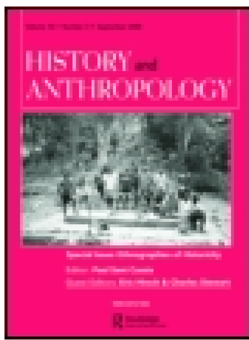


History and Anthropology

ISSN: 0275-7206 (Print) 1477-2612 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ghan20

Confronting a history of war loss in a Spanish family archive

Zahira Aragüete-Toribio

To cite this article: Zahira Aragüete-Toribio (2017): Confronting a history of war loss in a Spanish family archive, History and Anthropology, DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2017.1279157

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2017.1279157

Published online: 16 Jan 2017.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=ghan20

Download by: [Université de Genève] **Date:** 17 January 2017, At: 09:11

HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY, 2017
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2017.1279157

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Confronting a history of war loss in a Spanish family archive

Zahira Aragüete-Toribio

Law Department, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

ABSTRACT
The article discusses how relatives of left-wing Republicans killed and buried in mass graves by Francoist groups during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) recompose the stories of violent death of their ancestors in connection to documentary evidence that emerges during the search for their human remains. Mass grave searches have taken place in the midst of a process of historical investigation that has brought families, historians, activists and archaeologists together in order to document and seek official recognition for these extrajudicial executions. In so doing, they have also prompted the circulation of personal papers and official Francoist files that bear poignant information about the victims. Both sets of documents converge in the family archive, eliciting different re-readings and acts of memory. The article considers how familial interactions with these material sources attempt to grasp and recreate a history of loss marked by rupture and filled with absences. It also explores how such historical and familial uncertainties marks the experience of disappearance in the Spanish context.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 9 June 2016
Revised 6 October 2016
Accepted 8 December 2016

KEYWORDS
Spanish Civil War; exhumations; family archive; silence; memory; history

In the last sixteen years, Spain has witnessed a rush of activities centring on the search for, location and exhumation of the left-wing Republican in mass graves from the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and postwar years. This has put these Republican dead and their identities at the heart of what is at once a profoundly public and intimately private process of historical meaning making. After the war ended on 1st April 1939, the Franco regime only provided reparation for Francoist victims, persecuted and sentenced thousands of Republicans to death and imprisonment, and commemorated Francoist victory extensively.[1] During the transition to democracy, as many have argued, an unofficial *pact of silence* around the most difficult aspects of the Civil War and the dictatorship was forged between political elites (Aguilar Fernández 2008a). Such an agreement aimed to leave these episodes of the past behind in order to secure a democratic future. The Amnesty Law of October 1977 helped to consolidate this accord, absolving all parties of the conflict of the crimes they committed. The law granted amnesty to imprisoned left-wing supporters but provided full impunity to Francoist crimes (Aguilar Fernández 1996; Escudero 2014; Aguilar Fernández and Ferrándiz 2016). Furthermore, scarce economic and symbolic reparation measures were provided to relatives of Republicans and survivors (Aguilar

CONTACT Zahira Aragüete-Toribio zahira.araguetetoribio@unige.ch
© 2017 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Fernández 2008b; Closa 2013). Their experiences of Francoist repression would remain unspoken and unacknowledged publically, and mostly relegated to the realm of the private.

The first exhumation that took place at the turn of the twenty-first century prompted a social movement of families and activist groups around the recovery of human remains from Republicans buried in mass graves. Recent studies have estimated that over 130,000 Republicans were killed by Francoist army and paramilitary groups in extrajudicial executions (Rodrigo 2013). These collectives have demanded the recognition of these victims and made visible Republican histories of violence and loss in national and international realms. Inspired by transitional justice processes elsewhere (for example, Argentina or Chile) (Golob 2008; Ferrándiz 2014; Rubin 2014; Gatti 2016), the *movement for the recovery of historical memory* – as it came to be known – has pushed for the state involvement in the exhumation of unmarked graves; the moral, judicial and economic reparation of victims; the nullity of Francoist judicial sentences; the elimination of Francoist symbols (Gálvez Biesca 2006, 36); and the declassification, organization and digitization of archives. In 2007, the socialist government of José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero passed the commonly known as Law of Historical Memory,[2] which addressed some of these demands but was deemed insufficient by many associations. From 2011, the government of the conservative Popular Party stopped all aid to historical memory initiatives, ignoring the provisions made by the law. The party has opposed the movement from the start, arguing that promoting such a history would divide Spanish society (Junquera 2016).

Likewise, in the last years, efforts to investigate Francoist crimes by the judiciary have also been hindered. In 2008, Judge Baltasar Garzón attempted to launch a judicial inquiry drawing on international human rights law to define these extrajudicial executions as enforced disappearances in the framework of crimes against humanity (Closa 2013; Ferrándiz 2014). Garzón was later accused of perversion of justice and eventually dismissed in 2010 – though on the basis of a different case. In 2010, Argentinian Judge Maria Servini de Cubría initiated a criminal justice complaint under universal jurisdiction. This led to requests for the extradition of suspected Francoist wrongdoers – which met with the reluctance of the Spanish judiciary – and the first successful exhumation of a mass grave ordered by a judge in 2016. Throughout the years, historical memory associations have denounced the lukewarm response of Spanish institutions to international bodies such as the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance (WGEID) and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence of United Nations (UN) (Ferrándiz 2014; Gatti 2016), who have reminded the state of its obligations. In this context, families and activists have continued to mobilize, research and disseminate the history of the Civil War defeated mostly outside the scope of state action and criminal justice. As in other international examples, in which "dealing with the past" has been understood as necessary in order to obtain stability after conflict or authoritarian regimes (Bell 2009; Wouters 2014), the historical memory movement has promoted the idea that Spain needs to come to terms with its past in order to attain justice for Republican victims and consolidate its democracy.

In the search for the Republican missing, the exhumation process has thus become an important space for truth-seeking, where archaeological and anthropological finds are cross-referenced with life histories and testimonies, and with the information gathered from official and personal archives (Renshaw 2011; Douglas 2014; Rubin 2014;

Aragüete-Toribio 2015a). In this process of collection, cross-examination and interpretation, alternative archives, which contest official narratives about the Civil War and the postwar violence, have formed and developed through the exchanges between scientists, historians, activists and families. Central to this information flow, the family archive has expanded, as personal documents such as letters, diaries, biographical extracts, photographs or memorabilia have begun to share the space with Francoist military and institutional files, as well as scientific reports or historians' texts. Douglas (2014, 10) has argued that these new forms of historical evidence have helped victims to validate decades of private suffering and to "mobilise claims in the present", whilst shaping individual and collective identities. In this article, I depart from this point and examine the acts that people perform at the heart of the family archive in an effort to recompose a fragmented history of loss and to document the disappearance and execution of a relative. I first provide an overview of official and personal archives today and the evidentiary role of historical productions in the search for recognition of victims. Later, focusing on the experience of one family during an exhumation carried out in 2012 in the region of Extremadura (Spain), I examine the qualities and meanings that family records and the files of the Franco regime acquire in family life after decades of public silence. In so doing, I analyse the ways in which these artefacts stimulate and challenge transgenerational remembrance, and how their discursive content and their physical traits (that is, texture, engravings and composition) create a profuse and kaleidoscopic image of the disappeared relative.

Unfolding the archive

In 2011, I travelled to Extremadura, the region where I was born in South-Western Spain, to investigate the process of exhumation and reburial of human remains in mass graves from the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and the postwar period. During 18 months, I followed the work of historical memory associations in the region[3] and also worked with the members of the institutional Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura[4] (PREMHEx from now on). Even though financial and logistic support from the central government had existed intermittently over the years, some regions such as Extremadura – but also the Basque Country, Cataluña or Andalucía, among others (Ferrándiz 2014) – had promoted institutionally sponsored research groups or commissions to aid victims of Francoist crimes from the beginning of the exhumations movement. In Extremadura, the project was created and funded through an agreement between the provincial governments of Cáceres and Badajoz, and the regional government – presided over by the Socialist Party (PSOE) during that period. The University of Extremadura also participated, hosting the project inside of its History Department. From 2002 to 2013, professor Julián Chaves Palacios led the research group formed by three PhD students in History – Candela Chaves Rodriguez, Javier Martin Bastos and Inés Belén Fernández González – and a coordinator of exhumations, Cayetano Ibarra Barroso. When I met the team, there was also an archaeologist and physical anthropologist, Laura Muñoz Encinar, who had worked with PREMHEx since 2005.

PREMHEx was built around the historical investigation of "events related to the death, disappearance, prison or exile of people from Extremadura […] as well as concentration camps, disciplinary battalions or penitentiary colonies [during the war and in the

postwar years (*franquismo*)]" (GEHCEx 2007, 4). The project was innovative because historians and exhumation experts carried out academic research but also attended the demands from families to exhume mass graves that resulted from extrajudicial executions during and after the war. On the one hand, this meant that historical methodology and analysis were not only applied to the study of archives and oral testimonies, but also to the excavation of mass graves (see Muñoz-Encinar 2016). On the other, it brought academics in direct contact with activists and relatives of Republican victims, making the work of the historian an intrinsic part of historical memory endeavours. Not all historians, however, have agreed with this approach. Some like Juliá Diaz (2006; 2010) and Carreras (2005) have been critical of the place of History and the role of the historian in such historical memory ventures. Influenced, to an extent, by debates on the uses and abuses of memory in twentieth century France (e.g. Nora 1989; Todorov 2000), these authors have argued that the overly used concept of historical memory in Spain has come to stand for what is in fact history. Santos Juliá argues, for instance, that the term reflects an epistemological confusion between "knowing and remembering" (Colom González 2010, 16). For the author, history is the only tool capable of producing critical knowledge about the past (Juliá Diaz 2006, 2010, 16). Recognizing memory as something lived and individual, the author sees historical memory – understood here as a form of collective memory – as a mediated form of remembrance too often conditioned by the aspirations – and politics – of those who remember. Whilst history represents the past, historical memory, he asserts, "only ennobles that which is remembered" (Juliá Diaz 2010, 16).

Colom González (2010, 163) has criticized Juliá's view for not considering how historical memory enables other necessary representations of the past and the construction of new shared identities in Spain. He remarks that it is precisely "the moral and political meaning of collective remembrance", and not historical accuracy, that has made the historical memory phenomenon such an important event for contemporary Spanish society. For Colom González (Colom González 2010), these claims are significant because they require the symbolic reparation of "forgotten victims" and the "necessary reconciliation of Spanish citizens" with its most recent history. Similarly, when I spoke to PREMHEx director Julián Chaves Palacios about his understanding of the term, he explained to me that, in his view, the concept of historical memory transcended "mere research" (Interview with Julián Chaves Palacios, Cáceres, 3 September 2013). For Chaves Palacios, historical memory had a human and ethical component: to provide an answer to a social demand. History, in this regard, is only a part of this process, as families demand to know historical details to dignify their disappeared relatives (Colom González 2010) – and, on occasions, also to seek justice.[5] As opposed to Juliá, both of these authors speak of historical memory, as an enterprise where knowledge and remembrance are key acts in a process of public recognition of past crimes. Indeed many professional historians have become involved in this search for official acknowledgement, actively participating in families' inquiries or in recent judicial processes such as the investigation of Judge Baltasar Garzón in 2008. The work of historians like Francisco Espinosa Maestre, for instance, has been widely used as a point of reference for families, who have found in books such as *La columna de la muerte* (The Column of Death) (2003), details about their relatives' deaths that were unknown to them before. Books like Espinosa Maestre's have also provided lists of victims' names – creating a censuses of Republican victims, which did not exist before (De Greiff 2014). Similarly, Espinosa Maestre's "Report on

Francoist Repression. State of Play" (*Informe sobre la represión franquista. Estado de la cuestión*) (2009) played an important role in helping to define Civil War and postwar extrajudicial killings as crimes of enforced disappearance in Garzón's complaint. Historical memory initiatives have hence situated the historian inside of a process of information production in which historical analysis has become evidence through which to comprehend war loss inside the family and to legitimate such experiences in social and official spaces.

In this search for the recognition of Republican victims, concepts such as that of *disappeared* (*desaparecido*) have also been subject to major discussions among historians. Some have challenged the international use of the concept – commonly associated with the crime of enforced disappearance, enshrined in international human rights law – in favour of terms that refer to the historical specific experience of victims of Francoist violence. According to Ferrándiz (2014, 226–227), historians such as Julián Casanova have proposed that only those killed in "clandestine" executions in the first years of the war be categorized as "disappeared". This would exclude other victims that were detained, sentenced to death and executed by firing squad in later years (Ferrándiz 2014, 226). Likewise, Santos Juliá has supported this proposition, further arguing that the classification of Spanish victims as disappeared was the result of an "absurd" judicial investigation or *dislate judicial* (Ferrándiz 2014; Juliá Diaz 2010, 13), based on based on cases that also included those of victims of summary trials, who the author classifies as "executed" and not "disappeared". Ferrándiz explains that these authors have feared the "denaturalisation" of Republican victims, as the notion of "disappeared" entertained in international realms, remains strongly entangled with the "historical experience of the *detained-disappeared* in the dictatorships of South America" (Ferrándiz 2014, 227). Aware of this issue, Ferrándiz (2014) – among others (see Rubin 2015; Gatti 2016) – has argued for a context-specific understanding of the notion of disappearance that encompasses a "historic, sociological, juridical and symbolic differentiation" of the types of violence that victims underwent in Spain. Following these authors, I propose a definition of disappearance, which, anchored in the Spanish context, engages with the experience of violence of the dead but also considers, to a great extent, the manifold experiences of absence (Douglas 2014) that the living contended with after the killing of their relatives. In this regard, trails of disappearance can indeed be traced beyond the repressive process that led to the corpses in the mass graves. These can also be found in the omissions and dissonances of material collections as well as in the gaps and ruptures of familial recollection.

Official archives, used by families, activists and historians to document the death of Republican victims – whether dead as a result of extrajudicial executions, military trials or prison – have become primary sites of concern for international organizations and national groups of historians. These have vehemently complaint, in the last years, about the current situation of disrepair and decay of many files in Spanish archives. In 2006, a report from Amnesty International entitled *Victims of the Civil War and Franquismo: The Disaster in the Archives, the Privatization of Truth*, denounced the "arbitrary access criteria" of many repositories, where the availability of information often depends on the will of the civil servants that manage them and where the consultation of files entailed long waiting times (Amnesty International 2006). Likewise, in May 2014, historians from the Chair of Historical Memory of the twentieth century from the Complutense University in Madrid launched the manifesto *El acceso a los archivos y la memoria histórica del siglo XX*

(Access to Archives and Historical Memory in the twentieth century). Seven years after Amnesty's report, the document criticized the amount of files that remained unclassified in piles, had been destroyed or sold illegally, or removed from official repositories and kept in private collections, which do not allow their consultation. Both statements called for the regulation of archives by the state, demanding the reconfiguration of the legal framework in which they exist and the creation of a new Law of Archives that permits their appropriate handling and preservation. As anthropologist Douglas (2014, 6) has observed, even though the 2007 Law of Historical Memory enabled the creation of the Historical Memory Documentation Centre – which contained the previous Spanish Civil War General Archive – and a number of regional initiatives emerged to catalogue and digitize hundreds of thousands of files, "archival collections still exist in opaque and complex bureaucratic worlds" in Spain. Both the manifesto of the Chair of Historical Memory and Amnesty's report condemned the conditions of information inside these official collections and reclaimed – drawing from international human rights postulates – that such situation constitutes a breach of families' *right to know* what happened to their relatives.

Considering these predicaments, in Extremadura, historians from PREMHEx and independent historians I met during fieldwork, have often aided families navigate the tortuous official archive. Those such as Javier Martin Bastos, who worked in local civil registries, revised death certificates in order to compile lists of Republican victims killed in extrajudicial executions in Extremadura. Others such as Candela Chaves Rodriguez, who studied the judgements from Francoist military trials, extracted and, when possible, digitized these files. The regional project aimed to build an online database that enabled the search for victims' names and files online. These historians often remarked the difficulty of working with both sets of files, which were filled with voids and inconsistencies, and comprised the bewildering language and practice of the emerging fascist state. Extrajudicial executions, which had been backed by the quasi-legal War Proclamation Orders (*Bandos de Guerra*) (Espinosa Maestre 2009), left thousands of deaths unaccounted for in the civil registry. The records of those who were inscribed often described these deaths with euphemisms such as "death as a result of War Proclamation Order", "violent death due to man's direct action as a consequence of the Civil War" or, in more vague descriptions, as "death as a caused of internal haemorrhage", among others. These death transcripts were often deferred records, completed by public authorities after the war. People shared with me how some women refused to sign these certificates, for they did not include the real cause of a husband's death. Others felt obliged to accept them in order to secure further integration in the structures of the Franco regime (Espinosa Maestre 2009). Other files connected to Francoist judicial procedures were equally challenging for historians. Among these, those from the *Causa General*, discussed later on, comprised authority reports and witnesses' statements on suspects' crimes and affiliation, which drew from denunciations and often false accusations to persecute and prosecute Republicans. Judgements from summary trials, as Candela Chaves Rodriguez explained to me, revealed the protocol of court-martial procedures, where accusation witnesses, pleas and declarations were given priority over that of the defendant.

Stoler (2002, 100) has observed that a reading of documents along the archival grain shows how documentary practices are at once a "process and a powerful technology of rule", which can reveal, through their form and content, intimate political and social relations in the making of states. Some historians from the region spoke to me about

the archive beyond its extractive use, reading Francoist judicial documents and military and administrative inventories for their "regularities, for [their] logic of recall, for [their] densities and distributions and for [their] consistencies of misinformation, omission and mistake" (Stoler 2002). In interviews, historians often retold how documents revealed the regime's internal organization, its ideological aspirations and its contradictions. Through these readings, moreover, they were able to contextualize official documents for families, who often found the writing on them disconcerting. But Francoist documents, PREMHEx historians also warned me, could not be interpreted on their own, and instead, needed the voice of the witness and the personal array of materials – which families had sometime kept from their killed relatives throughout generations – in order to better interpret them. Witness' accounts and familial possessions often provided, as Candela and Javier said to me, other versions of the story told on the file. Nevertheless, while official documents lacked information or contained biased accounts of a person's execution, first-hand and other memories transmitted across generations also remained fuzzy. Extra-judicial killings happened often in the middle of the night, after the victim had been hastily detained and sometimes imprisoned for a short period of time. Sometimes, family members, who witnessed the detention of a relative, did not share their knowledge of these events with their children. Some children and grandchildren of those killed would learn about these killings through the cries and whispers of their relatives (Ferrándiz 2008). In the last years, the reappearance of personal objects that belonged to the victims has forced the disentanglement of these regimes of silence. Moreover, exchanges between historians, families and the materiality of the personal and official archive, as others have also noted (Douglas 2014), enabled the contextualization of such disperse and uncertain information.

Many works have noted the importance of considering the role of absences in different modes of historical production. In his seminal work on the Haitian Revolution, Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued that silences are intrinsic to the process of history making, tracing the relations of power that enabled the proliferation of some stories and suppressed others. Following Ilana Feldman, Trundle (2011, 505) has argued that such suppressed stories in the archive can continue to have potent "agency and effect" on the lives and actions of the people of whom they speak. Moreover, Hirsch (2008, 2012) has spoken about the haunting quality of historical absences, especially in relation to the visual archives of the Holocaust. These authors show, in different ways, how the dearth in the record has often triggered a persistent need to assemble intimate memories and public histories in later generations. In the family archives, which some people had managed to compiled and shared with me in Spain, stubborn silences provoked different individual and collective readings of documents, forms of testimony-sharing and fervent acts of "figuring out" that engendered distinct memory work. Absence of information about their relatives' life and dead, as well as the absence of their human remains, became also the fuel for a public act of historical meaning making in the course of the exhumation process. People engaged with mixed archives, composed by death certificates and files produced by the Franco regime, goodbye letters from their relatives and also some objects. Making sense of their form and their inscriptions, the familial archive emerged as new space of historical enunciation, where relatives attempted to decipher the uncertainties of the unresolved disappearances that had scarred their familial biographies.

The family record

I entered in contact with personal records and memorabilia that a few families had kept over time in the exhumation campaigns I attended between 2011 and 2012. Some families who visited these excavations often brought documents and images belonging to their dead relatives to share with the team at the site. People carried folders with documents they had collected over the years. Bundles of papers or, sometimes, single images still in their frames, travelled around the site providing a different dimension to the scientific work carried out in the mass grave. Archaeologist and physical anthropologist Laura Muñoz Encinar and her team often examined these and took pictures of them, as evidence that contextualized pre-mortem and post-mortem information of the person in the burial site. These artefacts were always recorded – even if the human remains of the person had not been located – for the purpose of the historical investigation of which the mass grave was part. They also became emotive materials, which made the past feel within close proximity. Volunteers looked at the photos and papers attempting to imagine the face and personal traits of the skeletons in front of them. Simultaneously, at the mass grave, the stories of second, third and fourth generation family members acquired a testimonial character. These stories contributed to the life history interview project that accompanied the historical inquiry of PREMHEx and also became part of my own ethnographic record. The space of the archive thus overlapped with that of the mass grave. Both spaces contained markers to devise specific chronologies of violence, manifested through their physicality, their grain and the inscriptions on them. Both spaces also evoked powerful sentiments, which disturbed those who came in touch with them.

A case in point was the exhumation in the village of Fregenal de la Sierra (Fregenal from now on), in the South-Western province of Badajoz (Extremadura) in 2012, and the story of the family of Juan Brazo Naranjo. Juan Brazo Naranjo was one of the many men that were imprisoned and later executed without a trial in November 1936 in Fregenal. The story of his murder, like that of others, remains unclear still today. Juan was a farmer, son of a foreman and farmer, and a wet nurse. His father had also been a Civil Guard during the time of the Second Republic and had been active in the revolutionary strikes of 1934. According to the family, Juan was brought up at the heart of a socialist family and influenced by his father and uncle's ideology. In the run up to the elections of February 1936, five months before the war broke, he actively campaigned for the Popular Front, a coalition of left-wing parties that formed against conservative forces in January 1936. When the war started in July 1936, and as Francoist documents would later record, he became a member of the Committee created to defend the Republican government in Fregenal. These Committees have sometimes been referred to as "Revolutionary" or "Popular" committees and were formed by militants from different left-wing parties until localities were occupied by Francoist troops (Chaves Palacios 2009). As the family recalled from information they obtained through older relatives like Juan's sisters – two of them still alive in 2012 – , Juan was possibly arrested twice and later killed after being unable to secure a reprieve.[6] In the exhumation campaign of 2012, the human remains of Juan were searched for in an area of the village cemetery that contained twelve mass burials. The uncertainty of where the body lay was something that the scientific team grappled with in many exhumations (see Douglas 2014; Aragüete-Toribio 2015b for a different example). In Fregenal, the intensity of the violence and number of killings –

still a matter of controversy among local historians – made the work at the site inherently strenuous. With over fifty bodies scattered in smaller and larger mass graves and little information about where each person was buried, the prospect of uncertain identification led, as in many other campaigns, to the thorough compilation of data from families. As a volunteer, part of the archaeological team for some time then, I set out to interview families about their relatives' executions together with two PREMHEx researchers, Laura and Cayetano.

We met up with the family of Juan Brazo Naranjo on a thundery afternoon of autumn at the end of September 2012. The family had travelled from the nearby province of Huelva, in Andalucía, to see how the excavation works progressed. They were eager to tell their story to us that afternoon. In an area of the newly set up autopsy room of the cemetery, turned into a provisional laboratory for the purpose of the exhumation campaign, Juan Brazo Naranjo's son and grandson sat next to their wives and across from me as I asked them details about their relative's detention and execution. At the start of our conversation, documents were carefully laid out on the wooden table next to the empty mortuary refrigerator by the grandson, José Antonio Brazo Regalado. Away from the sounds of digging and chatting at the excavation site and with the background murmur of his relatives in the room, he explained in a detailed manner, what each document represented and the information they contained. These documents had always stayed within the family, he said. When Juan Brazo Naranjo was killed, his wife, Maria Morales Morales, kept personal papers and photographs that belonged to him in a secure place of the house. In the 1980s, Maria gave these documents in "inheritance" to her grandson José Antonio, who was very close to her. For José Antonio, these documents – which had been kept under Maria's sofa for years – and the information they contained, became a precious token of his family's history of loss when Maria died. When José Antonio found out that the mass graves had been located in 2010, such an event triggered a profound need to learn more about what happened to his grandfather, Juan Brazo Naranjo. "This became an obsession", he said to us in our interview, "I began to spend my days searching the Internet; I just wanted to know more and more". This event also provoked the circulation of copies of these documents into other archives, such as that of PREMHEx, which José Antonio considered a "safe" space for the family's records.

Among the documents he showed us, there was a letter sent by his grandfather from prison, the day he learnt he would be killed (see Figure 1(c)). Next to it, there was a photocopy of the same document, this time with an official stamp of approval from a notary public in Huelva. On the sheet one could read: "TESTIMONIO" ("AKNOWLEDGEMENT"). I asked José Antonio if both documents were the same, to what he replied,

> They are, though this one [pointing out to the authorized copy] is a certified copy. The public notary told me he could not attest this was my grandfather's and that he had been executed. However, he could certify these are original documents. (Interview with José Antonio Brazo Regalado, Fregenal de la Sierra, 26 September 2012)

In a climate marked by the unwillingness of different Spanish governments to fully recognize Francoist crimes, the guarantee of the notary public ratifies the originality of the document and contests, as José Antonio remarked, any doubt about its authenticity – especially in a landscape of dissonant archival records, which contain clashing versions of the same story. Having such an intimate record validated by the administration, placed the

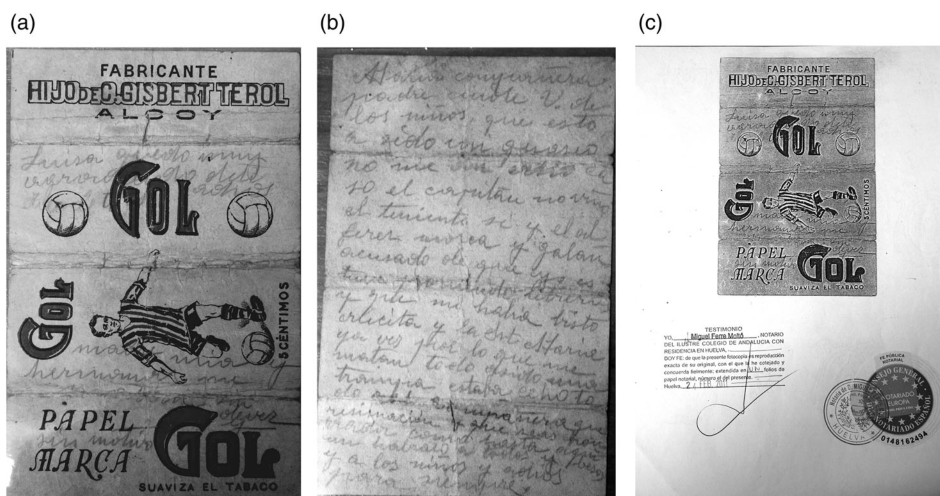


Figure 1. Goodbye Letter. Courtesy of José Antonio Brazo Regalado.

document in a new register. Though it only gives official recognition to its form and not its content, its authentication impinges other meanings on the document. Indeed, many people I interviewed considered that the often-deceiving and absent information about their relatives in the archive questioned the very existence of their kin.[7] Certifying the originality of a document that contained the declaration of a murder and the fears of the detainee as he approached the moment of his execution legitimized this type of familial evidence. Other anthropologists who work with documentary practices have paid attention to the aesthetic rules that set apart the production of official documents, their use and circulation (Riles 2006, 19). Annalise Riles and others (2006, 20) investigate the form of the document for what it does and for the "extensions" that it gains in particular social contexts. In this case, inscriptions such as the stamp of the notary public is a form of institutional labelling, which provides a new type of legal, political and social status to the document, now part of the ledgers of the state. Simultaneously, this recognizable authoritative mark allows the document to enter other "evidentiary regimes" (Crossland 2013), ensuring its efficacy in truth-seeking inquiries to attain recognition for the executed and their condition of disappeared. For the family, such an imprint validated its use in current judicial investigations – such as the one promoted by Argentinian Judge Maria Servini de Cubría, in which they collaborated – and made it a reliable source for the historical investigations of the regional team and other historians, as José Antonio remarked.

The black and white certified copy from the notary public, reproduced on a standard white A4 sheet, materialized the formal qualities of the bureaucratic procedure. On the contrary, the pattern of the original letter sent by Juan Brazo Naranjo (Figure 1(a) and 1 (b)), evoked a very different situation. A regular packet of smoking paper branded *Gol,* made by the manufacturer *Hijos de C. Gisbert Terol* and exhibiting a football player on its front cover had been turned into a canvas on which Juan wrote his last words to his family before his execution. As different historians told me during fieldwork in Extremadura, prisoners were often allowed to send a goodbye letter to a relative before they were killed. As archaeologist Laura Muñoz Encinar explained to me, on most occasions,

such rare finds were the only documentation that existed of the time that the victim spent in prison before their execution (personal communication with Laura Muñoz Encinar, 8 June 2016). This was the first time I had seen one of these letters up close. Ragged and consumed by the effects of time, the document, kept for its protection inside of a transparent plastic pocket, displayed the distressed and hurried handwriting of the prisoner. One could imagine the angst and anxiety of Juan Brazo Naranjo through the frenzied calligraphy that composed each sentence. Its impromptu character made the object a bearer of his precarious state, and a symbol of the violent event that disrupted the lives of different generations. I had observed in other settings that documents, images and objects of missing family members like Juan's letter often animated the conversations of relatives with a fragile memory of what happened to their kin. In this case too, the letter pierced through the traumatic memory of José Antonio and his father Fernando, as its form and content aided the two descendants of Juan Brazo Naranjo to retell his story.

Memory scholars, from Halbwachs to most recent names such as Assmann (1995), Winter (1996), Erll (2011) or Hirsch (1997, 2008, 2012), have long discussed the role that the family plays in the transmission of memory. The family has been understood, to varying degrees, as a framework that enables the transfer of social and individual knowledge and experience through communicative and bodily acts between generations. Hirsch (2008; 2012) has problematized the idea of mnemonic transmission within the family that some of these authors entertain by considering how disruptive events, such as war violence, transform communicative structures within the family and affect the qualities of transmission. As Hirsch, I intend to explore here how traumatic breaks in conventional – though never the same – forms of intergenerational transmission within the family, give rise to expressions that contend with uncertainty and with the affective force of harrowing events in the present. I seek to elucidate, how, through the interaction with the materials of the familial archive, relatives of Juan Brazo Naranjo found new ways of articulating a story that had been hardly rehearsed and enacted within the family nucleus, which lacked sometimes the necessary words and gestures to transmit it. These artefacts also aided the family to claim a familial connection to the life of their unknown ancestor. Hirsch (1997, 2008, 2012) has spoken of photographs, as artefacts that mediate violent experiences that were never lived or witnessed. Indeed, in the case of the goodbye letter, one could say, citing Hirsch (2008, 209) that, this piece of familial correspondence was an object of "remembrance that reconnect[ed] and reembod[ied] an intergenerational memorial fabric that [had] been severed by catastrophe".

Hence, this piece of paper, which bore the design, illustration and terminology of a different time, acquired familial meanings through the readings that both Fernando and José Antonio performed of Juan's message. In our interview, Fernando and José Antonio alternated their voices to tell the story that enveloped the letter. The letter subtly hinted at the event of Juan's imprisonment, which had remained unclear in family memories. In the letter, Juan expressed his gratitude to Luisa, one of Maria's sisters, Juan's wife: "Luisa, I am very thankful to you, goodbye". Indicating the piece of paper with his grandfather's words, José Antonio confirmed that only Luisa went to see him in prison. "This is why he says goodbye to her" – he added. This first reference to Luisa unfolded a story of familial care and protection, as she was the person who took food and other goods to him, when she visited him in prison. Maria, Fernando's mother, pregnant with their third child, only went once. Fernando, for example, knew

about this occasion. He could only remember vaguely, however, the moment when, being five, he visited his father in jail with his mother. He also remembered hazily when his mother took him to see a Captain (*Capitán*) in the village, who Juan knew from his years in the military service, to ask for mercy and for Juan's pardon. The story of Juan was entangled with that of the suffering of his wife, parents and sisters, who experienced other forms repression and humiliation before and after his killing. Fernando explained how, when the village was occupied, his grandfather lost all his land and his aunts lost their jobs as seamstresses. José Antonio retold how Juan's sisters were brutally punished and abused. Juan's family was forced to migrate to other parts of the region and never returned to Fregenal. Maria, his wife, would stay in Fregenal until she migrated to Huelva following her son Fernando.

Other fragments of the letter constitute a first-hand account of the events that preceded Juan's execution. Information about why he was killed or the time he spent in prison, however, also remained vague for Fernando and José Antonio. Both men agreed that the family lacked details about his killing due to the reticence of Maria and Juan's sisters to speak about what happened. According to José Antonio, every time he tried to speak to Remedios, Juan's older sister and the closest in age to Juan, she fell silent and burst into tears when the war was mentioned. Fernando's mother, Maria, sometimes shared snippets about Juan's ordeal with her descendants. She frequently and vehemently claimed, as José Antonio and Fernando expressed during our interview, that Juan did not just died but was killed (*no fue muerto fue matao* [*sic*]). When Maria was asked to sign and recognize, years after the killing, a deferred death certificate that stated that her husband had died as a result of the Civil War, she fervently opposed, repeating these same words. In the 1980s, after Franco's death, a new law of pensions (the Law 5/1979 of 18 September[8]) that compensated widowed women and orphaned children who lost their relatives as a result of the events of the Civil War enabled families to realize new deferred death inscriptions in the civil registry. This allowed Maria to certify that the death of her husband was an execution during the war in Fregenal. Maria, however, had to secure the testimony of two witnesses that attested the killing. For other women I interviewed in Fregenal and in other villages, this often proved a difficult task. With help from Fernando and José Antonio, Maria, obtained the declaration of two neighbours from Fregenal who lived in Huelva. As the family attempted to prove his killing, the testimony of Juan Brazo Naranjo recorded on the letter remained at the heart of their story,

> Maria dear (*compañera*), father look after the children because this is nonsense, they did not listen to me, the Captain did not come though the lieutenant and sub-lieutenants M and G did; I have been accused of putting up [political] posters (*letreros*). They said C and Mrs M saw me; you see why they kill me? Everything was a trap; everything was planned, so dear (*compañera*) go along with it and be honest just as you have been until now. A hug to all and kisses for the kids and goodbye forever. (Excerpt from letter by Juan Brazo Naranjo, n.d)

In her study, Hirsch (2008, 117) has observed that photographs have the capacity to move and affect the viewer, as they provide glimpses into a past marked by violent death and the breakup of the family. For the author, these remnants signify the materialization of painful loss but also open a space for projection and imagination. Making use of Paul Connerton's definition, Hirsch (Hirsch (2008, 216) identifies, on the one hand, the "inscriptive" or "archival" character of the document, which makes the photograph a tangible record of

the family's history. On the other, she emphasizes the photograph's "incorporative" or "embodied" dimension, as the image invites distinct forms of bodily engagement from the viewer. Holding, viewing and touching the photograph becomes part of the enactment of familial memory. One could apply this same principle to the letter. The imprinted details of the past on the letter substantiated an otherwise short-lived event, materializing the words of the executed relative. Such an imprint was a source of knowledge which also encouraged its appropriation to nourish intergenerational storytelling and familial mnemonic performances. His words, the texture of the note or the composition of his writing exuded Juan's suffering, which relatives integrated to their own retelling. His insistence on the fact that everything was a trap, the way he asks "do you see why they kill me?", or the feeling of impotence that his last words to his wife transmit ("so dear, go along with it"), confer his hopelessness and the painful realization of his fate. His direct words, written as if addressing generations to come, entrapped the minds of relatives he never knew. For Fernando and especially for José Antonio, who had read his grandfather's writing multiple times, transcribed each word and created a biographical sketch of Juan Brazo Naranjo's life and death, the text became also a part of their own testimony. The information of the letter was invoked intentionally or unintentionally to describe his grandfather's killing:

> Before the elections, he belonged to the committee because he was very involved in these matters. He went to *HOY* newspaper in Badajoz to put up propaganda for the Popular Front (*Frente Popular*). His sister even told me a few months ago that she boasted about her brother and was proud of him and it was her [Juan's sister, Ana] who told C. But I am not convinced by some parts of the story because my grandfather was not *putting up posters or writing graffiti on the walls or anything of the sort, rather, he went to submit electoral propaganda.* This is why he was reported [to Franco's military]. He was accused of putting up [political] posters. *Can you believe why they killed him? It was all nonsense and everything was a sham. They went to get him and that's that*. It is my own opinion, but I think it was vengeance. Though they would have captured him anyway as he was a member of the committee. They would have arrested him later because in Francoist documents of 1941 they were still looking for him, but he had already died. This is what I have deduced. (Interview with José Antonio Brazo Regalado, Fregenal de la Sierra, 26 September 2012, my emphasis)

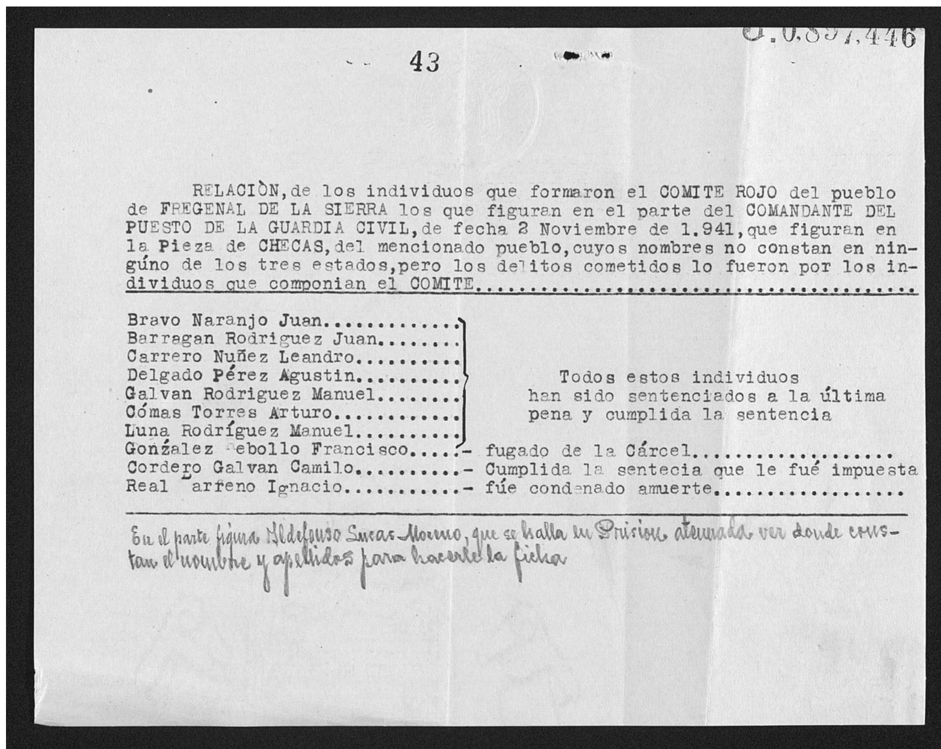
Note the way in which some of José Antonio's words (italicized in the text above) coincide with those of his grandfather's words imprinted on the letter, formulating a narrative that resembles the structure and content of his grandfather's message. José Antonio uses them to remark the political reasons for his detention and that, as his grandfather said, it had all been "nonsense" and a set up. Though José Antonio did not live Juan's arrest, imprisonment and execution, and the aftermath of his killing, his construction of the event developed in synchrony with the voice of his grandfather through his writings, his father's stories and the memories of Juan's sisters, Ana and Remedios. The narrative of Juan's grandson can be considered a form of transgenerational remembrance associated to what Hirsch (2008, 214) has termed "postmemory". This oral and material family archive became the "structure of mediation and representation" that facilitated the identification of José Antonio with his executed kin (Hirsch 2008). José Antonio identified with his grandfather's commitment and struggle for social equality, as he explained to us. His grandfather's words shaped José Antonio's feeling of admiration, affinity and contiguity as well as his imagination of the event. As Skultans (1998, 24) has highlighted in the post-

soviet Latvian context, written accounts can become part of the creative process which gives place to personal life histories. They can also become evidence of the existence of a unknown relative and alter intimate perceptions of history for those who encounter them. Other documents such as those found in the official archive and in the files of the *Causa General* had similar effects on the family. Nevertheless, the records of Juan Brazo Naranjo and the descriptions they contained triggered different sentiments and readings against the grain of the repressive archive on the part of Juan's decendants.

Family memory and state files

When the location of the mass graves began in Fregenal de la Sierra in 2010, José Antonio started to search the online Platform of Spanish Archives or PARES (*Portal de Archivos Españoles*), where documents of the *Causa General* have been digitized and are now linked to the Historical Memory Documentation Centre. José Antonio recalled the difficulty of finding his grandfather name, which had been registered, under a different surname, as Juan *Bravo* Naranjo. This was not rare. Describing a similar case, Douglas (2014, 7) has also highlighted the frequent errors found in similar databases in the country, and how they complicate the already taxing task of *combing* through the archive. Eventually, José Antonio found a document dated from 1941, which contained a list of the members of the defence Committee in Fregenal at the beginning of the war and who were accused, as expressed on the file, "for the crimes committed" in the locality. This file was part of the array of institutional reports and witnesses' statements produced and exchanged between the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Supreme Court and regional and local authorities, as part of the Francoist judicial investigation of the *Causa General*. The *Causa General* was a procedure established to gather documentary evidence about all those who were connected in any way to the Republican left-wing. It constituted a form of information sourcing but also a vehicle for the criminalization of the left-wing – which operated since the years of the war (Gil Vico 1998; Espinosa Maestre 2005). Gil Vico (1998, 168) has noted that the *Causa General* aimed to amass details about the persecution, torture, imprisonment and murder of members and followers of the right-wing but, most importantly, constituted the largest repository of names, used for the repression against left-wing suspects.

After a new decree on 26 April 1940, the process was further institutionalized and became the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and the provincial judicial authorities. Gil Vico (1998) points out that information-gathering techniques became more precise [9] and multiple domains of investigation or *piezas* were added to refine the scope of the survey. The list on which the name of Juan Brazo Naranjo appears (see Figure 2) was elaborated by the Major Civil Guard in the village and classified under the field of *Checas* – a category that makes reference to the ad hoc detention centres established by left-wing groups during the conflict. As people in the area told us, in Fregenal, as in other villages, the defence Committee detained right-wing supporters in the cinema of the village when the war broke. In Fregenal, people remarked, they never killed them. Historians from the region have documented similar events in neighbouring villages such as Santos de Maimona or Zafra, where members of these Committees arrested neighbours from right-wing factions, confiscating their weapons and goods, in an effort to contain the uprising (Lama Hernández 2004; Chaves Palacios 2009). Even though, the document



43

RELACIÒN, de los individuos que formaron el COMITE ROJO del pueblo de FREGENAL DE LA SIERRA los que figuran en el parte del COMANDANTE DEL PUESTO DE LA GUARDIA CIVIL, de fecha 2 Noviembre de 1.941, que figuran en la Pieza de CHECAS, del mencionado pueblo, cuyos nombres no constan en ningúno de los tres estados, pero los delitos cometidos lo fueron por los individuos que componian el COMITE.......................................

Bravo Naranjo Juan............
Barragan Rodriguez Juan........
Carrero Nuñez Leandro..........
Delgado Pérez Agustin..........
Galvan Rodriguez Manuel........
Cómas Torres Arturo............
Luna Rodríguez Manuel..........
— Todos estos individuos han sido sentenciados a la última pena y cumplida la sentencia

González Rebollo Francisco....- fugado de la Cárcel..................
Cordero Galvan Camilo..........- Cumplida la sentecia que le fué impuesta
Real arfeno Ignacio...........- fúe condenado amuerte..................

En el parte figura Ildefonso Lucas Moreno, que se halla en Prisión atenuada ver donde constan el nombre y apellidos para hacerle la ficha

Figure 2. List of accused, Fregenal de la Sierra, Spain, Ministry of Culture, Historical National Archive, Causa General, File: 1053 Box: 1 Dossier: 12 Page: 43[11]

does not specify the exact crimes of which these men were accused, it can be inferred that the men on the list of Figure 2 were detained and killed because they belonged to the Republican Committee.

Moreover, the file shows the imprecision of a process that, as Gil Vico (1998, 184) has observed, was vast and lengthy, and often difficult to manage for the understaffed Francoist administration of the postwar period. The document seems to address the request of Francoist authorities to investigate the whereabouts of these men, which were still uncertain in the regime's registers in 1941. In response to the higher judicial command, the Major Civil Guard of the village elaborated the present list, which includes if these men were dead or alive, if death or prison sentences had been executed or if they had escaped. Note that the civil servant writes "sentenced to death and the sentence has been executed" next to Juan's name and the names of others. Most certainly, Juan never underwent a trial or was formally sentenced to death. At the bottom of the page, the almost indecipherable handwriting reflects the investigative work of the civil servant, who, in the form of a reminder, notes that a new entry or *ficha* has to be made for a different suspect. In addition to this, the document is enmeshed in the language of *Franquismo*. References such as "rojo" or "Red", which appear next to the word "Committee" on the file, acquired negative connotations in the context of the inquiry. The word, used derogatively in Francoist pamphlets and press against Republicans, would soon become associated with ideas of felony, risk and deviance. As Gil Vico (1998, 180)

has highlighted, the *Causa General* also became an instrument of propaganda against what the dictatorship considered "a *loathsome regime of murderers*" (emphasis in original). This information would later inform books, which promoted the history of the Franco regime and condemned the Second Republic in national and international contexts. [10]

José Antonio contested the criminalization of his grandfather and rejected the regime's categorization of Republicans. Other families found the euphemisms used in death certificates, the information of court-martial trials and the declarations compiled by the *Causa General* humiliating – as one respondent from the nearby village of Zafra assured me. Others saw this language as a source of anxiety and confusion. Not having lived these events and having learnt vaguely about them, some members of later generations trusted the formality of the statements on these files and doubted whether their kin were innocent of the crimes of which they were accused. Writing about the relation that members of Australia's Stolen Generations have with the state files that chronicle their history of family separation, Murphy (2011) has noted that the space of this archive can attain benign but also dangerous meanings for those whom the state removed from their homes. For descendants who search state files to recompose their history of familial estrangement, the archive becomes, according to the author, a space where the reality of the process of aboriginal child removal is elucidated. This space is also, however, an arena in which the tortuous stories of parents' suffering and distorted colonial descriptions of aboriginal subjects unfold. These archives are, for these generations, a source of state "truths", where other histories of rupture unveiled.

Much in the way of the Spanish family archive, the archive of the Stolen Generations contains information that contradicts individual life histories, as people knew them. Murphy underlines that this archive encompasses the "malice" or "evil" – recalling Derrida (1996) – of a past marked by violence. As she discusses, information about the unresponsiveness of state authorities to parents' appeals or the constant abuse and degradation of children, waited in the archive, haunting its pages with painful accounts of familial depravation. In such a way, trauma emanated from its inscriptions and annotations and its silences and gaps. Indeed, those like José Antonio, who encountered Franco's archives for the first time, where also emotionally taken by the descriptions they contained and baffled by the absence of the stories they knew. Nevertheless, when I asked José Antonio if the information on the Francoist document had upset him when he read it the first time, he quickly replied: "No, it didn't upset me. Everything seems clearer to me now. It's as if I had been asleep and suddenly I woke up". He seemed certain that the story of his grandfather and his killing that these documents portrayed had been manipulated in the interest of the Franco regime. Documents confronted people with different versions of their ancestors that they needed to negotiate constantly. As Murphy shows, the presence of these lingering traumas in the archive had devastating emotional consequences but also incited readers to embark upon unprecedented searches for alternative meanings to their life trajectories. Encountering these documents furthered José Antonio's quest to challenge past Francoist narratives. In 2010, José Antonio began a search for information, which changed his vision of the past,

> I learnt what had really happened when I began my search. At least, this is the way I see it. I am not a historian or anything like that. I am in contact with Francisco Espinosa and other historians and that's how I started. Ploughing, ploughing, ploughing … I read all biographies and

> books. I am up-to-day with everything. I can see what happened in one place and another. Everything is similar. Names and surnames change, the circumstances change, but the end goal is the same: to eradicate Communism and Marxism. (José Antonio Brazo Regalado, Fregenal de la Sierra, 26 September 2012)

In the fragment above, José Antonio explains that his research allowed him to understand "what really happened" and to wake up from what he figuratively identifies as "a long sleep". Many families I met had initiated compulsive searches for other facts, clues and details that attested a counter-story: one which reflected their family experience. Lack of information about their relatives and the dubious character of these Francoist documentary remnants drove families' incessant quests into books, databases and even historians' archives, as José Antonio describes. "Ploughing" also through abundant Internet sites – which have become a fundamental source of investigation, exchange and association for families – José Antonio aimed to document a different "truth" to that contained in the Francoist archive. In the composition of his family's history, he cross-referenced the documents of the *Causa General* with the interpretations in books by historians such as Francisco Espinosa Maestre, who has written extensively about the Civil War in the province of Badajoz (Extremadura) and in Andalucía. He also contributed with new information, connected to his grandfather, to Espinosa Maestre's studies. Moreover, he cross-checked this official documentation with the findings of local researchers and with other families, who also looked for their executed relatives in Fregenal. José Antonio's words elucidate the ample network of resources and technologies that have surfaced in the last decade and which have diversified the inquiry and production of history about the Civil War in the country. Such network has re-contextualized the content of state files. José Antonio's words also suggest that the information in state archives is not immovable and can be re-interpreted through familial recall. As Murphy (2011, 489) observes in the case of the Stolen Generations, "[t]he practice of re-reading in the archive undergirds the impossibility of immutable truths and the possibility, fluidity, and contingent nature of meaning in the archival space".

Reacting to the writings on the file, José Antonio also recalled the words of his grandmother, Maria, to establish his grandfather's innocence. José Antonio recounted to us how Juan had helped the family of landowners, for whom the family worked, when anarchist groups threatened to take their possessions. He also explained that his grandfather had stolen from the rich to feed refugees, part of an 8000 people column (*la columna de los ocho mil*), which had fled villages from the South at the beginning of the war. The stories of the killing of Juan Brazo Naranjo that José Antonio learnt through others and that Fernando knew first-hand, together with the printed words of Juan Brazo Naranjo on his goodbye letter, cut across the official portrayal of the relative and connected it to the family's everyday experience of disappearance in the postwar period. Fernando and José Antonio spoke, once again, of how, after the war, the family was discriminated against (*señalados*) because their relative had been associated with the left-wing and executed in November 1936. In other villages, people told me that they felt they had lived like "pariahs" all their lives. This had disquieting consequences for those who survived. Talking to his father Fernando, José Antonio explained that Maria and Juan's sisters felt often ashamed of what had happened to the family. They were embarrassed and afraid to speak about Juan's killing and also to mention his political involvement. Fernando spoke of the grieving silence that governed the house when he grew up and the crying

of his mother, who spent her life in mourning. Fernando explained that Maria, who never set foot in the cemetery of Fregenal again – where her husband was killed and buried – "remained dead whilst still alive". The impulse that José Antonio felt to compose another version of the family's biography was also driven by the bitterness and silence he had witnessed and the need that him, as the grandchild of a Republican man executed during the war, felt to understand his unexplained absence at home,

> Your mother hid things from her children, like you hid things from me. You have suffered the pain of losing your father, and that's why you found it difficult to talk. It is the moment of the grandchildren, who have carried this inside, to act. I feel it differently from you because we have had different experiences. (Interview with José Antonio Brazo Regalado, Fregenal de la Sierra, 26 September 2012)

José Antonio implies that his father's proximity to the event, as the son of Juan Brazo Naranjo affected his inability to speak about the past and made him remain silent. Labanyi (2009) has interpreted the silence experienced in many families after the war in Spain as a strategy of survival that many, especially those of a first generation, employed in order to protect their lives and that of their descendants. Following Passerini (2006), this author has observed that the repression of the memory of Francoist violence within first generations – and, I would also add, within members of the second, as the example of the family of Juan Brazo Naranjo shows – did not suppress such memory but instead gave place to its re-articulation. Confronting the silence of his father and grandmother, José Antonio has embarked upon the reformulation and re-imagination of his family's past (Passerini 2006; Labanyi 2009). Indeed, Fernando and José Antonio, both developed a different relation to the event of their relative's execution. At the heart of the new historical memory venture both men have begun to "work out" together new meanings to their personal histories in private but also public exchanges. As Labanyi (2009) suggests, in this context, such re-articulations are re-defining the relationships among kin, as well as shaping individual and collective lives. Intimate re-articulations of the past, formed through the interaction between lived memories, vicarious recollections and historical exegesis, are also negotiated with collective enactments and definitions of the past. On the one hand, in this context, one can observe how the interplay between silence, memory and history create new contours for the story of disappearance and violence in the present. On the other, such process elucidates how these engagements have gradually connected the past to the realm of the future, as part of the public demands for "truth, justice and reparation" that take place within the Spanish historical memory movement.

History inside the family archive

Familial archives have become the house of multifarious documents in Spain, as the process of location, exhumation and identification of Republican human remains, eighty years after the conflict, has prompted their circulation and exchange in familial and public realms. In this article, I have attempted to show how the acts of information gathering that have taken place around the search for Republican relatives killed and buried in mass graves during and after the Civil War have opened up a window to the socialization of a repressive past that had largely remained unaddressed in Spanish national debates. Theorists such as Labanyi (2009) have said that it was not until a political debate about the past emerged in the country that private memories and historical interpretations of

these events gained public momentum. Indeed, such a social milieu was further stimulated by the exhumation movement and the central role that their claims for the official recognition of Francoist crimes have given to new conceptualizations of the war. The circuit of documents, testimonies and other forms of archaeological information – which have not been discussed in this article – has made the past "available" in the present, through the exposure and contestation of distinct narratives. Historian Lore Colaert (2015) has seen exhumations as "public seminars" that promote a history that was already known, through didactic engagements, conversations and dissemination strategies at the mass grave and beyond. In this article, however, I have wanted to highlight another understanding of the role of history in connection to the search for Republican human remains and the so-called recovery of historical memory.

The information exchanges at the core of these campaigns, of which exhumations are part, I would conclude, have also exposed a different engagement with the production and practice of history. Historical memory initiatives have diversified the work of the historian and opened the space of historical exegesis to families and other amateur researchers that have taken up the task of documenting and re-signifying the information they encounter. Historical analysis, as seen in the case of PREMHEx, was also applied to the study of mass graves. Inside the family archive, documents and objects, often filled with gaps or uncertain information, have triggered families' desire to know and to collect information in order to recompose personal biographies and to honour the life and death of a murdered relative. In such manner, this materiality is always framed by intergenerational retellings that attempt to reformulate familial experiences of loss and by historical interpretations that situate the story of the relative in a social continuum. If, as Trouillot (1995) observed, access to history has often been determined by historiographic traditions, then one could argue that these new actions, which push for the public exposure of once obscured historical artefacts and accounts, point to the emergence of a historiographical milieu influenced by the principles of visibility and acknowledgement of the historical memory movement. This might seem an interpretation that undermines the fundamentals and methodological preoccupations of History as discipline. Nevertheless, when I observed the realm of the family archive, I noted how this new historicity, this new relationship to the history of the conflict, had created a plastic space in which people and objects became interdependent in the production of meaning about the past.

Moreover, as Labanyi (2009) suggests, listening to silence can reveal the most intimate of traumatic stories – especially in contexts where atrocities have occurred. In this respect, I have pointed out that, paying attention to the omissions and absences that rule such novel historiographical milieu also provides other definitions to the experience of disappearance in the Spanish context. People disappeared from their homes and their human remains never came back. Some also vanished from official registries or were portrayed in unrecognizable ways to their relatives, through the descriptions that the Franco regime provided of them. Many also disappeared from family conversations. First-generation relatives who survived the war – such as the wives and the parents of those killed – sometimes hardly spoke the names and life stories of those killed. Later generations sometimes questioned the whereabouts of a relative they had never met, and the secrets that surrounded their lives and deaths. Anthropologist Francisco Ferrándiz (2011, 2014) has referred to the moment in which these dead came back to the Spanish social realm as a re-appearing act. Most certainly, their absence had always felt present, their lives

never fully forgotten and still latent, in the lives of individuals, families and the communities they inhabited. Emerging archives such as family collections, which involve the burdensome task of piecing dispersed memories and material fragments, make palpable the complexities of these relations with the "disappeared". Such taxing acts of assemblage and compilation also reveal the uneasy relationship that the state has, still today, with this past. The refusal of some to acknowledge such history and the memory of defeat undermines, time and time again, the experience of these victims.

Notes

1. Authors such as Box (2010) have analysed the array of commemorative celebrations and reburials that took place during the first decades of the Franco regime. Calendars were changed to commemorate the start and end of the conflict, parades of victory were organized and new constructions built to honour the Francoist dead. Among the most emblematic monuments was the so-called Valley of the Fallen. The Valley is a funerary complex composed by a crypt and an abbey. The mausoleum contains the remains of over 34,000 individuals – though this number could be much higher (see Ferrándiz 2014; Solé 2009). It was built by Republican prisoners and it contains the corpses of those who fought on the Francoist flank. It also contains, however, the corpses of Republicans that were transferred to the Valley without the consent of their relatives (Solé 2009).
2. Law of 26th of December through which the rights and measures in favour of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and dictatorship are recognized (my translation).
3. Among these groups were the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica de Extremadura* or ARMHEX (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura), the *Asociación Memorial Campo de Concentración de Castuera* or AMECADEC (Association for the Memory of Castuera Concentration Camp), the *Asociación Memorial Cementerio de Cáceres* or AMECECA (Association for a Memorial in Cáceres Cementery) and the groups of families of victims of Francoist repression in Puebla de Alcocer, Garciaz and Fregenal de la Sierra.
4. The team of the *Proyecto para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica de Extremadura* or Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura (PREMHEx) worked conjointly with historical memory associations and families North and South of the region from 2002 to 2013. From 2014 to 2015, a different team was responsible for the project.
5. During interviews and informal conversations, families often said to me that the most important thing for them was for "others to know what had happened". Here the term "others" signals the need for this information to be shared broadly and publically. Some of them also spoke of their wish to seek justice and to have their stories heard in a courtroom.
6. During fieldwork, people often explained to me that their relatives or families had turned to right-wing neighbours with whom they had good relations to save the lives of relatives whose life was threatened.
7. Many relatives said to me that their relatives had been "killed physically and also socially" because their deaths were never included in civil registries.
8. Law 5/1979 of 18th September for the recognition of pensions, medical-pharmaceutical aid and social aid in relation to widows, children and other relatives of the Spanish people who died as a consequence or during the past Civil War (my translation).
9. Espinosa (2006, 16–17) adds that some of these recording methods were generally inaccurate because victims were often inscribed more than once and left-wing victims were sometimes added to Francoist lists in villages where no right-wing supporters had been executed.
10. Two of the most interesting publications were *La dominación roja en España* (Red Domination in Spain), published in 1943, and *Datos complementarios para la historia de España: Guerra de Liberación* (1936–1939) (Complementary Information about the History of Spain: War of Liberation (1936–1939), published in 1945 (Gil Vico 1998, 182).

11. Translation Figure 2.

    LIST of individuals that formed the RED COMMITTEE of the village
    of FREGENAL DE LA SIERRA. These are listed as on the report by the MAJOR OF
    THE CIVIL GUARD STATION, on 2 November 1941, placed on the
    File CHECAS, of the abovementioned village, whose names are not registered on any of the other three states, though *the crimes committed were perpetrated by individuals that formed the COMMITTEE*

    Bravo Naranjo Juan … … … ..
    Barragan Rodriguez Juan … .
    Carrero Nuñez Leandro … …
    Delagado Pérez Agustín … … All these individuals have been sentenced to death and the sentence has been completed
    Galván Rodriguez Manuel …
    Cómas Torres Arturo … … …
    Luna Rodriguez Manuel … …
    Gonzalez Rebollo Francisco. –escaped from Prison
    Cordero Galván Camilo … … –served enforced sentence
    Real Barreno Ignacio … … … -sentenced to death

    [*In handwriting*] Ildefonso Lucas Moreno is listed on the report as in attenuated prison. Look up where his name and surname is listed to make his file

Acknowledgements

I thank the family of Juan Brazo Naranjo, especially José Antonio Brazo Regalado and Fernando Brazo Marayo, for retelling the story of their relative to me and for providing me with the personal documents that appear in this article. I am also thankful to the Historical National Archive in Spain for allowing me to reproduce the document in Figure 2 of this article. I also thank the *Agrupación de Familiares de Víctimas de Fregrenal de la Sierra* and the Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Extremadura (PREMHEx) for their support with this research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This research was supported by the European Research Council, as part of the project "Bosnian Bones, Spanish Ghosts" with Dr Sari Wastell as the Principle Investigator [grant no. 241231]. It has also received funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation, as part of the project "Right to Truth, Truth(s) through Rights: Mass Crimes Impunity and Transitional Justice, with Dr Sévane Garibian as the Principal Investigator (SNF project PP00P1_157406/1).

ORCID

Zahira Aragüete-Toribio http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8665-8174

References

Aguilar Fernández, Paloma, and Francisco Ferrándiz. 2016. "Memory, Media and Spectacle: Intervieú's Portrayal of Civil War Exhumations in the Early Years of Spanish Democracy." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 17 (1): 1–25.

Aguilar Fernández, Paloma. 1996. *Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española*. Madrid: Alianza.

Aguilar Fernández, Paloma. 2008a. *Políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política: el caso español en perspectiva comparada*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

Aguilar Fernández, Paloma. 2008b. "Transitional or Post-Transitional Justice? Recent Developments in the Spanish Case." *South European Society and Politics* 13 (4): 417–433.

Amnesty International. 2006. *Víctimas de la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo: el desastre de los archivos, la privatización de la verdad*. Accessed 5 August 2016. https://aricomemoriaaragonesa.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/amnistia-internacional-victimas-de-la-guerra-civil-y-el-regimen-franquista1.pdf

Aragüete-Toribio, Zahira. 2015a. "From the Archive to the Grave: Exhumations and the Production of History in Post-Franco Extremadura." Unpublished thesis. Anthropology Department, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Aragüete-Toribio, Zahira. 2015b. "Negotiating Identity: Reburial and Commemoration of the Civil War Dead in Southwestern Spain." *Human Remains and Violence: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1: 5–20.

Assmann, Jan. 1995. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique* 65: 125–133.

Bell, Christine. 2009. "Transitional Justice. Interdisciplinarity and the State of the 'Field' or 'Non-field'." *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 3 (1): 5–27.

Box, Zira. 2010. *España año cero. La construcción simbólica del franquismo*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

Carreras, Juan José. 2005. "¿Por qué hablamos de memoria cuando queremos decir historia?." In *Las escalas del pasado. IV Congreso de historia local de Aragón*, edited by Alberto Sabio Alcutén and Carlos Forcadell Álvarez, 20–21. Barbastro: IEA-UNED.

Century, Chair of Historical Memory of the 20th. 2014. *El acceso a los archivos y la memoria histórica del siglo XX*, edited by Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Accessed 3 October 2016. http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/memorias/documentos/MANIFIESTO_ArchivosMemoria%20Historica_siglo%20XX.pdf

Chaves Palacios, Julián. 2009. "Los Santos de Maimona en el siglo XX: la crisis de los años treinta (Segunda República y Guerra Civil)." *Los Santos de Maimona en la Historia: Jornadas de Historia de los Santos de Maimona*, Los Santos de Maimona.

Closa, Carlos. 2013. "Spain." In *Encyclopedia of Transitional Justice*. *Volume 2*, edited by Lavinia Stan, and Nadya Nedelsky, 459–464. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Colaert, Lore. 2015. "History from the Grave: Politics of Memory in Exhumations of Mass Graves from the Spanish Civil War." Unpublished thesis. Department of History, University of Gent.

Colom González, Francisco. 2010. "El pasado en el presente. Qué hacer con la memoria de la Guerra Civil." *Res Publica* 23: 161–174.

Crossland, Zoe. 2013. "Evidential Regimes of Forensic Archaeology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42: 121–137.

De Greiff, Pablo. 2014. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence*, 27th session, Agenda Item 3, Human Rights Council, United Nations General Assembly.

Derrida, Jacques. 1996. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, *Religion and Postmodernism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Douglas, Lee. 2014. "Mass Graves Gone Missing: Producing Knowledge in a World of Absence." *Culture and History Digital Journal* 3 (2): 1–12.

Erll, Astri. 2011. "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42: 303–318.

Escudero, Rafael. 2014. "Road to Impunity: The Absence of Transitional Justice Programs in Spain." *Human Rights Quarterly* 36 (1): 123–146.

Espinosa Maestre, Francisco. 2003. *La columna de la muerte: el avance del ejército franquista de Sevilla a Badajoz*. Barcelona: Crítica.

Espinosa Maestre, Francisco. 2005. "Agosto de 1936: terror y propaganda. Los orígenes de la *Causa General*." *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea* 4: 15–25.
Espinosa Maestre, Francisco. 2009. *Informe sobre la represión franquista. Estado de la cuestión*. Accessed 5 August 2016. http://www.todoslosnombres.org/content/materiales/informe-sobre-la-represion-franquista-estado-la-cuestion
Ferrándiz, Francisco. 2008. "Cries and Whispers: Exhuming and Narrating Defeat in Spain Today." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 9 (2): 177–192.
Ferrándiz, Francisco. 2011. "Autopsia social de un subtierro." *Isegoría. Revista de filosofía moral y política* 45: 525–544.
Ferrándiz, Francisco. 2014. *El pasado bajo tierra: exhumaciones contemporáneas de la Guerra Civil*. Barcelona: Anthropos.
Gálvez Biesca, Sergio. 2006. "El proceso de la recuperación de la 'memoria histórica' en España: Una aproximación a los movimientos sociales por la memoria." *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 19 (1): 25–51.
Gatti, Gabriel. 2016. "Lo nuestro como en *Argentina*: Humanitarian Reason and the Latin Americanization of Victimhood in Spain." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 25 (1): 147–165.
GEHCEX (Grupo de Estudios sobre la Historia Contemporánea de Extremadura). 2007. *Balance del fenómeno de la recuperación de la Memoria Histórica de Extremadura*. II Encuentro Historiográfico, Cáceres, 19th May 2007.
Gil Vico, Pablo. 1998. "Ideología y represión: La Causa General." *Revista de Estados Políticos (Nueva Época)* 101: 159–189.
Golob, Stephanie R. 2008. "Volver: The Return of/to Transitional Justice Politics in Spain." *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 9 (2): 127–141.
Hirsch, Marianne. 1997. *Family Frames:Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Hirsch, Marianne. 2008. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29 (1): 103–128.
Hirsch, Marianne. 2012. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
Juliá Diaz, Santos. 2006. "Bajo el imperio de la memoria." *Revista de Occidente* 302–303: 7–20.
Juliá Diaz, Santos. 2010. "Por la autonomía de la historia." *Claves de Razón Práctica* 207: 8–19.
Junquera, Natalia. 9-5-2016. "El PP dice ahora que es 'de justicia' recuperar los restos de fusilados." *El País*. Accessed 5 October 2016. http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2016/05/09/actualidad/1462788809_183324.html
Labanyi, Jo. 2009. "The Languages of Silence: Historical Memory, Generational Transmission and Witnessing in Contemporary Spain." *Journal of Romance Studies* 9 (3): 23–35.
Lama Hernández, José Maria. 2004. *La amargura de la memoria: República y Guerra en Zafra (1931-1936)*. Badajoz: Diputación de Badajoz.
Muñoz-Encinar, Laura. 2016. "De la exhumación de cuerpos al conocimiento histórico. Análisis de la represión irregular franquista a partir de la excavación de fosas comunes en Extremadura." Unpublished thesis, Department of History, University of Extremadura (UEX).
Murphy, Fiona. 2011. "Archives of Sorrow: An Exploration of Australia's Stolen Generations and their Journey into the Past." *History and Anthropology* 22: 481–495.
Nora, Pierre. 1989. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations* (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory) 26: 7–24.
Passerini, Luisa. 2006. "Memories between Silence and Oblivion." In *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, edited by Katherine Hodgkin and Susana Radstone, 238–254. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
Renshaw, Layla. 2011. *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast.
Riles, Annelise. 2006. *Documents: Artifacts of Modern Knowledge*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Rodrigo, Javier. 2013. "Exploitation, Fascist Violence and Social Cleansing: A Study of Franco's Concentration Camps from a Comparative Perspective." *European Review of History - Revue Europeen d'histoire* 19: 553–573.

Rubin, Jonah S. 2014. "Transitional Justice against the State: Lessons from Spanish Civil Society-Led Forensic Exhumations." *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 8: 99–120.

Rubin, Jonah S. 2015. "Aproximación al concepto de *desaparecido*: reflexiones sobre El Salvador y España." *Alteridades* (*Memoria social. Estudios y contribuciones antropológicas*) 25 (49): 9–24.

Skultans, Vieda. 1998. *The Testimony of Lives: Narrative and Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia*. London: Routledge.

Solé, Queralt. 2009. "Inhumados en el Valle de los Caídos. Los primeros traslados desde la provincia de Madrid." *Hispania Nova. Revista de Historia Contemporánea* 9. Accessed 5 October 2016. http://hispanianova.rediris.es/9/articulos/9a009.pdf

Stoler, A. 2002. "Colonial Archives and the Acts of Governance." *Archival Science* 2: 87–109.

Todorov, Tzvetan. 2000. *Los abusos de la memoria*. Madrid: Taurus.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1995. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, MA: Beacon.

Trundle, C. 2011. "Searching for Culpability in the Archives: Commonwealth Nuclear Test Veterans' Claims for Compensation History and Anthropology." *History and Anthropology* 22 (4): 497–512.

Winter, Jay M. 2006. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995 (1996 [printing]).

Wouters, Nico. 2014. "The Use of History in the Field of Transitional Justice: A Critical Introduction." In *Transitional Justice and Memory in Europe (1945–2013)*, edited by Nico Wouters, 1–23. Cambridge: Intersentia Publishing.