Mass graves gone missing: Producing knowledge in a world of absence[1]

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ABSTRACT: On May 1st, 2014 members of the historical memory team from the Aranzadi Sciences Society arrived in Oropesa de Toledo. The objective: to locate two mass graves containing the remains of Republicans killed in the weeks after Franco's troops entered the town in 1936. Despite evidence regarding the mass graves' existence, they were never found. Drawing on empirical, ethnographic data collected in the town of Oropesa in the months following this "unsuccessful" exhumation, this paper narrates the curious story of two graves that have "gone missing." It considers the intellectual labor exerted to produce historical knowledge in a context where municipal archives remain inaccessible and family histories are marked by silence and dis-information. The author suggests that the *absence* of information –the dearth of historical, narrative evidence– regarding the lives of the defeated makes the production of historical and forensic knowledge a complicated affair. It tracks how kin-based knowledge and scarce archival documents are gathered and animated in order to make exhumations possible. Considering the forms of knowledge that are needed in order to engage techno-scientific expertise in meaningful ways, the paper attends to the important role that kin-based knowledge and seemingly "unimportant" documents play in processes of historical enunciation.

KEYWORDS: Techno-scientific expertise; kin-based knowledge; archival records; forensic science; social memory; Spanish Civil War; Francoism

RESUMEN: *Fosas desaparecidas: La producción del conocimiento histórico en un mundo de ausencias.-* El 1 de mayo de 2014, los miembros del equipo forense de la Sociedad de Ciencias Aranzadi llegaron a Oropesa de Toledo. El objetivo: localizar dos fosas comunes que contenían los restos de republicanos asesinados en las semanas posteriores a la llegada de las tropas de Franco en 1936. A pesar de la evidencia que apuntaba a la existencia de las dos fosas comunes, nunca se encontraron. Utilizando los datos empíricos y etnográficos recogidos en Oropesa en los meses posteriores a esta exhumación "fallida", este trabajo narra la curiosa historia de dos tumbas que han "desaparecido". El texto considera el trabajo intelectual llevado a cabo para poder producir el conocimiento histórico en un contexto en donde los archivos municipales siguen siendo inaccesibles y las historias familiares están marcadas por el silencio y la desinformación. La autora sugiere que la ausencia de información vuelve complicada la producción del conocimiento histórico y forense. Teniendo en cuenta las formas de conocimiento que se necesitan para movilizar los conocimientos tecno-científicos de manera significativa, el ensayo atiende a la importante función que el conocimiento familiar y los documentos que no parecen ser "no importantes" juegan en los procesos de la enunciación histórica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pericia tecno-científica; conocimiento familiar; documentación de archivo; ciencia forense; memoria social; guerra civil española; franquismo

TO SEARCH, BUT NOT TO FIND

On May 1st, 2014 members of the historical memory team from the Aranzadi Sciences Society arrived in Oropesa de Toledo, a small town with less than three thousand inhabitants, nestled between the Gredos Mountains and the city of Talavera de la Reina. The objective of the journey was to locate two mass graves containing the human remains of Republicans killed in the weeks after Franco's troops first entered the town on August 29th, 1936. According to oral testimonies collected by a twenty-six year old historian and Oropesa native, Ricardo Moreno, the first grave was thought to contain four women and one man. The second was thought to contain two males. Prior to the team's arrival, local testimonies had been crosschecked with lists of *fusilados* published in books written by local historians.[2] There were many questions about the identities of those who had been carelessly thrown into the two mass graves. The names mentioned in testimonies given by victims' kin did not always match the lists of names extracted from historical texts. There were discrepancies regarding the dates when each individual had disappeared, and there were doubts about the exact location of the two mass graves.

The exhumation was a rushed and complicated affair. On October 27th of the previous year, the town council announced its plan to close and raze the municipal *cementerio antiguo*, or old cemetery. The burial ground dated back to the nineteenth century. However, compared to Oropesa's nearby medieval castle, the cemetery was relatively new. Nonetheless, the passing of time was palpable. The surrounding landscape was heavy with signs of decay and neglect. Dilapidated headstones, overgrown with thick chunks of grass, made it impossible to distinguish burial plots from footpaths. Crumbling wall crypts revealed the interior skeleton of a former mausoleum that had become the resting place for discarded junk and unwanted debris. Shards of hand-painted ceramic tiles, a handicraft autochthonous to the region, suggested that the cemetery had once been bright and beautiful. It was, perhaps, the coexistence of these piles of litter and slices of treasure –the mix of material decomposition and defiant resistance– that made the cemetery both eerie and magnificent. The graveyard's deterioration began in 1991, when the town council inaugurated a new burial ground on the other side of the village. More modern and spacious, the new cemetery quickly overshadowed the crowded, but quaint *cementerio antiguo*. By 2013, the decay of the old graveyard had become a sore on Oropesa's carefully coiffed landscape. Tucked at the foot of a hill, the cemetery was hidden from the winding cobblestone streets where tourists explored the town's more noteworthy medieval structures, but it was also dangerously close to the village's popular and picturesque, historical scenery. The decision to demolish the burial ground was accepted silently by those living in Oropesa, and the town council quickly made plans to convert it into an open-air theater and park. Following the announcement of the cemetery's closure, townspeople were given three months to exhume and transport the remains of their loved ones to alternative burial sites. Following national mortuary statutes, any unclaimed cadavers would be exhumed by local cemetery caretakers and placed in unmarked, common graves.

On February 7th, 2014, Emilio Sales Almazán, the president of the Castilla-La Mancha branch of the *Foro por la Memoria* –a regional civil association dedicated to the recuperation of historical memory– wrote a letter to local government officials, which described the existence of the abovementioned mass graves. In his written petition, Almazán requested permission for a group of technicians to access the cemetery and analyze the possible existence of the unmarked tombs. Permission was granted, and the *Foro* was given until June 15th, 2014 to conduct the investigations. The town council provided no financial support for the analysis of the cemetery grounds, but required that the technical team chosen to carry out the task provide documentation accrediting their expert status. In the following months, heated disputes took place between members of the *Foro* and local researcher Ricardo Moreno who was leading the investigation and acting as a liaison between members of the forensic team and victims' kin living in Oropesa. In light of Spain's 1977 Amnesty Law, which prohibits defining Franco's victims as victims of crime, mass grave exhumations are civil affairs.[3] Carried out by local teams of archaeologists and forensic experts who respond to petitions made by victims' kin and local historical memory associations, individual exhumations are often described as being worlds in and of themselves. As Francisco Ferrándiz (2014) notes, local disputes regarding whether exhumations should be somber events in which victims' kin control the commemorative acts that will accompany the process of disinterment, or whether they should be more performative events in which political symbols and rhetoric can be resurrected and put on display, are indicative of complex memory debates about the symbolic role that the fallen should play in the present. These conflicts often intersect with equally different ideas about the role that scientific expertise plays in these acts of exhumation. This, combined with feelings of territoriality regarding which teams should exhume where, means that exhumations projects are often, if not always, embedded in complex webs of conflict regarding how investigations should be carried out (Luis Ríos, personal communication). The case of Oropesa was no different, and in the months and weeks leading up to the exhumation, tensions about the details of the investigation bubbled to the surface as victims' kin, local researchers, forensic experts and regional activists openly debated how and who would carry out the inspection of the crumbling cemetery.

Despite these tensions, the exhumation began on the morning of May 1st, 2014. Taking advantage of the long holiday weekend, members of the Aranzadi team and the volunteers who regularly collaborate with them gathered in Oropesa to begin the excavation. Under the direction of archaeologist Jimi Jiménez, team members began removing dirt and chunks of earth from the area where the mass graves were thought to be located –a zone just right

of the cemetery's main entrance, in the southeast corner of the premises. As team members took turns digging, questions arose about whether or not it made sense for a mass grave to be located in an area so close to the wall crypts. Like most cemeteries in Spain, this graveyard, when used, would have been divided into distinct sections: *tierra santa* –the holy ground reserved for the interment of Catholic cadavers– and the civil section of the graveyard where the bodies of non-practicing persons would be laid to rest. During the Spanish Civil War, those killed as a consequence of their political allegiances were almost always buried in the civil section of the cemetery. It was a symbolic gesture employed to label surviving kin as having familial ties to "*rojos*", the pejorative terms used to describe those who supported the Republic. This question of placement echoed with my previous conversations with Jimi, who described the task of locating mass graves as being heavily contingent on one's ability to ignore what seemed logical in the present, in order to apply the logic that would have been used in 1936. In this sense, it seemed illogical that men killed due to their links with Republican ideals and women assassinated due to the political activities of their love interests would have been buried so closely to the crypts located on the cemetery's "holy ground".

The digging continued and team members seemed skeptical about their ability to locate the tombs and the human remains supposedly contained within them. The earth was hard and uniform in color. Team members gathered skeleton fragments, and a quick visual analysis suggested that they probably belonged to young individuals, maybe adolescents or children. This curious mix indicated that the earth being removed was probably *relleno*, or filling, used to even out graves that had been removed or reused. As the day progressed neighbors and victims' kin slowly made their way to the old cemetery. Ricardo later told me that as the friendly chatter began to increase, more questions about the location of the mass grave began to arise. Some thought the tombs could be located outside the cemetery walls, in the area where an autopsy room had been subsequently built. Other onlookers seemed absolutely positive that several men and women had been executed while standing in front of the exterior walls of the cemetery –perhaps, along the wall next to the entrance or in front of the brick partition that lined the longest, northern-most side of the graveyard. If executions had taken place outside the cemetery, it was possible that mass graves had been burrowed somewhere outside the brick perimeter. Some observers referred to the stories that neighbors and kin had told them about a mass grave located by the cluster of Cyprus trees at the center of the cemetery. Many had heard that at least one of the clandestine burials had been marked by a circle etched onto the ground around it. After two days of manual and mechanical digging, the graves still had not appeared. The expectations of victims' kin, local researchers and members of the forensic team quickly dissipated. The exhumation seemed to have ended before it had even started. The search was over, and the exhumation project was

deemed inviable. More research needed to be done. More testimonies needed to be collected. That which was sought could not be found.

WHEN TECHNO-SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE IS NOT ENOUGH

Maurice Halbwachs draws a clear distinction between individual and collective forms of remembrance by describing how the recall and localization of memory are facilitated by one's membership in a social group. For Halbwachs, remembering is the act of situating past experiences within a "framework of collective memory" (1992: 127). In Spain, the struggle to recuperate historical memory calls attention to what happens when individual experiences and memories cannot be incorporated into these collective frameworks. Although there has never been complete silence regarding the war and the effects of *franquismo* on everyday Spanish life (Juliá, 2006; Ruido, 2008), the democratic transition strategically championed amnesia as a political cure-all, capable of unifying a country sundered by ideological divisions and decades of violence (Aguilar, 1996; 2002; Resina, 2000). The ratification of Spain's Amnesty Law in 1977 institutionalized the idea that consensus and reconciliation could be achieved through the state's refusal to judicially recognize Francoist crimes or historically examine the effects of such crimes on victims and their kin (Burbridge, 2011). These attempts to legally and institutionally distance the new democratic state from the decades of political violence preceding it fortified what Spanish philosopher Reyes Mate describes as "the legacy of forgetting" (2008). The historical memory movement battles this legacy by attempting to transform memory into an object that can be recuperated.[4] It seeks to rescue living persons, dead bodies and forms of evidence from oblivion (Namer, 1994) by resituating the experiences of Spain's "postmemory" generation (Hirsch, 2012) as ones that are shared by a particular collectivity –a collectivity whose identity is directly linked to the ideological beliefs and political practices of those who fell victim to Francoist violence.

Since 2000, many of those participating in these efforts have turned to scientific techniques and technologies as effective tools for unearthing intimate experiences with political violence, thereby undoing the culture of amnesia that deeply plagues Spaniards' relationship with the recent past. In the context of legal amnesty, exhumations are collective, "para"-forensic events (see Holmes and Marcus, 2005) –unofficial community endeavors, in which local memory associations, victims' families and forensic experts work together to locate and recuperate the bodily remains of the disappeared. Through the osteological and biological analysis of human skeletons, these forensic endeavors seek to re-inscribe human identity and individual biographies onto fragments of human bone (Joyce and Stover, 1991; Komar and Buikstra, 2008), thereby establishing links between the living and the dead. In this context, the unearthing of the past is

both literal and metaphorical. As human remains are extracted from mass graves and as biological, osteological evidence is brought into view, victims' kin come into close contact with material vestiges of the past. However, these acts of exhumation also unearth immaterial evidence regarding twentieth-century Spanish history, in that they provide a space for the public *enunciation* of intimate experiences with violence –narratives that in years past were kept unspoken or relegated to the domestic space of the home.

Anthropologist Francisco Ferrándiz has described exhumations as events in which "the cries and whispers of the defeated" can be vocalized (2008). These acts of enunciation insert these long-silenced narratives into public debates about the past and their role in the present. The exhumation-as-enunciation inverts the experiences of victims' kin, who were unable to "properly" lay their loved ones to rest, by providing them with the opportunity to recover, retrieve and re-inhume the bodily remains of the deceased. In this sense, acts of exhumation are "tactics" that challenge the "nets of 'discipline'" (de Certeau, 1984: xiv; Foucault, 1991) that were cast during the dictatorship and maintained throughout the Transition to democracy. Through elaborate acts of "ritualization" (Bell, 1992), scientific, narrative and performative practices transform human remains from a state of "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1967) into "symbolic vehicles" (Verdery, 1999) through which new collectivities and forms of sociality congeal around shared experiences with political violence.

The techno-scientific expertise in these battles over signification is key. The local uptake of transnational forensic techniques and technologies not only exhumes evidence regarding political violence; it does so scientifically. As archaeologists Laura Muñoz and Julián Chavés demonstrate in their contribution to this Special Issue (2014), the techno-scientific expertise deployed in exhumation projects situates all that is unearthed –mainly human remains and personal objects– as hard "proof" (Crossland, 2013) regarding individual and collective experiences with political violence. These new bodies of evidence allow researchers to identify complex patterns of authoritarian repression, and they illuminate the mechanisms systematically used to inject fear into the push and pull of everyday post-war life. For victims' kin, this new genre of evidence also elucidates the mechanics of forced disappearance and political violence. However, the knowledge that is gained in these techno-scientific endeavors provides more than informative facts and historical explanation. It situates decades of private suffering as scientific "fact". It validates this suffering as real human experience, human experience that demands to be recognized. As victims' kin incorporate forensic evidence into their understandings of how their loved ones experienced the war and its aftermath, they are able to validate their experiences with violence as part of a larger national history of repression. In this sense, the act of narrating intimate experiences with violence through scientifically validated evidence allows these individuals to publicly reclaim complex histories while also demanding public recognition of the powerful, trans-generational effects of trauma. Techno-scientific expertise and the knowledge it produces restitute the identities of the missing while also reaffirming the identities of the living.

The application of scientific methods to the study of Spain's recent past has situated the historical memory movement as a central player in attempts, both academic and otherwise, to better understand how the war and the terror that ensued were experienced and how they, in turn, are now remembered. Despite the precarious economic horizon that forensic teams face and the uphill battle that they fight in producing evidence that cannot be recognized by Spanish courts, exhumation projects have created real expectations regarding the role that scientific evidence can play in the re-narration of twentieth-century Spanish history. Victims' kin, reacting to the promises put forth by DNA technology, hope to find and recuperate remains that biologically correspond to *their* deceased loved ones, while historians and anthropologists approach exhumations with hopeful anticipation as archival documents and personal testimonies are recovered, thereby elucidating the mechanics of authoritarian repression and post-violence social memory. Forensic specialists also face their work with expectation, turning to exhumation projects as an opportunity to expand shared sets of knowledge about identification methods. As the body of evidence regarding the regime's physical and ideological erasure of opposition grows, mass grave exhumations become embedded in complex worlds of expectation. These worlds of expectation center around what it is that these new forms of material, scientific and narrative evidence can elucidate about the past. They hinge on the evidentiary potential of what techno-scientific expertise can unearth.

Historian of Science Lorraine Daston describes evidence as inherently paradoxical. It is understood to be something that is free of human intention and presupposition. However, it is collected and produced with particular objectives in mind (Daston, 1994: 243-74). Similarly, Thomas J. Csordas describes evidence as something that is always "of and for something" (2004: 475). It is proof of something that can then be used to explain, justify or describe something in the world. In the context of contemporary Spanish mass grave exhumations, techno-scientific expertise enables the acts of disinterment that provide evidence of violence. It also situates these new evidentiary forms in relation to collective ideas about scientific objectivity and truth. However, as described in the previous section, this techno-scientific expertise does not exist in a vacuum. In order for it to be put to work, it must engage other forms of knowledge, other forms of evidence that are "of" the past, but that can be employed "for" the production of new narratives regarding historical experience. Experts can do the digging, but figuring out where disappeared bodies are hidden below the ground, depends on other types of knowledge, other kinds of evidence. Without kin-based knowledge and archival records regarding the existence of mass graves, it is hard to put techno-scientific expertise into action.

In this context, paying attention to what happens when mass graves *cannot* be located is an important point of analysis. What happens when techno-scientific expertise alone is not sufficient for locating and unearthing human remains? How does this affect the worlds of expectation regarding the kinds of knowledge that forensic endeavors can produce? These questions certainly highlight the complexities implicit in carrying out forensic work in the absence of judicial frameworks equipped to deal with the crimes of the past. They also draw attention to the complexity of historical memory work in a context where indelible structures of silence and the long-term absence of persons, records and narratives make accessing archives and eliciting testimonies an arduous, but necessary, task. However, the "failure" of techno-scientific expertise to find mass graves that have "gone missing" also draws attention to the kinds of data and testimony that are needed in order to push hard evidence and subjective experience to the surface of everyday, contemporary life. This, in turn, highlights the social processes through which techno-scientific expertise and other knowledge forms work together in order to re-narrate the past.

Spain's democratic Transition and its promotion of institutional, ideological and social forms of collective forgetting has reinforced a "master narrative of the nation" (Jelin, 2003: 27) that has excised the voices and experiences of those defeated during the war.[5] Consequently, researchers and victims' kin involved in the recuperation of new forms of historical evidence are fighting, not the lack of memory, but rather the persistence of silence. It is the *absence* of information –the dearth of historical, narrative evidence– regarding the lives of Spain's "other half"[6] (in Douglass, 1997: 62) that is at the root of attempts to unearth the past (Ferrándiz, 2013; Jerez-Farrán and Amago, 2010). Drawing on empirical, ethnographic data collected in the town of Oropesa in the months following the "unsuccessful" exhumation previously described, the remainder of this paper will narrate the curious story of two graves that went missing. By considering the intellectual labor exerted to produce historical knowledge in a context where municipal archives remain inaccessible and family histories are marked by silence and dis-information, I will analyze how community members construct historical narratives from the fragmented evidentiary traces that they encounter as a local historian pieces together new forms of archival and narrative evidence regarding local experiences with repression. Considering the role that forensic techniques and technologies have played in the recuperation, collection and analysis of evidence that has challenged this "master narrative", this paper addresses this issue of absence and the persistence of silence by tracking how kin-based knowledge and scarce archival documents are gathered and animated in order to make exhumation projects possible. In doing so, it carefully unpacks the social processes implicit in constituting historical knowledge in a context where the absence of evidence and the persistence of silence make it difficult to narrate the events of the past. Furthermore, by considering the forms of knowledge that are needed in order to engage techno-scientific expertise in

meaningful ways, the paper attends to the important role that kin-based knowledge and seemingly "unimportant" documents play in processes of historical enunciation. Bringing together theoretical debates regarding the constitution of evidence and the production of knowledge, the paper examines the recuperation and restitution of post-violence memory in a context where mass graves have suddenly disappeared.

OF NAMES & ICONS

In contemporary Spain, the use of forensic science as a tool for re-narrating experiences with Francoist violence has situated memory as an object that can and must be recuperated. The turn to historical memory is intricately entwined in projects of recovery and retrieval in which a wide variety of objects and evidentiary forms are re-contextualized and given meaning. This "objectification" of memory certainly applies to the unearthing of human remains. However, it also applies to other forms of disinterment, particularly processes of "archival exhumation", in which documents –birth and death certificates, summary judgments from military trials, cemetery log books, family photographs, magazine clippings, and letters– are extracted from municipal –and state-run archives, quarried from private family collections and downloaded from online databases (Jimi Jiménez, personal communication). As I have attempted to describe in the previous sections, in this context, techno-scientific expertise must work alongside other forms of knowledge in order for it to be successfully put to use. The "data" recovered through the collection of personal testimonies and the analysis of distinct archive collections helps forensic teams locate mass graves. It is also crucial to identifying human remains. A physical description of a deceased person and details about his or her life can provide important clues that can allow forensic experts to connect human remains to a unique human identity. At the same time, the evidence produced through exhumation projects informs and enhances the narratives that victims' kin and researchers develop regarding how the war and its aftermath were experienced in specific locations and contexts. There is no unique starting point for this chain of knowledge collection and production. The relationship between diverse knowledge forms is symbiotic, malleable and changing. There are, however, constants –or at least patterns– regarding the kinds of information that help advance these projects of historical recuperation. In the context of archival exhumation, victims' names are key.

As historian Alfonso Villalta describes in his analysis of Spain's "terror archives" (2014), Franco's dictatorship, like many authoritarian regimes (Weld, 2014; da Silva Catela and Jelin, 2002) and colonial projects (Stoler, 2009), produced an immense amount of documentation regarding the apparatus of repression developed and used by the regime. As anthropologist Penelope Papailias notes, "…Archiving draws attention to the relationship of history to the state and, by extension, to law, bureaucracy and citizenship" (2005: 13). It is in this sense that state-

run archival collections are important windows onto the mechanics of Francoist repression. They provide glimpses regarding how fascist governance was designed and implemented. However, these glimpses are often partial, nascent and cloudy. The sheer volume of documents yet to be unboxed, indexed and classified and the complex bureaucratic norms that limit the accessibility of collections makes extracting archival evidence a laborious task.

That being said, since 2000, there have been important advances in the organization and classification of this material. The 2007 Historical Memory Law integrated the Spanish Civil War General Archive in Salamanca and transformed it into the Historical Memory Documentation Center. This change was an important first step in publicly resituating this collection as a "terror archive" containing information about repression, rather than a simple stockpile of "war" data. Military archives in the cities of Ferrol, Guadalajara, Cádiz and Madrid, amongst others, have started to catalogue hundreds of thousands of boxes containing summary judgments from military trials (Gutiérrez Molina, 2014; Solé, 2006). Provincial Historical Archives are doing the same with records produced in jails and detention centers. These documents often provide key information about where, when and why prisoners were executed. The task of organizing these archival materials is matched by regional research projects that compile "*todos los nombres*" –or, all of the names of those who suffered repression during the war and the dictatorship.[7] These projects use these archival collections to extract data regarding individuals mentioned in testimonies given by victims' kin. They also use archival resources as primary sources regarding individuals, regardless of whether or not their kin have requested information. In addition, enormous sections of the *Causa General* –the sensationalist and propagandistic body of evidence criminalizing "*rojos*", which was compiled by Franco's Minister of Defense Eduardo Aurós in the years after the Civil War– have been digitized. Although the *Causa General* is housed in the National Historical Archive in Madrid, its digitization has allowed historians to read this document "against" (Benjamin, 1968: 257) and "along the grain" (Stoler, 2009), in order to produce innovative work (Ledesma, 2005) about how the Franco regime fabricated ideas about Spain's "internal", leftist enemy.

Despite these advances, archival collections continue to exist in opaque and complex, bureaucratic worlds, in which the accessibility and movement of paper are tightly regulated. Penetrating and making sense of these worlds is like searching for a pin in a bale of hay that is both organized and messy –a cluster of information so tightly bound that actually accessing its multitude of layers and its interior logics seems nearly impossible. There are, however, tricks to making these collections more penetrable, and possessing a victims' name is perhaps the most useful tool when trying to access information about a *desaparecido* –or disappeared person. Archival databases are organized and ordered by victims' last names. As a consequence, exhuming paperwork requires an important type of knowledge: the legal name of a disappeared person.

Although the two mass graves that were thought to be in Oropesa's old cemetery were never located, the exhumation did unearth new testimonies and information regarding individuals who were executed in the months after the arrival of Franco's troops in 1936. This, in turn, introduced new clues about how fascist repression was experienced during the war and its aftermath. After reviewing the list of victims' names that Ricardo had compiled prior to the exhumation, Jimi suggested that someone consult the collection of prison records held at the Provincial Historical Archive of Toledo. According to Jimi, these records might provide information about the townspeople who had been imprisoned and about the supposed "jail break" that eventually led to the execution of dozens of male Oropesanos. So, in July, just months after the "unsuccessful" exhumation drew to a close, I made the trip to Toledo with Helena, a volunteer who regularly collaborates with the Aranzadi forensic team in the collection of testimonies and archival data regarding victims. Like much of the historical memory work in Spain, this research required *desplazamiento* –or, the physical movement from one city to another. With relevant archive collections in Madrid, Salamanca and Toledo, there was much ground to be covered.

Our list contained more than sixty victims' names. After introducing ourselves to the archivists, we were told that the database only included the names of those individuals whose last names started with any letter of the alphabet between "A" and "H". The prison files were still being catalogued, and although there were some "random" files that had made it into the database, only those names corresponding to the letters "A through H" had been systematically indexed. There was order and disorder, and the mix of the two meant that actually finding individuals' files would be complicated. Requesting and reviewing even a small percentage of the documents corresponding to the names on our list could take hours, if not days. Helena and I reviewed the list and started filling out the request forms required for each consultation. After reviewing several *expedientes* –or files– we began to notice a pattern. More than half of the files referred to the expediente that corresponded to a prisoner by the name of Jesús Chico Maquedano. His name also appeared on our list. We scribbled down the index numbers used to identify each file and placed the folders in their corresponding boxes. After returning the boxes to the archivist, I filled out another form, this time, requesting files related to Jesús Chico Maquedano. The archivist consulted the database, but no names matched my request. Why did all of the other files refer back to this particular name? I showed her the list of index numbers that corresponded to the files that referred to this one name, a name that according to the "A through H" logic should appear in the database. The archivist lowered her voice and said, "Let's try some different combinations. Sometimes you have to get creative".

She switched the order of the two last names and entered "Maquedano Chico, Jesús" into the database's search engine. Still no match. She turned the computer screen in my direction. "Sometimes", she said, once again

lowering her voice, "the names are entered incorrectly. Human error. Let's see if we can find something". She quickly scrolled through the last names starting with "M", until suddenly she stopped. "See, there it is. Jesús Chico Machedano". She wrote down the index number and disappeared into the vaults. Minutes later, Helena and I reviewed the file. There, printed in red ink, was a list of almost all of the men from Ricardo's list. Stapled to the back of the document was the same list printed in lighter ink. Perhaps, a second copy was made as a reference. Although, this time, the list included the nicknames of each individual: "Rodaja", "Canalones", "Siete Tipos", "Mosquito". It was an interesting detail, but it seemed irrelevant. The rest of records on file tracked Jesús' movement in and out of jails and confirmed that on April 19th, 1940, the Office of Military Command in Talavera de la Reina sentenced him to death. There was no mention of where Jesús was executed. There was also no mention of the other men whose names appeared on the list, except a short letter issued by the Office of War Auditors that confirmed that Jesús and two other Oropesanos had testified in a war tribunal on July 10th, 1939.

We packed up our things and submitted the request slips required to order digitized copies of the files. In three hours, we consulted eleven files, several of which corresponded to individuals who were not actually from Oropesa, a sheer coincidence that their names corresponded to those on our list. In one morning, we had been able to collect what seemed like a lot of data, but it all seemed fuzzy. We already knew that the people on our list had been executed. We already knew that they were from Oropesa. The documents referred to various death sentences, but there was no description of where the men were actually buried. The names gave us data, but what did the data mean?

The following month, I went back to Oropesa, this time to spend several weeks with Ricardo and to assist him with collecting new testimonies from victims' kin and townspeople that had experienced the war and its aftermath. When I arrived, I gave Ricardo the pendrive where I had saved all of the digital copies the files and records from the archive in Toledo. Since Ricardo no longer lived in Oropesa, he had spent the last week or so setting up interviews with different people. So, we left the pendrive at home so that he could give me a tour of the town before the interview scheduled for that afternoon. We walked down the main street leading to the Plaza, until Ricardo stopped in front of a large, white two-story house in front of the church and monastery. Prior to the war, the monastery had been the subject of violent attacks. Religious icons had been smashed by Republicans, evidence that violence was present before the actual initiation of the war. According to Ricardo, the house, surrounded by a black, iron-gate, had belonged to Octavio, Oropesa's municipal health inspector and a stout supporter of the local labor movement. He touched the long, skinny bars and pointed to the places where they were not uniform or bent. At each bend, large portions of iron were missing. "The evidence is here", he said. "The question is: Why does no one want to know more about these bullet holes? If we could get a

ballistics expert here, we might be able to determine how the shots were fired". This issue of not knowing –or disinterest regarding these small curiosities– would be a constant in many of our conversations. In a subsequent interview, Ricardo explained this issue in more detail. "There has never been any oral transmission regarding what all of this means", he explained. "If you want to know about what happened in Oropesa, you have to ask people about it". Ricardo had been diligently asking these questions for the last eight years, and while he had recovered an incredible amount of information, there were still more questions than answers. This lack of transmission bothered Ricardo, in part, because it was so hard to explain. If evidence of violence was so visible, so blatantly written on the walls of homes and buildings, how could no one want to know more?

It was this lack of transmission or trans-generational silence that made it difficult for the forensic team to find the mass graves supposedly located somewhere in or near Oropesa's old cemetery. As Jimi had noted, the fact that victims' kin could not physically point to where the mass graves were located meant that the knowledge regarding where victims had been deposited had never been shared or transferred to younger generations. In most exhumation projects, especially those focusing on smaller mass graves, victims' kin usually can delineate the area where bodies have been interred. In most cases, this knowledge is a product of the fact that victims' kin, many times one or two generations removed from the *desaparecido*, have recurred to the site of the crime. In the absence of marked graves, these places have been quietly and often clandestinely used as sites of remembrance. Victims' kin in Oropesa, however, never revisited the places where the missing had been thrown. For Ricardo, this seemed both understandable and strange. Fear and emotional pain had, perhaps, prevented this kind of informal, makeshift memorialization, but the result was the reinforcement of an incredible silence regarding the victims' experiences. Physical absence had been reinforced by silence, and through silence knowledge had also been made to disappear. However, as Ricardo noted, this silence and lack of knowledge was curious, especially when taking into account Oropesa's reputation as a site of repression.

In historical memory work, there are many narrative tropes that repeat themselves in cities and towns all over the country. Many of these tropes have to do with the violence exercised on women's bodies: pregnant mothers killed and thrown into mass graves with their unborn children still in their wombs; young girls brutally assaulted or raped; women who silently suffered miscarriages caused by physical abuse (González Duro, 2012; Sánchez, 2009). They are stories that appear and reappear. However the narrative that is often most frequently repeated is that of the "*rapadas*" –women whose heads were shaved and who were forced to publicly parade, often naked, in front of their neighbors, families and friends. Despite the frequency with which this story is told and re-told, there is little documentation regarding these public acts of shame (Lourdes Herrasti, personal communication). Of the three

or four photographs that have been located, the image of "the rapadas of Oropesa" is the most widely recognized. It has been reproduced in newspapers and magazines, circulated on blogs and included in historical texts. It is an iconic photograph, both chilling and uncomfortable, that has come to represent this terrifying practice. In the image, four women stand in a straight line in front of a rocky background. Only two look directly at the camera. A woman dressed in black tensely holds her hands in front of her waist. A small crucifix dangles from her blouse. Her eyes look downward, towards her hand. Her body turns ever so slightly as if shying away from the gaze of the camera. The woman on the far left of the photograph holds a small child swaddled in cloth. She also turns her gaze downward, observing the infant nestled in her generous arms. The other two women, who appear younger than those next to them, defiantly look at the camera. With their hands laid gently across their waists, they assume a familiar stance, as if posing for a family portrait. But, the image clearly is not a family portrait. The quality of the image is bad. It has been copied and recopied, digitized and reprinted. The women's eyes are dark; the detail has been lost. There is an awkwardness to the women's poses, to their naked heads. It is "bare life" in the starkest of forms (Agamben, 1998). The image is an iconic representation of the repression and violence that women experienced during the Franco regime, and it is a photograph that is inherently linked to the town of Oropesa. Taking into account this iconic status, how could anyone not know about how this repression was experienced?

The next day, Ricardo and I started to review the digitized records that Helena and I had found in the archive. The records provided information that lined up with Ricardo's research materials, including the lists of townspeople who had been executed or disappeared. Ricardo could read the documents with ease. He had experience deciphering the handwritten testimonies and knew what particular phrases and stamps signified. They were inscriptions that seemed unintelligible to my untrained eye. Finally, he came across the long list of names that included individuals' *motes*, or nicknames. As he reviewed the list, Ricardo suddenly said, "This is a jewel! Look at all of these motes". I looked at him in disbelief. As he read off the nicknames he looked back at the lists of *fusilados*. He began flipping back and forth through the papers, matching legal names with nicknames. He then explained, "Families in Oropesa were known for their nicknames, nicknames which are passed down over generations". As a consequence, the townspeople that Ricardo had interviewed often referred to victims and their kin by their family nickname. With time, people's real names had become harder to remember. In a context where municipal archives were inaccessible, this one document helped underscore the usefulness of kin-based knowledge. By connecting legal names to nicknames, this particular archival record made it possible to connect the individuals mentioned in oral testimonies to archival records. This would help him untangle the different family histories that Ricardo had collected while also allowing him to corrobo-

rate the details of kin-based knowledge with archival documentation. It would make piecing these narratives together more manageable, more understandable.

In the days that followed we went to the homes of several people, mostly women, the majority of which had been small children during the war. In all of the interviews, Ricardo showed our interlocutors a copy of the photograph of the four *rapadas*. Everyone seemed to agree that the two women on the left were "La Catalana" and Pureza Sánchez. But, everyone provided conflicting information about the two women on the right. One interviewee identified the woman dressed in black as a "Cuerna" and suggested that the woman next to her was "La Planchadora". In the captions that regularly accompany the image in history books and historical memory blogs, the woman dressed in black was always identified as "La Planchadora" and the woman next o her as Antonia Gutiérrez. In our conversations with community members, however, everyone identified these last two women with different names. The fuzzy quality of the image made the photograph hard to read. The women's faces were blurry, and with no hair, they looked completely different from how people remembered them. And yet, people spoke with confidence as they identified their kin in the faces of the four women.

In observing Ricardo, I became aware of the incredible intellectual, detective-like labor that was implicit in the task of recuperating information about how the war and its aftermath were experienced in Oropesa. A simple document that connected legal names to nicknames helped make sense of the stories that victims' kin and townspeople narrated and re-narrated to my colleague. Knowing a family nickname allowed him to corroborate oral testimonies with the data found in archival documents, and showing those documents to townspeople validated aspects of the many stories that people carried with them. At the same time, there was a palpable lack of knowledge. People were not sure which women in the town had had their heads shaved. There was confusion not only about who appeared in the photograph, but also about how the photograph was taken. Who had shaved the women's heads? Was it a soldier or the young apprentice barber who was forced to carry out the act? Were there other photographs of the other women whose heads had been shaved? And, who were these other women? Absence and presence –knowledge and dis-information– were entangled.

Later on, in an interview with Ricardo, we reflected on the role that the photograph played in the production of shared ideas regarding the war and its aftermath. Ricardo's words struggle to make sense of the strange coexistence between memory and silence, between bodily absence and photographic presence:

> I think the picture has been deeply embedded in this town, in the sense that, women suffered so much repression here, and that has been transmitted [to those still living]. Not like in other places, where [these stories] are much clearer, where everybody knows where people

were [buried], what their names were, what they were like… Here everything has been blurred. People know there was a lot of repression. They know it touched their families. You know that all of this happened to this one woman, and you've heard that it also happened to so-and-so. People are aware of these stories. These stories are present, but it's a present that's really confusing because there hasn't been that [oral] transmission, that conscious inheritance of the history of what happenned during all of this. Nothing is ever really clear…. A lot of people see the photo, and they know that they have family members [who experienced these things], and so they say, "Well, that's my grandmother" or "That's my aunt", when maybe it's someone else. But with that one photograph, that is so symbolic, people transform the four women into their family, when in reality maybe they really have no familial connection. All of this is because the photograph is deeply ingrained in townlife. The fact that there was a lot of repression, that has stuck. But, that goes hand in hand with all of the forgetting. Sometimes it's forced forgetting. Sometimes people forget because they want to forget. But, the forgetting is there. So everyone is aware. Everyone knows the general history, but not in a specific or clear way. That's true of the photo and of the other stories that people tell. But, you can see the picture. When you go to people's homes, everyone has a copy of the photograph, as a newspaper clipping, in a book… Everyone has a copy. It's a huge symbol, but the people who live here cannot recognize who is who. I mean, we know. Everyone knows. There is "La Catalana" and Pureza. But the other two are there. One is Pancha, say some. But maybe it's Pancha and maybe it's not.

(Interview with Ricardo Moreno, August 26th, 2014)

I quote Ricardo's words at length because it demonstrate the complexity of historical memory work in Spain –the persistence of silences, and in the case of this unique photograph, the palpable sense of absence that coexists with curious, eerie forms of presence. It also underscores the intellectual labor –the constant piecing together of stories and data– that must be exerted in order to bring these narratives to the surface of everyday life in coherent, useful ways. Archival records and kin-based knowledge provide contextual information that help bring exhumation projects into being. In fact, as I have emphasized throughout this paper, the techno-scientific expertise implicit in exhumation projects cannot be put into action with these other forms of knowledge. And yet, as we can see in the case of Oropesa, this knowledge is not straightforward. It must be unearthed. This process of disinterment and its success in providing the forms of evidence necessary to accurately re-narrate the past is contingent on complex circumstances regarding the accessibility of archival records, the extent to which personal memories can be transformed into coherent narratives and the extent to which those narratives and historical data can be made to work together in useful ways.

In Oropesa, victims' kin are aware of and knowledgeable about the deployment of political violence during the war and its aftermath. However, after decades of silence regarding these events, this knowledge is ambiguous and fragmented. Details that can potentially make these forms of kin-based knowledge operational are often missing. In the absence of coherent, "official" historical narratives, victims' kin look towards documentary forms of evidence as objects that will help them make sense of what they have experienced and allow them to piece together what they have been told about the past. In this context of disinformation and silence, victims' kin transform an iconic photograph into a narrative canvas, an object through which they can re-draw their family histories and the histories of neighbors and friends. The person who collects these new narratives, however, must face the task of analyzing these stories. He or she must connect them to other histories, trace them back to historical evidence. It is a kind of labor that is dependent on the existence of names, the accessibility of archival records and the symbolic valence of a horrific image-made-icon.

THE WAR OF WORDS AND THE SEARCH FOR EVIDENCE: PRODUCING HISTORY IN A WORLD OF ABSENCE

[This] war is fought, not in the name of territories, but in the name of words[8].

-Arthur Koestler, 1937

Arthur Koestler's description of the Spanish Civil War as one that was fought through and in the name of words is a telling reflection regarding the conflict's deeply ideological character. It was a war fought over how Spain should be governed, how Spaniards envisioned their relationship to the state, and how national beliefs –both political and religious– would be defined and embodied. Read today, however, this statement uncannily emphasizes the role that words would have in post-war Spain. For those who won the conflict, Francisco Franco's long dictatorship was a period marked by symbolic, discursive control over how the war would be historically narrated and how the nation would be publicly imagined (Box, 2010). For those defeated, it was an extended period of silence. Thrust into a world of absence, fear and disinformation, victims' kin experienced the aftereffects of political violence privately. During the democratic Transition, this culture of silence was institutionally reinforced, thereby positioning amnesia as an effective mode of building political consensus after decades of fascist repression.

The war of words continues in contemporary Spain. It is a battle over signification, in which victims' kin struggle to push their renditions of the past "from the margins" of "official" history (Axel, 2002) to someplace more visible, audible and present. It is a war that has turned to techno-scientific expertise as an effective tool fore recovering human remains and unearthing a wide variety of material, documentary and narrative evidence regarding experiences with Francoist repression. The ability to carry out this work of historical recovery under the aegis of scientific practice has helped position these new bodies of evidence as knowledge forms that are imbued with objec-

tivity, heavy with facticity and directly linked to real human experience. This has generated new possibilities regarding how the past is understood and how these new forms of historical evidence can be mobilized for the staking of claims in the present. However, the task of producing historical knowledge in a world of absence –in a context marked by deep silences, dis-information and hearsay– is a complicated affair. Techno-scientific expertise is a powerful weapon in this war of words, but it cannot work alone. It must be accompanied by other forms of knowledge that make it possible to activate scientific techniques and technologies for the purpose of unearthing and re-narrating historical experience.

The inability to locate the two mass graves in Oropesa is not an example of "failed" science. Instead it draws attention to the important role that other forms of knowledge play in these endeavors. Furthermore, it accentuates the intellectual labor that must be exerted in order to wade through and make sense of the fragmented memories and narratives that victims' kin maintain. In this context, an archival document linking legal names with nicknames and the circulation of an iconic photograph that visually depicts the deployment of political violence are important objects through which historical knowledge can be co-constructed. Archival records, like forensic evidence, are not authoritative objects that inherently possess a kind of internal, historical truth. A photograph may attest to how repression was waged on the bodies of women in the post-war period, but it cannot inherently link intimate experiences with violence to individual identities. Instead knowledge must be produced through these evidentiary forms. In a context where the long-term absence of persons, information and narratives makes the act of remembering a necessary, yet arduous task, the social processes through which knowledge is assembled and made to mean are important sites not only for the study of social memory, but also for the study of how memories, documentary evidence and kin-based knowledge are validated and incorporated into alternative historical narratives. The ability to obtain, cull and make use of diverse forms of evidence –that is, the ability to find presence in this world of absence, to find words in this world of silence– is key in attempts to bolster and give shape to nascent claims regarding other forms of historical knowledge.

NOTES

2. *Fusilado* literally means "someone executed by firearm". It is a term that is often used to describe individuals who were executed during and after the Spanish Civil War. There is much debate about what words should be used to describe different types of executions, and many of these debates center around the political weight of different kinds of deaths. Describing the death of someone who was executed after a military trial and whose execution was certified by a death certificate, for example, is quite different from describing the death of someone who was extra-judicially killed and whose death was never documented. These are important debates, however they are beyond the scope of this paper. As such, in this article, I use the term *fusilado* which was the term used by members of the technical team who attempted to locate the mass graves, as well as the term used by victims' kin and local researchers.

3. It is important to note that the 1977 Amnesty Law does not directly, but rather indirectly prohibits the legal prosecution of crimes committed during *franquismo*.

4. The historical memory movement is a diverse and complex phenomenon that started in 2000 with the exhumation of a mass grave on the outskirts of Priaranza del Bierzo (Silva, 2003). The initiative was motivated by journalist Emilio Silva, who sought to recuperate the remains of his grandfather who was assassinated at the start of the War, and it was carried out by the forensic team from the Aranzadi Society for the Sciences. From this moment forward, the call for historical recuperation and retrieval has been closely linked, if not deeply embedded in the application of forensic science to the study of political violence. Associations for the Recuperation of Historical Memory (ARMH), as well as other historical memory forums and collectives, can be found in hundreds of cities and towns across Spain. While the original ARMH based in Ponferrada is perhaps the most visible group working to recuperate historical memory –mainly through the location and exhumation of mass graves and the identification and commemoration of those found at these burial sites– it must also be understood to exist within a broad, complex range of national and local debates about the re-narration of experiences with Francoist violence. For the purpose of this essay, I will refer to historical memory movement as a way of labeling this incredibly intense, diverse phenomenon whereby individuals and communities play active roles in producing historical narratives that often compete and contest dominant historiography regarding the Spanish Civil War, its aftermath and the ensuing Franco Regime.

5. As historian Emmanuel Rodríguez notes, Spain's Transition to democracy, as symbolized through the ratification of the 1978 Constitution, has been positioned as the nation's democratic "origin myth" (2013: 260). However, this foundational myth is a weak one that has been reinforced by "a specific field through which political discourse is organized" (Rodríguez, 2013: 261). According to Rodríguez, this "Transition Culture" is an arena in which politics are framed, enacted and analyzed by distinct sets of oppositional forces: left versus right, Constitution versus terror. The division of the country into distinct factions –those who won the war and those who were defeated– is a recurring trope that reinforces these discursive oppositions. Transition Culture is a recently coined term that is used to describe the integration of the cultural sphere into State politics overseen by the 1978 democratic regime. It also refers to a cultural atmosphere, which has been used to support and legitimize the Transition model of governance (Rodríguez, 2013: 258-259; see also Acevedo, et al, 2012). For a description of the Transition's nostalgic other half –"disenchantment", see Vilarós, 1998.

6 In 1836, a century before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil war, writer Mariano José de Larra published an essay in the Madrilenian newspaper *El Español*. In one of the most widely repeated lines of the text, de Larra writes, "Here lies half of Spain. It died at the hands of the other half" (in Douglass, 1997:62). Both a scathing critique of Carlist violence and an intimate reflection of de Larra's frustration with the political plague consuming everyday Spanish

social life, the essay describes a theme that reappears in Iberian texts from the 17th Century to the present: the division of the country into two irreconcilable blocs. This description of Spain reappears in discussions of "*las dos Españas*" –or the two Spains– that is often used to characterize bot the Civil War and its aftermaths. While the "theory of the two Spains" has been critiqued as a depiction that has helped bolster a democratic transition based on consensus rather than "truth and reconciliation", it is a trope that constantly reappears in contemporary political discussions. The use of concepts like *vencidos* and *vencedores* is another example of this polarization.

7. There are three key "All of the Names" Projects: one based at the National University of Distance Education (UNED), which studies the region if Ciudad Real in Castilla-La Mancha, another based in Andalusia supported by the Andalusian Association of Historical Memory and Justice (AMHyJA) and the Andalusian Central Labor Confederation (CGT.A) and a third entitled "Nomes e voces" that includes various research groups from universities in Galicia.

8. The original text reads: "[Esta] Guerra se hace, no por territorios, sino por palabras" (Koestler, 2004 [1937]). Arthur Koestler was a Hungarian-British writer who traveled to Spain on three separate occasions during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). During his third and final trip to the Iberian Peninsula, Koestler worked as a new correspondent for the British newspaper *News Chronicle*. A known communist activist, Koestler was quickly identified by Nationalist forces and imprisoned. Between February and June of the same year, he was held captive and sentenced to death. The abovementioned quote is from Koestler's book *Dialogue with Death: A Spanish Testament*, which combines essays that reflect on the writer's experiences in Spain and, in particular, his experience facing death row. Although the text was originally published in English in 1937, it was not circulated in Spain until 2004. Since its release, Koestler's description of the Spanish Civil War, as one that was fought in the name of words, has been used by historians, writers and cultural critics to describe the complex ideological tensions buttressing this key historical moment.

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