusive historical imagination. To speak about the crafting of history in relation to the exhumation of the Republican dead, I argued—like Veena Das (2007)—is to consider how particular forms of violence have affected individuals and collectivities over time. It also means considering how such violence, which emanated from the desecrated corpses of the defeated, has haunted political measures and decisions, neighbourly interactions, and personal subjective worlds—from its perpetration until the present moment. It means understanding how the experiences of hunger, poverty, and social neglect generated by such politically-motivated killings have shaped the way in which different generations relate to the past. Biographical accounts revealed parts of a history that had rarely been spoken about. They also, however, exposed the ways in which past hardship had been internalised and performed, thus continuing to affect subsequent generations. The deaths of these Republicans, which haunted the very traces and footprints found in the present, made history thinkable both for the historian and the relative. Documents and images, bones and objects were charged with an aura of repression, a trail of fear, and visible signs of perverse postwar politics. When considering these alternative modes of enunciation (Rancière 1994), we ought to think of how the latent anguish trapped in these vestiges shaped the experiences of those who engaged with them. On the one hand, we should consider how their affective force led people to embark on incessant and prolonged searches

for their ancestors in official and personal archives and mass graves, in order to reconstruct an image and memory that challenge their absence. On the other hand, we should also try to appreciate how these traces, which contain fraudulent representations and violent inscriptions, stir trauma and affliction in the searchers, which makes the endeavour for history an unsettling yet consoling affair.

Indeed, the making of the history and the recovery of the bodies of the Republican dead are also imbued with strong moral sentiments and a desire to honour their memory and rebury their corpses. At the exhumation ground, the treatment of the mortal remains and the care for victims was directly entwined with the personal and political wishes of families, activists, and the exhumation team. Their recovery was ultimately connected to a desire to return these bodies to the safe space of the community and to see their reburial in the cemetery. Scientific technologies have acquired a central role as modes of accounting, collecting, and identifying the mortal remains of the defeated. Many families and activists have regarded the scientific excavation of the mass graves as an intricate and laborious process and admired the time and dedication of the teams with which I worked during my fieldwork. Other techniques, such as DNA analysis, have proved, as Wagner (2008) has observed, to be a “technology of repair”, which has reunited different generations and re-established kinship bonds through biological reconstructions. Other actions, such as the rituals followed during reburials, the transportation of coffins, the attire of boxes, the mausoleums and tombstones built, and the speeches performed during these occasions have created a new culture around the corpses and the memory of the Republican dead at the periphery of statist action. Like exhumations, reburial also constituted a space in which familial and political wishes were pursued through the aid of scientific scrutiny.

As discussed in Chapter 6, reburials reunited a community around the defeated, with a common interest in commemorating the lives of the dead, contesting past and present national political agendas. These communities shared a common vision—though in practice, they were formed by heterogeneous goals and desires. Reburials—just like exhumation processes—often reflected how different political and familial wishes diverged in relation to the mortuary rites and the burial of the

exhumed remains. As seen in the case of Castuera, Puebla, and Garciaz—where some families preferred individual to collective burials, political symbols, or religious over civil ceremonies—the decisions made by these groups were taken collectively and often influenced by the wishes of a majority. Reburials provided a space in which collective memory and imagination could be performed, but also, as Seremetakis (1991) argues in the Greek case, constituted a realm in which conflict between historical memory actors was manifested. The memorial and re-interment also created a forum of denunciation, where the frictions between these civil-society collectives and governmental entities at local, regional, and national level were made apparent and contested. The staging of these memorials elicited, as shown in the last chapter of the thesis, the motivations and desires of a community in localised areas and at particular moments in time. Authors like Young (1993) have shown, however, that memorials can lose their meaning with the passing of time, and can come to be re-signified by future generations. Whereas some of the memorials built around Extremadura in the last decade symbolise this particular moment, as well as the struggle for the re-making of a Republican past, not all of them have continued to be used for collective commemoration. Many have remained tokens of private forms of mourning and individual remembrance.

The exhumation and reburial of the mortal remains of the Republican dead, and the process of historical production they triggered, is still today, at the time of writing, driven by the ethical concerns of historical memory associations, families, volunteers, and independent scientific teams, which have generated an established exhumation practice over many years. The inauguration of the Popular Party government in 2011, however, made the continuation of exhumations and historical memory campaigns extremely difficult and their existence became more precarious. While at the beginning of its mandate the party agreed that funds would still be available for the historical memory project, later discourses of austerity and a general lack of interest on the part of the new government ended all financial aid for exhumations and the cessation of grants for identification and reburials. As seen throughout the thesis, those in the frontbenches of PP have always been in open opposition to remembering the Spanish Civil War in terms of the history of defeat, and, once in power, the reparation measures implemented by the previous PSOE

government were soon dismantled. In this context, today, many of the national historical memory associations—such as ARMH or the Foro—have resorted to independent fundraising tactics, using online platforms such as crowdfunding to fund searches and excavations that relatives of the Republican dead still widely demand. Indeed, such limited funds have led to a decrease in the number of exhumations, which are now funded by private and, on some occasions, international donors. The progressive absence of support on the part of national and regional bodies has also led to the threat of closure of laboratories, and has called into question the permanence of projects and associations around the country.

The passivity of the central government has only strengthened the reticent positions of judges and institutions such as the Spanish National Court (*Audiencia Nacional*), which have continued to reject and deter recent petitions for the accountability and trial of Francoist perpetrators. In this regard, the judiciary has further frustrated the desire for “truth, justice and reconciliation” on the part of associations, and blocked their attempts to prosecute and testify against past repression. For instance, the current petition of Argentinean judge Maria Servini, based on the principle of universal jurisdiction, to extradite the perpetrators of violence exercised against participants of the strikes of 1975, open local mass graves, and prosecute the theft of newborns during Francoism, has been ignored and archived by judges at the National Court. Servini’s initiative brought together many individuals and associations who were in support of the lawsuit. Many of those affected told their stories to the judge when she visited Spain in 2014. The extradition, which is also supported by the Argentinean branch of Interpol, as well as other demands remain unresolved because, according to the National Court, such petitions have to be formally made between the governments of the two countries and not between the judicial apparatuses of Argentina and Spain. For many in the historical memory movement, this is just another way of dissipating the possibility of reparation for the victims of Francoist crimes, as well as a way of silencing the voices of activists and relatives inside the country.

Recent developments thus demonstrate the influence that political and legal decisions have in the process of exhumation, reburial, and commemoration of mortal remains. They have also shown how the past remains an asset in current political

scenarios. In Extremadura, for instance, the unofficial alliance between PP and IU at a regional level—which was forged after the regional election of 2011—secured the collapse of PREMHEX and the devolvement of its team by the end of 2014. The agreement between the different institutions, which was renewed every few years, was dissolved in favour of the formation of a new project run by new researchers. The new Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura will have a different lead investigator and exhumations' coordinator. This has been interpreted by some as a political move on the part of some members of IU to administer the production of the history of the region. Once again, and as informal conversations with some interlocutors have revealed, these actions were also prompted by the desire of particular individuals to organise and authorise information about the conflict and direct the exhumation of mass graves. Some activists to whom I spoke are today concerned about the fact that, with this new arrangement, PP has managed to reduce the impact of the project, as well as its activity. Many believe that behind these actions there is a desire on the part of the right-wing party to eventually dismantle any institutional support for the investigation into the conflict.

Some people affirmed that with the small budget designated to the new project, exhumations and reburials would be an impossible undertaking. The project has also ended its collaboration with researchers from the old PREMHEX, who worked for over ten years researching archives, testimonies, and mass graves. Such political decisions had a direct impact on the writing of some the results of the previous project. Though Javier and Candela, the two PhD historians who worked for PREMHEX submitted their theses before the end of the project, Laura's work was not finalised at that point. Laura had been hired as an archaeologist and never as a PhD researcher for the project. As a result, the analysis of some corpses, the writing of final reports, and the final writing of her thesis would become a personal project, which the new governmental agreement was not willing to fund. As she explained to me, the members of the new project had been clear about the change of direction the new investigation would take, and they showed a disinterested attitude towards her research. She told me that the new project would not be hiring PhD students and instead would rely on the work of independent historians around the region. Indeed, these new directions opened up a process of inquiry, with new aims, methods, and objectives, which decentralised the work of the university and involved other research

actors. This would constitute a new form of investigation in the region, which would most certainly trigger the articulation of other discursive formations and practices around the war past. For many of those with whom I spoke before finishing this thesis, however, the lack of funds for exhumations would lead to an inability to attend, support, and accomplish pending demands for reparation made by many families.

The future of historical memory initiatives such as the exhumation and identification of the mortal remains of the Republican dead seems uncertain today, not only in Extremadura but also in the rest of Spain. Understanding the production of the history of the civil conflict in the present is crucial in order to discern how the past forms such an important aspect of the social, political, and familial worlds of contemporary subjects. The thesis has shown that writing the history of the war means contesting old regimes of truth—but also present political discourses and practices. Exhumation processes have certainly triggered new ways of relating to the war, which have brought together activists, politicians, scientists, and families around the history of the civil war dead. They have triggered the emergence of artefacts and stories, charged with meanings and feelings of past suffering, which have in turn prompted the formation of alternative spaces for knowledge production and enabled new avenues of political action. In the light of the most recent developments in the region and around the country, one can begin to appreciate how such systems of historical enunciation are changing and how dynamic they really are: a new archive that was set in motion continues to be transformed through the conflicting desires and affective presence of emerging nonhumans and the dead. In the dissertation, I have demonstrated the importance of history, both its inner workings and outer manifestations, in order to understand both how identities are reconstructed and how individuals negotiate their lives as part of collective realities through the creation of new idioms, spaces and practices that challenge long-established political meanings and scenarios.

## References

- Abu El-Haj, Nadia  
1998 "Translating truths: Nationalism, the practice of archeology and the making of past and present in contemporary Jerusalem." In *American Ethnologist*. Vol. 25. Pp. 166-188.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila  
1991 "Writing Against Culture." In *Recapturing Anthropology. Working in the Present*, R. G. Fox (ed.). Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Aguilar Fernández, Paloma  
1996 *Memory and Amnesia: the Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- 2008 *Políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial
- 2013 "Jueces, represión y justicia transicional en España, Chile y Argentina." In *Revista Internacional de Sociología* Vol. 71. Pp. 281-308
- Agustí i Roca, Carme and Mir, Concepción  
2005 "Delincuencia patrimonial y justicia penal durante el Franquismo (1939-1951): una incursión en la marginación." In *Pobreza, marginación, delincuencia y políticas sociales bajo el franquismo*, C. Agustí i Roca, J. Gelonch Solé, and C. Mir (eds.). Lleida: Universitat de Lleida. Servicio de Publicaciones.
- Agustí i Roca, Carme, Gelonch Solé, Josep and Mir, Concepción  
2005 *Pobreza, marginación, delincuencia y políticas sociales bajo el franquismo*. Lleida: Universitat de Lleida. Servicio de Publicaciones.
- Amnesty International  
2006 "Víctimas de la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo: el desastre de los archivos, la privatización de la verdad." Available at <https://doc.es.amnesty.org/cgi-bin/ai/BRSCGI/Victimas%20de%20la%20guerra%20civil%20y%20el%20régimen%20franquista?CMD=VEROBJ&MLKOB=25254750202>. Last accessed 17.01.2014.
- Anderson, Benedict R.  
1983 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Appadurai, Arjun  
1981 "The Past as a Scarce Resource." In *MAN*. Vol. 16(2). Pp. 201-219.
- 1996 *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arendt, Hannah  
1970 *On violence*. London: Allen Lane.
- 1973 *The origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Argenti, Nicolas and Schramm, Katharina  
2010 "Introduction." In *Remembering Violence: Anthropological Perspectives on Intergenerational Transmission*, N. Argenti and K. Schramm (eds.). Berghahn.
- Aroca Mérida J.L.  
2011 "El PP gana las elecciones regionales pero Vara podría Gobernar con Izquierda Unida." *Hoy*, May 23.

- Azoulay, Ariella  
2008 *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York; London: Zone.
- Bartolomé, Juan José and Bartolomé Cecilia (dir.)  
1979 *Después de...primera parte: No se os puede dejar solos*. Producciones Cinematográficas Ales S.A.
- 1983 *Después de...segunda parte: Atado y bien atado*. Producciones Cinematográficas Ales S.A.
- Basu, Paul  
2007 “Palimpsest Memoryscapes: Materializing and Mediating War and Piece in Sierra Leone.” In *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*. M. Rowlands and F. de Jong (eds.). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Behar, Ruth  
1996 *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Belting, Hans  
2005 “Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology.” In *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 31. Pp. 302.
- Berliner, David  
2005 “The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology.” In *Anthropology Quarterly* Vol. 78(1). Pp. 197-211.
- Bervernage, Berber, and Colaert, Lore  
2014 “History from the grave? Politics of time in Spanish mass graves exhumations.” In *Memory Studies*. Pp. 1-17.
- Blanco Rodriguez, Juan A.  
2007 “La historiografía de la guerra civil española.” *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*. No. 7.
- Bloch, Maurice  
1996 “Internal and External Memory: Different Ways of Being in History.” In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, M. Lambek and P. Antze (eds), London: Routledge.
- Bloch, Maurice, and Jonathan Parry  
1982 *Death and the regeneration of life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre  
1979 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Box, Zira  
2011 *España año cero. La construcción simbólica del franquismo*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Boyarin, Jonathan  
1994 *Remapping Memory: the Politics of Timespace*. Minneapolis, Minn.; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Brennan, Teresa  
2004 *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press.
- Buchli, Victor and Lucas Gavin  
2001 *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*. London: Routledge
- Buckham, Susan  
2003 “Commemoration as an expression of personal relationship and group identities: a case study of York Cemetery.” In *Mortality*. Vol. 8. Pp. 160-175.
- Burke, Peter

- 1989 "History as Social Memory." In *Memory, History, Culture, and the Mind*, T. Butler (ed.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Burton, Antoinette M.  
2003 *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in late Colonial India*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Butler, Judith  
2000 *Antigone's claim: kinship between life & death*. New York; London: Columbia University Press.
- Carsten, Janet  
2007 *Ghosts of Memory: Essays on Remembrance and Relatedness*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Caruth, Cathy  
1995 *Trauma: explorations in memory*. Baltimore, Md.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- 1996 *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore, Md.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Casanova, Julián  
1992 "Liberalismo, fascismo y clase obrera: algunas contribuciones recientes a la historia comparada de la Europa de entreguerras." In *Studia histórica-Historia Contemporánea*. Vol. 10-11.
- 2002 "Una dictadura de 40 años." In *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: La violencia en la dictadura de Franco*, J. Casanova (ed.). Barcelona: Crítica.
- Chaves Palacios, Julián  
2000 "La historiografía reciente sobre la Guerra Civil 1936-1939 en los umbrales del nuevo milenio." In *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*. Vol. 16. Pp. 409-430.
- 2005 "Franquismo: prisiones y prisioneros." In *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*. No. 4. Pp. 27-47.
- Chaves Rodriguez, Candela  
2014 *Justicia Militar y Consejos de Guerra en la Guerra Civil y Franquismo en Badajoz: delitos, sentencias y condenas a desafectos*. PhD diss., University of Extremadura.
- Chinchón, Javier  
2012 *El tratamiento judicial de la Guerra Civil y el franquismo en España. Una visión de conjunto desde el derecho internacional*. Bilbao: Deusto University.
- Cho, Grace M.  
2008 *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Clifford, James  
1986 "Introduction: Partial Truths". In *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*, J. Clifford, and G. E. Marcus. Berkeley; London: University of California Press.
- 1999
- Cobo Romero, Francisco  
2005 "Represión y persecución de minorías y disidentes en las dictaduras fascistas

- europas del período de entreguerras: los apoyos sociales y la colaboración de ciudadanos comunes. La Alemania Nazi y la España franquista.” In *Pobreza, marginación, delincuencia y políticas sociales bajo el franquismo*, C. Agustí i Roca, J. Gelonch Solé, and C. Mir (eds.). Lleida: Universitat de Lleida.
- Coleman, Simon, and Peter Collins  
2006 *Locating the Field: Space, Place and Context in Anthropology*. Oxford: Berg.
- Collingwood, Robin G.  
1946 *The idea of history*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Connerton, Paul  
1989 *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Constenla, Tereixa  
2013 “El constitucional avala el envío de los papeles de Salamanca a Cataluña”. *El País*, February 1
- Cowan, Jane  
2006 “Culture and Rights After Culture and Rights.” In *American Anthropologist*. Vol. 108. Pp. 9-24.
- Cowan, Jane K., Dembour, Marie-Benedicte and Wilson, Richard  
2001 *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crossland, Zoe  
2000 “Buried lives: forensic archaeology and Argentina’s disappeared.” In *Archaeological Dialogues*, Vol. 7(2). Pp 146-159.
- 2009 “Of Clues and Signs: The Dead Body and Its Evidential Traces.” In *American Anthropologist*. Vol. 111. Pp. 69-80.
- 2012 “The Archaeology of Contemporary Conflict.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology of Rituals and Religion*, T. Insoll (ed.). Pp. 285-306. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2013 “Evidential Regime of Forensic Archaeology.” In *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Vol. 42. Pp. 121-137.
- Cruikshank, Julie  
1998 *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press
- 2005 *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*. Canada: University of British Columbia Press
- Cuesta, Josefina  
2007 “‘Las capas de la memoria’: Contemporaneidad, sucesión y transmisión generacionales en España (1931-2006).” In *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*. No 7.
- Da Silva Catela, Ludmila, and Jelin, Elizabeth  
2002 *Los archivos de la represión: documentos, memoria y verdad*. Madrid: Siglo XXI; New York: Social Science Research Council.
- Das, Veena  
1996 “Language and the Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain.” In *Daedalus*. Vol. 125. Pp. 67-91.

- 
- 1997 *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*.  
Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks
- 
- 2007 *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley, Calif.;  
London: University of California Press.
- Das, Veena, Kleinman, Arthur, Ramphela, Mamphela and Reynolds, Pamela (eds.)  
2000 *Violence and subjectivity*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press.
- Das, Veena and Kleinman, Arthur  
2001 "Introduction". In *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and  
Recovery*, V. Das, A. Kleinman, M. Lock, M. Ramphela and P. Reynolds,  
(eds.) Berkeley; London: University of California Press.
- Daston, Lorraine  
1991 "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe." In  
*Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 18. Pp. 93-124.
- Daston, Lorraine, and Peter Galison  
1992 "The Image of Objectivity" In *Representations*, No. 4 Special Issue: Seeing  
Science. Pp 81-128
- 
- 2007 *Objectivity*. New York: Zone
- Daston, Lorraine, and Elizabeth Lunbeck (eds.)  
2011 *Histories of scientific observation*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.
- De Certeau, Michel  
1988 *The Writing of History*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Delgado Ruiz, Manuel  
2012 *La ira sagrada: anticlericalismo, iconoclastia y antiritualismo en la España  
contemporánea*. Barcelona: RBA Libros.
- Derrida, Jacques  
1996 *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression*. Chicago; London: University of  
Chicago Press.
- Domanska, Ewa  
2005 "Toward the Archaeontology of the Dead Body." In *Rethinking History*. Vol.  
9. Pp. 389-413.
- Douglas, Lee  
2013 "Los regímenes probatorios de la ciencia y la visión: la ciencia forense y la  
exhumación del pasado". In Gomez-Moya, C., *Human Rights/Copy Rights:  
Los archivos visuals en la época de la declasificación*. Pp. 217-248. Santiago  
de Chile: Universidad de Chile, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo.
- Díaz Díaz, Benito  
2011 "La represión franquista como generadora del fenómeno de los huídos en  
Extremadura." In *Revista de Estudios Extremeños*. Vol. 67. Pp. 909-933.  
*El Socialista*  
1978 "Letters to El Socialista" *El Socialista*, January 8.
- Engelke, Mathew  
2008 "The Objects of Evidence". In *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.  
Vol. 14. Pp. 1-21.
- Escudero, Rafael  
2011 "Conceptos contra el olvido: una guía para no perder la memoria." In  
*Diccionario de memoria histórica. Conceptos contra el olvido*. Pp. 7-15.  
Madrid: Catarata

- Espinosa Maestre, Francisco  
 2002 “Julio de 1936. Golpe militar y plan de exterminio.” In *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: La violencia en la dictadura de Franco*, J. Casanova (ed.). Barcelona: Editorial Crítica.
- 2003 *La columna de la muerte: el avance del ejército franquista de Sevilla a Badajoz*. Barcelona: Crítica
- 2005 “Agosto de 1936. Terror y propaganda: los orígenes de la Causa General.” In *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea* Vol. 4. Pp. 15-25.
- 2007 *La primavera del Frente Popular: los campesinos de Badajoz y el origen de la Guerra Civil (marzo-julio de 1936)*. Barcelona: Crítica.
- 2009 “Informe sobre la represión franquista. Estado de la cuestión”. Available at <http://www.todoslosnombres.org/php/verArchivo.php?id=1251>. Last accessed: 17.01.2014.
- 2012a *Guerra y represión en el sur de España: entre la historia y la memoria*. Valencia: Universitat de Valencia.
- 2012b “La represión franquista. Las circunstancias de la muerte.” In *Boletín Galego de Medicina Legal e Forense*, F. Etxeberria (ed.). No 18. Pp 44-55.
- Etxeberria, Francisco, Herrasti, Lourdes, Pérez de la Iglesia, Lorena, Albisu, Claudio, Jimenez, Jimi, Cardoso, Sergio, Baeta, Miriam, Nuñez, Carolina, Palencia, Leire and Martinez de Pancorbo, Marian  
 2012 “Exhumación, identificación y causa de muerte en la fosa común de Aibar-Oibar (Navarra).” In *Munibe (Antropología-Arkeología)*. Vol. 63. Pp. 367-377.
- Fabian, Johannes  
 1983 *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. N.Y.: Columbia University Press
- Felman, Shoshana  
 2002 *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press.
- Fernandez de Mata, Ignacio  
 2011 “The Rupture of the World and the Conflicts of Memory. In *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago (eds.). Pp 279-304. Indiana: University of Notre Dame.
- Ferrándiz, Francisco  
 2006 “The Return of Civil War Ghosts: The Ethnography of Exhumations in Contemporary Spain.” In *Anthropology Today* Vol. 22(3). Pp. 7-12.
- 2007 “Exhumaciones y políticas de la memoria en la España contemporánea.” In *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*. No. 7
- 2008 “Cries and Whispers: Exhuming and Narrating Defeat in Spain Today.” In *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*. Vol. 9 (2). Pp 177-192.

- 2009 “Fosas comunes paisajes del terror”. In *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares*. Vol. LXIV (1). Pp. 61-94.
- 2010 “De las fosas comunes a los derechos humanos: El descubrimiento de las desapariciones forzadas en la España contemporánea.” In *Revista de Antropología Social*. Vol. 19. Pp. 161-189.
- 2011 “Autopsia social de un subterro.” In *Isegoría: Revista de Filosofía Moral y Política*. Vol 45. Pp. 525-544.
- 2013 “Exhuming the Defeated: Civil War Mass Graves in 21st Century Spain.” In *American Ethnologist*. Vol. 40. Pp. 38-54.
- 2014 *El pasado bajo tierra: exhumaciones contemporáneas de la Guerra Civil*. Barcelona: Anthropos
- Ferrándiz, Francisco, and Baer, Alejandro  
2008 “Digital Memory: The Visual Recording of Mass Exhumations in Contemporary Spain.” In *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. Vol. 9 (3 Art 35). Pp. 1-23.
- Feuchtwang, Stephan  
2011 *After the Event: The Transmission of Grievous Loss in Germany, China and Taiwan*, London: Berghahn Books.
- Filippucci, Paola  
2009 “In a Ruined Country: Place and the Memory of War Destruction in Argonne (France).” In *Remembering Violence: Anthropological Perspectives on Intergenerational Transmission*, N. Argenti and K. Schramm, (eds.). London: Berghahn.
- 2010 “Archaeology and the Anthropology of Memory: Takes on the Recent Past.” In *Archaeology and Anthropology: Understanding Similarities, Exploring Differences*, D. Garrow and T. Yarrow (eds.). Oxbow Books.
- Foltyn, Jacque Lynn  
2008 “Dead Famous and Dead Sexy: Popular Culture, Forensics, and the Rise of the Corpse.” In *Mortality*. Vol. 13. Pp. 153-173.
- Fontein, Joost  
2010 “Between Tortured Bodies and Resurfacing Bones: the Politics of the Dead in Zimbabwe.” In *Journal of Material Culture*. Vol. 15. Pp. 423-448.
- Foucault, Michel, and Colin Gordon  
1980 *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972/1977*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Foucault, Michel, and Alan Sheridan  
1972 *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- García Alonso, María  
2011 “Los nuevos testigos de la fe: mártires y política en la España del siglo XXI.” Conference: *Bajo Tierra: Exhumaciones del siglo XXI en España*, ILLA-CCHS-CSIC, Madrid, 29 de Junio – 1 de Julio
- Gassiot, Enmergol and Steadman Dawnie W.  
2008 “The Political Social and Scientific Contexts of Archaeological Investigations of Mass Graves in Spain.” In *Archaeologies: Journal of the World*

- Archaeological Congress, Vol. 4(3). Pp. 429-444.
- Geertz, Clifford  
1975 *The Interpretation of Cultures*. London: Hutchinson.
- GEHCEX  
2007 "Balance del fenómeno de la recuperación de la Memoria Histórica en Extremadura." Documento aprobado en el II Encuentro Historiográfico del GEHCEX, Cáceres.
- Gil Vico, Pablo  
1998 "Ideología y represión: La Causa General." In *Revista de Estados Políticos (Nueva Época)*. No. 101. Pp. 159-189.
- Giménez Muñoz, María del Carmen  
2009 "La Asistencia Social en Sevilla: del Auxilio de Invierno al Auxilio Social (1936-1939)." In *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*. No. 9.
- González Duro, Enrique  
2012 *Las Rapadas. El franquismo contra la mujer*. Madrid: Siglo XXI de España.
- González, José Ramón  
2006 "Prisioneros del miedo y control social: El campo de concentración de Castuera." In *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*. No. 6.
- González-Ruibal, Alfredo  
2007 "Making Things Public: Archaeologies of the Spanish Civil War". In *Public Archaeology*. Vol. 6. Pp. 203-226.
- 2009 "Arqueología y Memoria Histórica" Available at [http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/31203/1/2009\\_Patrimonio%20Cultural%20de%20España\\_Gonzalez\\_Arqueologia.pdf](http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/31203/1/2009_Patrimonio%20Cultural%20de%20España_Gonzalez_Arqueologia.pdf). Last accessed 17.01.2014.
- 2012 "From the Battlefield to the Labour Camp: Archaeology of the Civil War and Dictatorship in Spain." In *Antiquity*. Vol. 86. Pp. 456-473
- Gordon, Avery  
1997 *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis, Minn.; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gómez Bravo, Gutmaro, and Marco, Jorge  
2011 *La obra del miedo: violencia y sociedad en la España franquista (1936-1950)*. Barcelona: Ediciones Península.
- Granjel, Mercedes, and Antonio Carreras Panchón  
2004 "Extremadura y el debate sobre la creación de cementerios: un problema de salud pública en la ilustración". In *Norba. Revista de Historia*. Vol. 17. Pp. 69-91.
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson  
1997 *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Gálvez Biesca, Sergio  
2006 "El proceso de la recuperación de la 'memoria histórica' en España: Una aproximación a los movimientos sociales por la memoria." In *International Journal of Iberian Studies*. Vol. 19 (1). Pp. 25-51.
- Hacking, Ian  
1996 "Memory Sciences, Memory Politics". In Lambek, M. and Antze, P., *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* London: Routledge.
- Halbwachs, Maurice, and Lewis A. Coser  
1992 *On collective memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Hastrup, Kirsten  
1992 *Other histories*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Head of the State  
2011 “Ley 20/2011, de 21 de julio, del Registro Civil.” *Boletín Oficial del Estado*.  
Sec. I. No. 175. Pp. 81468-81502.
- Heaney, Seamus  
2004 *The burial at Thebes: Sophocles' Antigone*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, A. V. Miller, and J. N. Findlay  
1977 *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hertz, Robert  
1960 *Death and the Right Hand*. Translated by Rodney and Claudia Needham.  
Aberdeen: Cohen & West.
- Herzfeld, Michael  
1991 *A place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town*. Princeton,  
N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Hinojosa Durán, José  
2009 *Tropas en un frente olvidado: El ejército republicano en Extremadura durante  
la Guerra Civil*. Extremadura: Agapea.
- Hirsch, Marianne  
1997 *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge,  
Mass.; London: Harvard University Press.
- 2008 “The Generation of Postmemory.” In *Poetics Today* Vol. 29. Pp. 103-128.
- 2012 *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the  
Holocaust*. New York, N.Y.; Chichester: Columbia University Press.
- Hodgkin, Katharine, and Radstone, Susannah  
2002 *Regimes of memory*. London: Routledge.
- Hoskins, Janet  
1994 *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives*. London:  
Routledge.
- Humblebaek, Carsten  
2004 “Usos políticos del pasado reciente durante los años de gobierno del PP.” In  
*Historia del Presente*. Vol. 3. Pp. 157-167.
- Jelin, Elizabeth  
2003 *State Repression and the Labours of Memory*. Minneapolis: University of  
Minnesota Press
- Jelin, Elizabeth, and Langland, Victoria (eds.)  
2003 *Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales*. Madrid: Siglo XXI de  
España; Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno de Argentina; New York: Social  
Science Research Council.
- Jing, Jun  
1996 *The Temple of Memories: History, Power, and Morality in a Chinese village*.  
Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Jordanova, Ludmilla J.  
2000 *History in practice*. London: Arnold.
- Juliá Díaz, Santos  
1979 *Orígenes del Frente Popular en España, 1934-1936*. Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno.
- 1999 *Víctimas de la Guerra Civil*. Madrid: Temas de Hoy.

- 
- 2003 “Últimas noticias de la Guerra Civil.” In *Revista de Libros*, Vol. 81, Pp. 6-8.
- Koselleck, Reinhart
- 2004 *Futures Past: on the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press.
- Kwon, Heonik
- 2006 *After the Massacre: Commemoration and Consolation in Ha My and My Lai*. Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press.
- 
- 2008 *Ghosts of War in Vietnam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Lambek, Michael
- 1996 “The Past Imperfect: Remembering as Moral Practice.” In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, M. Lambek and P. Antze (eds.). New York; London: Routledge.
- Lambek, Michael and Antze, Paul
- 1996 “Introduction: Forecasting Memory.” In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, M. Lambek and P. Antze (eds.). New York; London: Routledge.
- Lanero, Mónica
- 1996 *Una milicia de la justicia. La política judicial del franquismo (1936-1945)*. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales.
- Laqueur, Thomas W.
- 1994 “Memory and Naming in the Great War.” In *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, J.R. Gillis (ed.). Chichester: Princeton University Press.
- Lass, Andrew
- 1994 “From Memory to History. The Events of November 17 Dis/Remembered.” In *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*, R. Watson (ed.). Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Latour, Bruno
- 1993 *We Have Never Been Modern*. New York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- 
- 1999 *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press.
- 
- 2005 “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik. An Introduction to Making Things Public.” In *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, B. Latour and P. Weibel. London: MIT Press.
- Ledesma, José Luis
- 2003 *Los días de llamas de la revolución: violencia y política en la retaguardia republicana de Zaragoza durante la Guerra Civil*. Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico.
- León Cáceres, Guillermo, López Rodríguez, Antonio D. and González Cortés, José Ramón
- 2011 “El campo de concentración de Castuera: del olvido forzado a lugar de memoria y recurso didáctico.” In *Revista de Estudios Extremeños*. Vol. 67. Pp. 527-594.
- López Rodríguez, Antonio D.
- 2006 *Cruz, bandera y Caudillo: el campo de concentración de Castuera*. La Serena: CEDER.

- 
- 2013 “La configuración de la memoria franquista en La Serena (1939-1948): materiales para su estudio.” In *La represión franquista en el entorno del Campo de Concentración de Castuera*, L. Muñoz Encinar, X. M. Ayán Vila, and A. D. López Rodríguez (eds). AMECADEC, Spanish Ministry of the Presidency and CSIC-INCIPIT.
- Marcus, George
- 1995 “Ethnography in/of the World System the Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography.” In *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 24. Pp. 95-117.
- Martin Bastos, Javier
- 2013 *Pérdidas de vidas humanas a consecuencia de las prácticas represivas franquistas en la provincia de Badajoz (1936-1950)*. PhD diss., University of Extremadura.
- Martinez, Guillem
- 2012 *CT o la Cultura de la Transición. Crítica a 35 años de cultura española*. Madrid: Debolsillo.
- Martín Rubio, Ángel D.
- 2012 *Extremadura: de la República a la España de Franco*. Ediciones Barbarroja.
- Martín Pallín, José Antonio
- 2011 “Amnistía.” In *Diccionario de memoria histórica. Conceptos contra el olvido*. Pp. 57-63. Madrid: Catarata
- Mbembe, Achilles
- 2003 “Necropolitics.” In *Public Culture*. Vol. 15 (1). Pp. 11-40.
- Meskell, Lynn
- 2002 “Negative Heritage and Past Mastering in Archeology.” In *Anthropological Quarterly*. Vol. 75. Pp. 557-574.
- Metcalf, Peter, and Huntington, Richard
- 1991 *Celebrations of Death: the Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Miñarro, Anna and Morandi, Teresa
- 2013 *Trauma y transmisión: Efectos de la guerra del 36, la posguerra, la dictadura y la transición en la subjetividad de los ciudadanos*. Barcelona: Xoroi.
- Mitchell, W.T.J.
- 1996 “What Do Pictures “Really” Want?” In *October*, Vol. 77. Pp. 71-88.
- Molinero, Carme and Ysás, Pere
- 2003 “Las condiciones de vida y laborales durante el primer franquismo. La subsistencia ¿un problema político”. In *Ayer*. Vol. 52. Pp. 255-282.
- Molinero, Carme, Tintó Sala, Margarita and Sobrequés i Callicó, Jaume (eds.)
- 2003 *Una inmensa prisión: los campos de concentración y las prisiones durante la guerra civil y el franquismo*. Barcelona: Crítica.
- Montero García, Feliciano
- 2005 “Asistencia social, catolicismo y franquismo: la actuación de acción católica en la posguerra.” In *Pobreza, marginación, delincuencia y políticas sociales bajo el franquismo*, C. Agustí i Roca, J. Gelonch Solé, and C. Mir (eds.). Lleida: Universitat de Lleida.
- Montero, Juan
- 2010 “Exhumando el legado material de la represión franquista: de la percepción social a la encrucijada jurídica y patrimonial.” In *Recorriendo la memoria/ Touring Memory*, J. Almansa Sánchez (ed.). Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Moradiellos, Enrique

- 2004 *1936. Los mitos de la Guerra Civil*. Barcelona: Península.
- Moreno Gómez, Francisco
- 2002 "Huidos, guerrilleros, resistentes. La oposición armada a la dictadura". In *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: La violencia en la dictadura de Franco*, J. Casanova (ed.). Barcelona: Crítica.
- Morton, Christopher A., and Edwards, Elizabeth
- 2009 *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Muñoz Encinar, Laura
- 2011 "Memoria arqueológica de la excavación y exhumación de 2 fosas comunes del Franquismo localizadas en el cementerio de Castuera (Badajoz)" INT/2011/102: University of Extremadura.
- 
- 2013 "Exhumación en el cementerio de Castuera. Campaña 2011." In *De la ocultación de las fosas a las exhumaciones. La represión franquista en el entorno del Campo de Concentración de Castuera*, L. Muñoz Encinar, X. M. Ayán Vila. and A. D. López Rodríguez (eds). AMECADEC, Spanish Ministry of the Presidency and CSIC-INCIPIT.
- Muñoz Encinar, Laura, Ayán Vila, Xurxo M, López Rodríguez, Antonio (eds.)
- 2013 *De la ocultación de las fosas a las exhumaciones. La represión franquista en el entorno del Campo de Concentración de Castuera*. AMECADEC, Spanish Ministry of the Presidency and CSIC-INCIPIT.
- Navaro-Yashin, Yael
- 2012 *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Nora, Pierre.
- 1989 "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." In *Representations*. No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, Pp. 7-24: University of California Press.
- Osiel, Mark
- 1997 *Mass Atrocity: Collective Memory, and the Law*. New Brunswick; London: Transaction.
- Petrović-Šteger, Maja
- 2012 "Mobile Sepulchre and Interactive Formats of Memorialisation: On Funeral and Mourning Practices in Digital Art." In *Journeys* Vol.13(2). Pp. 71-89.
- Petrović-Šteger, Maja
- 2008 "Anatomising Conflict – Accommodating Human Remains." In *Social Bodies*, M. McDonald and H. Lambert (eds.). London: Berghahn.
- Pickering, Michael and Keightley, Emily
- 2013 "Communities of Memory and the Problem of Transmission." In *European Journal of Cultural Studie.s* Vol. 16. Pp. 115-131.
- Pine, Frances.
- 2007 "Memories of Movement and Stillness of Place: Kinship Memory in the Polish Highlands." In *Ghosts of Memory: Essays on Remembrance and Relatedness*, J. Carsten (ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Pink, Sarah
- 2006 *The Future of Visual Anthropology: Engaging the Senses*. London: Routledge
- 
- 2009 *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: SAGE.
- Portelli, Alessandro

- 2003 *The Order Has Been Carried out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Preston, Paul
- 1994 *The coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction and Revolution in the Second Republic*. London: Routledge.
- 
- 1996 *A concise history of the Spanish Civil War*. London: Fontana.
- 
- 1999 “La historiografía de la guerra civil española: de Franco a la democracia.” In *Tuñón de Lara y la historiografía española*. A. Reig Tapia, J. L. de la Granja Sainz and R. Miralles Palencia (eds.). Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- 
- 2011 “The Theorists of Extermination: The origins of Violence in the Spanish Civil War. In *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago (eds.). Pp. 42-68. Indiana: University of Notre Dame.
- 
- 2013 *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*. London: Harper Press.
- Prior, Lindsay
- 1989 *The Social Organisation of Death: Medical Discourse and Social Practices in Belfast*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Público, Diario
- 2010 “La Cultura, contra la impunidad del franquismo.” *Público*, June 14.
- Quigley, Christine
- 1996 *The Corpse: a History*. Jefferson, N.C.; London: McFarland.
- Rancière, Jacques
- 1994 *The Names of History: on the Poetics of Knowledge*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Reig Tapia, Alberto
- 2006 *La Cruzada de 1936: Mito y Memoria*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Renshaw, Layla
- 2011 *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast.
- Richards, Michael
- 2011 “Grand Narratives, Collective Memory and Social History: Public Uses of the Past in Postwar Spain.” In *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, C. Jerez-Farrán and S. Amago (eds.). Pp. 121-148. Indiana: University of Notre Dame.
- Riesco, Sergio
- 2006 “La intensificación de cultivos durante la Reforma Agraria de la II República: ¿Alternativa o complemento?” In *¿Interés particular, bienestar público? Grandes patrimonios y reformas agrarias*, R. Robledo Hernández, and S. López García (eds.). Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza.
- Rios, Luis, Casado, Juan Ignacio and Puente Prieto, Jorge
- 2010 “Identification Process in the Mass Graves from the Spanish Civil War.” In *Forensic Science International*. Vol. 199 (1-3). Pp. E27-E36.
- Robben, Antonius C. G. M.
- 2004 *Death, Mourning, and Burial: a Cross-Cultural Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rodrigo, Javier

- 2004 “Los mitos de la derecha historiográfica. Sobre la memoria de la Guerra Civil y el revisionismo a la española.” In *Historia del Presente*. No 3. Pp. 185-195
- 
- 2008 *Hasta la raíz: violencia durante la Guerra Civil y la dictadura franquista*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- 
- 2013 “Exploitation, fascist violence and social cleansing: a study of Franco's concentration camps from a comparative perspective.” In *European Review of History - Revue Europeen d'histoire*. Vol. 19. Pp. 553-573.
- Rosaldo, Renato
- 1993 *Culture & Truth: the Remaking of Social Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Ross, Fiona C.
- 2001 “Speech and Silence: Women’s Testimony in the First Five Weeks of Public Hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” In *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering and Recovery*, V. Das, A. Kleinman, M. Lock, M. Ramphela, and P. Reynolds, (eds.). London: University of California Press.
- Rothberg, Michael
- 2009 *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Rugg, Julie
- 2003 “Introduction: Cemeteries.” In *Mortality*. Vol. 8. Pp. 107-112.
- Sánchez Marroyo, Fernando
- 1990 “Las organizaciones obreras en Extremadura durante la Segunda República.” In *Investigaciones históricas: época moderna y contemporánea*. No. 10. Pp. 123-164.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy
- 1992 *Death Without Weeping: the Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley; Oxford: University of California Press.
- 
- 1995 “The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology.” In *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 6. Pp. 409-440.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Bourgois, Philippe I.
- 2004 *Violence in war and peace: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy
- 2004 “Undoing: Social Suffering and the Politics of Remorse in the New South Africa.” In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, N. Scheper-Hughes and P. Bourgois (eds.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Schofield, John A.
- 2008 *Aftermath: Readings in the Archaeology of Recent Conflict*. New York: Springer.
- Sciolino, Elaine and Daly, Emma
- 2002 “Spaniards at Last Confront the Ghost of Franco.” *The New York Times*, November, 11
- Sebald, Winfried Georg
- 2001 *Austerlitz*. London: Penguin Books.
- Seremetakis, Nadia C.
- 1991 *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Shaw, Rosalind and Waldorf, Lars

- 2010 "Introduction". In *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence*, R. Shaw, L. Waldorf and Hazan P. (eds.) Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Silva, Emilio  
2005 *Las fosas de Franco. Crónica de un desagravio*. Madrid: Temas de Hoy
- Silva Suarez, Miguel  
n.d. "El proyecto de Cruz de los Caídos para La Coruña de Santiago Rey Pedreira." Available at: [http://ruc.udc.es/bitstream/2183/5215/1/ETSA\\_13-3.pdf](http://ruc.udc.es/bitstream/2183/5215/1/ETSA_13-3.pdf). Last accessed 28.01.2015.
- Skultans, Vieda  
1998 *The Testimony of Lives: Narrative and Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Solé I Barjau, Queralt  
2009 "Inhumados en el Valle de los Caídos. Los primeros traslados desde la provincia de Madrid." In *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*. No 9.
- Sontag, Susan  
2003 *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux
- Spanish Ministry of the Presidency  
1940 "Decreto de 1 de abril de 1940 disponiendo se alcen Basílica, Monasterio y Cuartel de Juventudes, en la finca situada en las vertientes de la Sierra de Guadarráma (El Escorial), conocida por Cuelga-muros, para perpetuar la memoria de los caídos en nuestra Gloriosa Cruzada." In *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. Pp 2240. Available at <http://www.memoriahistorica.gob.es/ValleCaidos/enlaces/HistoriaVCaidos.htm> Last accessed: 16/01/2015.
- 2011a *Informe: Comisión de expertos para el futuro del Valle de los Caídos*. Available at: <http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/85710/1/INFORME%20COMISION%20EXPERTOS%20VALLE%20CAIDOS%20PDF.pdf>. Last accessed: 25.02.2015.
- 2011b "Orden PRE/2568/2011, de 26 de septiembre, por la que se publica el Acuerdo del Consejo de Ministros de 23 de septiembre de 2011, por el que se ordena la publicación en el Boletín Oficial del Estado del Protocolo de actuación en exhumaciones de víctimas de la guerra civil y la dictadura." In *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, Sec. III. Pp. 101916-101923. Available at <http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2011/09/27/pdfs/BOE-A-2011-15206.pdf>. Last accessed: 25.02.2015.
- Steedman, Carolyn  
1998 "The Space of Memory: in an Archive." In *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 11. Pp. 65-83.
- 2001 *Dust*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- 2008 "Romance in the Archive." In *The Ontology of the Archive Symposium*. ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change, Manchester
- Stoler, Ann L.  
2010 *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.

- Oxford: Princeton University Press
- Stewart, Kathleen  
1996 *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America*. Princeton, N.J.; Chichester: Princeton University Press.
- Thomas, Maria Angharad  
2012 *The Faith and the Fury: Popular Anticlerical Violence and Iconoclasm in Spain 1931-1936*. PhD diss., University of London.
- Verdery, Katherine  
1999 *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- 2013 *Secrets and Truth: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Vidal, César  
2004 *Memoria de la Guerra Civil española: partes nacionales y republicanos*. Belacqua.
- Viejo-Rose, Dacia  
2011 *Reconstructing Spain: Cultural Heritage and Memory after Civil War*. Brighton: Sussex Academic.
- Vila Izquierdo, Justo  
1999 *La Guerra Civil en Extremadura*. Extremadura: Universitas.
- Vázquez Astorga, Mónica  
2004 "Celebraciones de masas con significados políticos: los ceremoniales proyectados desde el Departamento de Plástica en los años de la Guerra Civil española." In *Artigrama. Revista del Departamento de Historia del Arte de la Universidad de Zaragoza*. No. 19. Pp. 197-226.
- 2006 "Los monumentos a los caídos: ¿un patrimonio para la memoria o para el olvido?" In *Anales de Historia del Arte*. Vol. 16. Pp. 285-314.
- Wagner, Sarah E.  
2008 *To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing*. Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press.
- 2013 "The Making and Unmaking of an Unknown Soldier." In *Social Studies of Science*. Vol. 43(5). Pp. 631-656.
- 2014 "The Social Complexities of Commingled Remains." In *Commingled Human Remains: Methods in Recovery, Analysis and Identification*. B. Adams and J. Byrd (eds.). New York: Academic Press.
- Winter, Jay M.  
1996 *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Young, Craig and Light, Duncan  
2012 "Corpses, Dead Body Politics and Agency in Human Geography: Following the Corpse of Dr Petru Goza." In *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. Pp. 135-148.
- Young, James E.  
1993 *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press.

Ysàs Solanes, Pere

2004 *Disidencia y subversión: la lucha del régimen franquista por su supervivencia, 1960-1975*. Barcelona: Crítica.

Yuval-Davis, Nira

1997 *Gender & Nation*. London: Sage.