The Rupture of the World and the Conflicts of Memory

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This essay addresses four main topics related with the repression of the defeated in the Spanish Civil War. First, it looks at the narration of the victims' traumatic memories and the problems faced by both the narrator and the interviewer when attempting to recover these memories. Second, it focuses on the actual violence of Francoist repression in the areas controlled by the so-called Nationalists upon the breakout of the insurgency. Third, it analyzes the explanations constructed by different social sectors regarding the assassination of thousands of persons and their interment in mass graves, combined with information gleaned from the available historical record. And finally, it examines the conflicts of memory unleashed by the relatively recent wave of exhumations promulgated by the relatives of the assassinated victims, focusing on those in the province of Burgos, where I have conducted my research.

A YEAR OF MEMORY FOR SPAIN

On June 23, 2006, the Spanish Congress of Deputies declared the year 2006 as the Year of Historical Memory. This year thus commemorates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Second Spanish Republic, and the seventieth anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War. The initiative, approved in the last congressional session before summer holidays started, came from

the ranks of the minority coalition formed by the Green Party and United Left (the revamped Communist Party). The conservative Popular Party, the main opposition group to the government of Socialist José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, was the only one that voted against the measure. They proposed to call the year 2006 the Year of Concord, commemorating the Transition instead, because it represented a time when the Spanish were willing and ready to come together and harmoniously build a common future. In the Popular Party's reading, the Spain of today seems to be floundering in the midst of fruitless debates and reopening of old wounds that tear at the social fabric and the very essence of the nation.

In this same context of memorialist vindications and passing judgment on the Spanish past, on July 3 the European Parliament issued a condemnation of Franco's regime, again with the sole opposition of the Spanish Popular Party members.

The proclamation of the year 2006 as the Year of Historical Memory goes beyond the aforementioned anniversaries, however. It condenses at the highest institutional level the types of debates, issues, processes, and struggles that have been increasingly shaking Spanish society since the first mass grave exhumation in October 2000.[1] The opening of Franco's mass graves has brought the intimate experience of defeat—the history of the vanquished—into the open, challenging the hegemonic history of the victors. Bones, visible and palpable and imprinted with violence, testify that Francoist repression was virulent and widespread—something that many Spaniards had as yet refused to accept. It is therefore not surprising that recent years have witnessed a bitter struggle over the representation of the recent Spanish past, from the establishment and development of the Second Republic in 1931, through the Civil War and the Francoist regime. The Right has generally opposed exhumations, refused to acknowledge new historical data about the past, and initiated a revisionist historiography that underlines the fatal flaws of the Left during the Second Republic and the Civil War and in fact blames the Left for its defeat and the violence unleashed. This vituperative conservative reaction against the emerging memory of the vanquished is not misplaced: memory in contemporary Spain is a major social, political, and moral issue that is leading to more than simply redefining the past.[2] It is at the heart of contemporary redefinitions of nationhood, civil society, citizenship, and democracy.

REMEMBERING THE IMPOSSIBLE, NARRATING THE INEXPRESSIBLE

"I talk now because nobody wanted to listen before" (Ascención G.).[3] Sixty-seven years after the first of the crimes took place, this was the explanation given by an informant to the anthropologist who interviewed her, a lapidary phrase that points at a crucial fact: the silence and incomprehension best represented by the old adage "There is no worse deafer man than he who refuses to listen." The victims' silence was imposed through the exercise of terror and power, as well as the complicit deafness by those who were not directly affected. Spanish society thus alienated a part of itself and accepted the hegemonic theses of the dictatorship, silencing its guilt and misgivings about consenting to the violence. To know, to speak, would become problematic, a certain source of social as well as personal conflicts that nobody wanted. The disclaimers that "it happened so long ago," "it's better to not look back," and "we must turn the page" are knee-jerk answers that often mask guilt and unclear consciences and that seek to end all discussion.

Remembering—*recordar*, in Spanish—implies returning through feeling, through the heart—*cor*, in Latin. Its meaning is therefore related to reliving, for although it is impossible to repeat a past experience, the act of *recordar* evokes the sensations produced by that experience. To remember is to feel again.

When studying the experiences of violence and terror suffered since 1936 through the memories of those who lived them, we face the problem that these traumatic memories were made socially invisible for more than six decades and have therefore remained unarticulated and often suppressed. A sudden, incomprehensible, and terrifying experience made all aspects of the Spanish surviving victims' lives precarious; it fragmented possible sources of warmth and support and created an environment of hostility that made every moment of their daily lives insecure and fearsome. Transmitting this experience is difficult not only because it is incomprehensible to a listener who did not live through it, but because the ruptured social fabric has remained torn, especially for those who continued to live under the weight of a hegemonic memory that silenced their experience.

Another problem of recovering these memories in the present seems to arise because the narratives told by old men and women recount

experiences lived in their childhood. As they give their testimonies, informants' gestures and expressions reveal the pain of the children they were—the tears, fear, hopelessness, and disorientation felt at the loss of a parent or an older sibling.

A third pervasive problem lies in the difficulty of articulating through language experiences of suffering, horror, and panic. Michael Richards argues that "awful experiences, especially of loss, are impossible to forget because they are beyond normal human comprehension or existing schemata and cannot be assimilated into personal and collective narratives." He asks, rhetorically, "How is the inexpressible to be expressed?" ("From War" 94), and the answer lies in the diversity of strategies used by narrators that facilitate the articulation of their experiences. Some resources are narrative. Tomasa C. recalls, "I was sitting on my father's lap when they came to get him." Valentín C. says, "My father went to the store to get some pickled fish for supper, and he never came back." And Ascención G. remembers, "We were sleeping after dinner when they knocked on the door asking for my father." These narrative formulas that underline the rupture of the quotidian routine and then leave the action unfinished transmit the uncertainty that descended upon these men and women who were then children—the insecurity and, above all, the unexpectedness of what happened.

Elaine Scarry uses the notion of pre-language to describe nondiscursive resources used by individuals when recounting extremely painful experiences that include performance, gestures, and actions that involve the interlocutor who listens and is witness to the pain: "Pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (*The Body* 4).[4] The recourse to pre-language was clearly present in the conversations sustained with many of my informants when the pain of the experience they had lived spilled into their memories as they recalled and attempted to narrate them. The process of recording these memories and using them as a means to construct a historic-anthropological understanding of the events themselves is complicated by the difficulty experienced by the victims to use words in their narration. This situation is a constant in studies of traumatic memory. Authors such as Frankl, Semprún, Levi, and others make constant allusions to the incommunicability of horror.[5]

A memory can be vivid and detailed, but just as often it is shrouded by a cloud of dull pain and is therefore hard to verbalize. Many promising and intense conversations that we thought would yield exceptional data finally ended in nothing but general notes, for the facts that our informants wanted to share had receded and practically vanished behind the memory of the intense pain that was suffered and that was still present. When in August 2003 I visited Dominga E. in her house in a small village near Aranda, she was with her friend Mari Carmen R. During the interview, Mari Carmen kept muttering under her breath, "Oh, if only *I* spoke, if only *I* spoke." When I finished taking Dominga's testimony, I asked Mari Carmen to tell me her story. Suddenly, before an attentive listener, all she could say was that they had been very, very afraid and that the men had been taken away. Frustrated, she broke into tears, unable to transmit significant information, even though she knew that what she had lived through was significant and worth telling. When a space to speak and be listened to has finally come, the surviving victims are faced with the nonnarrativity of their pain. Gaining the empathy of their listener through the recourse to pre-language is the only way that expression feels sincere and useful.

Another example clarifies the notion of pre-language. Benilde S. lost two brothers between August and October 1936. A third brother was imprisoned. Ninety years old today, she cannot remember the details about her brothers' lives, their militancy, their relations, their dreams.[6] In her testimonies, she cried more often in moments of doubt, absence, or fragmentation of memory than when she recounted the capture and disappearance of her brothers. It is not precisely general pain or sadness that brought tears, but the incapacity to fully express the magnitude of the memory through words. Her recourse to pre-language is a strategy to repair the damage done by the passage of time. Listening came too late.

RUPTURE OF THE WORLD

The eruption of extreme violence in the summer of 1936[7]—which has been referred to as a holocaust by some authors—was experienced as what I refer to as a rupture of the world. This took place on two interrelated levels: on the one hand individual and on the other hand collective.

The life of apprehension, suffering, and alienation that would pervade the entire period of Francoism for many Spanish families could be described using Michael Taussig's expression "culture of terror": "From Timmerman's chronicle and texts like Miguel Angel Asturias' *El señor presidente*, it is abundantly clear that 'cultures of terror' are based on and nourished by silence and myth in which the fanatical stress on the mysterious flourishes by means of rumor and fantasy woven in a dense web of magical realism. It is also clear that the victimizer needs the victim for the purpose of making truth, objectifying the victimizer's fantasies in the discourse of the other" (Taussig, "Culture" 40). Although it came without warning, terror installed itself permanently. Testimonies are fraught with expressions of trepidation. The phrase "we have been afraid, very, very afraid," repeated by several informants, shows the anxiety and unease that continue to this day. As late as 2003, some of them set up secret appointments for interviews away from home; others received us at home but closed the curtains and made sure the doors were locked, and even then they lowered their voices to speak.

Personal Rupture

Pain can break an individual's world, especially a child's world. The brutal experience of the unexplainable—the murder of parents or siblings, sudden and increasing pauperization, destructuring of family life, constant humiliation and alienation, psychoses—all of these shattered what should have been the safe haven of childhood for the surviving relatives of the victims of the repression of 1936. These experiences marked the end of what had been "normal," everyday life, thus constituting a personal rupture of the world. As the wave of arrests and the rumor of assassinations spread, an environment of fear pervaded the lives of many who still did not believe that they would be directly affected (given the irrelevance of past military pronouncements in their personal lives) until the impossible also struck at their door. "We saw that they were detaining people, but we didn't think of running away. Why should we, when we hadn't done anything wrong?" declared Samuel G., whose brother was among those summarily executed (*fusilados*).

Children's descent into terror and insecurity was preceded and accompanied by the abuse heaped upon the women of their families. Female relatives of so-called Reds (*rojos*) were given degrading haircuts (the *pelonas*), were paraded around with their shaved heads through the streets, had their clothes torn, were taunted through songs. Beyond these initial vexations, they were constantly mortified and insulted for years. Incarcerated women and others were forced to assume the tasks associated with cleaning the barracks, hospitals, or officers' homes. It is not surprising that a significant part of the testimonies are stories of childhood humiliations and vexations.[8] According to his own testimony, Samuel G.'s father was assassinated in September 1936, when Samuel was seven years old, and he had to leave school in order to work along with his brothers. Among all the stories of hardship and suffering that he could have told us, he spoke of how he was forced to take his first communion dressed as a Falangist and was then excluded from the small celebration where the rest of the children were having cookies and sweet wine. This anecdote condenses the frustration and humiliation of a child in a world of cruel adults who insist on excluding the son in order to reproduce the stigma of his murdered father. His experience coincides with that of many other victims, whose exclusion was reproduced by the children of the victors, who insulted the victims at school and in the streets, perhaps with doses of oblivion that nonetheless did not reduce the cruelty perceived by the stigmatized children.

Childhood in fact ended with the disappearance of the assassinated father, an experience that not only caused emotional pain but led to the total pauperization of these people whose lives were often already precarious and who lost their head of household—sometimes the major, and often the only, source of income. The children of these severed households, some as young as seven or eight years old, engaged in labor that was often difficult for their age: they became a generation marked by an early entrance into the workforce, curtailed from pursuing schooling and with limited possibilities for improving their socioeconomic position in the future. The surviving victims were subalternized: they were orphaned by the law, excluded from public space, and sometimes directly or indirectly expelled from their communities. My own research shows how networks of support and sociability were reconfigured

among them, reproducing in many ways a sort of culture of the vanquished, as they constituted social collectives within the towns and villages in a clear status of submission to the new conditions of life imposed upon society. I encountered numerous marriages among children of the executed, which reveal not only their search for community but the degree and endurance of their alienation. Especially in small towns, surviving "Reds" were snubbed in regular society decades after the war was over, and relatives of known "Reds" were accepted insofar as they rejected the ideology of their loved ones and openly embraced the regime. Members of these communities of pain were among the first to migrate in the 1940s, as they escaped dismal conditions of life and extreme pauperization, further abetting the hegemony of "non-Reds" in their communities.

Collective Rupture and New Social (Dis)Order

But the society that excluded relatives of "Reds" was also undergoing a general rupture of the world, as the norms and values that were until then considered natural and unquestionable were invalidated upon the outbreak of the war and the social fragmentation that preceded and surrounded it. This favored the eruption of repressed desires, the revindication of new social spaces, and the alteration of gender roles.

In 1936, Manuela B. worked as a domestic servant in Madrid. By mid-July, she returned to her parents' home for her vacation and was there when the war reached her hometown. Her father was assassinated in August, and her mother, who was publicly disgraced, suffered a mental crisis, leaving Manuela to support the family. In her free time, she kept a diary on the notebooks of the syndicate that her father had founded in the 1900s (ascribed to the UGT—the General Union of Workers).[9] Besides revealing an often confusing mix of her father's leftist utopianism and her own profound Catholic principles, her journal narrates the most painful and significant events of her community.

One of the elements that Manuela found noteworthy was the behavior of those she identified as "fascist women." In October 1936, these women "sing to, jump around, laugh at, and insult those whose hair has been shaved. . . . All their effort is put into parading them around." In

February 1937, Manuela writes of struggle and turmoil, for "five women signed a petition for the Captain [of the civil guard] of Aranda to have 25 men of the town executed, saying that they had heard them yelling, 'Long live Russia!' " In March, she describes ruthless women who accused their neighbors of what constituted deadly dissent.

> There is a band of women that spends its time denouncing whoever they find convenient. They kept denouncing people without thinking about it. And some of them were so keen that they screwed up, because they made an unfair denouncement that the Mayor followed through, and then on the 29th, a pair of civil guards in a little car came for a man who had never been mixed up in politics and also made him a prisoner. Who can be safe these days? There is no reason to be safe as long as petty hatreds (*malos quereres*) and revenges continue.

Come mid-June 1938, Manuela wrote that some of the "social prisoners" were released, "poor souls who had been suffering for 22 months. . . . Among them was a man of this town, and what madness! Seeing that some were *rojillos*, which is how they called them, the women tried to go to the Captains and the Commanders to say that they should execute all of them because they were all worse than those who had already died."

Traditional views of war portray men as the sole protagonists because they officially brandish and use firepower. But war, and the social relations and roles of war, go beyond the battlefield. When men go off to war, social roles are profoundly altered, as women are often incorporated into realms normally reserved for the masculine universe, including political action.[10] In the case of the Spanish Civil War, the transformation of gendered spaces was even more complicated and contradictory. On the Republican side, collective women's actions intended to effect societal change, but in the areas controlled by the insurgents, Fascist women acting in groups sought to reinvent a pre-Republican social order without representing or attempting to construct a "new woman."[11] Like an ancient Greek choir, they represented themselves as the angry voice of the community in the absence of men, and they wielded great power over the "Red" women, whom they shamed and vexed, and the men

whom they accused based on gossip and rumor. This was their particular way of cleansing society from the moral decrepitude that had been introduced by—and was embodied in—the "Reds."[12] It was a type of sui generis empowerment of the feminine in which tensions and frustrations inherent in unequal gender relations could also be surreptitiously addressed, as women publicly exercised power over men, even "respectable men" (*hombres de respeto*).

These altered gender relations, the ideological polarization, the extermination of community members, the climate of fear and insecurity, and the unprecedented political importance of personal differences and problems—the deadly importance that made life precarious—signal just how deeply the world of social relations had been ruptured.

THE LOGICS OF VIOLENCE

Who Benefited?

Gender was not the only variable and social hierarchy affected by the coup and during the war, and women were not the only group to obtain a new social protagonism. The corporate world of the Spanish class system was also shaken and restructured. The interested calculation of the lower middle classes in the military coup was related to the possibility that it would provide job opportunities and spaces for political affirmation that had been usually reserved for the wealthier classes. In the end, the final triumph of the insurrection encouraged the emergence of a new petite bourgeoisie in these local spaces. I argue that, ideologically characterized by respect for traditional values, this new class hoped that so-called national regeneration would allow them to gain access to local power, and most were willing to ally with those who espoused the most exclusivist and violent discourses.

There was a redistribution of opportunities from those classified as "Reds" to those whose political activities (or lack thereof) coincided with the victorious side. These opportunities most often took the form of relatively unskilled jobs, which could be important in an impoverished economy characterized by high unemployment. In the neglected

municipal archive of Aranda de Duero names that would later be associated with the repression—of perpetrators as well as victims—show up in claims, firings, and job transfers. Moreover, many survivors explain that the reason their relatives were denounced or placed on blacklists of some sort is found in these conflicts between neighbors, which are in fact evident in the documentary record.

Malos quereres versus Extermination Orders

The individual benefits that accrued to some, and the quarrels between townspeople and community members that tore at the social fabric, led many to accept the thesis that the assassinations were entirely the product of envies and petty hatreds, *malos quereres*. We saw a similar interpretation in Manuela B.'s personal journal. The Francoist regime never acknowledged the massacres perpetrated by its adherents, much less that they had taken place as part of a political program; indeed, it encouraged the idea that rural villagers and peasants had acted on their own wild impulses.[13]

Recent research has unequivocally shown that there were express orders to eliminate all individuals considered leftists in the zones where the rebels had wrested power from the hands of the Republican government.[14] The instructions given by General Emilio Mola Vidal, director of the coup, lent an almost eugenicist character to the persecution of "Reds," who were considered more than merely ideological enemies: they were immoral; they were traitorous; they were anti-Spanish; they were atheists; they went against all that was good.[15] In a conversation with *Chicago Daily Tribune* correspondent Jay Allen—published by the *Tribune* on July 28, 1936—Franco said that a truce between the warring sides was impossible, because Republicans "fought against Spain," and were thus to be stopped "at any cost" (qtd. in Luzán; my translation).[16] Unfortunately for historians and researchers, there were both ample time and motives during the Francoist regime and the anesthetizing Transition to empty the major archives of compromising documents. Nevertheless, a wave of new research that studies local sources more deeply—municipal and provincial archives, prison documents, survivors' testimonies, archaeological evidence from the mass graves, and

overlooked documents in major archives and other sources—reveals the wider structural plan to eliminate all individuals considered leftists in the uniformity of the modus operandi followed by the rebels in diverse locales.

But the new historiographic tendency has insisted so much on the external origin of the repressive violence that some studies and even some associations dedicated to the recovery of historic memory now myopically deny the role of intracommunity tensions and local dynamics in the execution of violence. For some associations for the recovery of historic memory and for amateur historians, seeing the assassinations exclusively as the consequence of superior orders carried out by obedient villagers turns the individuals who were murdered into truly innocent victims. Their victimization is categorical because it is the product of military intelligence that procured the victims' names from lists of affiliation with parties, syndicates, or other associations, or mistakenly included them, whether or not the victims were politically and ideologically active. It is as if these amateur historians and activists portray victims' political activity or community conflicts as nonissues in order to stress the wrongness of their assassination. It should not be necessary to deny from the onset the role of local tensions and politics in order to deflect accusations that there were "reasons" why each victim was killed. After all, intracommunity tensions and political activism—even Communist militancy!—do not justify assassination, let alone interment in unmarked mass graves and the humiliation and exploitation of surviving relatives.

Moreover, despite the fact that orders did come "from above," the effects they had and their execution cannot be explained without taking into account the entanglement of these external demands with the internal conflicts of the community (see Bax; Seidman). It is clear from Manuela B.'s diary that village societies were enveloped in fear and animosity and fraught with tension; external orders and pressures mixed with internal tensions in a deadly dialectic. Furthermore, local explanations grant a sort of agency to the dead. By underlining the reasons why local envies and conflicts erupted, informants remember and in a sense honor their dead, many of whom were active in trying to change the status quo and invariably incurred the wrath of those who clung to it. Considering the execution of "superior orders" to eliminate all leftists as the only explanation for their assassination completely nullifies the individuality of the victims and the agency of community people in general—victims, perpetrators, collaborators, and bystanders alike. Emotions, hatreds, envy, tensions, and arguments embed the victim of repression in a world in which he or she was an agent, co-protagonist of his or her own history.

THE CONFLICT OF MEMORIES

Informed by an international framework of studies on memory, the analysis of traumatic experience and genocide, as well as a growing global acceptance of the principles associated with human rights since the end of the Cold War, Spain has seen the emergence of a social movement that seeks to "recover historic memory" encouraged by the opening of the mass graves of the Franco regime.[17] The Walter Benjamin–type "eruption" of this historic conflict in the present, in which a significant social sector demands attention and analysis of "the past" has come as a surprise (especially for international observers), for it has caused quite a stir on what appeared to be lethargic consciences. Relatives of the men and women whose bodies were buried in unmarked mass graves have led the social movement that seeks to reinstall these direct victims of repression into the political and social life of the country, even as they themselves are indirect victims and survivors.

Why are the bereaved families so concerned with the exhumations? Primarily they want to resolve the difficult trauma of having their loved ones buried in a field, "as if they were animals"—a common expression among the relatives of the victims. The issue of reinterment has a strong symbolic appeal.[18] The dead have culturally defined places where they should lie and where the living can relate to them, spaces that are adequate for remembering and honoring them through rituals and prayers that also allow closure. Family members want to close the cultural circle of personhood of their deceased loved ones by reintroducing them in the social sphere of the community. Not only was the exact location of the graves kept from them, they were also forbidden to visit them and leave flowers—the *guardia civil* kept surveillance—and widows, mothers, and next of kin were forbidden from making their mourning public

(such as wearing black). In many cases, attempts were made to erase the very existence of the murdered victims by ripping the pages of the civil registry where they were recorded.

But despite their definite materiality and impartial existence, once bones are in the open they are not neutral scripts. Digging up a grave entails digging up the past—reencountering buried feelings of fear, pain, frustration, shame, and guilt. Although the exhumation process has been generally positive for the communities involved, deeply felt tensions and debates always surround them, especially during the initial stages. Old fears are rekindled; guilt is brought to the fore, shame for things done and things not done, regrets. Exhumations make these emotions urgent by revealing the hard evidence of death in the midst of communities used to the silent and often complicit cover-up of the past.

The victims are enjoying a new social protagonism, especially among the so-called third generation. The exhumed remains possess a symbolic capital (see Verdery) that reconfigures the dead men and women into heroes, and they and their surviving relatives thus participate in the construction of new social discourses from an advantageous position. Such symbolic capital is clearly made manifest in the multiple public services of homage paid to the victims. These ceremonies are usually neither as conflictive nor as multitudinous in locales where repression was numerically less deadly than in Aranda de Duero and its neighboring villages, where more than two hundred residents from a population of nearly ten thousand were assassinated.[19] Ceremonies in Aranda serve as perfect occasions for politicians to make an appearance, especially since the creation of the Interministerial Commission for the Support and Study of the Victims of the Civil War and Francoism made this topic fashionable among government officials. In the homage we organized when exhumation labors at La Lobera were over, provincial and local politicians among those present were eager to make press declarations.

In the service and reinterment of the recovered bodies that took place on September 1, 2005, national and regional-level politicians of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), such as Diego López Garrido, speaker for the Socialists in Congress; Ángel Villalba, regional secretary of the PSOE of Castilla and León; José María Jiménez, PSOE's provincial secretary; Julián Juez, provincial secretary of the UGT, as well as a slew of regional, provincial, and local party leaders attracted a lot of media attention. The act was noteworthy because more remains had been exhumed in Aranda than in any other town in Spain till that moment. In personal communications, many families complained about the political manipulation of the activity, noting that organizers had been more concerned with facilitating the assistance of these politicians than that of interested relatives of those to be reinterred. As a matter of fact, many families were indeed missing, partly because of confusion regarding the date of the activity, which had been changed three times. Politicians made declarations and promises about their support for relatives, the pursuit of truth and historic memory, symbolic reparations, and so forth, and had their pictures taken next to the coffins.

Moreover, this new reading of the past is not lost on the few surviving perpetrators, most of whom have closed ranks against the identification and opening of the mass graves. Some have expressed fear of violent reprisals, while others fear possible judicial proceedings. Still others think that they would be forced to somehow compensate their victims' families for the goods and property they stole. In the area where our research team works there has been no direct confrontation between perpetrators or their descendants and the relatives of the exhumed, but fear exists nonetheless. In Aranda, a ninety-year-old Falangist who according to local hearsay "pulled a trigger," actually moved to Madrid when the process of opening the graves of Monte Costaján was initiated in 2003—perhaps afraid of possible reprisals, perhaps to avoid questions.

This is one of the multiple significant questions that arise from the conflict of memories: How do we negotiate the past and the discomfort of guilt? What should be done—or remembered—in the cases where people did things they knew to be wrong, under the conviction that it was fair and necessary to do these things? What about those who were carried away by the heat of the moment and participated in events that they then regretted for the rest of their lives? These perpetrators often feel remorse and live with guilty consciences, but few accept the responsibility of their participation in the events and ask for forgiveness. As they negotiate and rewrite their past in accordance with the change in the times, assuaging their guilt by placing themselves on the side of

the victims, helping locate the graves, and condemning the abuses in which they themselves partook, they nonetheless bear what I call "sick memories."[20]

An old guard from the Ribera of Valladolid and a former Falangist from Aranda are concrete examples. The guard narrated an execution in great detail and collaborated in the localization of the grave. He told the exhumation team that he had witnessed the killings silently perched on a tree, trying to avoid discovery in fear for his own life. But according to various testimonies, he was in fact one of the perpetrators. As a matter of fact, cartridges found in the exhumation grounds are compatible with his double-barreled shotgun, which informants had previously described as the weapon he used.[21] The former Falangist left an anonymous note—although everybody knew his identity—in the house of the sister of one of those assassinated in Aranda de Duero. In the note he expressed discomfort regarding the murders. He said that he did not participate in them and that he actually quit the Falange immediately after they took place. Moreover, he provided information about the "true" perpetrators—four individuals, three of whom had already died—saying that the sole survivor could give more information on the location of the graves and the identity of each body.[22] Both the guard and the Falangist reveal with their actions that they want to remove part of their guilt by cooperating with the relatives of the assassinated victims, while simultaneously denying that they in fact have any guilt to remove. According to a renowned Spanish psychiatrist, "the incapacity of integrating little by little the traumatic experience with the rest of our autobiography is a sign of danger, a sign that the emotional wound will worsen or become chronic."[23]

Obviously, the physical opening of a grave generates various reactions and discourses among those most closely involved. Some of the older family members voiced their desire to die peacefully now that the exhumations had been done. There are various cases in Aranda of people who promised their elders they would bury their murdered father or uncle or husband properly, with dignity. Our ninety-year-old Benilde S., whose two murdered brothers were supposedly in one of the graves at La Lobera, had promised her parents that she would disinter the bodies of her brothers and give them proper burial in the cemetery. This was also the case with the principal promoter of these particular exhumations, Restituto Velasco. He had promised his aunt on her deathbed that he would get his uncle—her husband—out of the mass grave. For these people, exhumation is a moral issue, and the restitution of the remains to the cemetery is an invaluable solace, as such more important than their identification.

Some of the younger relatives—often the children of the survivors, also indirect victims of the repression—try to spare their elders from suffering the pain associated with the eruption of this traumatic memory. But experience has consistently shown that the narration of these painful events in the context of the search for the localization and identification of the remains and the restoration of their family's dignity leads to relief (Ovejero Bernal). Part of the pain contained in the memory generated by trauma is somehow exorcised when, like a skeleton in a grave, it is unearthed, brought to light, and shared—release and gratitude are evident when an interview is over and when exhumations are successful. In Viktor Frankl's words, a true logotherapy takes place (see Frankl 139).

Obviously, exhumations do not affect all of the victims' surviving relatives in the same way. Different memories and emotions are intimately related with the lived experience of Francoism: the way the relatives came to terms with the assassinations of their loved ones and with their own social victimization. Exhumations are particularly problematic for those relatives who had accommodated themselves to the conditions imposed by the victors. Many of them had accepted the regime's logic that blamed their murdered parents not only for their deaths but for the problems they caused for the surviving family members. Some even held jobs in the Francoist political structure.[24] This is part of the drama and transformative power of suffering, as some people go from victims to collaborators with the perpetrators.[25] The surfacing of the bones of the dead into the open is a deep personal conflict for these persons, as it unsettles their efforts and struggles to construct an identity that distanced them from the "Reds" and was valued positively by Francoism. The orphaned children of "Reds" suffered immense psychological pressure under the ideological edifice of Francoism, principally by the priests and nuns who ran orphanages. There the children learned that their parents had committed great sins that they could help expiate, for which many were incited to serve the Church.[26]

In the exhumation at Villamayor de los Montes (Burgos), in July 2004, there was a clear example of a revamped identity, based on the denial of painful memories, one that was destabilized by the exhumation process. A man whose father was buried in the mass grave showed up with his three sons and tried to prevent the opening of the grave, arguing that the people concerned had not consented to the exhumation, that the process had not been carried out seriously, and that instead of digging up the dead, a memorial in stone should be built over the site—which was in the middle of the forest. This man had been mayor of a neighboring town as an active member of the conservative Partido Popular.[27]

A smaller number of relatives of the exhumed includes those who welcomed the exhumations but during their testimonies admitted to having signed death certificates that literally said that their parent had died because of the war (*por causas de la Guerra*) without giving another, more detailed, explanation—this, given the "pacified" character of Aranda when the executions took place, was not true—or had inexplicably disappeared. Having these certificates, they could collect the pitiful aid given by the government during the postwar period as well as perform other legal transactions that required this paperwork, such as remarry. The families that never accepted the signing of these documents today brandish what they see as their moral integrity with pride, leaving those who did sign in the uncomfortable position of moral corruptibility and betrayal of their victimized relative. For them, pain is transformed into a proud, vindicating identity.

Some sectors oppose the exhumations, including at least one pro-memory association, the Association of the Friends of the Grave of Oviedo. This association believes that historic memory is better served by identifying and preserving the mass graves in situ instead of opening them up and dispersing the remains of Francoism's victims. But in the cases I have studied, except for the incident of Villamayor de los Montes, those who oppose the exhumations belonged to the victorious side of the war. They are the ones who most vehemently declare that "stirring the ghosts of the past" will provoke divisions and problems that have already been overcome. This sector is protected by the Amnesty Law of 1977 that supported the discourse of "turning the page" during the Transition.[28] The problems of the Civil War were declared a thing of the past from the

privileged position of their own victory. In many cases, they somatized the propaganda of the Francoist regime and its Church—*memoria rerum gestarum*—regarding the fairness of the struggle against the barbarity of the "Reds" (see Casanova, *La iglesia*; Raguer Suñer, *La pólvora*). And many who were not direct perpetrators of the extreme violence of 1936 but were affected by the psychological legacies of Francoism are convinced of the reasons and justifications of their cause.

Finally, multiple and varied reactions to the exhumations also come from those born during the democratic regime, the generation of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the war, who have been relatively free of the conditioning experienced by their parents and grandparents.[29] Some of these grandchildren have become the protagonists of the movement for the recovery of historic memory. The rest, self-identified as apolitical, embody a clear legacy of the *mesocracia* encouraged under Francoism: rule by petty middling sectors with no ideological inclinations. They ignore or are indifferent to the horrors experienced by their grandparents' generation, and they are the key factor in the definitive national reconciliation, which must begin in the recognition of others' pain and respect for others' suffering. Their reaction before the reality of the mass graves is often of surprise, as their views on their own nation or society are shaken. Many turn to artistic imagery, particularly film, to understand and explain that unknown reality that they can then approach through fiction—and the comparisons with what they know of Nazi extermination are constant. They must negotiate a past that they did not know belonged to them.

The bones of the assassinated men and women found in mass graves are undisputable witnesses to the extreme violence committed against them—a violence that went beyond summary execution into social erasure and absolute disrespect. Given the visibility of violence and suffering embodied in the bones, they also mediate between perpetrators and victims. They are a site of negotiation for traumatic memories and experiences of denial that need social recognition as a moral compensation for suffering. Faced with the absence of other policies, such as Truth Commissions or governmental investigations, the exhumations of the mass graves of Francoism, which led to the almost immediate involvement of academia, are one of the most significant social processes of contemporary Spain. They are necessary for the democratic, scientific,

and social health of the country, for we are responsible for negotiating a past that must first be known and can then serve to construct a true history, without exclusions, a history for all sides—a history of suffering.

Just how necessary and how intimate such a historic recovery has become can be seen in my own family. My father is a conservative shopkeeper from Burgos, which is an eminently conservative city (it was the capital of the self-proclaimed crusade). He has been predictably very uncomfortable with my work, not only because of his own personal ideals and conservatism but because of the comments and pressure he endures in his social circle regarding his son's "questionable politics." To these, he always replies that his son was given this assignment, as if the chancellor of the university went around assigning each faculty member with particular homework. But his discomfort remains, and if I ever mention anything about the exhumations, he changes the subject, or waves me off, or gets into an argument about why I have to do this, why not let things be?—without actually continuing the discussion. He does not stomp out of the room because he has a very bad limp. But on one occasion, I cornered him in a conversation about the exhumation at Aranda. I showed him a piece of paper that we had found on the ground more or less over the mass grave—it had been attached to a bunch of flowers from the last All Saints Day, when families usually leave flowers for their dead. I read him the note, which said, "Even though you are many kilometers away from here, even if we do not know where . . . you have always been and you will always be with us. . . . A hug, and many many kisses from the whole family. We love you and we do not forget you, Grandfather, neither you nor the rest of the family that is with you, somewhere." When I looked up, my father was crying, and he said, "This has to be done" (*esto hay que hacerlo*).

NOTES

1. The exhumation developed in El Bierzo (León) was the first one conducted with expert forensic advice and rigorous identification of the remains in the context of the so-called movement for the recovery of historic memory. See Silva Barrera and Macías. Upon the advent of democratic rule, several exhumations were performed by relatives who gathered the remains, without institutional or academic support amid a political climate that officially discouraged digging up the past. But even these exhumations stopped after the failed coup d'état of 1981.

2. For a scathing critique of this revisionist tendency see Tusell, "El revisionismo"; Casanova, "Mentiras."

3. All interviews cited were conducted between May and September 2003 in Aranda de Duero and neighboring towns as part of my work in the exhumation of multiple mass graves as a member of the research team Violencia, Conflictos Civiles y Guerra of the Universidad de Burgos. The names of interviewees have been changed to protect their privacy.

4. See also Scarry, *Resisting*. As part of what has been called the anthropology of pain, see Morris.

5. See Frankl; Levi, *Si*; Levi, *La tregua*; Levi, *Los hundidos*; Semprún, *El largo*; Semprún, *La escritura*; and Semprún, *Viviré*. See also the novel *My First Sony* by Benny Barbash, whose child-protagonist explains why his father, a ghostwriter of Holocaust memoirs, stopped writing them:

> These poor people . . . want to translate their experiences into a language which hasn't yet been invented and will probably never be invented, and they rummage in the meager and narrow lexicon of words available to us, trying to find the formula which will express what they've been through, and in the end, the gap between what gets written and what they feel gives rise to frustration and resentment, and the entire project is doomed to failure from the word go, and Grandma's continuing silence is apparently the only language which can tell that story, and Dad, who knows how to put words together but doesn't know how to make sentences out of silence, decided to stop doing it. (qtd. in Milner 91)

6. Information or memories are not lost only because of the passage of time—in *I Remember Julia*, Eric Stener Carlson captures the conflict faced by relatives and friends of a disappeared Argentinean woman when they try to define exactly who she was, because the total meaning of the life of a person is not apprehensible.

7. The label "extreme violence" is applied using qualitative criteria that underline cruel or atrocious conduct regarding particular acts of violence and quantitative criteria related to the massive destruction of civilian populations. According to Jacques Semelin, "whatever the degree of its enormity, [extreme violence] is the prototypical expression of the negation of humanity, for its victims are animalized or objectified before being annihilated. We must go beyond moral judgments, to the political, economic and cultural circumstances which are capable of engendering such collective behaviors" (4).

8. "The word *vexation* conveys the idea about an external power, foreign to this world that agitates the body, severing the ties to others, and in this way

disturbing the internal being. To say that one has been vexed means that a powerful external force is causing internal problems that the filaments of the former extend deep inside the latter" (Kleinman and Kleinman 20).

9. A photocopy of this diary was given to the author by Manuela B.'s family. There are no page numbers.

10. Interviews done by Ackelsberg (130–31) are good examples of this: "The times that we lived during the war, six months were like three years in another context . . . so that, for me, the three years of war, all that I lived through, were like . . . ten years of my life. . . . When I was fourteen and fifteen I had experiences that would stay with me all my life engraved in my mind, such a flowering of ideas-made-reality that happened during this period! Even if I had died, I wouldn't have wanted not to have had that experience" (Pepita Carpena). Or in the words of another, "it was an incredible life, the life of a young activist. A life dedicated to struggling, to learning, renewing society. It was characterized, almost, by a kind of effervescence, constant activity. . . . It was a very busy life, got eight hours—or sometimes ten, if we got overtime—and going everywhere on foot to save money for the organization."

11. This "new woman"—whom I so name as a referential counterpoint to the "new man" of the 1960s international Left—was what Ackelberg's *mujeres libres* sought to become.

12. People's testimonies contain an ample collection of eugenicist terms, often linked to the vegetable-agrarian world. For instance, a common threat made regarding the children of the assassinated was "you must pull weeds by their roots" (*la mala hierba hay que arrancarla de raíz*); new rounds of assassinations after the hot terror was over were said to "glean" (*la rebusca*). According to Elaine Scarry,

> the recurrence here of language from the realm of vegetation occurs because vegetable tissue, though alive, is perceived to be immune to pain; thus the inflicting of damage can be registered in language without permitting the reality of suffering **into** the description. Live vegetable tissue occupies a peculiar category of sentience that is close to, perhaps is, non-sentience; more often, the language is drawn from the unequivocal non-sentience of steel, wood, iron, and aluminium, the metals and materials out of which weapons are made and which can be invoked so that an event entailing two deeply traumatic occurrences, the inflicting of an injury and the receiving of an injury, is thus neutralized. "Neutralization" or "neutering" (or their many variants such as "cleaning," "cleaning out," "cleaning up" or other phrases indicating an alternation in an essential characteristic of the metal, such as "liquefaction") is itself a major vocabulary invoked in the redescription of injuring. It begins by being applied only to weapons: it is the other peoples' firepower (guns, rockets, tanks) that must be "neutralized," but it is then transferred to the holder of the gun, the firer of the rocket, the driver of the tank, as well as to the civilian sister of the holder, the uncle of the firer, the child of the driver, the human beings who must be (not injured or burned or dismembered or killed but) "neutralized," "cleaned out," "liquidated." ("Injury," 4–5)

13. This discourse reveals inherent contradictions in one of the principal elements of Francoist ideology: paradoxical invocations to the traditional peasant as bearer of the purest essence of the *patria* (the fatherland)—with a clear resonance of the German *volkgeist*—coexisted with the notion that these very peasants were primeval and violent. Francoist ideology inherited the bucolic search for the medieval peasant as the reservoir of Spanish national identity from nineteenth-century Romanticism, which gained currency throughout the early twentieth century with the influential Generation of 1898. (For an example of early twentieth-century interest in the rural world, see Fernández de Mata, "En este"). Francoist folklorization and idealization of "the peasant" and "the people" (*el pueblo*) was embodied in the dance and choral groups of the Spanish Falange, which were emulated by innumerable local folkloric associations throughout the country. But the emphasis on peasant savagery and virulence displaced the regime's responsibility for the massacres and the disappearance of thousands of Spaniards, as townsfolk were made suspect for murdering and secretly burying a few dozen neighbors in each village despite the regime's supposed attempts to control such extremes. Regardless of the contradictory character of these discourses, they were successful in the construction of Spanish public opinion. In fact, upon the opening of the first mass graves and the uncovering of historical—and forensic—evidence that pointed to the existence of plans of extermination and what some authors have referred to as a "Spanish Holocaust" (Armengou and Belis), many Spaniards still refused to believe that the relatives of those murdered or summarily executed in 1936–1937 were indeed telling the truth. The dark veil woven by the regime to conceal the reality of its deadly brutality was thick enough to last for over sixty years.

14. In the First Circular of July 1936 (Madrid, July 19), soon after the beginning of the military coup, Gen. Emilio Mola said, "We must sow terror. . . . We must set forth a sensation of dominion, eliminating without scruples and without vacillation all those who do not think like us."

15. Such ideas are evident in almost all of General Mola's allocutions and writings (see Mola Vidal). For a firsthand representation of General Francisco Franco's imaginary, see de Andrade's *Raza*. This text was turned into the film *Raza*, directed by José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, which premiered in Madrid on January 5, 1942.

16. This fragment of the interview, reproduced in Luzán, is worth quoting at length (my translation):

ALLEN: Isn't there any possibility of a truce, or a compromise?
FRANCO: No. No, definitely not. We fight for Spain. They fight against Spain. We are determined to go ahead at any cost.
ALLEN: You will have to kill half of Spain! . . .
FRANCO: I said at any cost.

17. For a lengthier discussion of this historic development, see Fernández de Mata, "El surgimiento."

18. A classic study with relevant comparative data regarding the meaning of these reburials can be found in Robert Hertz's 1907 essay, "Contribution à une étude sur la represéntation collective de la mort." A fragment of this work is included under the title "A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death" in *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*, edited by Antonius C. G. M. Robben. In this same anthology see also Robben, "State."

19. When it took place, this was the largest single-town exhumation in Spain: 127 bodies were recovered by our research team, Violencia, Conflictos Civiles y Guerra, from various mass graves in La Lobera and Monte Costaján and in Aranda de Duero, where there are remaining mass graves to be exhumed. The team, made up of archeologists, forensic scientists, historians, and myself as a cultural anthropologist, tries to integrate the recovery and identification of the bodies with various sociohistoric projects. Such projects are circumscribed by the zone that was under the control of the insurgent military in June 1936, an area that underwent much more repression than actual battles. The members of the team are also part of Burgos's Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH), and we actively collaborate in the exhumations that this organization sponsors in our province. We also participate in the Regional Coordinator for the Recovery of Historic Memory, which brings together the different associations that work on this topic in the autonomous community of Castilla y León, which are linked to the national ARMH, the Forum for Memory, and Amnesty International, trying to inform public policy and the responsibilities of local governments regarding this subject.

20. For a brief but interesting analysis of psychological and psychosocial traumas associated with guilt and memory generated by Francoism and state repression, see Ovejero.

21. This story was given as part of an interview by Ricardo Bedera, of Valladolid's ARMH, and related to the author in a personal communication.

22. The sole survivor, identified by name and address in the note, is the old man who left for Madrid as soon as work on the exhumations began.

23. Luis Rojas Marcos is writing about the surviving relatives of the terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004, but it is worth reading the following excerpt thinking of perpetrators who committed atrocious crimes nearly seventy years ago and are still guilt-ridden: "Burying distressing memories can cause great anguish or depression and stop the process of recovery. Moreover, by hiding how

we feel, we distance ourselves physically and emotionally from others precisely when we most need human touch, support, and consolation. What is worse, the persistence of these symptoms—which in the beginning are normal—*during more than four or five weeks*, and the incapacity of integrating little by little the traumatic experience with the rest of our autobiography is a sign of danger, a sign that the emotional wound will worsen or become chronic" (emphasis mine). My added emphasis underlines the length of time that both bereaved relatives and guilt-ridden executioners have gone without being able to seek consolation and support or talk freely, as the title of Rojas Marcos's article, "Please, Talk," suggests.

24. These attitudes are perceived as treacherous by those who refused to give up the social and political beliefs of their elders and who kept a sense of familial loyalty to their murdered relatives until today. These victims, who lived under the scornful labels of "red," "son of red," etc., are usually the ones who most avidly support the exhumations.

25. One case, which is hard to accept but which best reveals the complexity of this psychological conflict, is that of Chilean survivor Luz Arce, who wrote an autobiographical testimony; see Arce.

26. Encouraged by the nuns at her school, the daughter of Eduardo de Ontañón—an intellectual from Burgos who was exiled in Mexico after the war while his family stayed behind in Spain—became a nun to pray for her father's soul. Jacinto de Ontañón, personal communication. Similar cases are related in Vinyes et al.

27. Like him, many persons who hold higher administrative positions experience similar conflicts of memory that affect the institutional support needed to continue with the process of dignifying the victims and their relatives.

28. The Amnesty Law is no longer a source of comfort, however, given the precedents set in Argentina, where certain elements of their own amnesties have been repealed.

29. In fact, Ovejero (73–74, 77) cites studies that have shown that at least in Chile, and among Holocaust survivors, psychological and psychosocial traumas related to state repression have multiplied *under democratic regimes*.

CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN POLITICS AND SOCIETY

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EDITED BY

CARLOS JEREZ-FARRÁN AND SAMUEL AMAGO

UNEARTHING FRANCO'S LEGACY

Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain

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"For anyone interested in understanding the lasting impact of the Spanish Civil War on contemporary society, *Unearthing Franco's Legacy* is required reading. The editors of this book have brought together, and placed in constructive dialogue, a comprehensive group of international authors whose contributions result in a sweeping and devastating account of the war's deep wounds on individual lives and collective histories. Meticulously studying Franco's policies, their impact on the war's victims, and representations of the war's stories, both those unearthed and others that continue to be buried, this book makes terribly clear that the Spanish Civil War and its memory continue to teach us lessons about the responsibility of scholarship in deciphering the complexities of the past."

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This collection of essays addresses the political, cultural, and historical debate that has ensued in Spain as a result of the recent discovery and exhumation of mass graves dating from the years during and after the Spanish Civil War. The unearthing of the anonymous dead in Spain has focused attention on how Spaniards have only recently begun to revisit their past and publicly confront Franco's legacy.

CARLOS JEREZ- FARRÁN is professor of Spanish and SAMUEL AMAGO is associate professor of Spanish, both at the University of Notre Dame.

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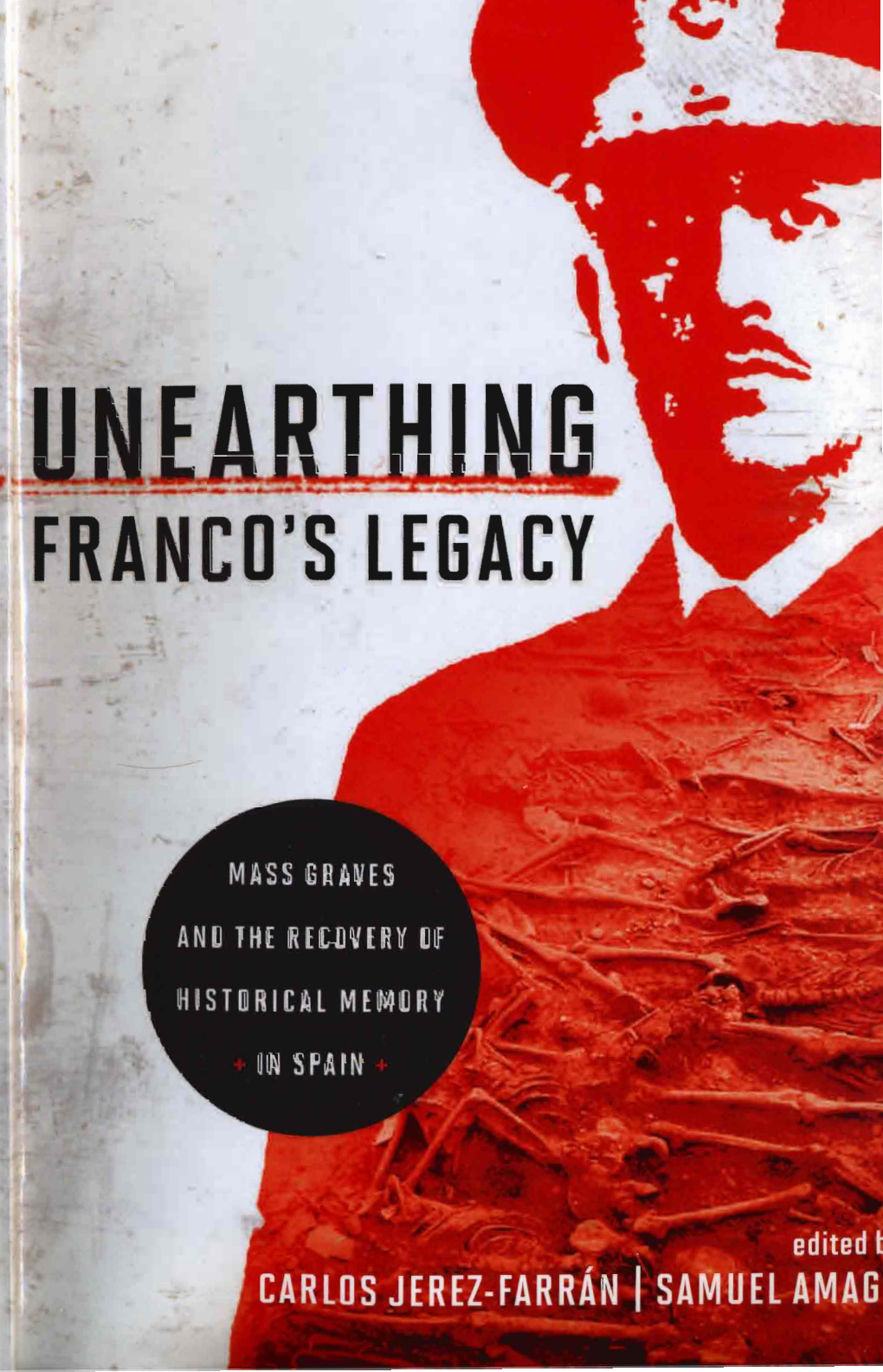

UNEARTHING FRANCO'S LEGACY

MASS GRAVES AND THE RECOVERY OF HISTORICAL MEMORY IN SPAIN

edited b

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