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SPAIN'S 'HUNGER YEARS'

A lack of musealisation of a traumatic past

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For decades, Spain has struggled to come to terms with its dictatorial past. In the twentieth century, this Southern European country was ruled by two authoritarian regimes (Miguel Primo de Rivera, 1923–30 and the long-standing dictatorship of Francisco Franco, 1939–75) and suffered a brutal, internecine Civil War (1936–39). These authoritarian regimes suffocated the burgeoning democratic social movements and political parties that were borne out during the First World War and flourished during Spain's Second Republic (1931–39). Ignited by the Nationalists' coup d'état in July 1936, the Civil War left around half a million dead and cumulated in the brutal dictatorship of General Franco that would last almost four decades. After the dictator's death in November 1975, Spain began its precarious transition to democracy, which was ratified by the 1978 constitution and the first democratically elected government since 1936, most prominently the left's resounding electoral victory in 1982. Spanish society, however, would have to wait until almost three decades after Franco's death for activism and policies on public memory to gain momentum.

Memory capacity is limited not only by neural and cultural constraints, but also by the psychological pressures of the historical context in which one lives or regimes of power. This makes for an intense relationship between 'active' and 'passive' forgetting, as described by Aleida Assmann.[1] In Spain, the Franco dictatorship was instrumental in trying to foster active forgetting of the country's tumultuous past through censorship, myth-making, or even violence. A 'social forgetting' took place that reflected the tensions between the public silence imposed by the dictatorship on the one hand and the private memory that remained hidden and stored until it came to light in democracy on the other.[2] Until well into the twenty-first century, democratic

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institutions did not promote active remembrance of what happened; thus, until the historical memory movement began to gain ground in 2000, the most bloody, brutal elements of the Civil War and Francoist dictatorship were not fostered by the public memory of the democratic Government: murders, court martials, property seizures, purges, and torture. It was also the case of Spain's post-Civil War famines (1939–42 and 1946) and 'hunger years' (1939–52), a period characterised by food shortages, mass starvation, rampant disease, and malnutrition. If efforts to commemorate and musealise the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship were meagre and sparse, collective memory of the famine and shortages of the bleak post-Civil War years were even more elusive, obfuscated, and obscure. Accordingly, this chapter aims to explain the dearth of commemorations, monuments, places of memory, and museums about Spain's hunger years from a historical perspective. It will also consider some examples that show progressive efforts to acknowledge, explain, and promulgate this period in Spanish history.

To this end, it is necessary to contextualise our discussion with consideration for the influences on Spain's collective consciousness, particularly following the inception of the dictatorship in 1939. The first section of the chapter centres on these ideas, detailing the myths propagated about the famine and hunger years by the Francoist state, which is critical to understanding the public silence regarding the official memory of the regime. We also outline public policy cultivated during the Transition to democracy (1975–82), detailing how the 'pact of forgetting' (or 'pact of silence') shaped public debate about the past and the lack of justice for crimes committed during the Civil War and dictatorship. In the second section, we discuss the genesis of Spain's historical memory movement, the so-called 'memory wars', the country's recent memory laws (2007 and 2022), and the burgeoning historiography about the Spanish famine. We will illustrate how, in all elements of this public debate, the famine and post-Civil War hunger were all but absent. Finally, we shift focus to developments and progress regarding Spain's memory of hunger: firstly, in reference to the identification and analysis of individual and intergenerational memories; and then through the limited efforts to musealise this period. We conclude with a consideration for recent commemorative practices about Spain's famine and hunger years, which, to our mind, represent the beginning of a public memory about the famine that has been lacking up until now.

Memory politics in Spain (1939–2000)

After General Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces declared victory on 1 April 1939, the Franco regime proclaimed 1939 as the 'year of victory'. Such a commemoration underscores the propagandistic, antagonistic approach the state cultivated during its reign, particularly during its first decade in power. In accordance with this 'culture of victory', the Civil War was characterised

as a 'Crusade' for a 'true Spain' (identified with tradition, Catholicism, and Castile) that defeated the 'anti-Spain' (represented by the Republic, liberalism, and Marxism).[3] However, as triumphant processions lined the streets of Spanish cities, the most brutal years of the Spanish famine (1939–42) took hold. During this period, more than 200,000 people died due to food shortages or illnesses related to malnutrition. While the impact of the Civil War should be taken into account, historians have revealed that this period is better understood as a 'man-made' famine, caused by the autarkic interventionist model adopted by the regime.[4]

The regime's victory propaganda entirely silenced the existence of the famines that occurred, both in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War and in 1946. The causes of the post-War years known as the hunger years (1939–52) were also distorted, when the living standards of Spaniards plummeted and the economy stagnated. Public memory about the Francoist regime focused on eulogising the Nationalists' victory and commemorating the 'heroes' and 'fallen martyrs' who died 'for God and Spain', leaving Republican experiences forgotten, many of whom were incarcerated in prisons and concentration camps, murdered and buried in the mass graves throughout the country.[5]

Francoism also utilised its propaganda to obfuscate, occlude, and misrepresent the famine and hunger years. The famine was completely erased: according to official state discourses, it had not occurred. Deaths from starvation and the exponential growth in deaths from diseases such as tuberculosis, typhus, and diphtheria did not appear in the press, nor in speeches by Francoist officials. The brutal post-Civil War years were deemed an innate consequence of three factors that, according to Francoist rhetoric, were beyond the state's control: a persistent drought ('*pertinaz sequía*') that impeded food supply throughout the 1940s; the fallout from the Civil War; and consequences of international isolation.

Rather than acknowledging the hardships faced by Spaniards, the state capitalised on romanticised conceptualisations of food to defend its autarkic, isolationist policies. Propagandistic newsreels (*Noticiario y Documentales Cinematográficos*, commonly referred to as NO-DO)—disseminated from 1943 to 1975 and screened in Spanish cinemas—promoted local foodstuffs. One example is 'La naranja y su riqueza' ('Oranges and their Richness', 1951), which promotes the health and financial benefits of trading oranges, with no reference to the famine or malnutrition faced by Spaniards.[6] In another NO-DO entitled 'Arroz y paella' ('Rice and Paella', 1955), 'the grain—loaded with symbolic meaning that can be harnessed by the regime—positions Spain as an important rice-producing nation thanks to state intervention and autarkic policies'[7] (Image 9.1).

Erasure and manipulation of this hunger past resulted in Francoist mythology about the famine infiltrating into the collective imagination. Many Spaniards held the view that mass hunger was an organic consequence

(a)

(b)

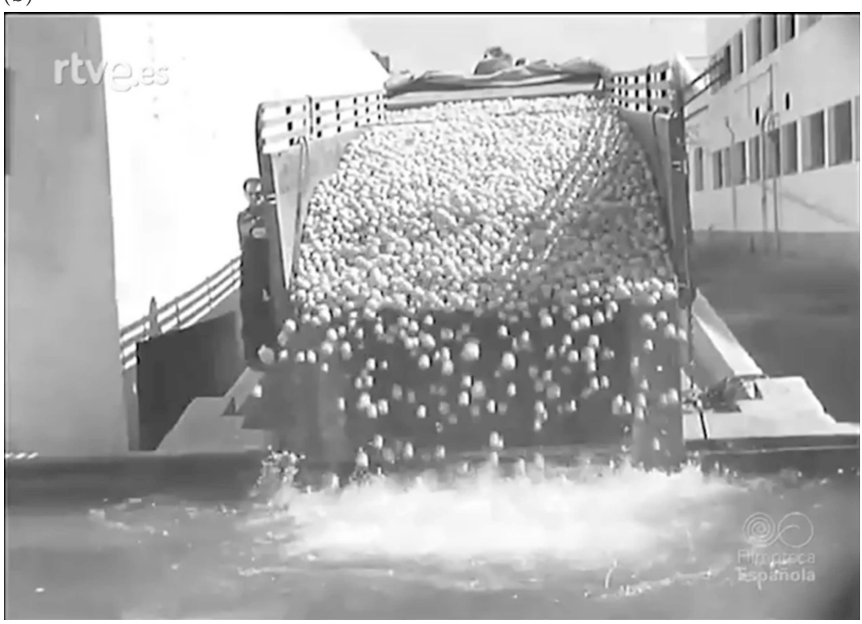

IMAGE 9.1 a and b. Francoist romantic conceptualisation of food: 'La naranja y su riqueza' documentary ('Oranges and their Richness'). Imágenes, Revista Cinematográfica. La Naranja y su Riqueza. No-Do, 1 January 1951, number 340.

of war and, when the situation improved in the 1950s, considered any improvement in their standard of living as evidence of the regime's success.[8] The fact that Spain was then a mainly agrarian country with poor communications and that the famine developed especially in the south of the country, far from Madrid and other parts of the country, contributed to the 'invisibility' of the famine. The absence of a coherent narrative on shortages, rationing, and poverty during early Francoism speaks to a 'silenced', fragmented history that remained unspoken within the individual and family spheres and, as we shall see, would take decades to come to light.[9]

Throughout the regime, the dictatorship reinforced such mythology, particularly from 1959 when collective consciousness about the Civil War began to evolve. The conflict was no longer understood as a 'crusade' and began to be understood as a 'struggle between brothers' for which the Second Republic was responsible. The regime's legitimacy was no longer centred on the war but now rested on having brought 'peace' and economic growth to Spain; in reality, however, the '25 Years of Peace' celebrated in 1964 were utterly disingenuous, while economic developments resulted from input and pressures from the United States.[10] The cult of economic success occluded memory of the famine: in the latter years of the regime—*tardofranquismo* ('late Francoism')—the state took credit for improving the standard of living, when it had in fact been responsible for more than a decade of economic stagnation. The myth of 'Spain's economic miracle', in this sense, replaced the previous mythology surrounding the enigmatic hunger years.[11]

After Franco's death in November 1975, reconciliation—rather than justice or vengeance—was critical to the country's precarious transition to democracy (1975–82).[12] Driven by pro-democracy social movements, the so-called Transition was, somewhat ironically, orchestrated by Francoist elites, particularly those more in favour of reform, known as the '*aperturistas*' ['progressives'] and democratic opposition. This period was characterised by a 'pact of forgetting' ('*pacto del olvido*'): a cross-party agreement that advocated amnesty to ensure that a democratic system would be effectively implemented. Fearing a repetition of the bloody Civil War, the country looked to the future, 'leaving the thorniest aspects of the past behind'.[13] Scholarship on post-Francoist Spain frequently echoes this loaded political discourse, referencing victims' 'forgotten' or 'silenced' histories, with some critiquing this terminology given that it obfuscates the covert ways that Spaniards shed light on this shrouded past.[14]

The 1977 Amnesty Law was central to this complex process of transitioning to a democratic state, which provided amnesty for crimes committed during the Civil War and dictatorship. Political prisoners were freed and tacit 'gag rules' impeded legal and political critique of Spain's dictatorial past, as the core principles of this law encapsulated the political mood of the period: moving forward, towards a fresh start that leaves the past behind.[15] For

some, this meant that the most traumatic elements of the past were 'forgotten' for pragmatic purposes. For others, it signified a governmental silencing of the past, obfuscating any public memory about the war and dictatorship, which resulted in 'forgetting' the victims and silencing their stories.[16] A salient example of these tensions was the non-commemoration of the Civil War in 1986, as Felipe González's Socialist government upheld the state-sanctioned silence by declining to officially commemorate the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict.

At the same time, there was an institutional political, social, and legal pushback against the collective forgetting that shaped the post-Franco years. We know, for example, that some regions such as Extremadura, Navarra, and La Rioja exhumed the bodies of Republicans from mass graves on behalf of their families. Without equipment or support from the authorities, some decided to provide a dignified reburial to their loved ones who had been murdered by Francoist troops.[17] Academic interest in the Civil War and dictatorship was also whetted: to mark the 50th anniversary of the conflict in 1986—which was ignored by the Socialist government—dozens of conferences were organised, resulting in numerous publications, with an estimated 15,000 works produced.[18] The 'insatiable curiosity' of Spanish citizens was 'satisfied by a deluge of popular publications, television programs, and films', as cultural production proved a productive alternative to formal political debate.[19] While Spanish society utilised cultural output to recuperate collective memory about the past, neither the famine nor the post-Civil War hunger years were focalised.

Memory politics (2000–present)

The relationship between the state, Spanish society, and the country's violent past began to evolve in the twenty-first century, with the year 2000 marking a turning point. It was this year that forensic methods were first used to excavate a mass grave in Priaranza del Duero (León). Moreover, the Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory (ARHM) was founded, with the aim of unearthing the remains of the regime's victims. A social movement began to gain ground that advocated for the exhumation of murdered Republicans, providing dignity to the victims, and commemorating the past. Propelled mainly by Spain's third generation—known as the 'grandchildren's generation'—who argued that victims' rights, truth, and justice were central to Spanish democracy—this movement demanded retribution for the 'silenced' crimes of the dictatorship, which ranged from execution, torture, and extrajudicial imprisonment to the loss of livelihood, exile, and the forced adoption of babies.[20] In 2007, the first of two memory laws—the Historical Memory Law—was passed by the governing Socialist Party.

Spain is an example of the difficulties of dealing with harrowing pasts. As a society marked by trauma and violence, it has faced the challenge of building

a democratic collective memory through post-conflict memorialisation. The historical memory movement forced debates about the past into the open, initiating what has become known as the memory wars. The political left is in favour of implementing policies to confront the past, though tensions remain as to how and to what extent this should be realised. On the other hand, such measures have provoked backlash from the right. In 2002, the conservative People's Party government released a statement to mark 25 years of democracy in Spain, in which they reiterated that it was imperative to 'avoid in all cases the opening up of old wounds'.[21]

Conflict regarding historical memory reflects a society that remains divided by the Civil War and regime. The 'obituary wars' during this period exemplify this: relatives of Republicans published obituaries in honour of their deceased loved ones, outlining when they were killed, by whom ('the fascists') and why ('for defending democracy'); in the conservative press, the descendants of the victorious Nationalists did the same.[22] This competing memory phenomenon occurred regarding monuments dedicated to the fallen by the Francoist state: many town halls took measures to remove them from public spaces, facing resistance from citizens on the political right.[23] Spanish society needed to confront, engage with, and reflect on the past. When doing so, however, bloodshed, deaths, and disappearances took precedent.

Ongoing ideological conflicts have intensified with the introduction of the Democratic Memory Law, ratified in October 2022.[24] The far-right Vox and conservative People's Party voted against the bill, while the ARMH—still one of Spain's most-prominent grassroots organisations—criticised the measures as insufficient.[25] Tabled by the ruling Socialist-Podemos coalition and passed thanks to support from left-wing and nationalist parties, this new legislation furthers the ground broken by the 2007 Historical Memory Law, pledging to expedite the unearthing of mass graves, investigate historical human rights violations, provide reparations to those persecuted, wrongfully imprisoned and tortured, criminalise the exaltation of Francoist dictatorship, and remove all remaining pro-Francoist monuments from the country (discussed further in the next section). Spain's memory wars therefore not only exemplify competing memory cultures, whereby conflicting narratives co-exist and play out in contemporary political dialogue—in consonance with Michael Rothberg's conception of collective memory as 'the past made present'—but also speak to the ways in which nations 'legitimise their political claims and policies by referring to their pasts'.[26]

As evidenced by the foregoing, Spain's memory laws aim to foster understanding about the country's democratic history, 'preserve and maintain victims' memory of the war and Francoist dictatorship, through the pursuit and knowledge of truth'.[27] To this end, Spain's history was framed in relation to war, specifically in relation to the global conflicts that devastated Europe, as Spain's Civil War acted as an ideological precursor to the

international confrontation between fascism and democracy. In accordance with literature on contested memories and victimhood, the ideological factions of the Spanish conflict are understood within 'a global frame of reference'—considering themselves to be oppressed by Marxism or fascism in accordance with their political affiliation. Thus, Spain is part of the multi-directional memory of the traumatic European twentieth century.[28] There is, however, no reference to the devastating, politically motivated famines that occurred during these years, ravaging women and men throughout Spain. The law clearly outlined that 'forgetting is not compatible with democracy'.[29] At the same time, it has not led to a state-funded museum about the Civil War and regime, nor due recognition for the harsh effects of the famine and hunger years, which were direct consequences of the state's propaganda and autarkic economic system. Thus, though Article 3 of the new law outlines the state's conceptualisation of victims to include all whose rights were impeded, including 13 distinct categories, there is no explicit reference to the victims of the hunger years, nor to the regime's failed economic, trade, or agricultural strategies that exacerbated the famine.

Political discourses and government initiatives have tended to focalise violent oppression and mass murder, occluding the critical impact of food shortages, rationing, starvation, malnutrition, disease, and poverty that brutalised Spain's population during the Civil War—particularly in Republican-controlled regions (predominantly the East and Southeast of the country, including Madrid, Barcelona, and Alicante)—and during the hunger years. In response to decades of silence regarding Francoist violence, contemporary governmental policies tend to prioritise the location and excavation of mass graves, extraction of Francoist monuments and memory sites, and the criminalisation of pro-regime rhetoric, with the broad aim of providing long-overdue dignity, recognition, and respect to victims. Similarly, historical memory activism focalises the violent persecution of the vanquished Republicans and the ongoing excavation of mass graves.[30] Legacies of the famine, on the other hand, rarely come to the fore in the recuperation of Republican historical memory.[31]

A lack of formal recognition of hunger can also be explained in relation to limited critical interest in the famine, which has been rectified in recent years. As we have outlined above, Spain's famine was occluded and silenced by the regime's propaganda. Archives were inaccessible to researchers. After the dictator's death, research about the war and dictatorship flourished, with particular attention paid to state violence and repression. Research that centres on the post-Civil War years has been a burgeoning field since the 1990s, specifically in relation to socioeconomic development, the consolidation of the regime, and the evolution of state structures and policy. Seminal research was published that disproved Francoist myths and revealed the bleak reality of Spain's post-Civil War landscape. Historians

have uncovered the dire economic circumstances caused by the state's autarkic model, a fascist-inspired interventionist policy that reinforced the victors/vanquished binary.

With regards to the commemoration of hunger, then, the Spanish case represents a relatively logical anomaly. On the one hand, collective memory of Spain's traumatic past has been muted, stunted, and repressed, at least until the reification of the 2022 memory law. Political and legal efforts to confront the past, moreover, have focused on violence and oppression, while historians have only recently begun to explore the causes and impact of the famine, having previously considered mass hunger an organic consequence of war and the devastating violence of the Francoist state. The fact that Spain's famine has only relatively recently come to light has shaped and informed collective memory and policies about the hunger years, in relation to both commemoration and musealisation.

Popular culture, memorialisation, and musealisation of hunger in Spain

As we write this chapter, there are still no monuments dedicated to the Francoist famine in Spain. This dearth of monuments could be explained due to three main factors: the prevalence of Francoist myths, particularly given the belated, limited legal interventions by Socialist-led democratic governments; the emphasis on bloodshed and (mass) murder in Republican historical memory; and the fact that historiography on Francoism has only recently recognised the political implications of the famine. Despite sharing some social, political, and environmental conditions that engendered famine in other European countries throughout the twentieth century, the Spanish case is distinct in as much as there is no coherent national narrative that can be exteriorised onto a monument.[32] Whereas the Ukranian *Holodomor* (1932–33) exemplifies the brutality of Soviet occupation in such a way as to reinforce national solidarity, Spain's famine years evoke a myriad of tensions. Rather than a centralised national narrative, as is this case in relation to other European famines, Spain's history of hunger is fragmented by ideological and geographical factors that problematise a consolidated, democratic account. As we shall see, historiography on memories of hunger elucidates a collective history that is inflected by multifaceted personal and political tensions; an affective, fragmented history that is, perhaps, too allusive to be reified in a material site.

In order to explain the lack of commemoration and the absence of a coherent, unified discourse about collective memory of hunger in Spain, we must consider the insidious influence of the Francoist dictatorship. As we have outlined, the famine was not formally recognised by the regime. That said, a legacy and collective memory of hunger did indeed take root during the dictatorship, enduring until the democratic era due to its poignant impact

on Spain's collective consciousness. The post-War novel is a salient example, a genre published under Francoism. In *Nada* ('Nothing', 1944), Carmen Laforet delineates the bleak and hopeless life of a female student in post-Civil War Barcelona. Camilo José Cela's masterpiece *La colmena* ('The Beehive', 1951) weaves a complex narrative of the inhabitants of 1950s Madrid, where hunger, the black market, and hardship are commonplace. In the seminal *Tiempo de Silencio* ('Time of Silence', 1962), psychiatrist Luis Martín-Santos paints a gritty picture of Spain's capital, with Madrid plagued by poverty, disease, and misery.[33] This cultural, collective memory of hunger would survive the death throes of Francoism, with the quotidian realities of hunger and the brutality of the post-Civil War years recurring as a common trope in Spanish literature. The work of Juan Marsé (*Si te dicen que caí*; 'If They Tell You I Fell', 1973), Agustín Gómez Arcos (*El niño pan*; 'The Bread Boy', 2006), and María Beneyto's poetry (*Biografía breve del silencio*; 'Brief Biography of Silence', 1975) are popular examples.[34]

Nevertheless, the dictatorship's strict censorship, restrictions on individual liberties, and the corrupting influence of state propaganda shaped cultural output under Francoism.[35] Memories of hunger were restricted to the individual and family domains. Rather than remaining covered in silence, stories of suffering, survival, and resistance were exteriorised in 'embodied memories', which shaped eating habits, food practices, and attitudes.[36] Women, many of whom were widowed or whose Republican husbands were imprisoned or exiled, were key, not only to ensuring their families' survival, but also to the transmission of lived experience, which contributed to the post-memory of the Spanish famine. As Carlos Gil Andrés observes, '[t]he memory of hunger, poverty and hardship of the post-Civil War era is a territory populated by female voices, hands, and perspectives'.[37] In rural areas, women resorted to collecting herbs, finding substitute ingredients, and relying on the black market to provide for their families. Traumatic memories of hunger and shortages were passed down to those who did not experience them firsthand, via modified recipes and intergenerational communication about a dormant history.

That said, it is also critical to recognise the difficulties many survivors face in their efforts to share or exteriorise these memories, as evidenced by oral histories from this period.[38] Some studies have elucidated how many Republican women struggled to articulate traumatic memories of sex-based violence, which included head-shaving, sexual abuse, and the forced ingestion of castor oil. At the same time, testimonies and oral histories speak to a subconscious unwillingness to recognise the hunger, starvation, or deprivation suffered by one's own family; to acknowledge and confess one's own wanting, seemingly, would constitute weakness, victimhood, or vulnerability. One woman recalling the post-Civil War era in Logroño (La Rioja, Northern Spain), for instance, is somewhat self-contradictory, explaining that though

there was 'no money', 'we didn't go without food'.[39] Some confess to the scarcity of resources and criminal practices relied upon to source food, and yet, do not admit to having experienced hunger.[40] Other cases demonstrate how women and men that lived through this period find it difficult to talk about the famine and the methods they resorted to source food, with hunger stigmatised and considered a source of personal and familial shame. Accordingly, experiences of hunger are often delineated in relation to others, never to oneself.[41] It is, therefore, challenging and problematic to piece together a coherent narrative about this period, much less musealise these years, as those with intimate knowledge of the famine suppress or occlude their stories. The 'silencing' of the hunger years, in this sense, corrupts personal memories as individuals—unwittingly or not—reinforce this occlusion through self-censorship.

Recent years have borne witness to a growing interest in the famine years. Films such as *Pan's Labyrinth* (Guillermo del Toro, 2007) and *Pa Negre* ('Black Bread'; Agustí Villaronga, 2010) reflect on the bleak post-Civil War years, explicitly linking food and the struggle for survival with the power of the state and post-war violence. Similar themes are explored in contemporary literature, most notably in the best selling novels of Almudena Grandes and graphic novels such as Paco Roca's *Regreso al Edén* ('Return to Eden', 2020), which, using personal and familiar stories, explores intergenerational memories of hunger, deprivation, and the cultural and social capital of bread as a source of survival.

In the heritage sector, however, commemorations of hunger and famine are lacking. While the Francoist regime constructed a 'memory network to their fallen', democratic governments have yet to commission a monument to commemorate the famine.[42] Republican sites that do exist reflect the 'atomized Republican memory: a myriad of individual, unrelated memorials, not linked by any master narrative, any route or any central mnemonic anchor (a national museum or monument)'.[43] Memory places dedicated to the commemoration of Republican history are intimately related to Spain's landscape, with this traumatic past memorialised in such a way as to engage with an ongoing dialogue; to use Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* paradigm, such sites constitute a 'material' (or physical) entity of memory, a 'symbolic' reification of anti-Francoist history, and a 'functional' site that facilitates the act of remembering and (re)constructing collective memory.[44]

The majority of these memory sites commemorate incidents of violence and conflict. Salient examples are the recovered bomb shelter Refugi 307 and Republican anti-aircraft battery Turó de la Rovira, both in Barcelona, and the plaques placed by successive Socialist Prime Ministers in 1988 and 2009 in Almudena Cemetery, Madrid, to commemorate the execution site of the 'Thirteen Roses', a group of women sentenced to death in August 1939 for terrorism.[45] Monuments have also been erected to commemorate acts of

resistance and experiences of exile. A cement sculpture in Santa Cruz de Moya (Cuenca) was placed in 1991, in honour of the anti-Francoist guerrilla fighters whose resistance continued into the post-Civil War years, dedicated to the 'Spanish guerrillas who died in the struggle for peace, liberty and democracy'. In La Vajol (Girona), near the border with France, a small monument was constructed in 1999 to remember those forced into exile, mirroring the numerous dedications placed in French territory.

Spain's famine and 'hunger years', on the other hand, have not been commemorated with a monument or memory site; a curiosity that can be explained by the dynamics and politics of Spanish history. The construction and popularity of the Famine Memorial in Dublin (Ireland) and the Holodomor Victims Memorial in Kiev (Ukraine), which commemorate the devastating famines in Ireland (1845–49) and Ukraine (1932–33), should be understood in relation to both countries' history of colonialism and occupation, making the memory of a traumatic national past a cohesive national narrative for the now-independent nations. The Spanish famine, on the other hand, can be traced back to a bloody Civil War and a vengeful dictatorship that impeded reconciliation. As Spain still struggles to confront and harmonise its traumatic past, constructing a coherent narrative about a famine that reinforced and exacerbated the victors-vanquished dichotomy remains elusive, problematic, and, indeed, inherently political.

The obstacles and difficulties in relation to confronting the past in Spain have impacted and shaped how monuments are devised and narrativised in Spain. One of the country's most famous sites is 'Mirador de la Memoria' ('Viewpoint of Memory') in the Valle de Jerte, Extremadura (South-Western Spain), a region that was particularly brutalised by the famine and post-Civil War depravation. Inaugurated in 2009 by a memorial association, the site is a visual manifestation of the 2007 Historical Memory Law, erected to commemorate and remember the regime's victims.[46] The ambiguity of how post-Civil War Spain and memories of the famine integrate into the collective imagination is encapsulated by the symbolism of this monument: consisting of four nude figures (three males and one female) that overlook the vast panorama, the statues allude to hunger through the imbrication of the body, vulnerability, and Spanish landscape. Yet, the figures do not suggest malnutrition (one male figure has a protruding stomach; the female statue has full breasts and thighs). The sculptor of the work, Francisco Cedenilla (the grandson of a Republican who was executed and whose remains lie in an unmarked mass grave), remarked in an interview that he wanted to represent 'those forgotten by the Civil War', depicting 'figures thinking about all of the people who suffered as a consequence of conflict, like those in 1936'; they do not belong to either side, nor do they represent a particular class, age, or sex.[47] After its installation, the monument was shot at by protesters and restored by its creator, reflecting how the site delineates the violence of the

IMAGE 9.2 'Viewpoint of Memory'. Sculptor: Francisco Cerdenilla Carrasco, 2009. Wikicommons.

War, disassociating it from the Francoist famine. Famine and hunger, in this sense, are conspicuously omitted, as this core facet of Republican collective memory—and, indeed, histories of the Civil War more broadly—remains an unspoken trauma of Spain's past (Image 9.2).

Monuments are invested with history and marked by the period in which they were erected. The same can be said of the Spanish famine. The best example of this is the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), the so-called 'national monument to those who gave their lives for God and for Spain'. Construction began in 1940, and the site was inaugurated on 1 April 1959—the 20th anniversary of the Nationalists' victory in the Civil War—to extol the Francoist rebels. The Valley is a grandiose, imposing place carved out of the rock. A monumental cross that dominates the landscape presides over a basilica and tombs of the 'fallen', surrounded by symbols that exalt victory in a war conceived as a 'Crusade' against 'anti-Spain'. Many 'heroes and martyrs' of the Francoist side were buried here, and so were the remains of Republican prisoners. The site exemplifies how Spain's landscape is scarred by its violent past, as the remains of at least 30,000 anonymous Spaniards lie in mass graves on this site.[48] The remains of Franco himself were buried next to the basilica's main altar, alongside José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the leader of Spain's fascist party who was assassinated during the Civil War. The silence and pain of the rock occlude a history of pain and hunger, as the Valley was built by the forced labour of Republican political prisoners, who faced brutal working conditions and meagre food rations, resulting in numerous deaths from exhaustion, disease, and malnutrition.

In recent years, the monument has been the subject of political intervention. On 24 October 2019, Franco's body was exhumed and reinterred next to his wife in a cemetery in El Pardo, on the outskirts of Madrid. Orchestrated by the Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, the removal of Franco's body was an effort to rework the politics of a (taxpayer-funded) mausoleum that had long been a site of fascist commemoration.[49] The site has been (re)renamed to its former title—the Valle de Cuelgamuros—and the government has opened a contest for ideas to 're-signify' the monument and turn it into a 'centre of interpretation'. As it stands, no official communications have considered the critical role of hunger, starvation, and shortages in the site's history.

With the government focused on converting the Valley into an 'interpretation centre', an opportunity has been missed to build a museum dedicated to the war and dictatorship, which, like the famine, is not mentioned in the 2022 Democratic Memory Law.[50] A virtual, international museum, however, has been developed, unrelated to governmental initiatives: the Virtual Museum of the Civil War, orchestrated by (mostly international) academics and inaugurated in 2022.[51] Financed by Canadian institutions, with some contribution from the Spanish government, the museum is free to access and organised into nine thematic galleries. The site centres on the Civil War period (1936–39) and, though there is a section dedicated to 'memory', there are no explicit references to the famine or hunger years. While the museum does include objects related to food practices and shortages during the conflict—such as the 'bread bombs' dropped by Nationalist soldiers during the 1939 siege of Madrid, and the Nazi-inspired 'One Dish Meal' introduced to fund welfare programmes—its temporal focus means that much of the famine is yet to be musealised.

With this in mind, we now turn to the exhibition initiatives that speak to a growing interest in the famine and the hunger years in Spanish museums, which builds on former projects that centred on war, exile, and concentration camps in post-Civil War Spain.[52] In 2016, 'Campo Cerrado: Art and Power in Post-War Spain' was inaugurated at the Reina Sofía National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNCARS) in Madrid, with the aim of publicising lesser known cultural output so as to re-think this period. As outlined by the organisers, this exhibition 'questions topics such as the scarcity or irrelevance of cultural or artistic activity during the 1940s and outlines and image of the time that resists schematisation'. Though the exposition interrogated a critical period of the hunger years by elucidating cultural and artistic activity from this period, references to food, famine, and shortages were absent.[53]

Food practices have been focalised in two exhibitions organised by the History Museum of Catalonia: 'Menús de guerra. Cocina de vanguardia y superviviencia' (Food of War. Avant-guard Cooking and Survival, 2014); and 'El Farcell de la postguerra' (The Post-War 'Bundle', 2018).[54] While the former centres on the War—outside the temporal parameters of the famine

and hunger years—'El Farcell de Posguerra' confronts this oft-overlooked period of Spanish history. The title of the exhibition encapsulates the social perspective of the project, as the 'bundle' was the scarf used by the working classes to transport black-market supplies. With items including ration cards, magazines, the press, culinary objects, and propaganda, the exhibition explores food practices and supply policies during the hunger years. Indirect allusions to hunger are delineated through references to the black market (both large and small scale), failure of ration cards, increased prices, and the ineffective food aid policies implemented by the regime's welfare programme (Auxilio Social). One core strength of the exhibition is the inclusion of concrete examples of foodstuffs and daily life post-war difficulties, highlighting events and facts that occurred throughout Catalonia and Barcelona so as to disseminate collective memory about survival during this brutal period. That said, 'El Farcell' limited its corpus to food practices, with no reference to starvation or rampant disease. Nor was the cause of the stark drop in living conditions explored, as both the famine and its origins remained on the periphery.

A more concerted effort to explore the origin and impact of Spain's hunger years is central to the 2022 exhibition, 'La hambruna silenciada: El hambre durante la posguerra franquista, 1939–1952' ('The Silenced Famine: Hunger in Post-War Spain').[55] The exhibition is divided into five sections: the conceptualisation of the famine, origins, consequences, popular responses to hunger, and collective memory. With references to all of Spain interspersed throughout the collection, the broader scope of this project speaks to the vast research that underpins it; financed by numerous bodies, 'The Silenced Famine' was curated by academics specialising in the Spanish hunger years (Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco and Gloria Román Ruiz). Supported by public and private funding initiatives from regional (Granada Provincial Council and University of Granada), national (Ministerio de la Presidencia), and private institutions (BBVA Foundation), the event was conceived as a travelling exhibition with plans to tour other Spanish cities throughout 2023 and 2024. Findings from numerous academic projects are disseminated, as well as testimonies sourced from archives or via interviews with survivors. The core aim of 'The Silenced Famine' is to verify, substantiate, and explore the Spanish famine, drawing links with other European famines of the interwar period. The fundamentally political causes of the famine are depicted in the promotional poster, which constitutes a military boot stamping on a loaf of bread, depicting violence, masculinity, brutality, and—fundamentally—the regime's control of bread, which functions as a metonym for food and Spain, given its omnipresence in the Spanish diet. While the exhibition includes artefacts from the post-War years (such as ration cards, recipes, propaganda, and publications), 'The Silenced Famine' can be epitomised by its aim to end the silence imposed by the brutal legacy of famine, hunger, and deprivation in Francoist Spain (Image 9.3).

IMAGE 9.3 Promotional poster of 'La hambruna silenciada'. Author: Alfonso Aguilar (Perroraro). Source: Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco.

Concluding remarks

The dearth of monuments and musealisations of the Spanish famine can be explained by the regime's propaganda and denialist policies, which cultivated a series of myths that silenced and distorted reality. The (re-)arrival of democracy in Spain and the years that followed were characterised first by 'forgetting' and, more recently, by the difficult recovery of historical memory, which saw the mobilisation of associations, public debate, and state policies—introduced exclusively by Socialist-led governments—that focalised identifying, recognising, and dignifying the victims of Francoist violence. Collective memories of hunger, however, remained dormant, delineated indirectly in cultural production, and restricted to transgenerational memories within personal and familial domains. After the dictator's death, Spanish historians focused on interrogating the most violent elements of the war and regime, with interest in the post-Civil War years—Spain's hunger years—and the famine growing in recent years. Accordingly, recent historiography has uncovered the political and economic origins of the Spanish famine. The

combination of the foregoing factors explains the scarcity of public memory about hunger and famine in (post-)Civil War Spain. More recent years have borne witness to promising initiatives that musealise this core component of Spanish history, recuperating memories of hunger and bringing them to public attention. Looking ahead, more exhibitions and public commemoration of Spain's famine are to be encouraged, particularly by drawing out comparisons with other European famines, as are explicit references to legacies of hunger in political, governmental, and legal reforms.

Notes

1 Aleida Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 97–8.
2 For the term, see Guy Beiner, 'Disremembering 1798? An Archaeology of Social Forgetting and Remembrance in Ulster', *History and Memory* 25, no. 2 (2013): 35–6.
3 See Javier Rodrigo, *Cruzada, paz, memoria; La guerra civil en sus relatos* (Granada: Comares, 2013).
4 See Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco and Peter Anderson, eds., *Franco's Famine: Malnutrition, Disease and Starvation in Post-Civil War Spain* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021). Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, ed., *Los "años del hambre": historia y memoria de la posguerra franquista* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2020).
5 See Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, *Crosses of Memory and Oblivion: Monuments to the Fallen of the Spanish Civil War (1936–2022)* (London; New York: Routledge, 2023).
6 See the following clip: https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/revista-imagenes/naranja-su-riqueza/2864782/, accessed 24 January 2023.
7 See the following video: https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/revista-imagenes/arroz-paella/2867138/, accessed 24 January 2023; Lara Anderson, *Control and Resistance: Food Discourse in Franco Spain* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 38.
8 Xavier Moreno Juliá, 'Maria y Miquel: memorias de guerra y posguerra en España, 1936–1955', *Historia, Antropología y Fuentes Orales* 1, no. 21 (1999): 67–81.
9 See Del Arco Blanco's 2021 interview in the press: Héctor G. Barnés, 'La hambruna española que fue borrada de la historia: ¿y si mató más que la guerra?' ['The Spanish famine that was erased from history: and did it kill more than the war?'], *El Confidencial*, 16 February 2021. https://www.elconfidencial.com/cultura/2021-02-16/gran-hambruna-espanola-muertos-guerra_2945088/, accessed 24 January 2023.
10 See Rodrigo, *Cruzada, paz, memoria*; Asunción Castro and Julián Díaz, *XXV Años de paz franquista: Sociedad y cultura en España hacia 1964* (Madrid: Sílex, 2017), 11–6.
11 See Michael Richards, *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-Making Spain Since 1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Also see Antonio Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain, 1939–1975* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
12 Many mark the Socialists landslide electoral victory in 1982 as the end of Spain's transition to democracy.
13 Paloma Aguilar, 'Transitional or Post-Transitional Justice? Recent Developments in the Spanish Case', *South European Society and Politics* 13, no. 4 (2008): 417–33.
14 Seminal scholarship that draws on this paradigm includes: Paloma Aguilar, *Políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política* (Madrid: Alianza, 2008); Ofelia Ferrán, *Working through Memory: Writing and Remembrance in Contemporary Spanish Narrative* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007); Carlos Jerez-Farrán and

Samuel Amago, eds., *Unearthing Franco's Legacy: Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2010). For criticism of the 'forgetting narrative', see, for example, Ángel Loureiro, 'Pathetic Arguments', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (2008): 225.

15 Stephen Holmes, 'Gag Rules or the Politics of Omission', in *Constitutionalism and Democracy*, eds. Jon Elster and Rune Slagstad (New York: Maison des Sciences Press, 1988), 19–58.

16 Santos Juliá, 'Echar al olvido. Memoria y amnistía de la transición', *Claves de la Razón Práctica*, 129 (2003): 14–25. Seminal scholarship that draws on this paradigm includes: Paloma Aguilar and Leigh A. Payne, *El resurgir del pasado en España* (Madrid: Taurus, 2018), 27–8; Fernández, *Políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política*; Ferrán, *Working through Memory*; Jerez-Farrán and Amago, *Unearthing Franco's Legacy*.

17 Paloma Aguilar, 'Memoria y transición en España: Exhumaciones de fusilados republicanos y homenajes en su honor', *Historia y política* 39 (2018): 291–325.

18 Julio Aróstegui Sánchez, *Historia y memoria de la guerra civil: Encuentro en Castilla y León, Salamanca, 24-27 de septiembre de 1986*, 3 vols. (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1988); Juan Andrés Blanco Rodríguez, 'El registro historiográfico de la guerra civil, 1936-2004', in *Guerra civil: mito y memoria,* eds. Julio Aróstegui Sánchez and François Godicheau (Madrid: Marical Pons, 2006), 373-406.

19 Carolyn P. Boyd, 'The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1 (2008): 136.

20 Paloma Aguilar and Clara Ramírez-Barat, 'Generational Dynamics in Spain: Memory Transmission of a Turbulent Past', *Memory Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 213–29; Ofelia Ferrán and Lisa Hilbink, 'Introduction: Legacies of Violence in Contemporary Spain', in *Legacies of Violence in Contemporary Spain: Exhuming the Past, Understanding the Present*, eds. Ofelia Ferrán and Lisa Hilbink (New York; London: Routledge, 2017), 1.

21 Olivette Otele, Luisa Gandolfo and Yoav Galai, 'Introduction: Absence and Trauma in Post-Conflict Memorialisation', in *Post-Conflict Memorialization. Missing Memorials, Absent Bodies*, eds. Olivette Otele, Luisa Gandolfo and Yoav Galai (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 3–7. Quoted and translated in Paloma Aguilar and Leigh A. Payne, *Revealing New Truths about Spain's Violent Past: Perpetrators' Confessions and Victim Exhumations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 13.

22 Ignacio Fernández de Mata, *Lloros vueltos puños: el conflicto de los desaparecidos y vencidos en la Guerra Civil Española* (Granada: Comares, 2016).

23 Del Arco Blanco, *Crosses of Memory and Oblivion*, Chapter 9.

24 BOE, 'Ley 20/2022, de 19 de octubre, de Memoria Democrática', https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2022-17099, accessed 24 January 2023.

25 The ARMH statement is available on their website: https://memoriahistorica.org.es/contundente-critica-de-la-armh-a-las-deficiencias-del-anteproyecto-de-ley-de-memoria-democratica-del-gobierno, accessed 24 January 2023.

26 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3; Otele, Gandolfo and Galai, 'Introduction', 2.

27 'Ley 20/2022, de 19 de octubre, de Memoria Democrática'.

28 Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Victimhood Nationalism in Contested Memories: National Mourning and Global Accountability, Memory and Political Change', in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 138. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.

29 'Ley 20/2022, de 19 de octubre, de Memoria Democrática'.

30 See Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London; New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012).
31 See, for example, Emilio Silva and Santiago Macías, *Las fosas de Franco: Los republicanos que el dictador dejó en las cunetas* (Madrid, Temas de Hoy, 2005).
32 Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, 'Las hambrunas europeas del siglo XX y el lugar de los «*años del hambre*»', in *Los «años del hambre»: historia y memoria de la posguerra franquista*, ed. Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2020), 37–8.
33 Carmen Laforet, *Nada* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1944); Camilo José Cela, *La colmena* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1951); Luis Martín-Santos *Tiempo de silencio* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1962).
34 Juan Marsé, *Si te dicen que caí* (Mexico City: Novaro, 1973); Agustín Gómez Arcos, *El niño pan* (Barcelona: Cabaret Voltaire, 2006); María Beneyto, *Biografía breve del silencio* (Alcoy: Imp. La Victoria, 1975).
35 In her analysis of popular culture in the hunger years, Helen Graham explains that, throughout the 1940s, 'the regime attempted to exercise cultural hegemony through the dissemination of what could be called an archaising vision', via educational materials, folklore, monuments to Nationalist soldiers, comics celebrating 'heroic crusaders' and religious dramas. See 'Popular Culture in the "Years of Hunger"', in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction, the Struggle for Modernity* , eds. Helen Graham and Jo Labayni (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 237. For this reason, critical literature about the regime and post-Civil War years was often published abroad; *La Colmena*, for instance, was initially published in Buenos Aires.
36 Gloria Román Ruiz, 'Echoes of famine. Effects of the embodied memories of the Spanish Hunger Years (1939–1952) on survivors' subsequent food practices and attitudes', *Memory Studies Journal* 17, no. 4 (2023): https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231155569, accessed 24 January 2023. See also David Conde-Caballero, Borja Rivero-Jiménez and Lorenzo Mariano-Juárez, 'Memories of hunger, continuities, and food choices: An ethnography of the elderly in extremadura (Spain)', *Appetite*, 164 (2021): 105–267.
37 Carlos Gil Andrés, '"Tengo grabado todo aquello": La memoria de los años cuarenta tiene nombre de mujer', in *Los «años del hambre»: historia y memoria de la posguerra franquista*, ed. Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2020), 39.
38 David Conde Caballer, Borja Rivero Jiménez, and Lorenzo Mariano Juárez. *Vidas sin pan: el hambre en la memoria de la posguerra española* (Granada: Comares, 2022).
39 Quoted in Gil Andrés, 'Tengo grabado todo aquello', 37.
40 Ibid.
41 David Conde Caballero, *Hambre: una etnografía de la escasez de posguerra en Extremadura* (Badajoz: Diputación de Badajoz, 2021), Chapter 10.
42 Conxita Mir Curcó and Josep Gelonch Solé, 'Presentación', in *Duelo y memoria: Espacios para el recuerdo de las víctimas de la represión franquista en perspectiva comparada*, eds., Conxita Mir Curcó and Josep Gelonch Solé (Lleida: Edicions de la Universitat de Lleida, 2013), 11.
43 González-Ruibal, 'Beyond the Mass Grave', 99.
44 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, 26 (1989): 19 u.
45 See https://www.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/en/heritages/els-espais-del-muhba/muhba-refugi-307, accessed 24 January 2023; and https://www.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/es/patrimonios/los-espacios-del-muhba/muhba-turo-de-la-rovira, accessed 24 January 2023.

46 'Viewpoint of Memory' came to international attention in 2018 when it was featured in the acclaimed documentary *The Silence of Others* (*El silencio de otros*, dir. Almudena Carracedo and Robert Bahar), which centres on the ARMH and the excavation of Spain's mass graves.
47 'Francisco Cedenilla: El monumento tiroteado no se identifica con ningún bando', *El Periódico de Extremadura,* 28 January 2009, https://www.elperiodicoextremadura.com/caceres/2009/01/28/francisco-cedenilla-monumento-tiroteado-identifica-45201805.html, accessed 24 January 2023.
48 Some suggest the number of bodies could be anywhere between 40,000 and 70,000. See Andrea Hepworth, 'Site of Memory and Dismemory: The Valley of the Fallen in Spain', in *The Memorialization of Genocide*, ed. Simone Gigliotti (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 52.
49 Sebastiaan Faber, *Exhuming Franco: Spain's Second Transition* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2021), 6.
50 'La transformación del Valle de los Caídos y otros retos pendientes en memoria histórica', *El País*, 31 March 2021, https://elpais.com/espana/2021-03-31/la-transformacion-del-valle-de-los-caidos-y-otros-retos-pendientes-en-memoria-historica.html, accessed 24 January 2023.
51 *Spanish Civil War: A Virtual Museum.* See https://www.vscw.ca/, accessed 12 April 2024.
52 For example, exhibitions curated by the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica (Historical Memory Documentation Centre) in Salamanca, which is amongst the country's most important Civil War archives, focused on artists, writers, and photographers in post-Civil War Spain, rather than on the daily life of famine, poverty, and hunger.
53 See the following website: https://www.museoreinasofia.es/exposiciones/campo-cerrado, accessed 24 January 2023.
54 For the exhibition website of *El Farcell de Posguerra*, see the following link: https://www.mhcat.cat/exposicions/exposicions_realitzades/el_farcell_de_la_posguerr, accessed 24 January 2023.
55 See the exhibition website: https://www.hambrunafranquismo.es/actividades/15-exposicion-la-hambruna-silenciada-el-hambre-durante-la-posguerra-franquista-1939-1952, accessed 24 January 2023.

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