

2013

Review of Richard Barker, *Skeletons in the Closet, Skeletons in the Ground. Representation, Victimization and Humiliation in a Small Andalusian Town. The Human Consequences of the Spanish Civil War*

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Recommended Citation

Morcillo, Aurora G. (2013) "Review of Richard Barker, *Skeletons in the Closet, Skeletons in the Ground. Representation, Victimization and Humiliation in a Small Andalusian Town. The Human Consequences of the Spanish Civil War*," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 1 , Article 32.

<https://doi.org/10.26431/0739-182X.1157>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.asphs.net/bsphs/vol38/iss1/32>

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Richard Barker. *Skeletons in the Closet, Skeletons in the Ground. Representation, Victimization and Humiliation in a Small Andalusian Town. The Human Consequences of the Spanish Civil War.* Eastborne, UK and Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2012. 281 pp.

A Spanish Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Richard Barker presents *Skeletons in the Closet* as a vivid narrative of the events and human consequences of the Spanish Civil war in Castilleja del Campo, a small village in the province of Sevilla. This is a revised translation into English of his book *El largo trauma de un pueblo andaluz* published in 2007 by the Castilleja del Campo town hall.

It took Professor Barker more than twenty years to painstakingly weave the many angles of the village's story and its no more than 800 dwellers. The author artfully utilizes oral interviews, municipal meetings minutes, press, and both private and official correspondence to reconstruct the events unfolding from the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931 to the immediate post war in the 1940s. Barker covers twenty years of numerous conversations and silences to gain some introspection into the impact of the atrocities on two generations of Castilleja del Campo folks – the author's town as well by marriage to a native, Carmina.

Through the beautifully written pages, the reader feels the personal investment of the author on this life-changing project. With great care not to impose his own judgment, but display the turn of events, Barker shows how the circumstances were sometimes beyond the actors' power to choose their own destinies. After all, in a small town like Castilleja's everyone was "family" and ideological right and left positions were mixed in the blood.

The book is divided into four parts: I- Republic; II- Repression; III- War; VI- Postwar. These four parts are followed by an epilogue and nine appendixes that include several lists of repressed men and women, ex-combatants, town Council minutes, and a Prison Poem of one of the main figures in the story.

The majority of the informants interviewed in the 1980s, both from the left and the right. They explained how the town suffered violence, hunger, fear, and revenge, most of them related to "old hatreds," or personal vendettas. They remember how some of the leftist men escaped execution by forcibly entering the Falangist centurias, or how nine women, whose names appear in appendix A, between 29 to 64 years of age, were publicly humiliated by having their heads shaved and given bread soaked in castor oil to eat before being paraded on the

streets of Castilleja. The public space was constantly renamed to mark ownership of the streets by the changing ideology in power during the tumultuous years of the Republic. The humiliated prisoners of Castilleja, both female and male, walked through the Plaza Calvo Sotelo, previously called Plaza de Martinez Barrio, and went down the Street Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, previously called Francisco Largo Caballero.

Everyone interviewed lamented the inability to honor a pact of mutual protection that Castilleja's residents from all political spectrums made on July 18 in the village's doctor office. Likewise, everyone remembers, though with contradictory details, the death of a young right-wing teenager, Manuel Rodríguez Mantero, as a tragedy. He was the victim of a confrontation before the war started between right wing Castilleja men and some leftist passing by. Everyone in the village remember him as a "good boy" and one of the notoriously leftist men in town offered his helped to take him to safety. The mutual protection pact was born out of this unfortunate tragedy. However, the violence that unraveled after the 18th of July uprising, Barker tells us, affected more than 4,000 people in the province of Huelva of which 168 were women, while in Sevilla 600 women were shot. The conflicting details along with the consensus of the tragic and unjust death of the teen Rodríguez Mantero reminds us of Alessandro Portelli's study about the death of Luigi Trastulli and the important role of oral history in the weaving of facts, memories and historical signification. While the study of Castilleja del Campo is a new important addition to the now abundant narratives of repression and violence before, during, and after the Spanish Civil War, there is not an attempt at a new methodological or analytical approach to the topic. It is rather a magnificent compilation of details and stories untold. The originality of *Skeletons in the Closet* resides in the fact that it is a local history and a good case study of ethnographic research.

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