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The return of Civil War ghosts

The ethnography of exhumations in contemporary Spain

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Fig. 1. Inauguration of a memorial near the mass grave at Valdediós, Asturias, where 17 people (including 13 nurses) from a nearby psychiatric hospital were killed and buried by Franco's troops. The grave was exhumed in July 2003.

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1. Juliá et al. 1999, Casanova 2002. Pio Moa (2004), who is currently spearheading a revisionist approach emphasizing the inevitability and restraint of Franco's rebellion, an approach expressed in best-selling books, denounces what he calls the 'myths' about Franco's repression and follows organic historian Ramón Salas Larrazabal (1977) in proposing far more conservative figures for Franco's victims. According to Salas, the total number of victims of the war was around 625,000, including 159,000 due to post-war hunger and sickness, 23,000 due to post-war shootings, and 10,000 related to the activities of the *maquis* – guerrillas – and to the participation of Spaniards in World War II. Thus, the total for the Civil War is 433,000. Of these, 165,000 died of disease, so violent deaths amounted to about 268,000, of whom 160,000 died in combat and 108,000 in the repression. This would be the total for all sides. Salas suggests that 72,500 were shot by Republicans and 58,000 by Franco, including the 23,000 shootings in the post-war period. However, in *Víctimas de la Guerra Civil*, Republican shootings are calculated at around 50,000 whereas the list of those

Mass graves resulting from episodes of extreme violence are crucial evidence of the wounds of history, and a key to understanding the dynamics of terror. The intentional jumbling of unidentified corpses in unmarked graves is a source of disorder, anxiety and division in many societies (Robben 2000). As a sophisticated instrument of terror, this type of grave is intended to bury the social memory of violence and thus to strengthen the fear-based regimes of the perpetrators, which can survive for decades. Yet as social and political circumstances evolve, social memory eventually returns to confront these unquiet graves. Events of recent decades in countries such as Argentina, Guatemala, Spain and Rwanda show us precisely this. What happens as a result of these return visits, often involving exhumations, depends on the national and international contexts in which the remains are found, investigated and manipulated (Verdery 1999).

The reasons for exhumation

Exhuming the remains of those who died by violence is inevitably controversial. State institutions often become involved in the exhumations in one way or another – sometimes in order to prevent them. On other occasions the work is done by international or grassroots organizations. Graves may be ignored and forgotten, deliberately erased from history, or actively commemorated. The exhumed remains themselves have their own complex social, political and cultural afterlives (Verdery 1999). For example, they can remain anonymous or become highly politicized, they can cross borders or end up in mass reburials, they can rest for long periods of time in forensic laboratories, or local communities and families can provide a final burial for the dead. Yet in all cases the public disclosure of caches of bones, products of the tragic legacies of war and violent conflict, elicits heartbreaking stories that had pre-

viously been suppressed or only whispered. The regimes responsible for the dead bodies become the subject of heated social debates challenging hegemonic versions of an uncomfortable past and provoking disputes about the politics of victimhood.

As Sanford has stated in relation to her work in Guatemala, digging up mass graves is literally 'excavating memory' (2003:17). The contested meanings associated with exhumed bones depend heavily on the junctures and dissonances among the diverse memory idioms and plots that surface and compete around them, from expert discourses – psychiatric, medical, legal, forensic, anthropological – to intimate, personal and fragmented narratives of trauma. The emotions, narratives and commemorations triggered by exhumations are crucial to a necessary reassessment of an uncomfortable past. This complicated process of memory-building has to be understood culturally and contextually for, as Lambek and Antze assert, 'memories are not simply records of the past, but interpretative reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration' (1996: vii).

Does anthropology have any business getting mixed up with suppressed memories, the historical schemes of victors, war monuments, skeletons and mass graves? I believe it does, for a number of reasons. First, as some colleagues have already shown (Verdery 1999, Robben 2000, Sanford 2003), the analysis of mass graves and corpses allows for a productive convergence of anthropologies of, *inter alia*, violence, death, mourning, victimhood, human rights, social suffering, memory, ritual, mass media and art. In turn, exhumations and other activities concerned with dead bodies and their representations are extremely rich, if complex, ethnographic locations in which to explore the emer-

executed by Franco's troops and associates might go up to 150,000, on the assumption that at least half of them went unregistered in the civil registers during the war.

2. The scale of this massacre in the bullring is one of the biggest bones of contention in the conflicting memories of the Civil War. For the winning side, it was simply a myth. In some versions cherished by the losing side, it was a horrendous bloodbath. See Espinosa 2003.

3. In Viznar (Alfacar, Granada). He was shot and buried, it is believed, with a teacher, Dióscoro Galindo, and two *banderilleros*, members of the anarchist trade union CNT (Confederación Nacional de los Trabajadores).

4. Emilio Silva has published a detailed report on the search for his

gence of social trauma and its diffusion in the social fabric, condensing many interwoven processes ranging from low emotions to high politics. There is finally the crucial issue of social responsibility, which has been pointed out by other anthropologists working with this issue (del Río 2005). As anthropology makes efforts to find new research agendas and rhetorics to express the complexity of social and cultural life, I argue that we should develop a more systematic 'rapid response' discipline ready to engage current social debates rigorously and quickly, and with the explicit aim of contributing to such debates with critical analysis and in a variety of contexts, from academic meetings to NGO assemblies to the mass media.

Exhumation of Franco's Spain

I will now look at a specific ethnographic case, where I hope to trace a 'road map' of possible anthropological lines and strategies of research for cultural and political work around the excavation of mass graves. Over the last five years, Spain has seen the emergence of a surprisingly strong social movement, loosely grouped around the idea of 'recovery of historical memories'. Local organizations engaged in this process have sprung up in different regions of the country. The 'recovery' movement focuses mainly on locating graves and exhuming corpses of the victims of Franco's repressive policies, both during the Civil War (1936-1939) and after his victory. According to recent historical research, the number of people executed by Franco's troops during and after the war can be estimated at between 70,000 and 100,000.¹ Modes of execution included occasional massacres, such as that in the bullring of Badajoz in 1936, where between 1000 and 1500 prisoners were allegedly shot,² and what were known as '*sacas*' or '*paseos*' ('strolls'), a generalized terror and assassination technique where prisoners drawn from jails and concentration camps, or citizens judged to

be collaborators of the defeated Republican government and therefore included in execution lists by local Franco agents, were driven to isolated places at dawn and shot, abandoned on the spot or dumped in ditches. The great Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, whose body has not yet been found and whose potential exhumation is the subject of a very revealing controversy, was the victim of one such *paseo* in Granada on 19 August 1936.³ To be sure, vengeful violence was perpetrated by both sides during the Civil War, and arguments over who initiated it, who was responding and who was more systematic and cruel are common in Spanish historiography, and have also surfaced in recent months in a number of newspaper articles and political debates. Yet while many of the numerous war victims on the winning side, including those illegally executed by Republicans, either by irregular troops or by popular tribunals, were in due course named, located, exhumed and commemorated during the first years of Franco's dictatorship, the corpses of many of the defeated still lie in unmarked graves by roadsides, cemeteries and battlefields. Until 2000, apart from a few exhumations that had mostly regional, local or just family impact, a wall of silence surrounded Spain's Civil War mass graves.

The issues raised by the exhumations of Civil War graves during the last five years were initially associated with individual initiatives and with a sudden media interest. The conditions for this wave of exhumations were nonetheless deeply embedded in the fabric of Spain's civil society, where they had been kept alive despite the dictatorship and its mandatory historiographical construction of 'victory', and despite the political pacts that paved the way for Spain's transition to democracy in the 1970s. These conditions were maintained by diverse actors on the losing side and by innumerable acts and initiatives, individual and collective, and from internal and external exile, relating to the memory of the war, the 1939 defeat and its aftermath. Then, in January 2000 Emilio Silva, a young Madrid-based journalist, set out to exhume the body of his grandfather, who in October 1936 was allegedly shot and thrown, with 12 others, into an unmarked grave in the village of Priaranza del Bierzo (León).⁴ In October 2000 the grave was opened under the supervision of archaeologists and forensic anthropologists.

Together with Santiago Macías, Silva founded the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, ARMH). In September 2001 the ARMH opened a second grave containing four bodies in Fresno de. This time the national and international press was present at the exhumation, and leading Spanish newspaper *El País* published half a page on the exhumation. In early 2002 ARMH set up a website, which was to become a decisive communication tool. On 16 March 2002 DNA tests were performed on four of the bodies recovered from Priaranza, again exciting media interest. ARMH later contacted the UN Task Force for Forced Disappearances to inform it of the Spanish Civil War case. Other exhumations followed. By this time ARMH was overwhelmed by communications from relatives of disappeared people asking for help in finding and identifying their remains. New associations started to spring up in different parts of Spain, some of them as regional or provincial sections of ARMH, or loosely linked to it. Other associations clustered around a second NGO, Foro por la Memoria (Forum for Memory), linked to the Communist Party; still others were autonomous. In May 2003 the DNA tests on the exhumed remains of Emilio Silva Faba, Silva's grandfather, were confirmed as positive, and he became the first 'disappeared person' of the Spanish Civil War to be identified by this means.⁵ By the end of 2005 more than 500 corpses had been recovered in over 60 exhumations.

Fig. 2. Francisco Escribano Cardeñosa, who survived an arrest with eight other farmers in Fontanosas, a small village in Ciudad Real, when he was accused of cooperating with the Guerrillas or 'maquis'. Like the others, he was tortured, but refused to admit any link with irregulars in the Sierra and was finally released. Three of his brothers 'confessed' and were killed in the Fontanosas shooting in 1941.

Fig. 3. Ninety-three-year-old Teresa Pozo García, from Villalmanzo (Burgos), looks for the first time into the grave where her husband was thrown after being shot by Franco's troops around 70 years before. Covarrubias (Burgos), July 2005.

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grandfather's body and the events that ensued; see Silva and Macías 2003.

5. For an expanded debate, see Ferrándiz 2005.

6. Such as the Asociación de Familiares y Amigos de la Fosa Común de Oviedo, or the Archivo Guerra Civil y Exilio (AGE).

7. The Foro por la Memoria website (<http://www.nodo50.org/foroporlamemoria/>), which has become a major source of information and links regarding historical memory in Spain, now displays the technical protocols and reports of the exhumations for which they are responsible.

8. Particularly widely shown, and very important in the popularization and promotion of the 'memory recovery' movement, has been the two-part documentary *Las fosas del silencio* (*The graves of silence*), by Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis, first broadcast by the Catalan channel TV3 in 2003.

9. Among recent books by historians on the Civil War, post-war repression and exile, see, for example, Espinosa 2003, Rodrigo 2003, Molinero et al. 2003, Casanova (ed.) 2002, Vinyes, Armengou and Belis 2002, Juliá et al. 1999, Aguilar 1996. Books by investigative journalists and writers include Silva & Macías 2003, Elordi 2002, Lafuente 2002, Torres 2002a and 2002b, Domingo 2002, Reverte & Tomás 2001. Accounts by survivors and witnesses of the repression (some of them now reissued) include Elio 2002 and Sans 2001.

10. Among the most popular novels are Mateo Díez 2004, Semprún 2003, Cebrián 2003, Ferrero 2003, Chacón 2002, Cercas 2001, Regás 1999, Rivas 1998.

11. Zapatero's grandfather, Captain Juan Rodríguez Lozano, was shot in Puente Castro, León, on 18 August 1936, just one month after Franco's uprising, because he refused to adhere to it. In his will, written a few hours before his execution, Rodríguez Lozano asked his relatives to keep his memory alive and declared: 'I die innocent and I forgive', a sentiment regularly cited by President Rodríguez Zapatero to emphasize the family history behind his political disposition.

The uncomfortable images of piles of corpses bearing marks of violence have provoked widespread and important debates in Spanish society, particularly within and between the various groups striving to preserve the memory of Franco's repression. There have been two main controversies. Early in the process, exhumations were described by some other organizations⁶ as an 'erasure of genocide' or even a 'second killing' of the victims. A number of manifestos circulated on the internet suggested that the exhumations were being done for media attention and personal profit, undermining the powerful denunciation of injustice inscribed in the buried bones, silent witnesses of the atrocities. What was to be done with the bones? What about those bones that remained unidentified? These organizations maintain that the graves should remain untouched as testimonies of the cruelty of the massacres and the sacrifice of the dead. They promote *above-ground* commemorative and symbolic markers – the identification of grave sites, the installation of monuments, inscriptions and lists of names of those lying in the graves – and the organization of periodic rituals of remembrance.

A second area of controversy, this time involving actions *below ground*, between the pro-exhumers of ARMH and Foro por la Memoria, related to the 'proper' establishment of protocols for a number of procedures, including: pre-exhumation study of each burial site (the location, circumstances of the killing, and lists of those killed); interviewing survivors and relatives; the exhumations themselves; forensic laboratory analysis; and the chain of custody of the remains. Both associations have been increasingly establishing alliances with experts – historians, forensic anthropologists, archaeologists, social anthropologists and psychologists – both in order to defend themselves against reciprocal accusations of non-professional conduct and to give their exhumations a more 'scientific' and thus legitimate character.⁷ In some cases more or less formal agreements with universities and scientific associations have

been established. Social and cultural anthropologists, for example, were not considered 'necessary specialists' in the first search for expert support, and it took some time to begin to make our presence visible and valued. Although we are still sometimes confused with journalists, forensic anthropologists or archaeologists, some of us interested in the politics of memory have been increasingly called on by the associations to contribute to the testimony-gathering process, both at the exhumations themselves and in other contexts. We are also invited to participate alongside other experts in conferences and summer schools, offering analysis of the 'symbolic' aspects of the exhumations and the social suffering emerging from them.

In fact, the most poignant disagreement between the two associations falls directly within our analytical field, as it relates to the political and mortuary rituals that take shape around exhumations, from locating graves, to opening them, to reburial. ARMH identifies itself as an association of relatives of victims and sympathizers with no direct affiliation to any political party, and considers the relatives of victims to be autonomous and decisive in the organization of mourning. Foro por la Memoria works from within the Communist Party and supports the politicization of the exhumation and handling of the bones. In their ceremonies exhumations are often carried out under a Republican flag, and at times incorporate other elements of the traditional left-wing commemoration protocol, such as speeches by Communist Party leaders, references to the heroism of the victims, raised fists and singing hymns over the remains, etc. In historical perspective these controversies over the correct handling of remains can be seen as a prolongation of former conflicts, not only during the post-war years but also during the war when, within a context of early anti-clerical responses to the uprising, embalmed remains housed in churches and convents were exhumed, desecrated and publicly exhibited (Lincoln 1985). Similar debates arose during the Second Spanish Republic, when

12. 2003; see also the response by Tusell 2003.
 13. Juliá 1999 and 2004.
 14. An argument frequently used by politicians in the right-wing Partido Popular, and recently articulated by their Catalanian leader, Josep Piqué.

- Aguilar, P. 1996. *Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española*. Madrid: Alianza.
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there were heated arguments regarding the allocation of bodies to religious or civil cemeteries (Delgado 2001, García 2004), and before. While considered by many to be simply petty inter-organizational politics, the contemporary underlying struggle, concerning as it does the reconstruction and interpretation of the 'wishes' of the dead, is a crucial point of entry for an ethnographer working on the anthropology of social trauma and memory.

Identifying forgotten victims

The central focus of the pro-exhumation associations is exhumations, the identification of the disappeared and the recounting of Civil War victims' narratives. A primary component of the process of identification and exhumation is the gathering, by experts and untrained volunteers alike, of testimony from witnesses and relatives of those killed during the war and the early post-war years. This testimony, expressed in local idioms of distress, acquired special relevance as a necessary accompaniment to the exhumation of the bones. Stories that had rarely been voiced, and then only in whispers, suddenly found, in the exhumations and the exposure of caches of bones, the resonating chamber they had lacked for over 60 years. During the exhumations some people speak out about the violence for the first time, while others look on in awe, or refuse to give their full names. And some are offended by the presence of 'inappropriate' people, such as relatives of the war victors, at the exhumations. As survivors age, the suppressed memories of the generation who suffered most during the war and its aftermath have dwindled. But with the recent exhumations, survivors were suddenly powerfully anchored in the most explicit evidence of the violence – the corpses themselves. In this process, the deep silence imposed by Franco's regime on the victims of its terror in the post-war years was markedly shaken.

The emergence of the bones from their forgotten graves and the associated re-evaluation of the testimonies of the defeated has become the focus of significant media attention, triggering the appearance and consolidation of a full-scale 'meaning industry' (Sztompka 2000) around memories of the Civil War, not unlike the avalanche of cultural products that has appeared in Germany around the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. An important task for anthropologists in the next few years is to track how the diverse 'memory products' taking shape around the exhumations are transformed as they enter this increasingly competitive industry of meaning of the traumatic past. For example, the complex process of translation of what Steedly (1993) called 'fugitive memories' of Franco's victims into legitimate public discourses, as well as into commodities, is no doubt a very promising scenario for an ethnography of memory and social suffering (Herzfeld 2001). Similarly, the itinerary of the bones and the physical evidence of violent death from under the ground to prime-time TV, forces us to engage what Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin (2004) have termed an 'anthropology on new terrain' – that of the media.

In Spain, since the first exhumations were reported on national and international news, the process of public exposure of Franco's repression has proven unstoppable. Documentaries have been broadcast on both local and national TV.⁸ Exhumations are usually covered by both local and national TV news. Some radio programmes have also contributed with coverage of exhumations, organization of debates, and gathering and broadcasting of Civil War testimonies. The Civil War has long been a focus of interest among writers, and the post-war repression is now also the subject of best-selling books. New academic and journalistic books and survivor accounts of the Civil War, and particularly its tragic aftermath, regularly appear in bookshops and newspaper kiosks.⁹ Some novelists rushed

to bring out books set during the Civil War, or were taken unawares by the impact of their books.¹⁰ Films based on some of these best-selling novels are already out and one of them, *Soldados de Salamina* (2004), was selected to represent Spain in the competition for the Oscar for best foreign film. Historians, forensic and cultural anthropologists, and archaeologists, some of them internationally renowned, are volunteering nationwide to help organize the activities around exhumations. Memorial events for the victims, as well as exhibitions and university summer courses on different aspects of the post-war repression, are frequently held. On the political front, anthropological attention has to be paid to the process of institutionalization of traumatic memory – a process where, in Sanford's words, the emerging public and political spaces for memory intersect, or rather, 'clash' (2003: 19). The various autonomous regional authorities, depending on their political leanings, are moving either to block the exhumations as far as is in their power or to create and promote 'memory recovery' commissions and to legislate on the exhumation process. The sudden institutional interest in the recovery of memories of Civil War defeat in autonomous regions such as Catalonia or the Basque Country is no doubt linked to an ongoing political debate over the meaning of the term 'nation', to demands for the establishment of new autonomy statutes regulating their relation to 'Spain', as well as to complex identity politics, including the politics of victimization.

In the midst of this explosion of interest, on 20 November 2002, the Spanish Parliament unanimously passed an unprecedented motion condemning Franco's uprising in 1936 as an illegal rebellion against a legitimate government. We await the response from President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, whose own grandfather was shot during the early days of the war,¹¹ and his government to what is now broadly considered by those on the left as an urgent responsibility of Spanish democracy. One response to the motion was the establishment, in October 2004, of an interdepartmental commission, under the supervision of Vice-President Teresa Fernández de la Vega, which will co-ordinate efforts nationwide to promote the 'moral and judicial rehabilitation' of the defeated in the Civil War.

At the time of writing, October 2005, the most relevant grassroots organizations have been heard by the Commission, which is now in the process of analysing the documentation provided and assessing the diverse initiatives proposed to them in the hearings. For example, the ARMH presented the Commission with a list of demands, including full government support for exhumation and the memory recovery movement within international legal frameworks, the creation of a task force of historians to serve as a Truth Commission, the installation of an exhibition in the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), exposing the use of forced labour in the construction of this massive, controversial monument to Franco's victory, and the immediate removal of all sculptures, commemorative monuments and 'lists of martyrs' devoted to the Civil War victors everywhere in Spain.

Conflicting political cultures

The recent rapid emergence of the ghosts of the Spanish Civil War, who had lain for six decades under a shroud of silence, has thrown the country into an unexpected public debate exposing conflicting political cultures, not only between ideological groupings but also between generations. This is indeed a situation of great relevance for any anthropologist interested in history, memory politics and intergenerational struggles. For many in Spain, including the majority of established historians and politicians, the debate was settled for good through the 1977 'Amnesty Law' decreed during Spain's transition to democracy.

Fig. 4. The bureaucracy of death. Judicial record of a prisoner shot in the 'camp de la bota' in Barcelona. The word 'executed' is written across the document. Detail of a touring art exhibition by Francesc Abad.

22/11/58

PRISIÓN CELULAR DE BARCELONA

Expediente procesal de Antonio Lopez Avila 4a 333

13. 9. 29. Mod. 1

Natural de <u>Almoharín</u>		Provincia de <u>Alcalá</u>	
Vecino de <u>Villafraanca de los Montes</u>		Provincia de <u>Barcelona</u>	
Hijo de <u>Rafael</u>		y de <u>Juliana</u>	
Edad <u>42 años</u>		Profesión <u>Levita</u>	
Instrucción <u>si</u>		Religión <u>R. A. B.</u>	
Estado <u>soltero</u>		Hijos <u>1</u> N° de ellos <u>-</u>	
Antecedentes		Ingresa por <u>P. de Villafraanca de los Montes</u>	
Domicilio <u>c/ Mediodía n° 11</u>			

Pulgar derecho	Fórmula Dactiloscópica	Pulgar izquierdo	Pulgar derecho

CAUSA

Número del Sumario	Año	JUZGADO	DELITO	Fecha en que se decretó prisión	Fecha de libertad
1				<u>13. 11. 38</u>	

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Amnesty was conceived as an act of closure for the open wounds of the Civil War and the dictatorship, and also as an end to the enduring myth of the 'two Spains'. It did not mean that the excesses carried out by both parties during the Civil War were forgotten. Rather, as the historian Santos Juliá has pointed out, they were deliberately 'thrown into oblivion'.¹²

Amnesty was the logical consequence of a new representation of the war – that of a senseless tragedy to be overcome through reconciliation – which had been increasingly adopted from the 1950s onwards by a new generation of historians and politicians who had not experienced the conflict at first hand.¹³ According to this logic, the massacres, shootings and other forms of violence inflicted during the war were to be scientifically researched and debated by historians. They should not be used in the future in renewed struggles over the politics of victimization or to open up already healed historical wounds. Bodies, for their part, should be left in their mass graves to avoid alarming the political right and the military.

However, the generations born in the 1960s and after, who were only children when Franco died, and neither fully experienced the dictatorship nor participated in the political bargaining around the 1977 Amnesty Law, were to discover that the country's celebrated democratization and modernization were built on a foundation of neglected,

unquiet graves. They began to question the political pacts established by their elders after Franco's death. This questioning has ranged from mild critiques – 'exhumations and the recording of victims' testimony should have been done earlier' – to full-scale rejection of the amnesty as a shameful pact of forgetfulness that dishonoured the memory of those massacred, falsified history and deprived relatives of 'proper' mourning and closure.

A pertinent fact in this emerging debate about Spain's traumatic past, as we have noted, is that a majority of the people involved in the exhumation movement are not historians or academics but rather relatives – mainly grandchildren – of people buried in the graves, together with left-leaning political activists who still feel they were painfully defeated in the war and then hunted like rabbits during the post-war years. On the other hand, the (young) academics are mostly struggling to gain institutional space and sometimes have to face prestigious seniors on the amnesty-defence side. Right-leaning historians and politicians generally dismiss the process as petty, unnecessary and vengeful, and one that will only lead to the opening up of old wounds and the reemergence of outworn political discourses. Some accuse President Zapatero himself of contributing to destroying the 'spirit of the transition' by trying to impose the new 'hegemony of the defeated' in place of the 'agreement of all'.¹⁴

Fig. 5. Shadows of onlookers over exhumed bones. Fontanosas, Ciudad Real, February 2006.

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Questions abound, as exhumations are still a hot issue in Spain's politics of memory. Most of the fundamental questions still remain unanswered, requiring further, urgent research and demanding permanent adjustment of theoretical and methodological frameworks to make sense of the evolving facets of the process. For example, why has this grassroots movement emerged with such vigour in the early 21st century, more than six decades after the tragic events it seeks to commemorate, and what form will it take after the initial burst of interest? What kind of social, political, symbolic events are exhumations becoming in contemporary Spain? How are they being inserted into current political debates? How will they evolve over the next few years? What will be the long-term impact of exhumations, and of all the activities taking place around them, in the refashioning of memories of the Spanish Civil War and in the social and political organization of the country's past? Is there a 'tolerance threshold' in Spanish society for how much of the traumatic past can be dug up and aired before it becomes a nightmare? Notwithstanding the fact that exhumations are bound to have a crucial influence on the ways in which we Spaniards perceive ourselves and our past, and will continue to trigger heated debates in all areas of Spanish society in coming years, it seems still too soon to advance an informed assessment.

Moreover, the events that are increasingly taking shape around memories of the Civil War are many and varied, forcing us to imagine, demarcate and then explore emerging ethnographic locations. As this swift and incomplete tour of the locations of the emergence of memories of the defeated in the Civil War in contemporary Spain shows, there are many possible scenarios for an ethnography of traumatic memory, and they are beyond the scope of traditional fieldwork. A combined multi-site strategy – 'follow the bodies', 'follow the silences', 'follow the plots', 'follow the political decrees', 'follow the cultural products', and so on (Marcus 1995) – around diverse ethnographic sites, from cemeteries to exhumations, commemorations, forensic laboratories, film and literature, art exhibitions, academic acts, national and local government, pop concerts, websites or memory museums, to name but a few, is required if we are to understand anthropologically the process by which traumatic memory is being

produced, circulated and consumed in the social fabric in what, according to Alexander (2004), can already be labelled a 'trauma process'. What was earlier presented as an ethnographic 'road map' for investigating the impact of exhumations in Spain (and other similar contexts) might more rightfully be considered a challenging research 'labyrinth'.

From an anthropological point of view, the Spanish case is also of interest for the ongoing debate on the impact of opening violence-related graves and mass graves in other parts of the world – Iraq, Bosnia, Rwanda, Guatemala, Argentina, etc. More than 60 years have passed between these events and the beginning of the current exhumation process. This speaks of the resilience of traumatic memory through years of silence and fear, and even beyond reasonable political settlements like the Amnesty Law – an issue that requires further research.

Calls for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate the facts, give institutional backing to the exhumation process, assume the expenses and ultimately settle the legal and moral debate on victims and perpetrators in the Spanish Civil War in line with the principles of international law, which would no doubt become another crucial ethnographic research site (Hayner 2002, Sanford 2003), are as yet timidly articulated. Independently of the institutional and political support that might be provided, exhumations will continue during the upcoming years. Amid chronic controversy, the bodies of victims of the Civil War will continue to be named, commemorated and reburied. Stories of fear and repression will continue to be told. Lurid details of vindictive massacres will continue to trickle into the social arena in multiple formats.

It seems clear that, one way or another, Spanish society has entered the early 21st century having to face the unexpected and uncomfortable ghosts of the 20th. In the midst of heightened emotions and controversy, as well as a multiplicity of locations of memory, we anthropologists should be ready to provide appropriate analysis, to contribute to a more nuanced shaping of the necessary social and political debates over an almost 70-year-old fratricidal war and, more generally, to the better understanding of the long-lasting consequences of violence and repression. ●

ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEMORY

The front cover shows a statue of General Francisco Franco in the exhibition 'Franco, Listen!', held at the Museum of Vilafranca del Penedès, Barcelona. The statue was displayed with the aim of stimulating comment, dialogue and action among museum visitors around the time of the 30th anniversary of the dictator's death on 20 November 1975. It was attacked by a group of Catalan pro-independence activists, who poured red paint over Franco's head, invested him with a crown, and hung a sign around his neck reading: 'The Spanish Monarchy is a direct inheritance from Franco – end the hypocrisy.' The back cover shows a formerly unmarked mass grave strewn with floral tributes after a spontaneous ceremony led by relatives of the 46 people killed near Villamayor de los Montes (Burgos), following the exhumation of the bodies in July 2004.

In this issue, Francisco Ferrándiz describes the debates taking place in Spain around the exhumation of mass graves from the Civil War (1936-1939). In the last few years the strength of the 'movement for the recovery of historical memory' linked to the exhumations has been such that some on the political right are denouncing the advent of a 'new hegemony of the defeated' that is taking the place of the 'agreement of all' which many believe was the trademark of the Spanish transition to democracy.

Proposing that anthropologists visit and address the sites of memory – exhumations, cemeteries, political discourses, laws and commemorations, claims of victimhood, media reports, artistic performances, forensic laboratories, academic meetings and summer schools, historiographical debates, civil associations, historical archives, public and private rituals, narratives of the defeat and old photo albums, to name a few – Ferrándiz encourages anthropology to engage in 'rapid response' research, to diversify fieldwork locations, to modulate research strategies in order to address rapidly evolving problems, to continue visiting the sites of violence, past and present, and to produce the type of knowledge that allows us to participate in substantive ways in social and political debates well beyond our discipline and beyond our academic setting.

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JAI ME NUÑO