Original scientific article DOI: 10.51936/dr.41.108-109.99-120

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# MEMORY AS REPRODUCTIVE LABOUR: FROM TRAUMATIC REMEMBRANCE TO INSTITUTIONALISED VICTIMHOOD

*ABSTRACT*

*The aim of the text is to connect the idea of remembrance to that of social reproduction labour, referencing as a case study the mass graves as an outcome of the coup, the civil war, and the dictatorship in Spain since 1936. These mass graves have been the central axis for articulating memorialist discourse in contemporary Spain. The memory of the mass graves is therefore a relevant object of study. The frameworks of analysis developed by Lise Vogel, Alva Gotby, Tithi Bhattacharya, Susan Ferguson, Silvia Federici, and Hannah Proctor are applied to the results of historical and ethnographic research, which have reclaimed a way of relating to the mass graves, from mourning to monumental practices or institutional political action. The article addresses the importance of emotional labour as part of memory, and how this is a contested field in which the possibility of consciousness-raising is confronted by the state and its apparatuses, whose imperative is to reproduce the mode of production.*

*KEY WORDS: social reproduction theory, materialism, women, mass graves, Spanish civil war*

## Spomin kot reproduktivno delo: od travmatičnega spominjanja do institucionalizacije žrtve

IZVLEČEK

*Cilj članka je povezati idejo spominjanja z idejo družbeno reproduktivnega dela, pri čemer kot študijo primera navaja množična grobišča, ki so posledica državnega udara, državljanske vojne in diktature v Španiji od leta 1936 dalje. Množična grobišča so postala osrednja os, okoli katere se v sodobni Španiji*

*artikulira memorialni diskurz. Spomin na množična grobišča je zato relevanten kot predmet raziskovanja. Članek aplicira analitične okvire, ki so jih razvile Lise Vogel, Alba Gotby, Tithi Bhattacharya, Susan Ferguson, Silvia Federici in Hannah Proctor, na rezultate zgodovinskih in etnografskih raziskav, ki so vzpostavile način odnosa do množičnih grobišč – od žalovanja do monumentalnih praks ali institucionalnega političnega delovanja. Članek obravnava pomen emocionalnega dela kot del spomina in kako je to sporno področje, kjer se možnost ozaveščanja sooča z državo in njenimi aparati, katerih imperativ je reproducirati obstoječi produkcijski način.*

*KLJUČNE BESEDE: teorija družbene reprodukcije, materializem, ženske, množična grobišča, španska državljanska vojna*

## 1 Introduction

For the first time in his career, in 2021, Pedro Almodovar directed a film that referenced the consequences of the 1936 coup d'état, the war, and the dictatorship established following the victory of the fascist forces. In *Parallel Mothers*, he presents the story of Janis, a photographer, and Ana, a teenager at odds with her family. They give birth on the same day, and their babies are accidentally switched at the hospital. However, the event that gives the film its title is the setting for another drama which haunts Janis. The baby had been conceived after an affair with an archaeologist involved in the exhumation of a mass grave where the remains of Janis's grandfather, killed during the war, are expected to be found. In constructing the story around the murdered grandfather, Almodovar reproduces the ways in which the hegemonic media have, in recent years, narrated the memory of the 1936 coup against the Spanish Republic, the war, and the dictatorship. It is the clichéd story of grandchildren searching for a grandfather; narrations without references to the political affiliation of the people who were murdered, their revolutionary actions or agency against fascism, or the political and historical background to the launching of the coup. In this regard, such narratives also conceal the powerful accumulation of capital due to that violence. Accordingly, the mode of production reaffirmed by the coup and post-war ultimately determined how and why the memory of the Spanish war is often based on oral history and inconsistency. However, these material conditions also predetermined that the policies derived from narratives of victimhood, which progressive organisations and governments campaigned for, would give rise to hierarchies of victims and the establishment of a cosmopolitan memory on a transnational scale. This would, thereby, exclude political narratives condemned as leftist folklore and melancholy from the field of memory. Owing to the internal liberal logic of this field and the

capitalist mode of production in which these narratives are produced, memory is elevated to the category of ideology, creating a distorted vision of the past that would maintain the reproduction of the post fascist relations of production in the structure in which it is embedded (Palacios 2023).

Nonetheless, a more complex analysis of these ideas demands the insight of the Marxist tradition of social reproduction theory. Despite Almodovar's film being a simplistic fetishisation of the hegemonic narrative, it does, paradoxically, link both concepts: memory and social reproduction labour. Whilst Janis is engaged in the search for her grandfather and becomes pregnant, she finds herself in several situations which illustrate the extent of unpaid labour essential to reproduce life (her own and the baby's life). This is evident in her decision, which demonstrates her high social class as an artist, to employ and exploit a foreign student to look after the baby so that she can continue her professional career as a photographer. Janis wrongfully dismisses this student by framing her. She subsequently treats Ana in the same way, abusing her friendship to employ her informally. Ana accepts the au pair position, and, as the employer, Janis not only takes advantage of her domestic labour and childcare work but also makes her the object of her sexual desire and uses her for her emotional stability, abusing Ana's teenage vulnerabilities. Thus, the archetype of the successful, liberal, independent woman, to maintain her status as a photographer, resorts to exploiting vulnerable women to perform the tasks of social reproduction that ensure the production of the next life. However, it also becomes evident that it is critical for Janis to find her grandfather to presumably heal a trauma and achieve closure with the past and the transmission of a healed legacy to the next generation, represented by the baby. This illustrates that domestic and affective memory labour is needed to produce Janis's generational replacement. In this context, the intrinsic relationship between both concepts is revealed. Therefore, to understand how memory operates ideologically to ensure the reproduction of the mode of production, it is necessary to recognise the requirement of an enormous amount of unpaid social reproduction labour.

The following text begins by examining Lise Vogel's (2013) and Tithi Bhattacharya's (2017) definitions of social reproduction, labour, and their connections with memory. Bhattacharya argues that human labour is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a whole and, despite capitalism acknowledging productive labour for the market as the sole form of legitimate "work", the daily and generational reproductive labour sustains the drive for accumulation. This is the labour dispensed to produce people as part of the systemic totality of capitalism, often in (but not restricted to) a "kin-based" configuration called "family." Moreover, Vogel links social reproduction to the

class struggle for production conditions, representing the central dynamic of social development in societies characterised by exploitation. Vogel adopts a materialist perspective and determines, as fundamental to Marx, how surplus labour is appropriated by a ruling class, and an essential condition for production is the existence and constant renewal of a subordinate class. However, she recognises the limitations of this analysis because it ignores the social process of production, which is at the same time a process of reproduction: Social reproduction requires that there is always a supply of labour-power to set the labour process in motion, so labour-power must be maintained and replaced. Vogel, therefore, defines social reproduction work as work that satisfies the continuing needs of the bearers of labour power. This introduces the question of gender since generational replacement of labour force bearers implies biological reproduction. Whilst Vogel acknowledges that generational replacement is central to the labour force reproduction that society requires, a severe labour force shortage caused by war would tend to exaggerate the contradictory pressures on women workers by emphasising the role of the family as the locus of generational reproduction.

To examine how this work of social reproduction and generational replacement is intrinsically linked to the work of memory, Alva Gotby (2023) provides analyses which expand on the above theories. She explains how the family remains the "proper" place of intense feelings and the most important source of emotional well-being, where we primarily create our sense of authentic subjectivity. She relates this to the fact that capitalism depends on emotional reproduction and thereby defines emotional labour as interactive labour that produces emotional effects on another person and includes the establishment and reproduction of emotional bonds. Thus, in the acts of expressing, suppressing, and shaping feelings that must be constantly repeated and managed, there are forms of subjectivity under capitalism that are fundamentally linked to hierarchy. Gotby demonstrates how affective individualism is linked to capitalist-colonial systems of power and gendered forms of labour and how emotional reproduction function as an organising principle of care. In this context, she explains that, through ongoing care practices, care often involves many different tasks. Thus, part of the work of emotional reproduction consists of producing an ideological inversion and recreating an attachment to the world as we know it. This is why Gotby recognises that emotions in general, and the work of care and developing affection, are fundamental to shaping ideology. Therefore, ideology would not endure without feelings, and emotional reproduction diminishes discontent with the dominant order, creating the belief that we can and should have satisfying emotional lives under capitalism.

This function of emotional reproduction in mitigating discontent, is pertinent to the object of this text. The memory of the mass graves has been one of the

fundamental axes of the articulation of memorial discourse in contemporary Spain (Ferrándiz 2014); moreover, in addressing the subject of mass graves, we recognise several factors that elucidate the perfunctory allusions of Almodovar's film. Challenging the hegemonic image reproduced by agents such as Almodovar, this article is based on ethnographic research conducted in Spain from 2018 to 2023, including samples obtained throughout the country, by interviewing more than one hundred activists and relatives of people murdered during the war, and other relevant actors in the field of memory policies from historians to policymakers. This ethnographic work has been subjected to a literature review, connecting the concept of trauma transmission as part of family memory and the function of this individualist family-oriented analysis as the foundation of the last decades' memory culture to the idea of social reproduction. It aims to apply these critiques of the materialist tradition regarding the work of social reproduction to the practices and politics of memory, taking as a case study the memory of the coup, the war and the dictatorship in contemporary Spain, with a particular focus on the memory of mass graves.

The article combines theory and ethnography, imbricated in each section, connecting aspects of social reproduction theory with experiences documented during the fieldwork and referencing them to the literature review. Consequently, the subject of the first section is how the memory of the mass graves essentially began to be passed on by women, who thereby imparted a story of domination to the generations to come, epitomised by a political conflict marked by class antagonism that led to violence in the 1930s. This coup resulted in the extermination of thousands of militants and people who were represented a threat to the new National Catholic and fascist regime. The reproduction of life involved domestic labour, but also emotional work marked by trauma and fear. The second section will address how that same work of social reproduction enabled the women who had suffered the loss and following generations, to begin to subvert the narrative of trauma and the structure that sustains it. These challenges were materially reflected in tributes and monuments around the mass graves and primarily socially translated into anti-fascist politics, and later into institutional politics following Franco's death. In a third and final section, we observe, however, especially in the last two decades, that when NGOs began to demand that the state take charge of exhumations, there was an outsourcing of elements of the work of exhumation, This, thereby, externalised some of the work of social reproduction, and generated a dependence on the state and an introduction into the field of a series of discourses, which have attempted to annul the emancipatory potential of memory by returning it to its dimension of emotional labour. The latter guarantees the subjectivity which subjugates workers

to continue their labour compliantly and to produce the next worker within the framework of the liberal democratic consensus. Finally, the text will identify the limits of this method of understanding traumatic memory by considering that the mourning which results from losses due to violence deriving from political, economic and social conflict, cannot be healed at the individual level without resolving the oppression that persist to the present day. Therefore, to understand the ideological character of the politics of memory in contemporary Spain, which focus on the individual recovery of the skeletal remains of a grandfather as a formula for "healing" memory, it is evident that this way of conceptualising the past does not resolve the problem from which the violence emanated but, on the contrary, ensures the reproduction of the mode of production as the site of continued violent expropriation, extraction and exploitation. The work of social reproduction, of which memory is a part, thus becomes a site of struggle where the rebellion can also happen (Ferguson 2020).

## 2 Reproducing life in the aftermath of war

According to Gerald Brenan, the situation of the Kingdom of Spain before the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic, was that of an underdeveloped and traditional economy with a clearly defined class division. Certain elites controlled the economy and the government, whilst the peasants and workers were excluded from economic and political decisions (Brenan 2014). However, the deeply ingrained system of exploitation, oppression and injustice under the military and corporate government, protected by the monarchy, provoked a growing organisation of the working classes at the political and trade union level, generating an antagonism that was difficult for the regime to sustain. Finally, in 1931, multi-party elections were held to curb the discontent. Confronted with the massive victory of republican parties in the municipalities, King Alfonso XIII fled the country. The government collapsed, and the Spanish Republic was proclaimed. This opened up new political possibilities and led to strained debates between reformist and revolutionary perspectives. A new constitution enshrined the state and established it as a liberal democracy, proclaiming its secularism, universal suffrage and the division of state powers. Integral to a reformist agenda, land reform was planned, minimum wage and holiday pay, the possibility of self-government within the republic for autonomous regions, schools were built, and literacy and cultural democratisation campaigns were launched. Nevertheless, social conflicts persisted, and injustice and inequality were conjoined with the prospect of generating and articulating political and trade union demands. The reversal of specific reforms during the centre-right government led to a workers'

revolution in 1934, which was harshly repressed by the Republic. In 1936, the Popular Front government reopened the reformist agenda. This time, the response to the workers' demands was a coup d'état, which failed and led to war in 1936, repression and the creation of a new national catholic State of Spain (Casanova 2010; Sesma 2024).

The triumph of the fascist forces instigated a regression in the economy and in the rights of the population, not only restoring the situation which existed prior to the republican reforms, but also aggravating further the conditions of precariousness, exploitation and the accumulation of capital in the hands of the bourgeois, landowning, Catholic and military elites. Simultaneously, memory policies were orchestrated to generate memory practices based on a mythologised image of Spain and to construct the regime's legitimising narrative around the figure of the Fallen for God and Spain, so that all repression and authoritarianism were justified in the face of the "red barbarism" prior to the coup: from exhumations to parades, from monuments to celebrations (Box 2010; Saqqa 2024). This indicated, not only an accumulation of economic capital but also, according to Gal Kirn's theories, an accumulation of memory capital (Kirn 2022). The dictatorship instituted a system of coercion, violence and exclusion against the defeated population (Aróstegui 2012); in effect, the terror imposed by the dictatorship was part of a conscious strategy that had scientific backing. The psychiatrist and commander Antonio Vallejo Nágera, head of the Military Psychiatric Services from August 1938, and director of the Psychological Research Office, promoted "research into the biopsychic roots of Marxism". His influence was decisive in creating hostile attitudes towards the losers due to the promulgation amongst militants and civilian institutions of the "degenerative and inferior psychosocial nature of the adversary" (Ruiz-Vargas 2006: 24).

These policies affected not only those who were directly murdered but also the survivors who were again exposed to the policies of exploitation, with even less protection by the state, which guaranteed the power of the elites. The people who had been politically active during the years before the dictatorship suffered institutionalised and systematic repression, which also demonised the alternative models of femininity which had emerged during the Republic (González 2017). At the same time, the surviving women were left in charge of maintaining the families, and in a context of an absence of male labour, as Vogel argued, the paid and unpaid work of social reproduction, raising and maintaining existing workers and the next generation was further reinforced. This can be inferred by the regime's concern with encouraging the birth rate, controlling women's pregnancy and childbirth (García 2014) and women's role as "housewives" in domestic work, to comply with an ideal of passivity, service, and hard labour

(Roca 2005). These activities are fundamental to the development of the economy in that women not only work as salaried workers, but also reproduce the life of the male worker in the home and of the workers of the next generation they have given birth to. This situation is exemplified in the story of Enesida García Suárez, whose parents were murdered in Tiraña, in the Nalón mining basin, in the context of the repression of the workers' movement in what was known as "Little Russia". In her memoirs, she stated, "When they were crowing 'the war is over, the war is over', I thought so too, because we were fed up with calamities and privations; in a word, starving; it turns out that the war, or something worse than the war, was about to begin" (García 2018: 12). Her life was impacted by this deepening accumulation of capital and class exploitation after the war. She and her family suffered periodic fines from October 1937 onwards and deprivation of liberty on several occasions. She experienced the theft and confiscation of her property and the harassment, arrest and torture of her elder sister until her suicide in September 1942. Enesida was unable to organise funeral rites for any of the deceased relatives. In the following years, her siblings dispersed, and two of her uncles fled to the mountains until one of them was killed and the other imprisoned. In these conditions of dispossession and social death, she could barely reproduce her own life and had to work as a maid, selling her labour to reproduce others' lives. Yerba Segura Suárez considers her life to be "one more" of the many who lived after the war (Segura 2018: 79).

According to Gotby's thesis, it is critical to observe how the family and the environment of the work of social reproduction which it represents are fundamental to creating subjectivities in this context: a subjectivity that, if, on the one hand, was constructed through the image of the ideal woman for the dictatorship (Osborne 2017). In studies of the construction of the narrative and the psychological conditions derived from violence, exploitation and dictatorship, the idea emerged recurrently amongst the repressed population that to achieve prosperity, silence about the past was vital: this involved forgetting everything related to the republic, and the social struggles of the time. In these terms, the silence of the defeated entailed a series of conditions, such as the desire to protect their children and the danger to their survival, as represented by the policies implemented by the victors. It was a time of silence, fear and mourning. Black was the most worn colour because almost everyone had a family member who had died in the war or the post-war period (Ruiz 2005). Also, the silence maintained by the defeated after the war is significant, and it is recorded that the descendants were the "bearers of these silences" (Marín and Jiménez 2011: 408).

Anna Miñarro and Teresa Morandi have studied extensively in the field of psychoanalysis and mental health on the effects of the war of 1936, the

post-war period and the dictatorship, demonstrating how violence has been transmitted through different generations, determining their lives and shaping their subjectivity with the "trauma" (Miñarro and Morandi 2014). However, these theories cannot be separated from the material reality. Thus, if the family remains the "proper" place of intense feelings, where we create our sense of authentic subjectivity, and if capitalism depends on emotional reproduction, the latter being associated with the generational transmission of trauma, then this reinforces, constitutes and reproduces emotional bonds that guarantee the reproduction of capital. It is, therefore, no coincidence that women who survived the war and dictatorship often instructed their children "not to talk about the past" and "not to get involved in politics." At the same time, in acts of expressing the violence suffered or of suppressing it from the narrative in a traumatic way, it is a phenomenon which is constantly repeated and managed, reinforcing the hierarchy and domination that guarantees exploitation by the holders of the means of production. Consequently, emotional reproduction is the organising principle of care in this memory transmission. In the interest of capital and the dictatorship, care and memory would have been a fundamental component of the articulation of a perception of the past that would guarantee the condition of the docile worker in the present and, with it, the reproduction of the imposed mode of production to the working classes.

In this regard, traumatic memory had a clear function for the regime, the landlords and the bourgeoisie: "Amid all this atmosphere of torture and misfortune, they were the bearers of a fear and silence that enveloped their families in all the situations they experienced, and that gave rise to the formation of ideological guidelines, which were the ones that Franco wanted to spread among the families" (Ruiz 2008: 490). Therefore, it is essential to recall Gotby's explanation that part of the work of emotional reproduction is to produce ideological investment. She asserts that ideology depends on emotional investment, as it is not merely a mental belief but a way of relating to the world. For her, it is crucial that ideology does not function without feelings, and it is through emotional reproduction that we come to invest emotionally in the legitimate objects and the proper futures for capital. "Through the privatisation of emotional reproduction, negative feelings become individualised. Emotional reproduction serves to smooth over malcontent with the dominant order, creating a belief that we can and should have satisfying emotional lives under capitalism" (Gotby 2023: 9). We should, therefore, perceive that "trauma" is the correct sentiment for the reproduction of the future of capitalism in post-war Spain. As, in the meantime, is the creation of subjectivity amongst the families: "For the bosses and bourgeoisie, it was a time of prosperity in all respects; all their possessions and interests were restored to them,

they occupied many posts that had been left vacant after the purge to which the republican civil servants had been subjected, and they regained the social and economic power they had always wielded" (Ruiz 2008: 609). Therefore, whilst psychologists have argued that these traumas and psychosocial consequences have been passed down from generation to generation, this also applies to the fortunes and capital amassed during the dictatorship, which have been passed down from generation to generation (Maestre 2019). It could, therefore, be argued that emotional labour connected with trauma and the reproduction of capital cannot be dissociated.

## 3 From the transmission of trauma to political resistance

In the post-war period, in a society subjugated by the fascist Spanish State, the economic elites, and the church, there was thus an economic base composed of a mode of production based on corporatism and the super-structure that stabilised it: a combination of family trauma and National-Catholic ideology. Terror may have played a determining role in learning the "rules" of good behaviour, as attributed to the violent state apparatuses by Louis Althusser (2008). This would have generated attitudes which determined the subject groups' specific position to which they are "destined" within the division of labour, assuming rules of morality, and civic and professional conscience. According to Althusser's theory, this construction of a synthesis of subjectivity based on trauma concurrent with the exercise of violent repression, would function to inculcate the rules of respect for the division of labour and, ultimately, for the rules of order established by class domination.

In this regard, it is crucial to recognise the role of memory in this kind of social reproduction work, and to acknowledge that capitalism requires unpaid reproductive labour to contain the cost of the labour force. In this context, it is divided, on the one hand, into emotional labour based on the intergenerational transmission of trauma and, on the other, into the production labour of the next docile worker. All of this is organised around the family, where the trauma is transmitted to the next generation and simultaneously, the upbringing and care are provided to prepare them to enter the productive system. However, Silvia Federici observes that the emphasis on the dictatorship and the management of traumatic memory in the family derives from this kind of unpaid work. A materialist theory of memory requires the subordination of the memory beyond the emotional to the relations of production. Federici also recognises that this is a terrain of struggle, which precisely relates to women's experiences of the Chilean and Argentinean dictatorships (Federici 2019: 89). As Althusser posited, within this stabilisation there is a dialectical relationship, and whilst the ideological

apparatuses (which include the family) complement the repressive apparatuses to generate the subjectivities necessary to guarantee the reproduction of the mode of production, these are sites where a challenge to the established order can occur (Althusser 2014).

In this regard, there are several instances in which there is a break with the intergenerational transmission of trauma, which converts emotional labour from an activity of reproduction into a resistance or subversion of the hegemonic ideology. Focusing attention on the mass graves where those killed in the systematic elimination of both reformist and revolutionary agents opposed to the Catholic national order had been buried, different types of initiatives demonstrate the break with this subjectivity. There are accounts of shepherds or agricultural workers, who witnessed the assassinations and who informally communicated the location to relatives and other members of the local community. Consequently, these places were marked and signposted during the post-war period and in the years that followed, mainly by relatives of the murdered people. Stones were placed or cross marks were made in places such as Villamayor de los Montes in Burgos, Guillena in Seville, Morata de Jalón in Zaragoza, Tiedra in Valladolid, Cobertelada in Soria, the ravine of Víznar in Granada, Castillejo de Martín Viejo in Salamanca, Bercial de Zapardiel in Ávila, and Alcaraz in Albacete (Palacios 2024: 23–29). Manuel Ramírez Gimeno stated in an interview: "The stone was an agreement between the families at the beginning when they had to keep silent and could not show themselves much, to mark the site so that it would not be lost. [...]. So, the families decided that a carved stone should be placed there". [1] Other actions would include clandestine exhumations of buried remains, such as those that transpired in Urzante in Navarra (Ferrándiz 2014: 158–162) or Puerto Serrano in Cadiz (Pérez Guirao 2024: 3–6), where relatives were clandestinely caring for the remains of the murdered people.

In other cases, the actions in defiance of this subjectivity and the spatial construction of an alternative account of the dead were accomplished in sites such as La Barranca, on the outskirts of Logroño in La Rioja, where hundreds of bodies had been buried during the repression of the coup (Aguirre 2008: 25). Women dressed in black began to gather there from 1937 onwards, wives, daughters and mothers of the murdered, carrying flowers and food to spend the day there on All Saints' Day. Despite the repression and harassment by the forces of the state and the local population, they returned the following year (Asociación para la Preservación de la Memoria Histórica de La Rioja 2011). In Monte de Estépar where the murdered from the Burgos prison were buried, the

1. Manuel Ramírez Gimeno. Interview on 5 October 2019 in Albacete.

military police installed the nearest train stop to prevent women from accessing the burial area, given the challenge they presented to the imposed traumatic subjectivity. This would lead them to find other routes, as was testified by local shepherds (Albo 2015: 86). A similar situation occurred in Ocaña, in Toledo, where, threatened with similar harassment, families like theirs had to go to the graves of Roma families, which were the closest to the mass graves. These families took them in, and camouflaged them to disguise the fact that they were mourning for those murdered and buried in the mass graves (Palacios 2024: 42).

On other occasions, and despite the harassment, publicly recognisable marks were installed, which, to some extent, posed a challenge to the imposed order. However, during the dictatorship, the most outstanding initiatives to convert the graves into a kind of burial ground took place in the Paterna Cemetery, where several thousand people murdered in the post-war period had been buried. It was here, from 1941, that the wives, daughters and sisters of the murdered from all over the province of Valencia would come, especially on All Saints' Day, when their presence was consented to under the surveillance of the Guardia Civil and the Police. Gradually, the graves were covered with crosses, plaques and memorials to the murdered people, as well as ceramics with their names on them, following local traditional practices (Gabarda 2020). These acts also took place on the mass graves of the Castellón Cemetery (Ródenas 2016). The interventions on the mass grave in the Cemetery of San Salvador in Oviedo also followed this pattern. At the end of the 1960s, a large stone wall was built to demarcate the grave. This initiative was achieved openly, not covertly, through a collection and by popular subscription to defray the costs of the work, only a few years after the great workers' strikes in the coalfields (Asociación de Viudas de Guerra de la República 1984).

These acts changed the character of mourning, rejecting the terror function of mass graves, which continued to maintain social reproduction, subverted that function to create an honourable place in which to care for the dead and generate a new subjectivity. This was initially ephemeral, stones, flowers, marks, which gradually became permanent, as in Paterna or Oviedo. Following the death of the dictator, Francisco Franco, and with the legalisation of certain parties and trade unions in the 1970s, hundreds of new actions, much more political, took place. Sculptures, gardens, monuments of all kinds: menhirs, plaques, pantheons with the exhumed bodies or over the mass graves themselves, were now built, in a singular alliance. This brought together the surviving families of those who were murdered four decades earlier and the new militants of socialist, communist, anarchist as well as Basque, Galician and Catalan nationalist parties and trade unions. Whilst these alliances were not free of tensions, they did reveal situations in which the

militants themselves were descendants of the murdered people and therefore this action of creating a cultural memory of the territory, united generational transmission of memory and historical conscience. The terror landscape was transformed into a place where relatives mourn, but also for political speeches and the singing of workers' anthems in yearly remembrance services (Palacios 2024: 47–82). Actions of memory around the graves and with the bodies of the murdered are precisely implicated in the work of care associated with femininity (de Kerangat 2023), but, in this context, are converted to political acts.

The foregoing cases, demonstrate that not only the mass graves, but also the emotional work of the generational transmission of memory and other spheres of the work of social reproduction are the sites of resistance and memory, even if they are not necessarily linked to graves. In effect, these "subtle resistances" linked to the care of the dead (de Kerangat and Chiappe 2019) are part of a broader spectrum of opposition (Arced 2013). Other acts of open defiance were also grounded in the family environment; a perfect example was the Democratic Women's Movement, linked to the Communist Party, which became one of the largest anti-fascist and feminist organisations during the Dictatorship. Although it initially emerged as an association to support political prisoners, a fundamental task of social reproduction with regard to the penitentiary system, its members played a decisive role in creating awareness amongst working women (Arriero 2018). Similarly, women provided crucial support, by subverting their reproductive labour to sustain the antifascist guerrillas after the end of the war (Marco 2016). It is essential to recognise that, in these cases, social reproduction labour is no longer in the emotional and subjective realm, but is producing, not the next docile worker, but the next militant. Therefore, many family members became affiliated to political parties and trade unions that were reorganised during the 1960s and legalised in the 1970s, thereby redefining the transmission of the memory of the previous generations.

## 4 The elite capture of memory

In contrast to this way of understanding memory, which was sustained in an eminently politicised way by the monuments around the mass graves and the different political actions that linked the struggles of the present to those of the past, "trauma" and "silence" maintained their presence in the lives of most of society up to the end of the 20th century. However, the situation would change once again in the year 2000, when a mass grave was exhumed in Priaranza del Bierzo, precipitating a new cycle of memory practices with particular characteristics. The reappearance of a "traumatic past" (Yusta 2014) and of the "ghosts of the civil

war" (Ferrándiz 2006) was symptomatic of the central focus on the exhumation of remains in these new actions on mass graves (Renshaw 2016). The exhumations were underpinned by the rhetoric of human rights: the search for "victims," understood as subjects of "forced disappearances" referring to frameworks of transitional and humanitarian justice, actions marked by the "forensic turn," which, (even though on occasions they allowed for the politicisation of the processes), were characterised by a profound depoliticisation of the conflict. Thereby, the memory of the revolutionary or reformist past, of the anti-fascist struggle and the workers resistance to the dictatorship, was reduced to the "traumatic" memory of the "victims". These actions, in dozens of places such as Paterna, Talavera de la Reina, Guadalajara, Sevilla, Dos Hermanas, Castelló, effectively led to the destruction of the monuments which had politically re-signified the graves, to focus on the recovery of skeletal remains, to individualise them, and hand them over individually to the families (Palacios 2022a). The ethnographic records of those first exhumation processes describe the fear and terror experienced by the surviving relatives who were present (Ferrándiz 2014), so that the generational transmission of the trauma re-emerged at the same time as the skeletal remains of the people murdered decades earlier. However, in this whole process, it is critical to reiterate the emphasis on the recovery of the remains in an individualised manner, enabled by forensic techniques. The recovery of remains demanded by relatives with direct biological links to the murdered persons (generations of children and grandchildren), in the absence of judicial prosecution of the crimes of the dictatorship, must be understood within the framework of the "recovery of dignity" and the "right to a fair burial" in an incongruous amalgamation of Christian Canon Law and Human Rights. Exhumations have often been referred to in the media and literature as a means of "closing wounds" in a familial and individualised way. Individual stories are presented in academia (Fouce 2008), journalism (Junquera 2013), mass media (RTVE 2019) and institutional politics (Junta de Andalucía 2021). Therefore, although memory was, for decades, connected with the republican and antifascist narrative, the leaders of the new field of memory imposed a new agenda based on victimhood—an elite capture as defined by Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò (2022).

The foregoing compels us to reconnect the memory of the coup, the war and the dictatorship to social reproduction labour at the emotional level. In this context, the analysis of this type of work by Tithi Bhattacharya is critical. She illustrates how the public (production) and private (reproduction) divisions articulate the "historical forms of appearance in which capitalism as a process posits itself" so that "the spatial separation between production (public) and reproduction (private) is a historical form of appearance, then the labour that is dispensed

in both spheres must also be theorised integratively" (2017: 8). This elucidates the criticism that the memory of mass graves should not be politicised, that it should remain familial, as propounded in public speeches by heterogeneous, but mainstream politicians, such as Santiago Carrillo, Carmen Calvo, or Albert Ribera (Palacios 2022b: 237). In fact, during my ethnographic research work, it was common to encounter boycotts from institutions when actions over the graves began to transcend the realm of the family and become politicised. Even though the mass grave can be seen as a public space, for the institutions, it should remain private (Palacios 2024).

The situation, therefore, has specific structural implications. On the one hand, the policy of memory since 2000 has been focused on ensuring that memory is not politicised, but that it continues to be circumscribed by social reproduction labour, marked by trauma, and that it must remain in the private sphere, separate from the public and productive sphere. This encompasses the powerful imperative to ensure the emotional reproduction of the subjective conditions within the family through which the relationship with the world continues to guarantee submission, non-participation in politics and fear. At the same time, this also implicates the public and state policies that have reinforced this situation, as this has been a conscious policy emanating from the state and its ideological agents. Through subsidy programmes for exhumations and memory laws that sustain memory as something private which corresponds to the families, it is the State that has promoted the creation of an appropriate framework for memory policies in Spain to be directed towards the recovery of skeletal remains as a means of restitution at the individual and family level, that is, that of social reproduction. In this sense, the State has encouraged and ideologically exploited the sentiments derived from this process. Thus, a discriminatory system of hierarchies has been created, which distinguishes who can be remembered and yearn for dignity and who retains honour (such as the Fallen for God and Spain, fascists and Catholics), perfectly reflecting different economic positions in the system. For this reason, private agents independent of the state (families, memory associations, museums, artists, journalists) often functioned to reproduce and discipline in line with hegemonic interests, subconsciously exemplifying Althusser's framework of interpretation of ideological state apparatuses (2008). Accordingly, whilst the state organises official memory using a wide range of methods of remembrance, which includes the function of emotional labour of social reproduction in the reproduction and transmission of trauma as fundamental, the subordinate classes are thus relegated to aspire to dignity, desirous of the status of "victim", and to participate in a structure of dispossession, extraction and exploitation that survives owing to the repression exercised exactly at the time of these traumatic conditions.

In this context, whilst the liberal memory politics of the last two decades emerge in the guise of "politics of resentment", of collectives aspiring for "dignity" in Francis Fukuyama's terms (2018), Wendy Brown offers an analysis of the politics of the feminist struggle which could be applied in the field of memory. The configuration of conflations that constrain emancipatory desire and reinforce the liberal state so that in memory, as in feminism, the concept of wounding and victimhood have become central elements of political identity, generating rights-based discourses and legitimising the role of the state in the protection of individuals, promoting the dependence and powerlessness of subjects who have inherited a past of revolutionary struggle (Brown 1995). However, it becomes evident that, not only is the work of social reproduction, that is, the management of trauma, conceived as a need that the state is asked to take care of, but also that, by taking charge of its mediation and promotion, the state has imposed its own agenda. Silvia Federici expressed this fear of seeing her demands for wages for domestic work being manipulated by a capitalist state, as the aim of the campaign was not for states to take charge and become dependent on it, but to denounce the fact that this was real work, which was not being paid, and to advance the prospect of the socialisation of reproductive labour (2019).

Acknowledging that these forms of post-traumatic memory described as part of the work of social reproduction should not lead necessarily to demanding that the state perform this function. This point has been demonstrated in Spain during the last two decades, when the state assumed responsibility for the management of trauma. It promoted a politics of victimhood, reinforcing trauma within the structure of the family, and deactivating and rendering invisible revolutionary and anti-fascist memories. The critical issue is the ideological character and structural functions of this work, understanding it as a contested place. Hannah Proctor provides a pertinent analysis with regard to the emotional experiences of political defeat. She recognises that invoking past violence does not resolve present conditions, since the violence of the past is sustained in the oppression of the present. Proctor, therefore, contrasts the politics of victimhood with militant mourning since "The dead will be safe from the enemy only when it is defeated. And justice cannot be achieved through existing laws, systems or institutions but only through their abolition, through the demonstration of their foundational injustice" (Proctor 2024: 202).

## 5 Conclusion

In terms of relating the idea of remembrance to social reproduction labour, the history of the mass graves of the Spanish war and dictatorship presents a tangible case for the recognition that memory is an integral element of care and emotional labour, and that it functioned, in part, as a disciplinary tool for reproducing life, the workforce, and the docile worker. However, this also made it a contested field, where the possibility of consciousness-raising is confronted by the state and its apparatuses, whose interests lay in reproducing the post fascist capitalist mode of production. This includes recurring attempts by the state to monopolise the meaning of this kind of work, reinforcing the transmission of trauma and nostalgia as a function of the reproduction of the mode of production.

The foregoing has established that we are addressing a political conflict marked by class antagonism, which led to violence in the 1930s, and caused the extermination of thousands of militants and people who represented a threat to the new National Catholic and fascist regime. The memory of the mass graves was essentially transmitted by women, who, in turn, passed on a story of domination, marked by trauma and fear, to the generations to come emotional reproduction created ideological investment in the appropriate objects and futures that were compatible and legitimate for capital. This maintenance of emotional reproduction within the family sphere functions to assuage the discontent with the dominant order. In this context, trauma was the appropriate emotion for the reproduction of the future of capitalism in post-war Spain. Concomitantly, the creation of subjectivity within the families was a time of overall prosperity for landlords and the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the intergenerational transmission of trauma relates to the intergenerational transmission of the fortunes and capital accumulated during the dictatorship. In conclusion, emotional labour connected with trauma, and the reproduction of capital cannot be dissociated.

However, this led us to examine the implication that this same work of social reproduction created the potential for the women to realise subversive actions counter to the narrative of trauma and the structure that upholds it. These challenges were materially manifested in tributes and monuments around the graves. Acts of memory focused on the graves and the bodies of the murdered are inevitably connected with the work of care associated with femininity; in this context, they became political acts. Moreover, there was resistance to social reproduction labour, not only in emotional terms, but which, instead of producing the next docile worker, produced the next militant. As related above, this is exemplified by the fact that many family members were members of political parties and trade unions, which were reorganised during the 1960s and legalised in the 1970s.

Finally, it was established that, when NGOs began to demand that the state take charge of exhumations, there was an outsourcing of part of the work of exhumation, an externalisation of part of the work of social reproduction, which generated a dependence on the state and an introduction into the field of a series of discourses. These discourses have functioned to annul the emancipatory potential of memory by returning it to its dimension of emotional labour, which guarantees the individualism that compels subjects to continue to work docilely and to produce the next worker within the framework of the liberal democratic consensus. Memory, again, is confined to the family, the individual, and the generational transmission of trauma through memory policies based on the idea of "dignity", "victimhood", and dependence on state aid.

In conclusion, it is crucial to recognise that memory forms part of the social reproduction labour, but that this should not lead to necessarily demanding that the state carry out this work. This text purports to elucidate the ideological character and structural functions of this social reproduction of memory, conceptualising it as a contested space. In this regard, an analysis of the emotional experiences of political defeat reveals that the rhetoric of closing wounds through individualised trauma therapy, conceals the structural implications of that trauma. Nostalgia and mourning result from losses due to violence derived from political, economic and social conflict which implied dispossession, extraction, exploitation, and repression, if not murder. They cannot be healed individually without resolving the oppressions that continue in the present. Therefore, a profound understanding of the ideological character of the politics of memory in contemporary Spain, which isfocused on the individual recovery of the skeletal remains of a grandfather as a formula for "healing" memory, demands a coherent approach. This would involve recognising that an individualist analysis does not resolve the problem from which the violence emanated. On the contrary, it ensures the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, the work of social reproduction, of which memory is an integral part, becomes a site of struggle between the hegemony of state domination of memory politics and those who strive to expose the ideological nature of memory, which presents mass graves as neutral or apolitical tragedies, rather than the result of fascist crimes and a deliberate strategy of class and political repression. The resistance of victims' families, aligned with militants, consists in reclaiming the memory of their anti-fascist agency and its intergenerational transmission.

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