

A Return to Monuments: Overcoming the “Forensic Turn” in Contemporary Spain

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Rebut/ Received /Recibido: 29/09/2022

Avaluat / Peer reviewed / Evaluado: 23/10/2022

Publicat / Published / Publicado: 15/01/2023

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Palacios González, Daniel “A Return to Monuments: Overcoming the “Forensic Turn” in Contemporary Spain” . *on the w@terfront*. Barcelona. Universitat de Barcelona vol. 65, nr. 01, p. 3-33. [ISSN on-line: 1139-7365]. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1344/waterfront2023.65.01.01>.

Abstract

In the year 2000 thirteen people were exhumed from a mass grave in Priaranza del Bierzo. This event has been established as the founding act of the movement called "Historical Memory" in the Kingdom of Spain. A movement which, despite claiming the recovery of the past within the framework of Human Rights rhetoric, has been marked by the exhumations of mass graves as its primary and most visible activity. These exhumations have always been portrayed positively by the media. This is framed within the so-called "forensic turn," as a process in which scientists have been incorporated into the investigation of mass violence.

However, this account has not addressed a number of issues, one of which is fundamental and relates to the fate of the bodies after exhumation. Another omission is the question of what to do when the graves are not found where they were believed to be. In this sense, the subject has been approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, starting from the history of art, making use of ethnographic techniques and taking samples from a qualitative-quantitative study which has been carried out over the last 4 years throughout the country. Therefore, the materials used to address the problem are organized into the following three parts. Firstly, the limitations of the forensic model and exhumations are discussed in detail. Secondly, monuments built after the exhumation of mass graves are examined. Thirdly, monuments constructed when the grave remained undiscovered, and the bodies could not be exhumed are also considered.

In this regard, the experiences analysed have firstly clarified the limitations and dissatisfactions that have arisen around the "forensic turn." The low rate of identifications, the lack of symbolic mediators and the lack of social recognition, lead to the fact that exhumations in themselves do not offer answers and that, on the contrary, they do not necessarily modify the meaning of the graves as tools of terror. Therefore, in the second section, some initiatives have been employed to illustrate the need to bury the bodies after exhumations, both for pragmatic and symbolic reasons. These monuments could also be the solution for those unable to locate the mass graves, as explained in the third section. The conclusion focuses on the origins of these "memorial monument solutions," which have transcended the "forensic" model. Therefore, it is suggested that it would be relevant to continue researching these practices in the future, and not to see them as mere solutions to a technical problem, but as a new stage of memorial practices.

Keywords: Mourning, Bereavement, Archaeology, Francoism, Human Rights

Resum

L'any 2000 es produeix l'exhumació de tretze persones d'una fossa comuna a Priaranza del Bierzo. Aquest acte s'ha establert com a acte fundacional del moviment anomenat de la Memòria Històrica al Regne d'Espanya. Un moviment que malgrat pretendre la recuperació del passat en el marc de la retòrica dels Drets Humans, ha estat marcat per les exhumacions de fosses comunes com a principal i més visible activitat. Aquestes exhumacions han estat retratades des dels mitjans de comunicació sempre de manera positiva i reeixida. Això s'emmarca dins del denominat "gir forense", com a procés en què s'han incorporat científics a la investigació d'aquest tipus de contextos de violència massiva.

Tot i això, aquest relat no ha parat atenció a diversos aspectes. Un d'ells, que és fonamental, és el del destí dels cossos després de l'exhumació o de què fer quan les fosses no es troben on es creia que es trobaven. En aquest sentit s'ha abordat el tema des d'una perspectiva interdisciplinària, partint de la història de l'art i fent ús de tècniques etnogràfiques, prenent mostres d'un estudi qualitatiu-quantitatiu que s'ha desenvolupat en els darrers 4 anys al conjunt del territori. D'aquesta manera, els materials que permeten abordar la problemàtica s'organitzen en les tres parts següents. En primer lloc, es tracta de manera detallada les limitacions del model forense i de les exhumacions. En segon lloc, s'aborden els monuments construïts després de l'exhumació de fosses comunes. En tercer lloc, s'aborden els monuments construïts quan la fossa no s'ha trobat i no s'han pogut exhumar els cossos.

En aquest sentit, els materials exposats i analitzats han explicat en primer lloc les limitacions i insatisfaccions que s'han produït al voltant del "gir forense". La baixa taxa d'identificacions, la manca de mediadors simbòlics i la de reconeixement social, hauria fet que les exhumacions per si mateixes no oferissin respostes i que pel contrari no alteressin necessàriament el significat de les fosses en tant que dispositius del terror. Per això, en un segon punt s'han recopilat algunes iniciatives que il·lustren a la perfecció la necessitat d'enterrar els cossos després de les exhumacions, tant per un motiu pragmàtic com per un de simbòlic. Aquests monuments a més haurien estat la solució també per a aquells que no haurien aconseguit trobar les fosses comunes, com s'explica a la tercera part. Com a conclusió es planteja com s'han produït aquestes "solucions monumentals" que han superat el model del "gir forense". Se suggereix així que seria per tant rellevant seguir investigant aquestes pràctiques en el futur i no mirar-les com a simples solucions a un problema tècnic sinó com un nou estadi de les pràctiques memorials.

Paraules clau : Dol, Arqueologia, Franquisme, Drets Humans

Resumen

El año 2000 se produce la exhumación de trece personas de una fosa común en Priaranza del Bierzo. Este acto se ha establecido como acto fundacional del movimiento denominado de la "Memoria Histórica" en el Reino de España. Un movimiento que pese a pretender la recuperación del pasado en el marco de la retórica de los Derechos Humanos, ha estado marcado por las exhumaciones de fosas comunes como principal y más visible actividad. Estas exhumaciones han sido retratadas desde los medios de comunicación siempre de una manera positiva y exitosa. Esto se enmarca dentro del denominado "giro forense," como proceso en el que se han incorporado científicos a la investigación de este tipo de contextos de violencia masiva.

Sin embargo, este relato no ha prestado atención a diversos aspectos. Uno de ellos, que resulta fundamental, es el del destino de los cuerpos tras la exhumación o de qué hacer cuando las fosas no se encuentran donde se creía que se encontraban. En este sentido se ha abordado el tema desde una perspectiva interdisciplinar, partiendo de la historia del arte y haciendo uso de técnicas etnográficas, tomando muestras de un estudio cualitativo-cuantitativo que se ha desarrollado en los últimos 4 años en el conjunto del territorio. De esta manera, los materiales que permiten abordar la problemática se organizan en las siguientes tres partes. En primer lugar, se trata de manera detallada las limitaciones del modelo forense y de las exhumaciones. En segundo lugar, se abordan los monumentos construidos tras la exhumación de fosas comunes. En tercer lugar, se abordan los monumentos construidos cuando la fosa no se ha encontrado y no han podido exhumarse los cuerpos.

En este sentido, los materiales expuestos y analizados han explicado en primer lugar las limitaciones e insatisfacciones que se han producido en torno al "giro forense." La baja tasa de identificaciones, la falta de mediadores simbólicos y la de reconocimiento social, habría llevado a que las exhumaciones por si mismas no ofreciesen respuestas y que por el contrario no alterasen necesariamente el significado de las fosas en tanto que dispositivos del terror. Por ello en un segundo punto se han recopilado algunas iniciativas que ilustran a la perfección la necesidad de enterrar los cuerpos tras las exhumaciones, tanto por un motivo pragmático, como por uno simbólico. Estos monumentos además habrían sido la solución también para aquellos que no habrían logrado encontrar las fosas comunes, como se explica en la tercera parte. Como conclusión se plantea como se han producido estas "soluciones monumentales" que han superado el modelo del "giro forense". Se sugiere así que sería por tanto relevante, seguir investigando estas prácticas en el futuro, y no mirarlas como simples soluciones a un problema técnico sino como un nuevo estadio de las prácticas memoriales.

Palabras clave: Duelo, Luto, Arqueología, Franquismo, Derechos Humanos

Introduction¹

The year 2000 represented a pivotal moment in the history of the Kingdom of Spain and society's relationship with the memory of the twentieth century and its conflicts. In the same year, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero presented the "New Way" as a current and electoral platform for the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in its XXXV Congress. The "New Way" or "Third Way" was derived from the concept of neoliberalism propounded by the sociologist Anthony Giddens and adopted by the British Labour party under his theoretical tutelage (2013). It would be Giddens who would give a new impetus to sociological theories based on individualism with his "identity in high modernity" (Giddens, 1991). A third event connects the gamble of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in that year with the theory of Anthony Giddens and the incorporation of neoliberal and sociologically individualistic assumptions in politics in the Kingdom of Spain. This event took place in the year 2000: thirteen people were exhumed from a mass grave in Priaranza del Bierzo (Etxeberria et al., 2002).

The origin of that mass grave was in 1936. That year, a military coup took place, taking the country into a war and dictatorship headed by Francisco Franco. The victims are estimated to be between 100,000 and 130,000, and thousands were buried in mass graves around the country (Juliá, 2006, Preston, 2008, Francisco Espinosa, 2010). Those mass graves have been the object of memorial practices since the post-war when widows and relatives continue to bring flowers and organize remembrance services, both in secret and in public. After Franco died in 1975, the local communities monumentalized hundreds of mass graves, and the murdered were often remembered as "Martyrs of Freedom". Nevertheless, despite people's obstinacy in keeping their memories, the Spanish government adhered to a "Pact of Silence," concealing the war and dictatorship, looking for a political consensus that allowed the left-wing PSOE and the right-wing PP (Popular Party) to rule the country whilst hiding the crimes of the dictatorship (Palacios, 2021). Despite the situation changed with the happenings of Priaranza del Bierzo in 2000, the narrative related to this exhumation has a key individualistic dimension: a grandson in search of his grandfather who was killed and buried in a mass grave during the war of 1936. During the last two decades this event has become a foundational myth

1. This article shows partial results of research funded with a Marie Skłodowska-Curie doctoral fellowship as part of the a.r.t.e.s. Eumanities program. It has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 713600 (2018-2021). This research was also part of the research projects BELOW GROUND: Mass Grave Exhumations and Human Rights in Historical, Transnational and Comparative Perspective at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas funded by the Ministry of Economy of the Government of Spain I+D+i programme under the project reference No CSO2015-66104-R (2016-2020), and Beyond Subtiero: From the Forensic Turn to Necropolitics in the Exhumation of Civil War Mass Graves, at the Universitat de Barcelona funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of the Government of Spain I+D+i programme under the project reference No PID2019-104418RB-I00 (2020-2024).

of "Historical Memory" which would have presumably inspired other relatives to seek and promote exhumations after reflecting on their family history, thus appropriating the body of the murdered as an act of justice or restitution, despite having had zero impact on the sentences and perpetrators' impunity. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to stress a point obscured in this individualistic narrative of the grandson in search of his grandfather. Despite films and TV series such as *Cuéntame* (Tell Me) (2013), *El Silencio de Otros* (The Silence of Others) (2018) or *Madres Paralelas* (Parallel Mothers) (2021), and the mainstream media portraying the exhumation processes as producing results, the percentage of bodies actually identified through DNA from over six hundred graves is extremely low (Etxeberria, 2020). Therefore, the question arises: What will be the final destination of the exhumed bodies?

The most prominent recent academic literature has predominantly focused on social and political aspects strongly defined by the exhumation processes (Ferrándiz, 2014; Aguilar & Payne, 2018). Furthermore, studies focusing on specific regions where these issues have been addressed, such as Andalusia, Euskadi, Catalonia, among others, (Giraldez, 2014; Alonso, 2017; Mir & Gelonch, 2013) stand at the forefront. Therefore, it was decided to address the construction of monuments in relation to mass graves, on dozens of occasions built to house the exhumed bodies or built after failed exhumations. We will refer to these initiatives as the solutions which transcended the so-called "forensic turn." This was the arrival of forensic experts, physical anthropologists, and archaeologists with investigative protocols at mass murder scenes, which has become widespread in recent decades in various conflict settings (Dziuban, 2017). And in this sense, in the Kingdom of Spain, the "Forensic Turn" impacted how exhumation processes were developed and how the new monument practices were conducted. Therefore, the exhumation of the mass grave within forensic protocols fell within the logic of the narrative of the investigation of crimes through the recovery of corpses circulated through the media (Ferrándiz, 2018). The media have also generally shown the success of these techniques through real or fictional cases, and as part of this "turn", have generated an unexpected resurgence of scientific positivism that has become known among professionals in the sector as the "CSI effect" (Schweitzer and Saks, 2007). Based on the heroic image of the forensic scientist in television fiction, this effect has generated great expectations of the possibilities of forensic techniques to locate, recover and identify corpses in violent contexts. This represented a return to confidence in scientific positivism, which was, nevertheless, one of the only safeguards offered by the media to society at a time of profound crisis (Palacios, 2022). Intending to find and exhume the bodies of their relatives from mass graves, groups of relatives and activists organized themselves into associations. This was a mandatory requirement to be eligible for the source of funding offered by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero government: subsidies based on specific projects so that the work could be carried out privately. Then, the associations began to carry out exhumations on

their own, hiring companies of archaeologists and forensic anthropologists (Ferrándiz, 2014).

As a goal, this article reveals how the advent of this exhumation-based model presents a crisis when it faces the final destination of the exhumed bodies or when the bodies are not found. Even though the research is rooted in the discipline of art history, and, given that these initiatives have only been partially documented, we used ethnographic techniques in order to compensate for these limitations. A sample of 100 municipalities were visited out of the more than 600 that I have in a database which includes mass graves where memorial actions have taken place from 1936 to 2020. Accordingly, the quantitative study has been combined with the qualitative one, the consultation of documentation, participant observations and visual documentation. A large sample, which also included visiting the sites and interviewing those involved in these practices: family members, activists, politicians, archaeologists, forensic experts, and local and regional authorities between December 2018 and March 2020. Therefore, the materials which enable us to approach the problem are organized in the following three parts. The first deals with the limitations of the forensic model and exhumations. Secondly, the monuments built after the exhumation of mass graves are discussed. Thirdly, we examine the monuments built when the grave has not been found and the bodies could not be exhumed. As a conclusion, we consider how these monuments, which have been built outside the model of the "forensic turn", have been produced, and how this implies a willingness to continue to produce monuments, not solely a pragmatic solution to scientific limitations.

Dissatisfactions with the "Forensic Turn"

According to our data have been carried out a total of 60 exhumations in Andalusia since 2000. But in very few of them has it been possible to identify the victims. The reasons why it is still difficult to identify the victims today lie in a series of circumstances which, as José Antonio Lorente Acosta states, have to do with technology, the state of the remains, the difficulty in finding living relatives with whom to compare the DNA, etc. The cases of Gerena and Sierro are a good example. Sierro rural guerrilla remains were exhumed in 2010, relatives could only be traced for one of them, Indalecio Fuentes, whose son, Antonio Fuentes, had DNA samples extracted for analysis. Well, despite having two bodies and a relative, what could have been expected to be a simple process turned into a complex one due to the poor condition of the bodies. This made it impossible to find samples in good condition among the exhumed remains. It was also impossible to genetically identify all the women in the case of Gerena, even though there were relatives of almost all of them. In short, it is very complicated to give back the victims to their families. It is advisable to make the relatives aware of

this before beginning any exhumation process, out of responsibility and common sense. (Giráldez, 2014: 92)

With these words, Javier Giráldez describes the limitations of the so-called "forensic turn." But I documented such situations too. In May 2019, when I was conducting my research in the province of Seville, I visited Marchena. There, Ana Ribas Parra, and José Manuel Romero Sánchez received me in the Museum of Memory set up by the Asociación Dignidad y Memoria de Marchena (Dignity and Memory Association of Marchena). Ana explained to me how the museum and so many other initiatives have come about after trying to exhume the mass grave. After the takeover of the town by the insurgents, Javier Gaviria counted in his studies 200 people killed in July 1936 (2007). Ana told me how at the beginning of November flowers appeared in that area where her mother "was not allowed to tread." In the eighties, a monument was erected on the initiative of the local socialist group. Years after that initiative, mourning continued at the site of the grave, but then a shift took place in the public debate.

We went to the first conference organized by the Association of Historical Memory and Justice of Andalusia, which no longer exists. And it was there in 2004 that we became aware that we were not crazy, but that there were people there who wanted the same thing. We emerged as a group because one day in 2000 I read about the opening of Emilio Silva's grave in Priaranza and it caught my attention. I said to my mother: Look what they have done in León. And she said: I want to do the same with my father.²

Before then, Ana told me, her mother had never considered the possibility of exhuming the body of her father. "The need must have been there all the time," she told me, but circumstances would not have allowed her to address it. However, the need could not be met. Ana and José Manuel explained to me how excavations had been carried out, but they had found nothing but jumbled bones, to their "total frustration."

This frustration, due to an unmet need, is predicted by many of those involved in the execution of the exhumations themselves. Angel Olmedo, from ARMHEX, explained to me how, before the exhumation process, his association works with the families to make them aware that a failed exhumation or partial identification of the bodies is also possible.³ This is a real possibility that physical anthropologists themselves recognize (Ríos, 2012), and science cannot guarantee it can meet their need, due to its limitations. And that results in many dramas. In places like Utrera I met Juan Valle, who with tireless energy and dedication was searching in the local cemetery for the mass grave where his grandfather was to be found. He felt that the monument that had been placed at the entrance to the cemetery had not dealt with the problem.⁴ However, the mass grave was not found. It

2. Interview with Ana Ribas Parra in Marchena, May 30, 2019.

3. Interview with Ángel Olmedo in Mérida, December 5, 2019.

4. Interview with Juan Valle in Utrera, May 29, 2019.



Figure 1. Unveiling of the monument in Estepar (2019) Author's personal archive.

was therefore a double loss of the body: first it was taken away through murder, then it was taken away again by the forensic expert who testified that the place where they had been mourning over the decades was not where the body was buried. The assurance of success suggested by the "CSI effect" turned out to be a lie. Forensic and archaeological techniques came as key mean for the "recovery of historical memory," but this was not automatic.

In 2004 the manifesto "To Support ARMH is to Bury Memory"⁵ was published. It was a plea against the "forensic turn," setting out how the "turn" did not lead to justice and reincorporation of the excluded into society in the Kingdom of Spain. Besides that, another frustration was the unrealistic expectations of the process, since in most cases identification does not take place, as the recurrent failures in identifications testify. But other major dissatisfactions that have come hand in hand with the "forensic turn"

5. José M^a Pedreño, "Apoyar a la ARMH es enterrar la memoria," Foro por la Memoria, January 23, 2004, accessed May 10, 2021, https://www.foroporlamemoria.info/documentos/jmpedreno_23012004.htm.

are those related to the absence of clear protocols for psychosocial intervention in exhumation processes, often resulting in re-traumatization by subjecting relatives to images of violence without support in a society that continues to marginalize them. This is a marginalization that forensic science is not equipped to cope with. Science does not involve educational, memorial, or informative programmes. It has been automatically assumed that science provides answers, but it does not provide them by itself. In addition to being part of a process that has no legal implications, some of the technicians who carry out exhumations are sometimes unaware of the consequences.

Nevertheless, when visiting an exhumation, it is common to find flags and flowers. In relation to this practice, Lourdes Herrasti, one of the archaeologists with the most experience in the exhumation of graves as part of the Aranzadi team, pointed out to me that flowers placed in the empty grave were a recurrent action (Herrasti & Etxeberria, 2019). But what to do with death bodies after exhumations is therefore a challenge. Bones cannot speak for themselves, and it is up to the living to choose how the dead live on in memory and history. And this is an obligation that science cannot fulfil by itself. In this sense, during the unveiling of a sculpture by the CNT of Burgos at the graves exhumed in the Monte de Estepar in Burgos, Raquel Neira, the daughter of Nicolas Neira, the trade unionist murdered and honoured that day, made a revealing comment: "What difference does it make if they are all bones, they are all the same."⁶ These words were uttered by Raquel when, after the ceremony, a young man pointed out the body that could be her father on a large canvas that reproduced the mass grave in real size. And indeed, after the body of Nicolas Neira was handed over to his daughter, the remembrance service continued. The scientific result of the exhumation ceased to be central, and the recovered body became just another observer of his own remembrance service from the boot of the family's car. A service organized around a new sculpture in the surroundings of the mass graves (Figure 1).

As Hans Belting points out, it is obviously impossible to take new pictures once a person is deceased. In photography a mortal body can be reproduced to infinity through the negative, but it is a body that is never released from death. Therefore, even if it seems obvious, it is impossible to take a picture of the murdered person after death, and when photographing the graves, the skeletal remains are photographed, not the people themselves (Belting, 2014). In such circumstances, when the bodies are given to the relatives after exhumation, they can be reinterred without further ado, in the social anonymity of family vaults if possible, or in a collective ossuary or an anonymous columbarium if they have not been identified or claimed. But the question arises as to other possibilities. Is it possible to produce images beyond forensic science or has the "forensic turn" annulled all other possibilities? This concern arises when the only answer

6. Raquel Neira comment during the CNT memorial event, 14 September 2019.

seems to be the technical report and the boxes with bones that someone will not always want to take care of. However, it is not the only solution.

The Return to the Monument

Two of the main forensic experts involved in the process of exhuming mass graves from the War and the Dictatorship, Fernando Serrulla and Francisco Etxeberria, point out that having registered a total of 2,457 graves, by 2020 more than 700 graves would have been exhumed, recovering more than 8,000 individuals, and it is estimated that there are 20,000 individuals still to be exhumed, of which less than a third might be identifiable. However, taking as a reference the figure suggested by Francisco Espinosa of 130,199 people murdered, the forensic experts suggest that only 0.2% of the 130,199 individuals estimated to have been murdered have been genetically identified, which is just 260 individuals (Etxeberria, 2020). Therefore, the most obvious thing to do, given the limitations of forensic science, would have been to give up searching for the missing bodies, but giving up did not seem to be an option for those involved. Science does not provide absolute answers and therefore the monument re-emerges in society as a way of dealing with mass graves. As David Le Breton argues, in these situations medicine distances itself from the recourse to the symbolic, and yet it could enhance its effects (Le Breton, 2013). In fact, Francisco Etxeberria himself observed from his experience as a forensic expert exhuming mass graves, how thanks to many exhumations, monuments were built after finding the bodies. And that's why thanks to the construction of those monuments those places are considered by the authorities as "sites of memory:"

There are hundreds, one might say thousands, of places in Spain that could be places of memory. I'm not talking about exhumations, I'm talking about recognizing the site, identifying it, and that it should be recorded in the town hall that we have a clandestine grave in the municipality, outside the cemetery, in such and such a place. And that this space should be protected in perpetuity, regardless of whether we know who the relatives are, regardless of whether there are bones underneath, regardless of whether DNA testing is carried out or the cause of death is established, regardless of anything else: a clandestine grave within the municipal boundaries in itself should be treated differently.⁷

One of the questions that Etxeberria poses in the same lecture is how the monument re-emerges, strengthened by the forensic process, although it is not the forensic process itself that campaigns the memory practices. This is a necessary response for those involved

7. Etxeberria Gabilondo, "Congreso Internacional: Cuerpo, Ciencia, Memoria y Política en las exhumaciones contemporáneas, ILLA-CSIC, 2015," YouTube, September 22, 2015, accessed May 10, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5hEoEDtil4>.



Figure 2. Monument in Villamayor de los Montes (2019) Author's personal archive.

in the process and derives from the dissatisfaction produced by the exhumation itself. It is not something new, but something that had already occurred before and Etxeberria himself exemplifies in the same lecture through experiences such as that of La Barranca.

As in La Rioja, during the seventies and eighties the solution of building a collective vault after exhumation was the most common (Aguirre, 2012). Indeed, some authors researched on vaults built after exhumations also in Navarra (Gastón & Layana, 2019), and Extremadura (Kerangat, 2019), as well as the pioneering ones in Euskadi (Alonso, 2017). These were all places where exhumations were carried out as a collective task, involving neighbours, raising funds and with no technical means other than their own hands and traditional knowledge of how to care for the dead. The graves were emptied

to build vaults where the bodies were housed and from then on, they were the object of devotion, mourning and remembrance. Despite this, their media visibility was almost nil, so that rather than using a historical reference, the decision to create monuments to house the exhumed bodies returns as a necessity for the different social agents involved in the exhumation processes after the 2000.

Firstly, it should be noted that the monuments arose again after the exhumations as a pragmatic solution, a means in the face of a need that the forensic investigation did not meet for the relatives. It is therefore not surprising that, despite all the media attention paid to the exhumation process in Villamayor de los Montes, the ending of the story of the exhumation of the 46 bodies by the Aranzadi Science Society and the UAM in 2006 (Ferrándiz, 2018), was when the bodies were collectively reburied in the municipal cemetery where Fernando García Hernando told me that he had always wanted to bring his father (Figure 2).⁸ In this type of experience, where the grave was located outside the cemetery, the need to exhume and re-inter was logical. However, I also found the solution of the monuments in experiences of exhumation in graves inside cemeteries. This was the experience of Alcaraz too, where following an agreement the families had made after the murders, a stone was placed after the War. With that stone, they marked the burial place in a cemetery as there was a risk that the grave could be lost among others. A cross was placed there in the 1960s and finally, in the 1970s, a fence was built. Years later Manuel Ramírez Gimeno initiated the exhumation of the grave. According to what he told me, his original objective had been to take the body of his grandfather, like those other grandchildren of the murdered of his generation had wanted. However, the process did not turn out as expected.⁹ Successive local and regional PSOE and PP governments obstructed the exhumation in various ways. When they finally managed to overcome all the bureaucratic hurdles imposed by the administration, the technical team found 35 bodies, which was more individuals than expected due to the subsequent use of the space for other burials. But some of those who were murdered by the regime did not turn up in the exhumation. Only two bodies were conclusively identified by DNA (Benitez et al., 2016). In view of this situation, it was therefore necessary to build a new structure in the cemetery where tribute was paid to the murdered and where the exhumed bodies could be housed. This need did not conflict with forensic science, but on the contrary helped to make up for its shortcomings, to deal with the dissatisfactions generated. But spatiality is also fundamental, it is necessary to have a place to house the bodies, and science itself does not provide this either.

Another drama was faced by the groups of relatives of those murdered in Paterna. In 2019, at the same time as this exhumation process was taking place, Carolina Martínez Murcia

8. Interview with José M^a Rojas and Fernando García Hernando in Villa Mayor de los Montes, January 14, 2019.

9. Interview with Manuel Ramírez Gimeno in Albacete, October 5, 2019.

and other relatives, under the banner of the Plataforma de Asociaciones de Familiares de Víctimas del Franquismo de las Fosas Comunes de Paterna (Platform of Associations of Relatives of the Victims of Francoism of the Mass Graves of Paterna), were going to begin receiving the bodies exhumed from the mass graves at the end of the year. Many of them had not been identified, and for others there were no relatives, and they did not know what to do with them. There were previous tombstones, plaques and sculptures that had begun to be installed decades ago, but they were destroyed by the technical team in order to proceed with the exhumation of the mass grave. They submitted the following request to the town council:

We request the that the PATERNA TOWN COUNCIL take responsibility for and give urgent priority to the creation of a large mausoleum, to be agreed with the ASSOCIATION OF RELATIVES OF VICTIMS OF FRANCOISM OF THE MASS GRAVE N°94 OF PATERNA, above ground level, in a new site, inside the Municipal Cemetery that meets the optimum conditions of preservation of the remains, as well as providing access for future identifications, and that at the same time fulfils the function as great Space of Memory and Dignity for the victims of the dictatorship.

At the same time, we would like to request as a future project that the remaining first lot of land be converted into a Great Memorial Square indicating the outline of the existing mass graves, where the names of the 2,238 victims murdered in Paterna can be placed, remembering and reporting the horrors of the dictatorship and fascism, as a guarantee that history will not be repeated.

We want to remind you that it is required by law, that those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war and the dictatorship are recognized and measures are established to honour their memory.

Carolina Martínez Murcia

President of the Association

Alberto Pedro Martínez

Secretary of the Association

Despite this, the town council, under the PSOE, refused to give them a solution. Juan Antonio Sagredo, mayor of Paterna, refused to receive both relatives and the Platform as an organization, delegating the meetings to the deputy mayor but in an unofficial capacity. The only concession he grants them was to rebury their relatives in the grave. The Paterna town council went so far as to tell elDiario.es newspaper "We are not in favour of the columbarium, how dare they tell us how to organize our cemetery?"¹⁰ In a request to the city council by the platform for the same things, the relatives referred to this decision as "an incoherence and an atrocity, the burial in the same mass grave where their murderers placed them." In 2020 Carolina and the platform continued to fight for the construction of a place where the exhumed bodies could be housed, while the city council continued to avoid dealing with the problem, hiding behind the 2007 Law

10. Juan Miguel Baquero, "¿Huesos devueltos a una fosa franquista? El conflicto que desafía a familias de víctimas del 'paredón de España,'" eldiario.es, November 2, 2020, accessed May 10, 2021, https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/huesos-devueltos-fosa-franquista-conflicto-desafia-familias-victimas-paredon-espana_1_6365444.html.



Figure 3. Burial in a mass grave in Benavente (2019) Author's personal archive.

of Memory. Today a sign has been placed over the grave stating "39 inocentes han estado 80 años ocultos injustamente en esta fosa. Los familiares no queremos que vuelvan" (90 innocent people were unjustly hidden in this grave for 80 years. We, the relatives, do not want them to return here). Finally in 2021 the platform managed with the support of various associations, journalists, and academics to get the mayor to give in and in the coming years a monument will be built to house the bodies of those exhumed.

The success of the Paterna relatives, however, shows that despite their victory the most dramatic point of all this is not the lack of political will of town councils such as Paterna but the legal vacuum of the 2007 Law and the 2011 protocol which simply states that unclaimed or unidentified bodies must be re-interred in the municipal cemetery, without further symbolic recognition:

They are interred in the cemetery of the town where the grave is located. For this purpose, the most appropriate containers will be used, according to the indications of conservation and restoration technicians. Each individual will be buried in an individualized way after an identification that will allow them to be located in future exhumations, together with the personal effects that have been found. This identification should include in all cases the study register number.¹¹

But not even such a technical procedure is carried out. And sometimes, this produces a new monuments. I found an illustration of this situation when I visited the mass grave in Benavente. In the city of Zamora, the grave has been the subject of memory practices for decades, to which a sculpture with a raised fist was added in 2016 at the initiative of the IU councillor Manuel Burón. But from the point of view of the current discussion, what stands out about the Benavente mass grave are some plaques on the edge of the grave, where it is indicated that the ARMH has buried four murdered people, exhumed, and unidentified or unclaimed by their relatives. The ARMH thus considered that the best place to bury them was in another mass grave where a monument was placed (Figure 3).

And this will probably happen again in future, as I saw in Puerto Real. Paco Aragón, CNT activist and member of the Asociación por la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica Social y Política de Puerto Real (Association for the Recovery of the Social and Political Historical Memory of Puerto Real) explained to me how in 2016 a long grave was exhumed, the largest in the province, where about 200 people had been killed in 1936 with the rapid arrival of the rebel army from Africa (Baquero, 2016). Paco explained to me that the local CNT decided to organize days of remembrance, which later led to the founding of the memorial association, the construction of a monument at the cemetery and finally the exhumation of the mass grave. When we talked, the bodies were kept at the town hall. When I spoke to them, they were still waiting for the results of the analysis, but they had a clear idea of how to continue the process:

The idea that the laboratory has, and it is the idea that we have too, from previous experience, that nobody from the association, nor from the town council, nor anybody else knows the results of the analysis. Why? Because they bring them in a sealed envelope. All the relatives are summoned to a meeting at the town hall, and then the sealed envelope is given to the relatives. This is where you are told whether the DNA matched the remains or not. If it matches, fine, if it doesn't, then nothing. That's why an official act is held in the town hall, and it is the laboratory that brings the results directly and hands them over. And the Association, the town council and the Andalusian government have to be present, plus them. And then they hand them over to them. And once this has been done, everyone is given the opportunity to... because we are going to make a kind of 'U' to build all the columbaria in the monument, to put all the little boxes inside. So, any family member

11. Ministerio de la Presidencia, "Orden PRE/2568/2011, de 26 de septiembre, por la que se publica el acuerdo del consejo de ministros de 23 de septiembre de 2011, por el que se ordena la publicación en el Boletín Oficial del Estado del protocolo de actuación en exhumaciones de víctimas de la guerra civil y la dictadura," Boletín Oficial del Estado, September 27, 2011, accessed May 10, 2021, <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/o/2011/09/26/pre2568>.

*who wants to take his or her body can take it, no problem. Do you see what I mean? So this is how it will work even after the DNA analysis has been done. Because there are many relatives here who say that, if the bodies have been under the ground together for 83 years, they should be exhumed together and be buried together.*¹²

This experience once again represents a way that monuments provide a solution to the problems that flow from the exhumation processes, while also fostering a sense of community.

But this project stems from the personal concerns of its anarchist campaigners in Puerto Real and not from a legal necessity, protocol requirement, or scientific method. I recognized this situation in numerous other examples of structures in very different places, where people had faced the same problem in a similar way, such as Estepar, Puebla de Alcocer or Paterna de Rivera. There, a monument built as it was impossible to identify individually each body even after analysing the DNA (Figure 4). Despite not having been able to find the exact body of his grandfather, Juan Luis told me: "Now they are buried with dignity."¹³

This idea of developing monuments to solve the problems caused indirectly by forensic science and archaeology is not exceptional. They are also developed with the idea that, although the cycle of exhumations has been completed, there may be more in the future. Therefore, more bodies may be handed over to relatives or that it may be necessary to house more as new graves are opened. Thus, in the graves of the San Carlos Borromeo cemetery in Salamanca, where monuments had been produced since the 1980s and 1990s, the Asociación Memoria y Justicia de Salamanca (Salamanca Memory and Justice Association) arranged for the construction of a monument which not only demarcated the area associated with the mass grave, but also, in 2007, they installed an obelisk "En memoria de las víctimas del franquismo. En homenaje a sus familias. Por la Libertad" (In memory of the victims of Franco's regime. In homage to their families. For freedom). Large plaques with the names of those murdered in Salamanca are also displayed in the complex, and a series of columbariums underneath them were used to house the bodies recovered after two exhumations. They made sure they left more space there for possible future exhumed bodies. Luisa Vicente explained:

We did this because we were finding that we had already done an exhumation several years ago and we had them stored in a cemetery. We didn't have anywhere to take them. And we couldn't identify all the remains, so we had the problem of which one was which because of the conditions of the terrain: they had quicklime poured over them, they had stones poured over them... And so, our idea is, and we always had it, we always had a very clear idea, that apart from the names, we had to have a space for those bodies. Either because of what I was saying,

12. Interview with Paco Aragón and Antonio Molins in Puerto Real, July 19, 2019.

13. Interview with Juan Luis Vega in Paterna de Rivera, July 17, 2019.



Figure 4. Monument in Paterna de Rivera (2019) Author's personal archive.

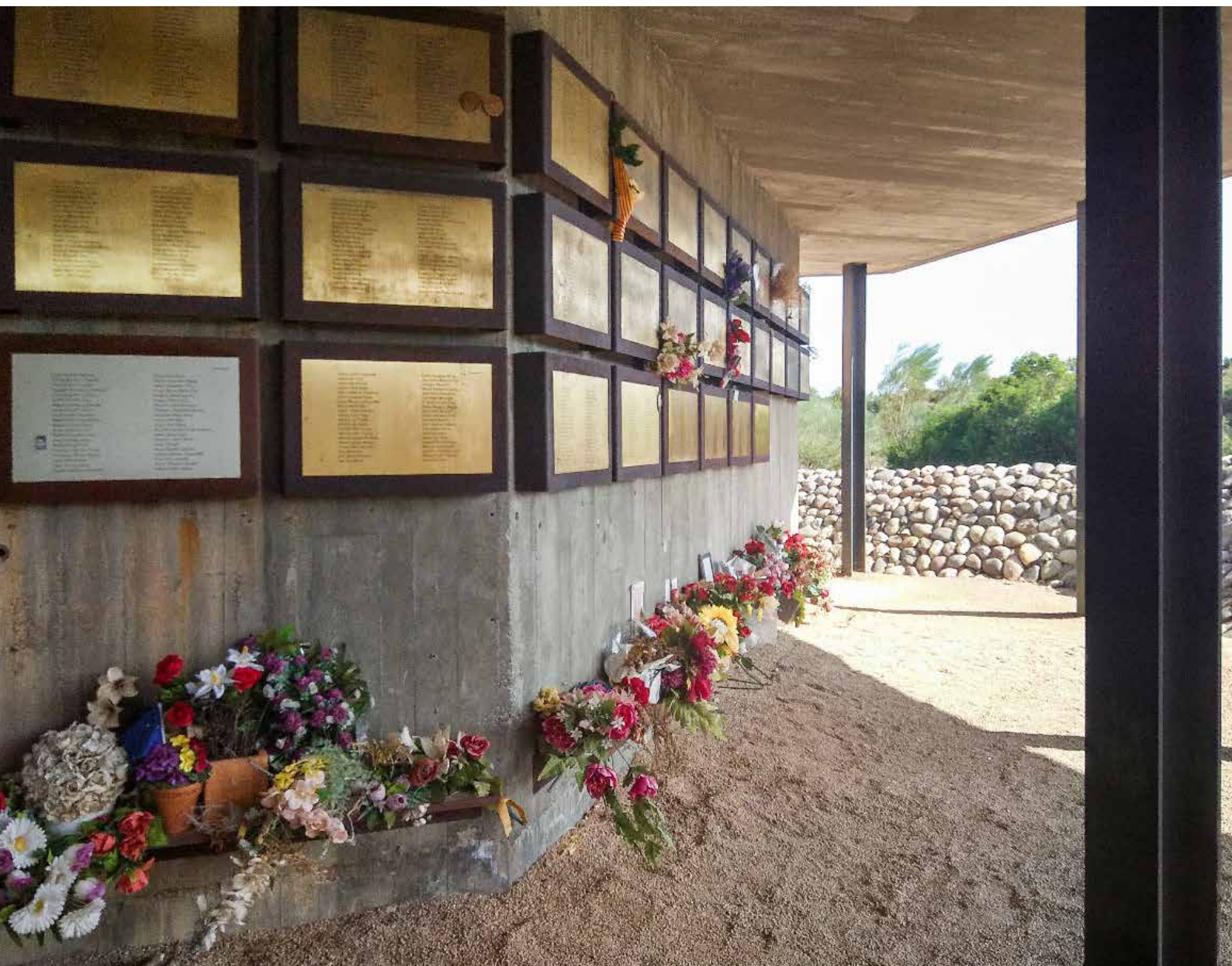


Figure 5. Camposines Memorial (2019) Author's personal archive.

or because they had not been analysed, because often the terrain is not the most appropriate for identification, or because the families did not appear, or because in some of these cases the families say, look, they have been there for many years, why would we separate them? Once they have been identified, we are going to leave them together because this is what the families want. Therefore, we planned this space when we applied to the government for the funding, we had already planned to have these columbariums to be able to collect any remains that could not be returned to the relatives. So, we were very clear about that.¹⁴

Thus she, together with David Hernández, introduced me to an initiative that not only demonstrated the need for the reburial of unidentified remains, but also the need to prepare in advance for the need itself.

But this was not only a solution suggested by associations. A vault with a similar purpose

14. Interview with Luisa Vicente and David Hernández in Salamanca, September 10, 2019.

but organized by local authorities is located in the Pamplona cemetery. This monument was commissioned by the Navarrese government, and a similar initiative was undertaken years later by Gogora, the Institute of Memory, Coexistence and Human Rights, a department of the Basque government. Only a year after its creation, they commissioned the so-called "Columbarium of Dignity" in the Olaso cemetery in Elgoibar, Gipuzkoa, to house the exhumed bodies (Alonso, 2017). But even years before, in Catalonia, in 2009, an unusual initiative took place to address a similar problem in the context of a battlefield. The valley of the river Ebro is full of bodies, a consequence of one of the biggest battles that happened during the War (Ramos, 2017). Those bodies are turning up everywhere and there is no guarantee that they can be identified. The solution found by the local authorities was the Camposines monument. On an old trench, a structure preserves the remains found of combatants of the Battle of the Ebro, as well as the names of more than a thousand of them declared missing. It is managed by the COMEBE, the Consorci Memorial dels Espais de la Batalla de l'Ebre (Battle of the Ebro Memorial Consortium) (Figure 5).¹⁵

Official, civil society, and family experiences show the urgency for a monument after exhumations. This is something which is sometimes planned in advance and sometimes arranged in haste when faced with unidentified or unclaimed remains. The fact that the Basque, Navarrese, and Catalan governments have decided to invest, as part of their memory policies, in the construction of large vaults speaks of their political allegiances. There is no governmental regulatory framework to cover the needs that flow from the dissatisfaction that can and usually does arise, despite forensic scientific methodology, nor are they obliged to develop this type of monuments. Their interest here derives purely from their own political beliefs. It was therefore left in the hands of various social actors to think of and develop a solution to the problem generated by the exhumations. Nowadays, the commitment from local and regional governments is increasing to bury the exhumed bodies in monuments. However, there is an added problem to the non-identification of bodies that made people turn again to the monuments, which is the possibility of not finding the bodies at all.

Monuments to House the Lost

Between September and October 2019, I visited Galicia, where David Casado Neira was working on places of murder and burial in the context of the 1936 coup and the War. In a text he published a few months later, he points out how difficult was to determine the exact locations of combat, murders, or burials. Therefore, uncertain landmarks were built in the landscape of Galicia:

15. "Qui Som," COMEBE, accessed February 25, 2020, <http://www.batallaebre.org/app/index.php?page=comebe>.



Figure 6. Monument in Val do Limia (2019) Author's personal archive.

The acidity of the soil - which implies a rapid decay of any biological remains -, the uncertainty of sources and information - limitations of official sources, to which must be added the growing absence of first-hand informants -, and the progressive modification of the terrain caused by continuous human activity (building of reservoirs, widening of roads, enlargement of cemeteries, among others) resulted in a map of places that exist beyond cartographic certainty, on maps and in geographically precise locations. They are places that are built on imagined landscapes in which are created loci of certainty, that is to say, they give meaning to a point on the map. That is where the story fixes coordinates and becomes truth. (Casado, 2020, 47).

My research focused only on graves and his covered other types of sites, but we shared an interest in how to produce a communicative memory around a violent event whose location is uncertain.

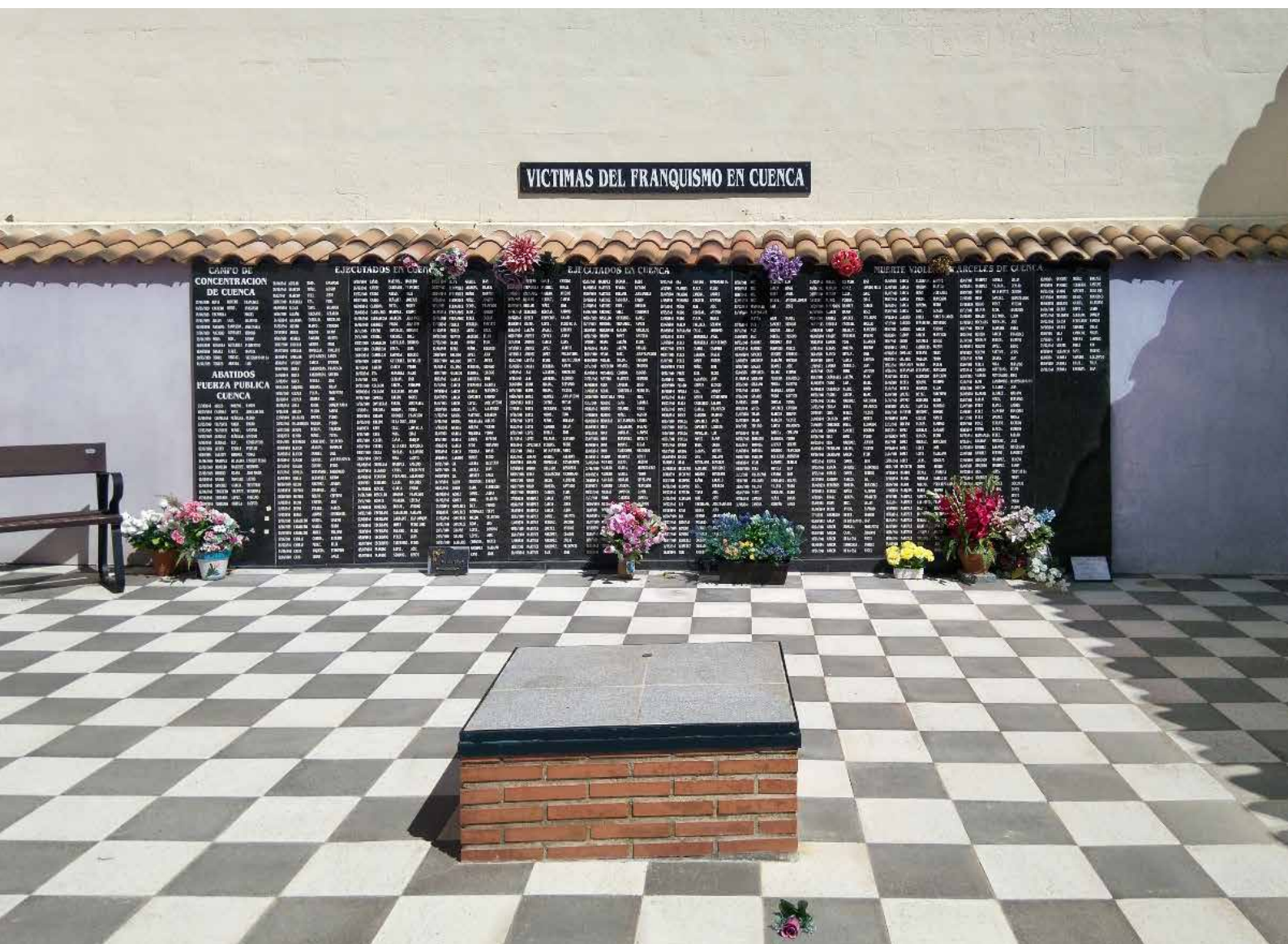


Figure 7. Monument over the ossuary of the Cuenca cemetery (2019)

What I found in Galicia was particularly exceptional when compared to other territories. The characteristics of the terrain and the irregularity of the repression, which did not involve large graves in cemeteries or outside them but selective murders after which the bodies could have been buried or abandoned anywhere in the mountains, made it particularly difficult to carry out memorial work. In those days we visited La Coruña, Santa Mariña, Aranga, Sada, Fonsagrada, El Acebo, Mondoñedo, Lorenzana, Ourense, Bande, Furriolo, Mos, Tui, Camposancos, Baiona and Vigo, meeting in some of the places with the campaigners of the monuments. At the time I felt absolutely bewildered. The orography is radically different from that of Castile, Andalusia or the Levant, and the populations are diffuse, and their boundaries are confused. While on the plateau or the coast it is easy to find one's way around and cross a large part of the territory in several hours. Here, enclosed by mountains threaded through with winding roads there is no such relationship with space. Moreover, the directions to places are never clear. And all this could be transferred and translated into monuments on mass graves. What is nebulous



Figure 8. Monument next to the Granada cemetery (2019) Author's personal archive.

can be made tangible in a space despite the absence of the bodies, and a monument is forced, in these contexts, to renounce the importance of the body itself in order to value a space which, at least, those bodies occupied before being killed and buried (Figure 6).

Monuments are thus proposed as a solution to the impossibility of exhuming or building over the grave itself. This impossibility also arises when there has been a previous exhumation, not for the purpose of identifying the bodies, but to free up space in the cemetery. This process is very common throughout the country, known as *mondas*. They generally occur when the Church or the town council decides to sell off municipal land or rent it to private individuals for new graves or to take graves whose owners cannot be contacted or are not up to date with payments for the rights to the graves. In these cases, the bodies are exhumed and dumped in ossuaries. This was the fate of many mass graves. In such a situation where it is impossible to exhume because an exhumation has already

taken place, the monument re-emerges as a solution to the impossibility of exhuming the bodies. The creation of a monument around the ossuary was the decision that the ARMH of Cuenca made when they discovered that the mass graves had been exhumed and the bodies taken to the ossuary in Cuenca, according to Juan Pedro Bru Rubiato.¹⁶ Consequently they built an entrance and placed plaques with the names of the murdered on the walls (Figure 7).

But on other occasions, the construction of columbariums has made access to the graves impossible, and this has been compounded by the *mondas*. In both cases, these were speculative operations based on the economic exploitation of the cemetery space by its managers. This happened behind the Alhambra palace in 2017 at the Granada cemetery. There the Asociación Granadina para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Grenadian Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory) had a monument built that includes a long list of names and space for flowers in front of the walls where the murdered were shot after the 1936 coup. Even without bodies, the site is now also considered a Site of Democratic Memory in Andalusia (Figure 8).

This situation where the bodies are inaccessible is also the case of many chasms and wells used by the insurgents as places to dispose of the bodies (Etxeberria, Serrulla & Herrasti, 2014). Although their existence is not ubiquitous throughout the country, they are particularly important in certain places, and there, facing the impossibility of exhuming the bodies, the local campaigners decided to build monuments: the Jinámar, the Pozu Fortuna in Mieres, and the Pozu Funeres in Laviana stand out. Also in 2003, the pit was located and in 2005 a sculpture was unveiled, which today is the site of an annual memorial service. Another similar situation is to be found in the south of Castile, in Villarrobledo, Albacete, where 147 people were shot, many of whom were dumped in the place known as "Los barreros." This is a hole of more than 40 metres deep from which mud was extracted to make pottery. The ARMH of Cuenca carried out a survey to exhume the bodies, but faced with the impossibility of recovering them, in 2012 they decided to place a large steel cube displaying the names of the 300 murdered people from Villarrobledo. The monument was built in a car park and that place would otherwise have been lost (Figure 9).

Besides those monuments, there are other contexts where there is uncertainty about the specific location of the burials. Such situations prompted the development of practices as a way to mark the landscape linked with the lost mass grave. Also, when exhumations fail to find the bodies, a monument seems to be a good option. I noticed such a monument on the road from El Hornillo to El Arenal too. After a failed exhumation, a monument was placed marking the site in the absence of certainty as to the specific location of the bodies on the part of local activists (Figure 10).

16. Interview with Juan Pedro Bru Rubiato in Tarancón, April 27, 2019.



Figure 9. Monument over the "barreros" in Villarobledo (2018) ARMH de Cuenca.

Or in Chiclana, Cádiz, where I met Isabel Canto Fornell and Juan Luis Verdier Mayoral, members of the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, Política y Social de Chiclana (Association for the Recovery of the Historical, Political and Social Memory of Chiclana). With the support of the town council and the Andalusian government, they managed to start excavating in search of the mass grave in the local cemetery, where those murdered in the summer of 1936 were buried. However, the courtyards in the cemetery had changed since 1936, and the mass grave was not found. For this reason, they opted for a practice that was not limited to the location of the grave, given the impossibility of locating it, but to another more visible space in the cemetery. Isabel Canto Fornell told me how their first action consisted of placing a stone next to a tree in the first courtyard, so that people would have "a place to find their bearings." It was placed at the



Figure 10. Monument along the road from El Hornillo to El Arenal (2019) Author's personal archive.

entrance to the cemetery "because the aim was to make it visible," although they knew that the mass grave was not there. She explained to me:

Although in other places, they had to find the bodies first and then make the tomb, we decided to skip straight to making the tomb. And in fact, in those two columbariums that we decided to make, there is a bottle buried for each of them with a photo and other keepsakes chosen by the families.¹⁷

Relatives and other attendees placed the bottles inside the monument, with the names of the murdered. But as the monument was not directly linked to the bodies, they also put bottles for the widows of the murdered in there. Thus the inscription reads "Ni el silencio

17. Interview with Isabel Canto Fornell and Juan Luis Verdier Mayooral in Chiclana, July 17, 2019.



Figure 11. Monument in Chilcana (2019) Author's personal archive.

ni el tiempo borrará vuestros nombres de la historia" (Neither silence nor time will erase your names from history) (Figure 11).

But there are cases where the bodies were not even buried but thrown into the sea, as in Cabo de Peñas. In 1938, the Falangists of Candás threw more than ten people into the sea because of their political or trade union connections before the 1936 coup. The experience of Cabo de Peñas also highlights another problem for those communities who aim to develop a monument.

María Concepción was the granddaughter of María Fernández Menéndez "La Papona," a UGT trade unionist who worked at the Albo cannery where she was known for her support for workers and her fight against injustice. María Fernández Menéndez was one of the eight murdered women known as les Candases (Those from Candás) because of their trade union affiliation, political involvement, or family links with other persecuted people. Their bodies were some of those thrown over the cliffs of Cabo de Peñas, so that the final fate of their bodies was unknown to the survivors. However, María Concepción began to investigate out of love for her mother, who had a very hard childhood after the murder

when she was only 13 years old. She came across a small cross in Bañugues cemetery. The locals told her how there they had buried some corpses there that they had found on the beach around the time of the killings at Cabo de Peñas. In 2017, the exhumation took place; however, the site had been previously excavated and only one of the bodies was found, belonging to Daría González Pelayo. She was the only one of les Candases who had no relatives. They received the news through the press, as ARMH disappeared after the exhumation. In the face of the impossibility of locating the other women, they decided to make a monument. Sonia Santoveña Fernández, daughter of María Concepción and great-granddaughter of María Fernández Menéndez, explained to me how they set up a monument in a prominent spot on the bay, the prau de San Antonio. They erected a large monolith with a plaque looking out over Candás thanks to the support of the local town council. *"N' alcordanza de 'Les Candases' y les víctimes del e Aunque la seronda de la historia anubra les vuestres tumbes col visible polvu del escaecimientu, enxamás vamos arrenunciar nin al más vieyu de los nuegos su años"* (In memory of "Those from Candás" and the victims of Francosim. Even though history has shrouded your graves in the mists of oblivion, we will no longer give up even the oldest of our dreams).¹⁸

Conclusions

After securing a prominent place for their monument in the absence of the bodies, this initiative was followed by giving the name les Candases to a square in the municipality, thereby commemorating them in the city centre in 2021. Again, this proposal was supported by the town council, but it required Sonia and María Concepción to collect signatures, with huge support from the locals. A book and a documentary about these women will be released in the near future. To the strength and memory of Sonia and María Concepción, we owe a custom which overcomes melancholy, overcomes the impossibility of exhumation, resists historical institutional humiliation, and manages to transcend them by its own initiative, establishing itself in the landscape. They have achieved the recognition of their community so that they finally come to occupy central urban space with a square named in their honour. Their struggle does not end here, and the memory is perpetuated by memories of the tributes which have been paid, and the fact that les Candases are a local legend. From the monument at the top of Candás you can see how life goes on for the population. But they do not walk alone and les Candases watch over them from high up on their monument – an example to all. Despite the failure of the "forensic turn," those women found a solution in the monument, not in the bodies themselves but in the gesture of building a sepulchre.

18. Interview with María Concepción Fernández Fernández and Sonia Santoveña Fernández in Candás, November 17, 2019.

As a goal, this article reveals how the advent of this exhumation-based model presents a crisis when it faces the destination of the exhumed bodies or when the bodies are not found, the solutions which transcended the so-called "forensic turn." In summary, giving back the bodies to their families is complicated, and it is advisable to make the relatives aware of this before beginning any exhumation process. But the monuments built after the exhumation of mass graves and those built when the tomb has not been found, and the bodies could not be exhumed, are not solely a pragmatic solution to scientific limitations. They imply a willingness to continue to produce monuments, an enduring mark of mourning, a physical memory-aid. Indeed, as Paul Ricoeur states:

Sepulcher, indeed, is not only a place set apart in our cities, the place we call a cemetery and in which we depose the remains of the living who return to dust. It is an act, the act of burying. This gesture is not punctual; it is not limited to the moment of burial. The sepulcher remains because the gesture of burying remains; its path is the very path of mourning that transforms the physical absence of the lost object into an inner presence. The sepulcher as the material place thus becomes the enduring mark of mourning, the memory-aid of the act of sepulcher. (Ricoeur, 2010)

These initiatives can be labelled anachronistic, but they may also be interpreted as a victory of popular over scientific knowledge. Or even as an acknowledgement of the possibilities of formulating scientific knowledge through popular creation. In this regard, there is value in looking again at these monuments, viewing images which, ultimately, stem from social initiatives, which are part of the process of revising the memory of violence in the 20th century. A process which cannot fail to have a consciousness-raising character, which is manifested in these images representing the monuments. In this context, we should not forget Valentin Voloshinov's statement: "Consciousness can harbour only in the image, the word, the meaningful gesture, and so forth." (Voloshinov, 1973: 13) It would therefore be pertinent to continue researching these initiatives in the future, and not to perceive them as mere solutions or aesthetically obsolete but as a new stage of memorial practices, which in a dialectical way, have succeeded in integrating previous imperfect stages towards a communicative improvement, towards a higher stage of consciousness overcoming the "forensic turn".

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