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Helen Graham, *The War and Its Shadow: Spain's Civil War in Europe's Long Twentieth Century*. Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2012. Pp. xiv, 250. ISBN 978-1-84519-510-6.

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This is not a narrative history of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), though Helen Graham (Royal Holloway College, Univ. of London) has written that, too.¹ An accomplished scholar of the war, she provides an exhaustive bibliography of sources, a helpful glossary, and footnotes fully one-third as long as the body of the book. The 150-page main text is an unrelenting analysis of Francisco Franco's prosecution of the war, its aftermath to 1975, its European context, and, above all, the undeserved silence—the “shadow” of the title—that persists into this century.

Graham sets herself two tasks: first, to uncover the grievous record of the Francoists. Following Paul Preston,² she reckons the toll of war deaths and destruction; also the torture, repression, incarceration, and coldblooded executions inflicted by Franco's supporters—a record unmatched in duration (1936–75) by any other European dictatorship. Many “tens of thousands” perished in the actual fighting, of course, but more disturbing to Graham is the extension of the bloodbath long beyond 1939. Some 200,000 civilians died under “Francoist repression” (54) and “up to a million men, women and children spent time in prisons, work camps, forced labour” (104). Such casualties were produced by the nature of the war.

Like other twentieth-century wars, Graham writes, the Spanish Civil War entailed more than territorial conquest: it was also, and primarily, a ruthless “cleansing” of the body politic, a war of “intimate enemies and local massacre” (12), not of strangers or occupiers. The Francoists meant to restore an old order rooted in local gentry, social hierarchy, elite rule, and church discipline, all clothed in the rhetoric of nationalism, arrayed against the modernizing forces of industrialization, urbanization, secularism, and a cosmopolitan professional class. Thus, the violence of the Second Republic (1931–36) was a “way of breaking forever with the past” (44), while the atrocities of the rebels (as Graham calls the Francoists) were intended to “kill change,” literally.

The Francoists viewed the Republicans as “infected” elements of the population, which required a healing of the nation through a vigilant, decades-long postwar campaign. Many other European wars of the last century, Graham argues, from World War I to Kosovo, followed this pattern of a rightist, ultra-patriotic “culture war” against a threatening insurgent or “alien” opponent, always resulting in heavy casualties among civilians. Another shadow cast by the Spanish Civil War.

The second, more problematic, task of the book is to expose the current shadow in Spanish history by ripping off the shroud thrown by Spaniards over their recent past; this is an “an ethical and democratic” imperative, according to Graham. Also revealed is the shadow spread by the international failure “to condemn, or even recognize, the scale of abuses committed by the Franco regime” (103). The dictator's victims, she argues, suffer a double victimization, first in the event itself, then in memory. The suffering and oppression that Franco perpetrated are usually treated as a peripheral phenomenon of World War II history. So the Republican cause occupies a romantic but minor place in an era filled with more dramatic figures than Franco and more momentous developments. More often than not, the war is seen as a precursor or harbinger of the larger global war. Graham is passionate about this mischaracterization and her book glows from beginning to end with an incandescent indignation. One major reason for this misshapen history, she believes, is the sheer longevity of the regime and its quiet demise. A second is the Cold War: the West willingly accommodated Franco because he was an ally in that struggle. Finally, the conservative forces in Spain

1. See *The Spanish Republic at War 1936–1939* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 2002) and *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2005).

2. *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (NY: Norton, 2012).

muffled domestic dissent by appealing to Spanish nationalism and unity and by promoting a consumerist mentality that stressed “looking forward.” As Spain and the rest of Europe moved into relatively prosperous times in the second half of the twentieth century, no one wanted to rock the political boat; there would be no South African-style commission on truth and reconciliation. Thus, Francoist Spain “got away” with its crimes.

In general, Graham’s case is well made. But she sometimes takes it too far. European wars were scarcely monocausal affairs. World War I is an obvious example. Though the Allies labeled the Germans “Huns” and barbarians, and the Germans, in turn, depicted Britons as Colonel Blimps, the war was not a cultural conflict, but a matter of political rivalry and economic competition. Moreover, the participation of tsarist Russia and imperial Austria-Hungary on opposite sides rules out any neat division between modernizing and reactionary forces.

Graham’s ardor often leads her to overstate. For instance, the rape of Republican women becomes for her a bodily violation of the whole Republican community. Indeed, the body-health analogy is stretched too far in this book. What new regime—granting the special weight of the Roman Catholic Church in this case—has not accused the old of nurturing “alien” ideas and institutions and polluting public life? Sometimes, postmodernism notwithstanding, even a powerful metaphor is just a metaphor. And, while a “general sense of security and existential well-being” (206n4) may have militated against revisiting the Franco years, it is not persuasive to ground it in “sociological Francoism,” a diffuse constituency of petty white-collar and managerial groups, created by “apartheid” policies. In a too leading and subjective exercise, Graham uses a brief “photo-essay” (admirably, the book features many photographs) to convey the unutterable internal transformations of Republican boy soldiers by inviting us to gaze at their eyes and open faces.

These examples typify the postmodern sensibility that tinges the book’s style and subject matter. Graham mobilizes a distinctive vocabulary of “spaces” and “imaginaries” and “oxygenating opportunities,” often using exotic terms or inflated words (“massified,” “comparator,” “hecatomb”) that burden a reader trying to navigate the massified host of long, explanatory footnotes. Also unhelpful is the appealing but uneven topical arrangement of chapters (some derived from earlier articles), including a horrific family study, an examination of foreign brigaders, and a discussion of gender issues. In short, the prolix writing does not make for lively, unforced reading, despite the book’s brevity.

Nonetheless, this white-hot indictment of Franco’s regime more than repays the reader. The scholarship is impressive and convincing and the range of concerns is exhilarating, while the evidence adduced usefully supplements the existing literature. For a prudent, deliberately calibrated, and bloodless assessment of the Spanish Civil War, look elsewhere. If, however, you believe history is a moral enterprise that can give the voiceless their due, this book will serve very well.