

MOURNING THE IMAGE
THE AFTERLIFE OF BODIES IN CONTEMPORARY SPAIN

A Dissertation

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This dissertation examines categories of human remains germane to Spain's mass grave exhumation phenomenon across three different media: photography, monuments and the plastic arts. In looking at spirit, memorial, and pictorialist genres of photography, each chapter explores the distinct relationship between the living and the dead as evidenced through physical spaces of interaction as well as visual sites of engagement. Beginning with the nation's foremost specter, the first chapter examines portraits, correspondence, lectures, and the art installation, *Everstill / Siempre todavía*, which celebrates the lost poet-dramaturge, Federico García Lorca, at the family's summer home in Huerta de San Vicente, Granada. These artifacts and exhibitions demonstrate a mutual desire that forecasts not only Lorca's anticipation of his own demise and return, but also the public's longing to grieve him somewhere on the landscape. Despite his lack of locatable material presence and inability to be mourned, Lorca's spirit is enlivened and perpetuated through his cultural legacy within the spaces he inhabited while living. Moving from the missing singular body to the emergence of collective remains, the second chapter investigates contemporary excavations of Republican mass graves experiencing an active resignification in reburial. By mitigating their loss through documentary photography, I situate the

practice of post-mortem portraiture within Clemente Bernad's *Desvelados* as a funerary custom of recovery. In these visualizations of skeletal matter, the viewer mourns the dead by witnessing the history of violence inscribed on their remains and repatriates disappeared loved ones back into the community. From these previously concealed bodies in the midst of memorialization, the third chapter analyzes the single most visible site of death in Spanish memory politics, el Valle de los Caídos, the Fascist-Catholic monument-basilica-war memorial commissioned in 1940 to honor Francisco Franco's fallen soldiers. Unlike the Civil War victims interred within the crypt of the Catalan spiritual community of Montserrat, a historic site of Republican violence against the Church and regional reconciliation, the assembled components of el Valle deter the prospect of national reconciliation. Foreclosing familial mourning of the dead, this composite site gestures to the authorial mark of the dictator enshrined within the floor of the basilica.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edward Curran attended Providence High School in Charlotte, NC. He holds a B.A. in Modern Languages (Spanish) from Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. He also completed an M.A. in Spanish (Language, Literature and Culture) as well as a Graduate Certificate in Translating and Translation Studies at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte, NC.

For Tonya and Isla, always and forever.

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PREFACE

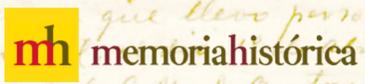
A crystalizing moment in Spain's necropolitics quietly coalesced in May 2011 when a handful of online international and Spanish news agencies uneventfully reported the publication of an interactive virtual map that charts the location and condition of graves dating back to the outbreak of the Civil War until the demise of Dictator Francisco Franco in 1975.¹ The Ministry of Justice published the death map to ensure the government's compliance with guidelines established by the Historical Memory law ratified in December 2007. A variety of public and private entities contributed information for each data point on the grid, including Spain's own Ministry of Defense, as well as regional memory advocacy groups from each autonomous community. In addition to being a searchable entity on its own, the map also links to the Spanish government's historical memory webpage which provides ongoing updates of governmental compliance with other projects related to the memory legislation.

Concerning the user interface, the information page is divided into sections at the bottom including the interactive Map of Graves, a Grave Search Engine, and a Victim Search Engine (See Figure 0.1 – "Information on the Map of Graves"). A tab at the top of the page redirects users to an online form where citizens continually

¹ Achille Mbembe first coined the term "necropolitics" in his essay of the same name, which explores "figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle of autonomy but *the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*" (14). In terms of Spain, this instrumentalization of the dead began in the Civil War with the emergence of mass graves. These institutionalized policies concerning the production and management of the dead then continued during the dictatorship by disappearing members of the civilian population while also consolidating Nationalist burial sites. Moreover, contemporary historical memory legislation engages with undoing the effects of these policies by attempting to equally commemorate both Nationalist and Republican victims of the Civil War.

Bienvenido | Berwingut | Benvido | Ongi etorri | Welcome |





Ministerio de Justicia
Map of graves application

Information
Map of Graves
Grave Search
Victim Search Engine
Information Provided by Citizens

Information on the map of graves

Pursuant to the provisions of article 12.2. of Law 52/2007 of 26 December which acknowledges and extends rights and establishes measures in favour of those who were the victims of persecution or violence during the Civil War and the Dictatorship, the Spanish Government was commissioned to create an integrated map of the entire national territory showing the areas where the remains of people who disappeared under violent circumstances during the Civil War and the subsequent political repression have been found.

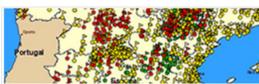
According to the aforementioned article, the data sent by the different competent Public Authorities should be incorporated into this map; for this purpose the relevant collaboration agreements have been signed with several Regional Governments.

Therefore, the data used to create the Map comes from the information sent to the Ministry of Justice by the different Autonomous Regions that signed the collaboration agreements and by Associations, Foundations or Entities dedicated to recovering historical memory, whose research has received subsidies from the Ministry of the Presidency.

These are elementary or basic details about the burial places, some of which have already disappeared, but whose location is known; therefore, those citizens who would like further information should contact the Authority or Entity that provided the information.

It must be pointed out that the information incorporated into the map to date is a first draft or initial version of the map and that it will be completed over time as part of an ongoing, dynamic process in which burial places already located have yet to be marked and this map will be subject to both the addition of new locations as well as constant updates of the data included about mass graves that have already been located.

We inform the citizens concerned that the locations of the burial places on the map do not correspond to their real geographical coordinates; rather the symbols have been placed over the populated area where they are located.



Map of Graves

Access to information on graves through a geographical map of Spain. Different coloured symbols are shown according to the type of intervention carried out on the graves and information may be viewed at different zoom levels. You can access detailed information on the grave from the map.

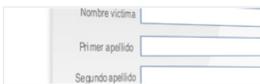
[Go to Map of Graves](#)



Grave Search Engine

Access to information on graves through a search form using different criteria. The results lists enable you to access both detailed information on the graves and on the victims buried there, as well as the location of the grave on the map.

[Go to Grave Search Engine](#)



Victim Search Engine

Access to the victim search engine through a form using different criteria. The results lists provide information on the different entities that hold information on these victims.

[Go to Victim Search Engine](#)

Ministerio de Justicia
Browsing Guide | Accessibility | Legal Notice: | Contact

Figure 0.1 – “Information on the Map of Graves”

Image capture from the Ministry’s website translated into English which states the goals and objectives of the map as well as the three user interfaces for searching the archive.

provide information which edits and amends the contents of the grid. Before scrolling down to click on the interactive map, the information page makes the user aware of the government's compliance with the particular articles from the legislation by declaring:

El Gobierno de la nación tenía el encargo de confeccionar un mapa integrado de todo el territorio español en el que constaran los terrenos en que se han localizado restos de personas desaparecidas violentamente durante la Guerra civil o la represión política posterior. (Ministerio de Justicia, "Información sobre el mapa de fosas")

[The Spanish Government was commissioned to create an integrated map of the entire national territory showing the areas where the remains of people who disappeared under violent circumstances during the Civil War and the subsequent political repression have been found.] (Ministerio de Justicia, "Information on the map of graves")

In the above citation, certain verbal cues reinforce how one typically interprets the data displayed, referenced, and indexed on a map. The verb *confeccionar* means to make, to produce or to draw up, which as action verbs result in the creation of an artifact, in this case a digital cartographic archive. The verb *constatar* means that the government, in this action of producing a map, states, affirms, confirms or verifies the place or position of these previously lost human remains on the landscape. This objective is reinforced by the verb *localizar*, which means to locate a person, place or thing within a space on a given terrain. In summary, these remains are fixed and located on a map that coincides with the boundaries of the nation. As for the question of the identity of these individuals, the previously cited passage from the website also provides the user with this information. These data points mark the remains of individuals who violently disappeared during the Civil War and subsequent political repression. On the most basic level, the text suggests that these graves include the

victims from the losing side of the conflict as well as individuals perceived as ideological threats to the values of the dictatorship well after the war.

However, all of this verbiage laboring to fix, situate, coordinate, locate, position, and represent the whereabouts of these graves in the opening paragraphs completely unravels in the last one. Apparently, *none* of the graves referenced on the map correspond to an actual site, but rather an approximate one proportionate to the living population within a given region. This abstract relationship between the data points and geographical space is curiously explained in the last paragraph of the information page:

Para información de los ciudadanos interesados advertimos que la localización de los lugares de enterramiento en el mapa no se corresponde con sus coordenadas geográficas reales sino que los símbolos se han colocado sobre el núcleo de población donde se ubican. (Ministerio de Justicia, “Información sobre el mapa de fosas”)

[We inform the citizens concerned that the locations of the burial places on the map do not correspond to their real geographical coordinates; rather the symbols have been placed over the populated area where they are located.] (Ministerio de Justicia, “Information on the map of graves”)

These geographical points merely exist as symbolic categories of graves, in process and in flux, which the map tethers to areas populated by the living. Their true locations still remain obscured on the surrounding outskirts of these inhabited urban spaces. Why bother attempting to visually represent this type of information if the data points are abstracted and ghosted? In a way, it appears as if these newly quantified bodies of the disappeared are still phantasmagorically wandering the provinces that they once inhabited. Officially, the reason is pragmatic: the government does not want amateur excavators to exhume a missing descendant

without following the proper protocol. From another standpoint, the visual quantification of these graves in transition also marks a progression towards more concrete representation. Prior to May 2011, no such document existed which recognized the scope of the mass grave phenomenon. Their locations were informally safeguarded within in local memory as well as formally hidden within archives managed by churches in the community and the Francoist regime.

Despite this glaring misrepresentation, the government at least officially admits to the number of documented mass graves in this visual quantification of the dead. This move suggests greater transparency when recognizing the human cost of the Civil War and political repression. Based on data derived from the map, one online news source places this number at more than 2,000 collective graves, with only 250 listed as open or in process (Junquera). However, this ghosting of known bodies, while simultaneously tallying mass graves, also marks a transition in the value of the body in decay for the contemporary Spanish imaginary. As evidenced by the language that frames the map as well as the visual representation of the map itself, there is a remarkable amount of tension between illustrating these locations on the national landscape and masking their true location. What was previously guarded and protected as invisible now speculates an obscured visibility in estimation. Currently, substantial value is being placed on locating and forensically assigning identities to the remains of the lost and disappeared. In a way, the map conceptually demonstrates this shift in Spanish society, from the ephemeral phantom of the disappeared to the compulsive material incarnation of acknowledged remains.

In returning to the death map, additional contradictions continue to unravel due

to how it is narrated and textually situated for the user, which further complicates what it essentially tracks: the disappearance, movement and circulation of human remains in a material afterlife on the landscape. The previously interred body of the deceased is not stationary in an enclosure presumed to be eternal, but rather travels for distribution to various possible locations depending on the history and category of a given mass grave. The map is searchable by region as well as province and includes a legend that denotes six separate categories. The sheer number depicted by multicolor dots and corresponding flags eclipses the landscape and cloaks the names of cities, regions and the topographical space representing land. No region is left unaffected (See Figure 0.2 – “Map of Graves Overview”). The six separate flags reference the type of grave by describing a particular intervention associated with the site: 1) green flags signify that no interventions have been undertaken; 2) red flags stand for fully or partially exhumed graves; 3) white flags refer to grave-traces whose location was previously known and is now missing; 4) yellow flags, another category of grave-trace, denote collections of individuals who were transferred to el Valle de los Caídos; 5) the blue star in the geographic center of the map symbolizes el Valle de los Caídos; and 6) multicolored flags reference several types of aforementioned category of grave occurring in the same place (See Figure 0.2- “Map of Graves – Legend”). As if an ordinary result of detailed cartography, the mass grave map deceives the eye in allowing the viewer to presume that mass grave is finitely represented. For instance, the zoom function allows the viewer to focus on data points within a specific region, giving a tremendous amount of detail to topography. The names of regions, towns, bodies of water, and mountains are all clearly identified. Moreover, latitude and

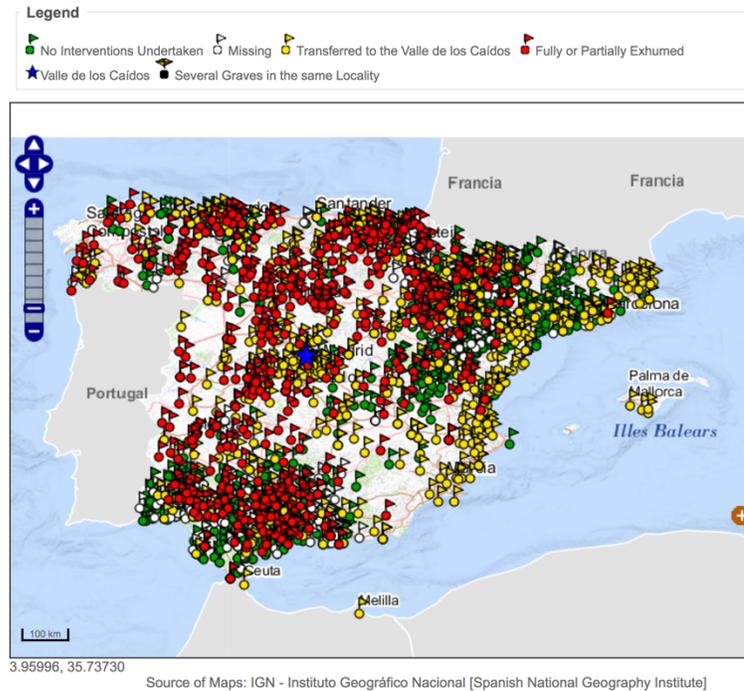


Figure 0.2 – “Map of Graves Overview”

Image capture from the Ministry’s website which displays the various data points across the Iberian Peninsula. Users access this interface just beneath the information page.

Map of Graves

Enables you to find the geographic location of the graves or burial places in Spanish territory on which information is available, represented with different coloured symbols based on the actions undertaken on each one. You can select a specific Autonomous Region or Locality, or else the general overview of Spanish territory or the Iberian Peninsula. You can also zoom in manually on the map using the bar designed for this purpose or by double-clicking on the map. You can click on any of the flags in order to receive more detailed information on the grave in the information box to the right of the map. For more information, please press [here](#)

Show location on the map

Autonomous Region Province [Mainland](#) [Spanish Territory](#)

Legend

- No Interventions Undertaken
- Missing
- Transferred to the Valle de los Caídos
- Fully or Partially Exhumed
- Valle de los Caídos
- Several Graves in the same Locality

Figure 0.3 – “Map of Graves – Legend”

Image capture from the Ministry’s website of the legend which appears above the online map.

longitude demarcate the official borders of provinces and the Spanish state. When searching the archive for details related to a particular plot, it is difficult to believe that the grave does not correspond to its place on the terrain.

In viewing the totality of the map, this abundance of information lacks significant context. Who are the individuals represented in each category of grave? Why does the grid signify grave-traces, which are absent of remains? Why is el Valle de los Caídos included and what is its relation to the other mass graves? At first glance, given what we know from the text on the information page of the mass grave website, what is visually symbolized and sparsely explained via these six data points stands in excess of the individuals who disappeared violently during the war or subsequent political repression. First, the map historicizes the trafficking of corpses from roughly 1936, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, to 1983, eight years after Franco's death, when Spain was once again a democratic state. These remains are represented by yellow flags and are presumed to be mostly the Nationalist dead, the victors of the Spanish Civil War, who were originally interred in mass graves within the Republican zone during combat. However, over the course of decades these remains were meticulously collected, identified, exhumed, recorded and reinterred in the necropolis commissioned by Franco in 1940 to honor the fallen Nationalist troops in their Crusade against the atheist and immoral Republican forces. Moreover, as these soldiers gradually succumbed to old age and were buried within local family plots, their individual graves were later exhumed to fill the quota of bodies required for the structure. While these numbers are significantly fewer, as the monument neared completion some Republican soldiers were also exhumed from shallow

roadside graves for interment within the complex to meet the compulsive body count. The inclusion of such a minority allowed the site to be framed as one of reconciliation by the regime. According to the website, the blue star representing el Valle houses 33,815 “victims” living out a material afterlife within the crypt and behind the tapestried walls of the basilica.

Despite the disclaimer at the end of the information page that introduces the grave website, the destination of these bodies is well known and documented in Spain as well as on the same map that claims not to triangulate its position. The blue star, symbolizing el Valle de los Caídos was constructed at the heart of the peninsula and is equally positioned at the center of the grave map. The whereabouts of these bodies correspond to an actual location within a designated architectural space rather than an abstract approximation on a fluid terrain. In comparison to the other graves represented on the map, this is the only site that would qualify as a burial place. Under the most ideal of circumstances, the notion of a burial entails a measure of care for the deceased where the body, prior to interment, is prepared and made ready for an imagined afterlife before becoming the focus of a culturally accepted funerary ceremony. The individual’s body is encased in ritual and then placed within an enclosure presumed to be eternal. Moreover, burial places, such as a cemetery, are collective yet individual in their collectivity. A cemetery houses multiple graves ordered and divided into separate or familial plots where members of the same clan, separated by time and the circumstances surrounding their particular deaths, are often buried together. Likewise, such spaces have a sense of generational continuity between the living and the dead honored there. The previous generations are interred

within this demarcated sacred space so that the surviving members of the clan in the present and future are able to visit and memorialize individual and familial plots.

However, the other graves on the landscape, which still reference a body, are sites of violence and human rights abuses where perpetrators systematically abused, terrorized, and tortured victims prior to execution and often mutilated them post-mortem. As the result of an unnatural death, these remains experienced an alternative sort of ritual in the purposeful and reproducible lack of care they received. These bodies were not properly prepared nor were they enveloped within an appropriate funerary rite prior to their anonymous and collective interment. In no particular order, structure or familial affiliation, a single mass grave might contain thousands of individual bodies absorbed within the collectivity of other bodies. Victims were dragged and tossed, not placed, into an enclosure that remained uncovered until the number of bodies fulfilled the spatial demands of the hollowed-out earth. As an ongoing offense, these spaces exist outside the generational continuity of the cemetery and the surviving family was prohibited to visit or commemorate their graves.

In addition to historicizing the circulation of remains, a second function of the map involves anticipating the future trafficking of human remains across the Spanish landscape to pending destinations. Given the vast number of contested gravesites, *all* of these plots identified as containing a body are marked for burial upon exhumation somewhere else on the Spanish landscape; it is just a matter of where and when. A prominent instance is el Valle de los Caídos, which is arguably the most controversial historical memory project for the Spanish government. According to the Ministry's website, on May 27, 2011, the President commissioned a group of experts to provide

options for redesigning the complex. In the Spanish press a variety of possibilities have been discussed including, but not limited to: 1) the removal of the cross and all the bodies, 2) the construction of an alternative site to the Republican soldiers still buried in mass graves or 3) the inclusion of a museum to offer a more balanced history of events. Further complicating matters, in addition to the body of Franco in repose, the floor of the basilica houses the sepulcher of José Primo de Rivera, the founder of Spain's Fascist Party. While the location of the site is static in geographical space, the bodies housed within the memorial, especially the itinerant Republicans, await potential removal.

As for the other categories of remains pending a departure, the second and third instances are the green flagged graves expecting excavation in addition to the fully or partially disinterred red flagged sites. In contrast to the yellow grave-traces of bodies transported to the Nationalist necropolis, on the death map the final destination of the fully exhumed red graves is not identified on the map. It is assumed that these bodies were identified forensically, thanks to descendants, potentially a generation or two removed, who provided DNA samples for their recovery. Remains awaiting reclamation and identification are housed individually in a location determined by the autonomous community where the grave is located. As for the individuals within these graves, both categories include the soldiers or political prisoners from the Republican side who died in battle or who were executed shortly after the war. Moreover, these graves also contain victims of Francoist repression, who perpetrators interrogated, tortured and then granted summary executions between 1939 to 1975. Potentially and most famously included within the category of green graves awaiting

exhumation, are the remains of Federico Garcia Lorca, who is considered the emblematic victim of the Civil War from the Republican side. The location of his body has been a source of myth and legend since his arrest and summary execution beneath an olive tree in the early morning of August 19, 1936 outside of Paraje de Fuente Grande near Granada. Since 2009, recovering his remains has gained renewed interest in part due to the changing political climate in Spain as well as the desire of victims' families to find and identify the bodies of their loved ones who were rumored to have been executed alongside the famous poet and dramatist. Lorca's descendants originally opposed efforts to recover his body, but later relented as to not impede the identification of other victims presumed to be buried in the same grave. The Spanish government regards multiple bodies in a single grave as one entity and requires consent from each family to exhume individual remains from the collective.

What would compel a nation to accumulate and make public an online archive that historicizes collective graves while concurrently serving as a travel manifest reporting and anticipating exhumation and burial? The recorded information is basic and elementary, yet extraordinary due to the comprehensive and meticulous nature of the tally. What are the underlying reasons for such a project? As opposed to graphing the existence of mass graves in a given region on a data-driven diagram, such as a pie-chart or bar graph, the Spanish government chose to visually and geographically couple the mass dead with the living inhabitants of these provinces on an amendable map. The Spanish Civil War ended in 1939 and Franco died in 1975; respectively seventy-eight and forty-two years later, the current generation of Spaniards has a diminished memory of the repression and in many cases the immediate family of the

deceased has also passed away. Despite the rationale behind tracking and displaying mass grave data in such a format, the map reflects a global interest related to the status of the dead in terms of how they are interred and where they are commemorated. Additionally, the map reveals an anxiety to settle accounts for those who were abruptly disappeared as victims of systemic Francoist repression. Furthermore, the map also indicates an ongoing concern for continuing to recognize the exhumation and burial of Nationalist soldiers who perished during and after the Civil War.

In considering the subject matter of my research, the following dissertation addresses contemporary commemorative concerns related to the individuals encompassing each category of grave referenced on the map. In analyzing their relationship to geographical space as a site of interaction between the living and the dead, each chapter provides a snapshot of the current state of memorialization surrounding Federico García Lorca, the Republican mass graves, as well as the Nationalist soldiers and Dictator Francisco Franco interred within el Valle de los Caídos. In terms of geography, these spaces occur not only around the previously concealed grave or within the highly visible national monument, but also locally within the home or around the community in memorial parks. Likewise, room-museums and temporary art installations honoring the famed Civil War dead, can be found not only within Spain but also within a university dormitory and hotel in the international cities of New York and Buenos Aires. The resignification of these domestic sites aligns with Spain's historical memory movement and the attempts to integrate the mass graves within the landscape and society.

However, I also believe that the map's attempt to envisage the dead evidences

a larger problematic concerning their representation not only in the physical spaces on the landscape, but also within visual sites including photographs. The grave map illustrates an aspect of this tension when interrogating how to equally represent all the dead, Republican and Nationalist alike, despite their transitional standing not only on the terrain but also within the Spanish imaginary. In this regard, my dissertation also thinks through images as well as the practice of photography as a methodology in considering the community's relationship to these differing sets of human remains within the context of the contemporary moment of the mass grave exhumation phenomenon. Considering their distinct visual categorizations evidenced by the map as lost, disappeared, emerging, or commemorated remains, various photographic genres elucidate the nature of their representation. For instance, spirit photography, which historically attempted to evoke the manifestation of departed loved ones via the medium of the camera, corresponds to the interventions transpiring with Federico García Lorca's famous lost remains that the public continually attempts to materialize on the landscape. Likewise, memorial photography, which exhibited the body post-mortem and prior to burial, restores dignity to the disappeared and emerging skeletal remains of Republican soldiers and political dissidents being recovered from mass graves. Finally, pictorialist photography, a misguided genre characterized by a painterly aesthetic wrought through techniques of overdetermined composition, informs the relationship between the lavishly commemorated Nationalists and itinerant Republicans to the Francoist memorial complex, el Valle de los Caídos.

While the map of mass graves illustrates some of the content investigated within my dissertation, this online archive also demonstrates key terminology

regarding their visual representation which develops across chapters. Thus far, this rendering of human remains as acknowledged has been discussed in terms of cartography as an interface between their geographical and visual representation, which addresses the following: 1) how the graves are designated on the map and what each category means; as well as 2) the relationship between these categories and how the map accurately indicates each gravesite in physical space. To introduce a set of terms related to visual analysis, the first aspect deals with the mass graves and those interred within them as “referents”. While the second considers how the map operates as an “index” which signals to these referents on the landscape. As referents, these assorted data points symbolize, denote, or refer to differing types of mass graves which presume to exist within the material world. Apart from what each category means as a referent, the map also points out, indicates, or gestures to each of these specific groups by marking them on an interactive visual plane modeled on Spain’s topography. Essentially, the data points signal “look here” to see this category of mass grave demarcated in space. Within each chapter, I consider some aspect of referentiality or indexicality as relating to a photographic genre which informs the representation of each category of grave. As showed on the map, referents occur in various concurrent and distinct iterations and the index does not merely gesture to the denoted referent within the image. In terms of the photographic genres explored, the index either points to the subject within the photograph, the viewer looking at the image, or even the author who composed the resulting picture.

For example, demonstrating the concept of referentiality, the map labors to integrate the various classifications of Republican mass graves onto the landscape

while labeling the empty Nationalist mass graves as seemingly equal data points. Within this distinction between Republican and Nationalist grave, a multitude of overlapping and unique referents occur when exploring the association between designating these data points and their placement. When considering certain aspects of their visual representation, all of the referents from each category could be considered as “absent” or not substantively present within the community as living flesh and blood members. Upon their known or presumed death, the individual as deceased no longer occupies the same place in society. Their spirit departs the body and their remains live out a material afterlife interred or disposed of somewhere. Given this transition into mortal remains, family members and friends are not permitted the same routine interaction with the deceased in the physical spaces that they once inhabited in life. However, we maintain some form of relationship with their referents as denoted within their portraits guarded in the family album. These photographs become sites permitting us to engage with their absent referents, the quality of which depends on how one copes with grief and loss. However, this interaction with the referent is highly relational and bound to our knowledge of the corresponding individual and their lived experiences, the details of which inform how we affectively respond to these representations upon their death.

Depending on the sum of their lives, while each data point aggregates absent referents, other diverging characteristics between Republican and Nationalist graves emerge. Considering the Nationalist dead as referents, the map historicizes their completed transformation from mass grave victims within Republican zones towards recovered remains commemorated in el Valle de los Caídos. Parsed from collective to

singular remains, their bodies no longer reside within the excavated grave traces catalogued within the online archive. Unlike their compatriots, the Francoist regime recovered these individuals long ago and their families had the opportunity to mourn them for a time. However, these remains were not restored to the local community and now belong to a conglomeration of the Church and State and refer to sacred militarized remains interred within the memorial complex. Much like the families of the Republican dead, aspects of their commemoration foreclose interaction with their gravesites. However, in comparison to the other mass graves indexed by the online map, the burial site does point to a concrete geographical location in physical and visual space.

In the case of Republicans, these referents on the map symbolize various conditions within a trajectory including: lost, disappeared, emerging through an open excavation, or recovered after a completed exhumation. In death, each category has a similar point of origin yet where they reside on the landscape in their material afterlife differs in presence. As previously mentioned, insurgents systematically executed Republican soldiers and members of the civil population perceived as ideological threats to the new regime. As a result, after their death in battle or in the aftermath of the Nationalist victory, these political dissidents ended up in mass graves visually concealed within the surrounding area. However, these graves are now in the throes of active resignification from hidden collective monuments to terror towards individual human remains returned to the community. As such, this transition encompasses a series of referents. For instance, referents considered as “lost” not only imply one’s absence in death, but also refer to the lack of a locatable gravesite.

Perhaps after a series of failed exhumations, the location did not yield skeletal remains or divulge the individual that the family desired. Likewise, “disappeared” referents concern those individuals that suddenly went missing, who the family presumes is dead and obscured within a known mass grave on the outskirts of town. Similarly, “emerging” referents signal a pending recovery as the family anxiously awaits the successful identification of remains in order to restore them as individuals to the community. Considering the second term and how the map behaves as an index for these various referents to Republican mass graves, the “look here” quality consistently fails to indicate their locations. Through approximating their positions within given populated areas, the map instead places the burden of representation on the living members of the community.

In terms of their photographs, the status of these mortal remains impacts the viewer’s connection to their visual representations. The abrupt nature of the lost or disappeared referent, the wondering what transpired, and the possibility of their recovery has the capacity to disrupt one’s relationship to an individual’s image. Similar to the undetermined representation of the Republican mass graves on the death map, victims’ vernacular photographs within the family album likewise become “unsettled”. No longer fixed within the referential relationships in which viewers typically interpret portraits, their photographs are now imbued with the violence which resulted in their deaths. What was once considered a typical photograph of an individual attending a wedding, becomes infused with the distressing affect of their abrupt disappearance years later. As opposed to seeing the circumstances which resulted in the subject being photographed during what should be considered as a

joyous occasion, survivors only see the inexplicable index to trauma. Compounded by the probability that these family members never directly witnessed the cause of their loved one's death, a powerful "afterimage" develops to substitute the experience. As the new referent for the disappeared individual, the viewer derives a traumatic afterimage from indirectly observed violence or a plausible reproduction surmised via secondary visual sources. Given the lack of locatable presence of the victim's body and the history of violence subsequently marking their referent, the family is denied the prospect of grieving their material remains at home or mourning their image in photography.

In closing, my dissertation *Mourning the Image, the Afterlife of Bodies in Contemporary Spain*, explores the unique relationship between the individuals found in graves across the peninsula as well as their representation in photography, art exhibitions, and ritualized iconography. In this combination of geographical and visual spaces of interaction between the living and the dead, this project considers current political issues related to overall repatriation of the Republicans while also questioning the role of Nationalists interred within the monument. However, in looking at the particular circumstances surrounding reconciling all the victims of the Civil War as Spaniards, my project is deeply invested in how viewers relate to images. As such, the social uses of photography figure prominently within the following pages. From the documentation of one's identity in portraiture, mitigating personal loss in spirit and memorial photography, or seeing the presence of the photographer in pictorialism, each speak to an association with images that encompasses historical and contemporary practices of viewership.

CHAPTER 1

SPIRIT EMBODIED, MITIGATING LORCA'S DISAPPEARED REFERENT IN ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

The relationship between photography and death coincides with the invention of the camera. In exploring the intimate bond between the individual photographed and their subsequent image, many thinkers such as André Bazin, Roland Barthes, Robert Pogue Harrison and Susan Sontag have contemplated the practice of photography as something mortuary resulting in the crafting of a death artifact. This death-coded language appears frequently in comparisons between the person beyond the frame and the one recorded within the image, some of which include: embalming the subject; making their likeness a death mask or a *momento mori* that reminds the viewer of the subject's passing and mortality; or after experiencing this person's loss, the haunting we endure in mourning when vernacular photographs remind us of the circumstances surrounding their death. In elaborating this mortuary tendency in photography, writers utilize these anthropological illustrations to interrogate a nexus between the historical individual photographed, the individual within the image, their lifetime, their death, and the nature of their enduring representation.

For example, Bazin contemplates this "preservation of life by a representation of life" as he situates the photograph within a larger tradition of anthropomorphic representation such as ancient Egyptian embalming, the modeling of substitute mummies in effigy, and even the painted portrait (238). Surviving the body's decay and enduring in material representation aids memory within the community. Bazin

contends that “the image helps us to remember the subject and to preserve him from a second spiritual death,” a death that might entail being forgotten or having never existed (238). Elaborating Bazin’s remarks, Pogue Harrison asserts that “the photograph retains essential links to its ancestral origins in the death mask, if only because it allows a person’s likeness to survive his or her demise” (148). Moreover, Sontag’s canonical trace reading of the photograph as “something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask,” which as “the registering of an emanation” is “a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be” (154). Unlike other visual or plastic arts, the photograph is intimate, having a vestige of contact with one’s body through light and time that gestures to a moment safeguarded within the image.

However, anthropologically speaking, while death is a uniform constant in the human experience, the quality of death varies substantially between individuals. Continuing with these analogies to death, what if the subject of photography abruptly went missing? What if because of such an absence, a death mask could not be formed from their visage? What if their sudden death was a result of violence enacted on their body because of genocide? What if they were not buried, but rather concealed and hidden from their family members in an unmarked mass grave as an act of systematic State repression? The designated individual within the image now refers to someone who has vanished under suspicious circumstances. When looking at photographs, regardless of the subject matter or when the images were recorded, these extreme cases disrupt our viewing experience as we attempt to mitigate the referent’s status as disappeared.

By referring to an unavailable entity no longer fixed to a certain place at a given time, the disappeared referent evidences a paradox. Since the photograph now denotes someone abruptly displaced, viewers attempt to negotiate the referent's lack of locatable presence which contradicts the visual immediacy of the person represented within the image. Consequently, the disappeared referent also disturbs notions of photographic indexicality wherein the physical relationship between the person represented and their photograph becomes problematized by their lack of materiality or closure for the family who assumes the individual has died. Moreover, in parsing out this problematic, the disappeared referent intersects with notions of presence and absence as well as how one copes with grief and loss surrounding violent death.

In exploring this referential paradox, I will investigate how photography and commemorative art exhibitions celebrating Federico García Lorca endeavor to locate the famed poet and Civil War victim. Considering the status of his remains as missing on the landscape, these projects create a visible trace of Lorca, which mitigates his loss and creates a presence for his disappeared referent. As such, these art installations and photographs chart an alternate trajectory of recovery, where the poet's spirit embodies the frame or space of a room. In these cases, as opposed to considering the photographic index as recording an event in the past that has happened, these commemorations and photographs gesture towards a tentative future happening. For Lorca, such happenings entail his presence and return to sites occupied abroad, the exhumation and the recovery of his remains within Spain, in addition to his spirit inspiring artists and inhabiting the family's summer home in his

native Granada. What remains of Lorca via artifacts, personal effects, photographs and his literary works or what emerges from his creative legacy within ongoing cultural production, permits commemoration and vicariously mourning of his loss in the absence of his body. In other cases, this new corpus of Lorca-inspired cultural production permits us to settle accounts on behalf of his disappeared referent: the grievances we perceive the poet experienced in life which remain pending in death.

Embodying Departed Referents in Spirit Photography

In order to differentiate how one engages with present as opposed to disappeared referents as relating to violent death and loss, in this section I will elaborate two portraits of President Abraham Lincoln. The first photograph was taken by Alexander Gardner, who recorded the last image of the President, prior to his assassination, between February and mid-April 1865 (See Figure 1.1 – “Last Lincoln Portrait”). In 1872, at the behest of his widow Mary Todd Lincoln, spirit photographer William Mumler produced the second portrait of Lincoln in his Boston studio (See Figure 1.2 – “Mary Todd Lincoln with the Spirit of Her Husband Abraham Lincoln and Son Thaddeus”). While the first portrait, corresponds to events limited to the President’s lifetime, the second portrait incarnates his spirit through the experience of being photographed and orients the image towards a future happening. Modeled on previous vernacular photographs of the deceased, an afterimage of Lincoln manifests within the frame, serving as an interface for the viewer to interact with the once invisible disincarnate being. Exceeding the events limited to his lifespan, this new referent of an ever-present Lincoln based on previous photographs transcends the President’s assassination and consoles his bereft widow.

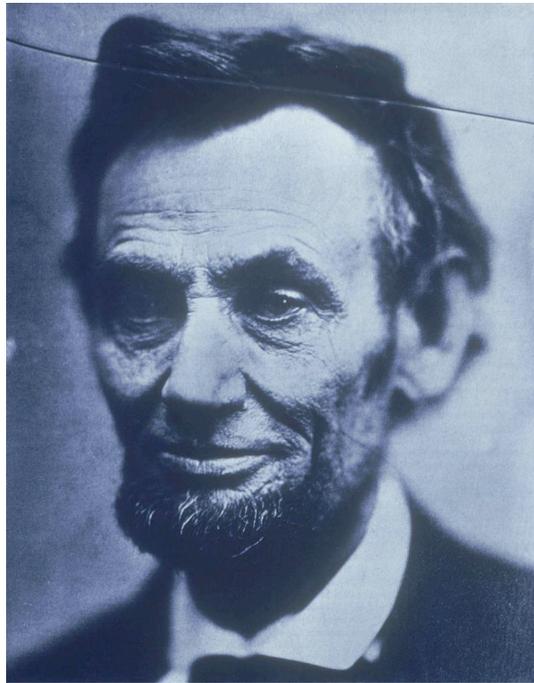


Figure 1.1 – “Last Lincoln Portrait,” between February and mid-April 1865

Photograph credited to Matthew Brady by ARTstor, but the original uncropped and undamaged version appears in Alan Trachtenberg’s text, *Lincoln’s Smile and Other Enigmas*, and is attributed to Civil War and presidential photographer, Alexander Gardner (75).

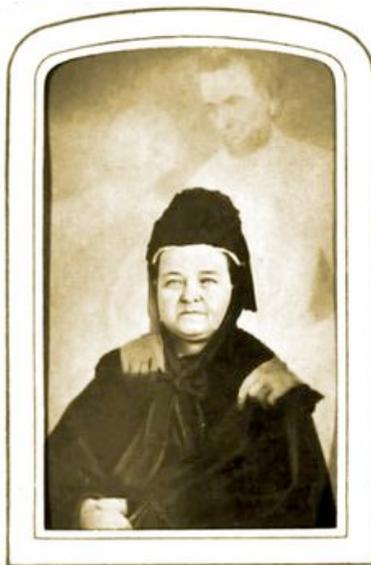


Figure 1.2 - “Mary Todd Lincoln with the Spirit of Her Husband President Abraham Lincoln and Son Thaddeus,” 1872

Photographed by William H. Mumler, scanned from *The Strange Case of William Mumler Spirit Photographer* by Louis Kaplan (170).

Consider how Alan Trachtenberg engages with Lincoln's referent, alive between February and mid-April 1865, seated before a camera for his last session with Gardner: "What do we make of what looks like a smile on Lincoln's last portrait, just weeks before his death --- melancholy, relief, resignation, amusement, a private communication with himself during the sitting" (76)? While his question foreshadows the finality of the President's impending demise at the hands of Booth, the writer ponders Lincoln's internal thoughts which gestures to his life as lived during and prior to the moment of his photographing. In Trachtenberg's analysis, Lincoln was there, seated before Gardner, thinking about something, as humans tend to do when pausing before the camera for a period of time. Trachtenberg's comments also reveal how viewers typically narrativize photographs of highly recognizable people. When looking at such portraits, the viewer often tethers the known or imagined experiences which comprise the referent's lifetime, occurring beyond the photograph, to their representation within the photograph. In a similar vein, Trachtenberg later waxes poetic on Walt Whitman's comments regarding "aspects" of the President's face as a "pattern American" (75):

Eventually the whole history of the nation and its most typical character traits [became] inscribed and indexed by the face of Lincoln. How can we look at Lincoln's photographed face without seeing the debates with Douglas, Fort Sumter, the Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg, the Second Inaugural Address, John Wilkes Booth? Is it in Lincoln's face we see, or versions (there are many) of the history of which he partook? (75)

Regarding viewership, Trachtenberg directs his comments to Americans, members of the same community that encompass "the nation," who recognize the events, places, and historical figures that connote by association to Lincoln under

surface of his portrait. From a collectively experienced cultural history, these categories resonate uniquely for Americans as opposed to viewers from other countries unfamiliar with the mentioned associations. When lacking clues to explicitly denoted events, viewers from a given community assert known associations within the subject's lifetime on to the portrait, Trachtenberg alludes to this tendency by considering the emblematic relationship between Lincoln, then, and the American viewer, now, by stating "the most typical character traits [became] inscribed and indexed by the face of Lincoln" (75). We see Lincoln's legacy, from which we envision our own set of modern values. One might admire Lincoln's stance against slavery, his ability as an orator, or his merits as a leader. Creating a distinctive relationship with his referent, these assimilated categories of our imagined sense of Lincoln then, months prior to his death, reinforce how we self-identity as Americans now.

Emphasizing this contemporary American engagement with the image of Lincoln, John Berger explains: "The formal arrangement of a photograph explains nothing. The events portrayed are in themselves mysterious or explicable according to the spectator's knowledge of them prior to his seeing the photograph" (25). As evidenced in Trachtenburg's reading, the photograph includes a spectrum of historical episodes, the triumphs as well as the tragedies, that correlate with Lincoln's lifetime as a public figure. In Berger's writing, he contends that "the language in which photography deals is the language of events" (26). A photograph "isolates, preserves, and presents a moment taken from a continuum" of external references (26). Later in his remarks on the portrait, Trachtenberg claims that "our readings depend on larger

stories we tell (or hear) about the man and his history” (76). Given what one might know about the 16th President of the United States, a viewer might inscribe other anecdotes from his personal life on the portrait such as the fraught relationship with his wife, the loss of two of his sons while he was in office, as well as rumors of his same-sex attractions.

For this representation of Lincoln, one seen as a living referent within the photograph, we limit the continuum of events to those comprising his lifespan as opposed to the afterlife of his body post-mortem. The photograph of the body lying in state, the death mask, or other such artifacts are derived from an alternative referent, that of the corpse decaying into remains. To some extent, while also memorializing the living as referent, the deceased as referent encompasses a distinct history and continuum of events which varies from those prescribed to the once living subject of photography. A non-metaphorical death artifact of Lincoln might elicit a series of associations related to how his remains were mourned, interred and commemorated. On a photograph of Lincoln’s body lying in state, one might inscribe the elaborate memorial services, including the funeral train, or even the failed plot to steal his body entomb in Oak Ridge Cemetery.¹ However, regardless of Lincoln’s referent as living or deceased within the image, similar readings occur based on what viewers know regarding the continuum of events attributed to the given referent.

Trachtenberg’s reading of Lincoln’s last portrait, is typical to what we have come to expect when writing about photography, especially in the case of a well-

¹ See Thomas J. Craughwell’s monograph, *Stealing Lincoln’s Body*. Craughwell was inspired to write about the incident after growing up hearing stories about the nearly successful grave robbery while visiting the Lincoln Monument in Springfield, Illinois as a child. As opposed to the portrait discussed by Trachtenberg, these Lincoln memorial sites are imbued with their own histories, an overlapping continuum of sorts, as related to the afterlife of his remains.

known individual within the community. Similar to re-reading a familiar narrative and knowing what happens to the protagonist in the next chapter, in retrospect our second reading foreshadows their untimely demise at every twist and turn because we know how the story ends. As viewers of photographs, we often approach images in a similar fashion via the events comprising the referent's known or imagined past. Likewise, our reflections on those photographs bring their past into our present as viewers. However, the genre of spirit photography operates under a unique set of parameters, wherein the event of photographing produces the referent whose subsequent trace manifests when developing the negative. In his essay, "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations," Tom Gunning claims that "spirit photographs were the products of unknown spiritual forces who used the images of the dead as a way of communicating their existence to the living" (65). As opposed to documenting the appearance of ghosts among the living, photography permitted their embodiment via the portrait, which served as an interface or technologically advanced medium between the living and the departed. As oriented towards the future during the moment of being photographed, these portraits do not document the spirit's appearance, but rather permit the disincarnate beings to inhabit the photograph as a visible referent and interact with the living. In order to explain how a resulting image generates such a referent, some background information on spiritualism as a movement will situate spiritualism in the context of a photographic genre.

Beginning in 1848 when the Fox sisters of Hydesville, New York, who serving as mediums, claimed to commune with the departed "through raps and sounds, spiritualism developed into a full-fledged doctrine that posited a dynamic interaction

between the living and the dead,” which flourished in American society through the Reconstruction period (Cloutier 20). Besides holding the belief that spirits existed beyond their corporeal containers, the movement also embraced the more progressive leanings of society such “as women’s rights and abolitionism and promoting religious views alien to the Christian mainstream” (20). Offering an alternative secular solace to the upheaval of the Civil War, spiritualism experienced immense popularity by permitting a grieving nation to communicate with their departed loved ones in the here and now as opposed to waiting to commune with them again when joining them in the afterlife. The movement’s influence even extended to the White House, where the First Lady, Mary Todd Lincoln, a known spiritualist, was rumored to have hosted séances. Spiritualism also gained a measure of international influence and popularity. Prior to the Civil War, the Spanish Church considered the movement a considerable threat to the faith. On October 9, 1861, the Catholic Church in Barcelona issued “one of history’s last *autos de fe*” that “involved the burning of three hundred books confiscated at the French border” on the topic of spiritualism (Paredes 1). However, the *auto* “actually marks the expansion of the Spanish Spiritualist movement, which would endure and even strengthen right up until the time of the Civil War (1936-1939)” (1). Much like the American variety, spiritualism in Spain “was generally embraced by people associated with scientific innovation and inclined toward social reform” (1). Moreover, Spanish spiritualists turned to science and their understanding of “electricity, magnetism, and inventions like telegraphy and photography” to corroborate their fascinations with the occult, including “telepathy, hypnotism and somnambulism” (3).

Indeed, technological advancements aided the spiritualist cause by providing scientific verification that defended their beliefs against skeptics. Regarding how people in the 19th century reconstructed their relationship to information and their own bodies, media historian Jeffrey Sconce claims: “Technologies like the telegraph ... gave cultural aid to the Spiritualist movement by effectively separating messages from the bodies of their senders” (qtd. in Garber). With the invention of the camera, “images were disentangled from their subjects” similar to how “information was disentangled from its sources” via the telegraph (qtd. in Garber). Thus, “ghosts were, in their way, everywhere;” and the material world seemed to coexist with the unseen spirit realm (qtd. in Garber). Likewise, through the “invisible forces” of electricity and magnetism, science had captivated the public by demonstrating “this idea of an invisible world that acts upon the visible world” (Firenze 70). Photography appeared at the forefront of visualizing the unseen and “showed itself capable of reproducing images that were beyond the capacity of human vision” (73).² Spiritualists made a concerted effort to equate the scientific invisible with the unseen spirit realm via the technology of the camera. For spiritualists, “photography seemed to give evidence of a metaphysical belief” regarding the nature of spirit beings (Gunning 67). Consider the following remarks from spirit photography acolyte, James Coates, author of

Photographing the Invisible:

To say that the invisible cannot be photographed, even on the material plane, would be to confess ignorance of the facts which are commonplace – as, for instance to mention the application of X-ray photography to the exploration of the muscles, of fractures, of bone,

² Within the same article Firenze cites “Eadweard Muybridge’s 1878 motion studies of a horse that proved that during a gallop a horse has all four hooves off the ground at one time – a phenomenon invisible to the naked eye and therefore in the past, a subject of great debate” (73).

and the internal organs. Astronomical photography affords innumerable illustrations of photographing the invisible. (2)

Coates directs his statements to detractors who would deny technology's capacity to reveal underlying truths regarding the natural world. While his comments allude to the difficulty of photographing entities in the hereafter, he dedicates the entirety of his monograph to recounting witness testimony, accompanied by photographs, which attests to the veracity of "portraits of living discarnate beings or spirits" manifesting on our material plane (4). In classifying images and cataloguing first-hand accounts, Coates also writes a spirit photography primer that explains how a session works, what happens in the developing process, as well as the nature of the referent and index of the resulting photograph.

First regarding the session, Coates attests to the spontaneity and free will of individuals sitting for a portrait, who "have chosen their own time, position, or place for operations" (8). Spirit photographers, such as William Mumler, set up studios charging approximately ten dollars per session, when a standard photograph for the time cost about a quarter apiece (Cloutier 21). The photographer could not anticipate the clientele nor guarantee the manifestation of the departed loved one, who the surviving family member sought to contact. Coates corroborates the mercurial will of the spirits by stating "at times, a clearly identifiable portrait of a departed person is obtained, of whom no similar likeness had ever been taken in life" (8). In fact, during a session the camera might manifest "the double" of "living persons," some of which the sitter might have seen out in the world (9). Due to this set of unpredictable

circumstances, individuals made repeat visits to the studio until finding the desired loved one on film.

Given that the purpose of the session was to invoke an inhabiting, aspects of the séance figured prominently in the encounter between the living and the departed via the camera. Due to the hefty price of admission, and the likelihood that a spirit might not appear on film, the séance validated the occasion of being photographed, satisfied some aspect of the sitter's desire for contact with their departed loved ones, and blessed the camera as the new medium that exceeded the abilities of their human counterparts. While clairvoyants possessed the ability to see "the spirit form in the room before it has been photographed," the camera as medium permitted the spirit's manifestation within the print (Coates 8). Considering the example of the Mumler's portrait studio, spiritualist circles regarded Hannah Mumler as a clairvoyant, healer, and medium, who took an active role in the operations (Cloutier 21). Harkening back to the Fox sisters and a medium's ability to perceive the invisible spiritual entities within a room, Hannah's "entrances into her husband's studio were often accompanied by raps across the floor – a standard indication that spirits were present" (21). Prior to taking the photograph, she "would describe to the fascinated sitter the image that would appear on the plate" (21). Likewise, photographers aided in facilitating these encounters with the invisible. In his autobiography, Mumler attests to "the soul-satisfaction of being an [sic] humble instrument in the hands of the invisible host that surrounds us for disseminating this beautiful truth of spirit-communion" (Kaplan 69). Mumler views himself as a mere vessel attuned to the will of the spirits; the "intelligent discarnate" beings who "in the Invisible are controlling, directing," and

guiding the portrait experience (Coates 12-13). Within this role as photographer-medium, he would gesture dramatically to welcome spiritual manifestations, whose presence were sometimes corroborated by his dancing camera (Cloutier 21). Through the impromptu séance and thanks to the technology of the camera, entities within the invisible realm might elect to manifest on film.

After establishing an environment conducive to a “spirit-communion,” successful invocations become apparent “through the process of developing,” when “a further chemical change is brought about which is necessary in order to reveal the image or portrait produced by the *unknown factor or factors*” (Coates 8). As an intersection between science and the occult, the developing procedure adhered to standard portraiture, where in a multistep chemical process produced the image from film; yet an unknown intervention on behalf of the spirit caused their manifestation on the print. As intelligent beings, choosing to manifest, “they were defined as presences that had not been visible, at least to the sitters, at the time the photographs were made and whose appearance first on the negative and then on the print were a surprise to the sitters and sometimes the photographers” (Gunning 51). In the material world, as an invisible referent their presence could only be perceived by mediums or clairvoyants, yet film might reveal a sighting when the disincarnate being chose to inhabit their previous human form.

As a referent, the photographic print allowed the spirit to inhabit a semblance of their human form. “Spirits transformed radically after death, and existing photographs ... might provide the necessary model for them to... recreate their previous appearance in a spirit portrait” (Gunning 65). Coates attests to this belief

when quoting Mr. Blackwell's testimony in his monograph: "Some spirit people seem to find it very difficult to remember how they looked in earth-life, and refresh their memory by referring to a photograph or portrait ... they sometimes transfer so exactly that undeserved suspicion is cast upon the unfortunate medium" (171).³ Blackwell's comments suggest that "these spiritual forces may actually need to consult existing photographs in order to create these images" and that the developing process permits their transference from disincarnate being to a semblance of their human form (Gunning 65). Thus, the camera, via the event of photographing and during developing, fashions the spirit as a spectral human form in an afterimage based on referents derived from other photographs. By virtue of having been photographed in life, the subject can again manifest on film as an entity approximating their previous form. The photograph substitutes the lost referent of the deceased in death and resurrects the referent anew within the spirit portrait. Like a text translated from an earlier version because the original text went missing, these afterimages are derived from images whose source referents, the individuals photographed, are absent, lost, or missing. In terms of photography, a paradox occurs within the trace reading. These photographs, resulting from other visual referents are in their own way, traces of traces. However, the second trace does not result in a copy of who existed before, such as a photograph of a photograph or a painting of a painting, but rather a new referent modeled from the visual remains of the individual previously portrayed within other images. By substituting the lost referent of the deceased, the spirit photograph

³ Here "the unfortunate medium" refers to the practice of spirit photography that was later criticized for producing inauthentic portraits by way of double exposure of the same section of film.

resurrects and remakes their referent. Likewise, through visualizing the invisible, the photograph also now marks this new referent as a trace who inhabits the frame.

As an index, the spirit portrait further complicates a trace reading of who existed then as opposed to who manifests now within the photograph. According to this line of thought, instead of “providing indexical evidence of the appearance of a spirit ... the spirit photograph was a creation by spiritual forces rather than a record of their appearance,” which orients the image towards a future manifestation, or happening, since the event of photographing (Gunning 65-65).

This happening, the spirit’s fashioning of a human form, occurs during the developing process. The photograph produces the trace of a future event as opposed to documenting one that has already occurred. In the strictest of terms, the photograph recorded the relative who sat for a portrait within a studio. Through the recording of the event and during the process of developing the negative, the spirit might elect to manifest as opposed to the spirit did manifest on film. One interpretation documents the event of the manifestation, while the other produces the manifestation because of the photographing. Historically during the American Reconstruction period, spirit photography attracted mourners to studios with the hope of contacting departed loved ones. After having disappeared, in some cases the remains of these soldiers never returned home from war, but managed to return and inhabit portraits. As such, mourners sought spiritual happenings via the interface of the photographic print as a medium to cope with their grief and loss. We see evidence of this happening through the spirit portrait as medium in Mrs. Mumler’s interactions with Mrs. Lincoln when she returns to the studio to collect her portrait.

Regarding the spirit portrait of Abraham Lincoln, Mumler wrote about the experience of photographing the widow Lincoln in his autobiography, *The Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler in Spirit-Photography*, published in 1875. After suffering a lifetime of tragedy, which included not only witnessing her husband's assassination but also outliving three of her four sons, Mrs. Lincoln was a creature of despair in continual mourning and declining mental stability by the time she was photographed by Mumler. Prior to her husband's death in 1865, the couple had buried two young sons due to sudden illness. At the age of four, Edward Lincoln died in 1850, and during the presidency, William Lincoln passed away in 1862 at the age of eleven. Regarding her mental health, "during the White House years she suffered from anxiety, paranoia, narcissism, mood swings and depression, and in later years her symptoms grew to include hallucinations and delusions" (Emerson). Intensifying her mood swings and depression, Willie's death devastated the First Lady. "Her grief was so pronounced that her husband actually warned her that if she did not overcome it, she would be driven mad and that he would be forced to commit her to an asylum" (Emerson). As a coping mechanism, she turned to spiritualism and found comfort in seeking out the spirits of the dead and conversing with them through séances (Emerson). Later in 1872, while grieving the loss of yet another son, her youngest Thomas, who had passed suddenly at the age of eighteen, Mrs. Lincoln sought out the familiar comfort of communing with the departed via spirit photography.

While her portrait was widely circulated, we know little regarding Mrs. Lincoln's experience of being photographed apart from Mumler's account within his

autobiography.⁴ Under the assumed name of Mrs. Lindall, dressed in black and wearing a veil, Mrs. Lincoln entered unassumingly into the modest portrait studio (Kaplan 92). She casually talked with the previous client who had just finished his session and inquired if he recognized the figure that appeared on the negative (92). After agreeing to Mumler's fee, she sat down in front of the camera and removed the veil just prior to her photographing (92). At this point in her sitting, Mumler does not describe the details of what transpired during the session. Apparently, Hannah did not preside over the sitting, but the spirits impressed their will upon the clairvoyant Mrs. Mumler when Mrs. Lincoln returned to collect the finished print and looked at the photograph for the first time. Within his book, Mumler relayed the following exchange between Mrs. Lincoln, and Mrs. Mumler who "controlled," or channeled, two spirits:

My wife was almost instantly entranced, and, turning to Mrs. L., said: "Mother if you cannot recognize father, show the picture to Robert; he will recognize it." "Yes --- yes, dear," Mrs. Lincoln said; "I do recognize it; but who is now speaking? she asked. The control replied: "Thaddeus!" A long conversation ensued. Mr. Lincoln afterwards controlled and talked with her --- so the lady-friend informed me who had thus unexpectedly been a witness to this excellent test. When my wife resumed her normal condition, she found Mrs. L. weeping tears of joy that she had again found her loved ones, and apparently anxious to learn, if possible, how long before she could join them in their spirit home. (93)

In Mumler's account, the most recently departed loved ones from Mrs. Lincoln's life substantiate the identity of the spirits who manifest within her portrait. "Thaddeus" is

⁴ On February 24, 1872, *The New York Times* published a story originally printed in the *Boston Herald* the day before, which seems to corroborate Mumler's account of his encounter with Mrs. Lincoln or her interactions within the spiritualist circles of Boston. "Incognito and closely veiled [she] attended a public séance of a well-known lady medium ... on which occasion the spirit of her lamented husband appeared and, by unmistakable manifestations, revealed to all present the identity of Mrs. Lincoln, which she had attempted to keep secret." However, given the exchanged reported in Mumler's autobiography, this identity of this "well-known lady medium" is likely his wife Hannah.

presumed to be the spirit of Mrs. Lincoln's recently departed son, Thomas, who went by the nickname "Tad". In Mumler's caption and interpretation of the photograph, Tad appears to the left side of the frame. One cannot easily discern his human-like form given only the silhouette. Yet his manifestation is apparent in the interaction that occurred with his mother via Mrs. Mumler. The spirit of the younger son beseeches his mother to show the photograph to Robert, Mrs. Lincoln's eldest and only surviving son. Through the photograph as medium, she gains access to what was once imperceptible and communes with each departed loved one in a present-tense happening with the spirit who embodies the frame.

The photograph shows a seated Mrs. Lincoln, hands clasped, gazing directly at the camera, and almost staring beyond the viewer (See Figure 1.2 – "Mary Todd Lincoln with the Spirit of Her Husband" and Figure 1.3 – "Mumler Spirit Portrait Catalogue"). Cloaked in mourning evidenced in various layers of heavy black velvet, her head is covered and only her face and clasped hands are visible in the print. Mimicking the weight of her clothing, she appears somber with deep frown lines. Providing a measure of hope and levity, the embodied figure of her departed husband stands in the background and cradles each of her shoulders. The spectral outline of his defined hands and fingers contrasts the textured thickness of her cloak. The details of his face are extraordinary in comparison to other spirit entities portrayed by Mumler. His iconic profile, strong jawline, pronounced beard, nose, and forehead signal reminders of Lincoln from other representations. Resurrected from the visual remains of his other portraits, this semblance of a much younger Lincoln faintly smiles and gazes down at his grieving wife. As an incarnated spirit being, he is no longer



Figure 1.3 – “Mumler Spirit Catalogue,” 1870-1875

Photographed by William H. Mumler, United States, two pages from an album of 112 cartes de visite and cabinet cards 1870-75. Eight albumen silver prints 10 x 6 cm approx. (each) 28 x 20.3 cm (album page). The College of Psychic Studies, London.

Image found online at a blogsite for the University of Sidney Nineteenth-Century Study Group and the same set of photographs appears in Crista Cloutier’s essay, “Mumler’s Ghosts,” reproduced in *The Perfect Medium, Photography and the Occult* (26)

wounded by John Wilkes Booth and transcends his assassination. This representation does not adhere to the events within the continuum of Lincoln's lifetime and forecasts what comes next: life after death. Likewise, this referent of Lincoln made whole again and generated in spirit outlasts the decay of his bodily referent as a decomposing corpse on the funeral train, or the deteriorating remains within his memorial. As opposed to remembering him in death, incapable of providing her solace, his spirit manifests on the negative and provides Mrs. Lincoln immediate comfort. While embracing her image, this referent of her husband also corroborates her beliefs about the afterlife by making visible his unseen presence. His body was lost, but his spirit has endured, evidencing that he has always been present with her as a disincarnate being in the invisible and now as a semblance of his human form embodied within film.

While history proved to discredit the practice of spirit photography, in instances of absent, missing, or lost referents, contemporary photographs evidence a similar engagement, wherein the viewer attempts to mitigate the referent's lack of presence. Spirit portraits, such as Lincoln's, resulted in a literal manifestation of loss, as visualized through incarnated spirit beings inhabiting photographs, which substituted the referent of the departed loved one and alleviated the distress of their passing. While this spectral representation of Lincoln resulted from his widow's deep personal grief, his various referents explored in this section do not encompass a disappearance in the sense that his remains are situated on the landscape and within cultural memory. When looking at Lincoln's last photograph as the President, or his reincarnated spirit portrait from a previously invisible referent, viewers

subconsciously register at some point since his assassination that mourners buried and honored his body. We memorialized his remains and continually commemorate his image on currency, in effigy via sculpture, and acknowledge his legacy through highly recognizable public monuments hailing his achievements. While Lincoln's death was tragic and traumatic at the time, one can easily locate his mortal remains on the American landscape enshrined within Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois. Bearing in mind Lincoln as a public figure and the possibility of mitigating loss through art and photography, I would like to consider the case of Federico García Lorca as a disappeared referent on the Spanish landscape. As a celebrated public figure and cultural treasure, Lorca lacks a monolithic shrine in which to house his remains and reflect on his legacy. Instead, the community commemorates and leaves traces of the poet in the places where he was known to be found in order to compensate for his disappeared referent.

The Passport and the Bedroom: Lorca's Death and Perpetual Return

Adhering to the formatting guidelines for a passport photograph, he sits for a portrait ensuring that the proper ratio of head to torso appears within the frame, allowing a clear view of his face (See Figure 1.4 – “Federico García Lorca Passport Portrait” and Figure 1.5 – “Federico García Lorca Passport”). His eyes gaze directly at the camera. His neutral expression and full closed lips do not quite reveal a smile nor betray a frown. Fully aware of the image's intended use as part of an official travel document, he adopts a conventional pose: straight back, relaxed shoulders, the right-hand crosses over the left, overlapping palms rest on the crossed legs of his light-colored trousers. He appears most like himself as to not later arouse unwanted



Figure 1.4 – “Federico García Lorca Passport Portrait,” 1929

Federico García Lorca poses for his passport photograph, which was later included in a letter to his friend, Carlos Morla Lynch, dated June 6, 1929. In a revised edition of *Poet in New York*, Christopher Maurer included the cropped photograph, as well as a translated passage from the letter to Lynch where Lorca analyzes the portrait.

Image from an unknown photographer found online at *Literary Surrealism Meets Urban Inequality*, a blog dedicated to some of Lorca’s earlier poetry.

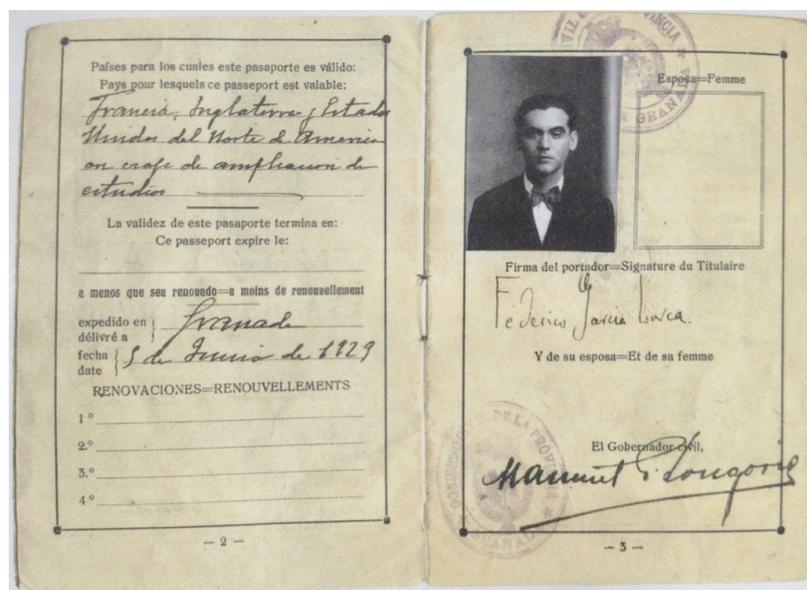


Figure 1.5 – “Federico García Lorca Passport,” 1929

Federico García Lorca’s passport, including the cropped portrait. This artifact was on display as part of the “Back Tomorrow: Federico García Lorca / Poet in New York” exhibit at the New York Public Library from April 5 through July 20, 2013. The image appears in an article written by Antonio Muñoz Molina, “El viaje de Lorca,” published online by *El País*.

suspicion on the occasion when customs officials might inspect the passport and compare the photograph to the man standing before them. He wears a dark suit jacket, possibly navy or black, the details of which are difficult to discern given the quality and scale of the image. One cannot distinguish the outline of the collar; the shapeless lapel disappears between chest and shoulders. The sharp triangular fragment of his white shirt, accessorized with a capricious polka dotted bowtie, contrasts the ordinary jacket.

In the looking at the photograph, apart from the starkness of the white shirt and the quaintness of the bowtie, as a viewer I am drawn to the background and overall quality of light, which casts unevenly across his face. A shadow covers his right side, obscuring the details of his temple and ocular area. One only perceives the whites of his eye and a faint pupil as opposed to the more demarcated eyelids and brow line on the left profile. Yet, the casting shadow on his face is absent from the background, which appears much brighter. Likewise, the brighter and more complete view of his left profile contrasts the darker background over his shoulder. Technically speaking, countless explanations are possible for the casting of shadows over the face as well as the variation in background. Somewhere outside the frame perhaps an object, person, or even the layout of the room, obscured the light source. Likewise, perhaps he sits beside a window that illuminates his left side, while concealing the right. Equally, the anomaly could be related to the developing process. Whatever the reason, the man posing for the photograph, Federico García Lorca, also took an interest in the peculiarity. Yet, he considered this image more a spiritualist portrait rather than a passport photograph.

In a letter to his friend, Carlos Morla Lynch, dated June 6, 1929, while relaying the itinerary of his first international trip abroad, Lorca commented on his likeness and enclosed a copy of the photograph. The letter serves not only as a caption for the print, but also captures the poet's mindset and alludes to the circumstances leading up to his travels to New York, Vermont and Cuba. This correspondence accompanied by the photograph, as well as critical commentary on his literary work from this period, greatly inform Lorca lore and the genesis of his formation as Spain's foremost ghost. The letter conveys a tone of confidence underpinned by fragility; Lorca feels certain that this international adventure will creatively inspire him, while he begins anew and heals from some recent personal losses. At the beginning of the letter, Lorca remarks optimistically that he is somewhat surprised that in a few days he will leave Madrid despite being "un inútil y un tontito en la vida práctica" ["useless and silly when it comes to practical life"] (my translation) (*Epistolario* 611). However, his friend and mentor, Fernando de los Ríos, who was guest lecturing at the time, will help him navigate his "primeras dificultades" ["first difficulties"] while he acclimates to the city and residency at Columbia University (611). Despite his hesitation to leave home, Lorca asserts the necessity for making the trip, from which he will later benefit creatively: "Me encuentro muy bien y con una nueva inquietud por el mundo y por mi porvenir. Este viaje me será utilísimo." ["I find myself well and with a new restlessness for the world and for my future. This trip will be of great use to me"] (my translation) (611).

Lorca explains to Lynch that his father is giving him the money for his expenses and expresses self-satisfaction by deciding to make the trip. In fact, in

February 1929, Federico García Rodríguez was deeply concerned for his son's emotional well-being and inquired after one of his friends, Rafael Martínez Nadal, as to the cause (Gibson, *A Life* 231). Lorca's friend "did not reveal all he knew about Federico's problems, but said that a trip outside Spain would undoubtedly be beneficial to the poet;" a tone that Lorca echoes in the letter when considering the usefulness of the voyage (231). Given social mores at the time, Nadal concealed from the poet's father that he believed Lorca's depression was derived in part from his recently concluded relationship with Emilio Aladrén Perojo, who had become romantically involved with the woman that he would later marry (231). The nature of the Aladrén – Lorca friendship was ambiguous, according to Lorca intimates as well as contemporary historians.⁵ Some accounts situate the strikingly handsome Aladrén

⁵ Biographer Ian Gibson dedicates a chapter to the Aladrén – Lorca affair in his book, *Lorca y el mundo gay*, which was published in 2016 as a supplement to his original biography of the poet, *Federico García Lorca, A Life*, published in 1989. Between the two texts Gibson amends earlier comments regarding possible lovers to better develop Lorca's personal life given new information and contemporary acceptance of his status as an icon for the LGBTQ community. While Lorca has long been hailed as an emblematic figure for Republican victims of the Civil War, due to his outspoken liberal tendencies and criticisms of the church, widespread rumors of his homosexuality became incongruent with his formation within this political mythology. For example, the clearest motive for his murder revolves around his sexual orientation. The recently discovered report written in 1965 by the Granada police headquarters mentions that Lorca "confessed" before being executed, which first, confirms his assassination was an official act, and second, verifies his sexual orientation prior to the murder. Essentially, his confession substantiates the accusation and thus legitimizes his death. (See James Babcock's article for information on the official order). Moreover, Lorca was supposed to be leaving Spain because he had decided to accept Margarita Xirgu's invitation to travel to Mexico. However, he delayed his departure while waiting for his paramour, Juan Ramírez de Lucas, to secure the appropriate travel authorization. Due to his age, the 19-year-old student and aspiring actor required his family's permission to leave the country. Lorca had kept their romance a closely guarded secret only referring to him as "El rubio de Albacete" in his *Sonetos del amor oscuro* or *Sonnets of Dark Love* (written in 1936, but not published until 1983). Likewise, Ramírez de Lucas concealed their relationship until just before his death in 2010 when he decided to give his sister a box containing mementos from Lorca, which included drawings, poetry, his diary and letters. In fact, Ramírez de Lucas possessed the last known letter written by Lorca dated July 18, 1936. (See Amelia Castilla and Luis Magán's article which reports on the discovery of the letter). In light of these circumstances, authorities had the opportunity to arrest Lorca because he was in love. Ironically, in 1936 if Lorca truly was the heartbroken melancholic poet enshrined within this letter and celebrated by scholars of his last completed manuscript, *Poeta en Nueva York*, he might have lived out his life as an expatriate in Mexico writing a litany of salacious gay love sonnets. Lorca's actions demonstrate that heartbreak initially motivated him to leave Spain, but regardless of the risks, "el amor oscuro" or "the dark love" between two men compelled him to stay.

as a notorious womanizer, with whom the sensitive poet had fallen madly in love.⁶ Others suggest that the bisexual Aladrén aggressively pursued a physical relationship with Lorca, from which the young sculptor professionally benefited.⁷ As a successful writer, Lorca wielded a measure of cultural influence and showered praise on Emilio by introducing him at social events as one of the most promising contemporary Spanish sculptors (Gibson, *Lorca mundo gay* 221). Regardless of the nature of their association and given his growing affections for his future wife, either Aladrén did not reciprocate Lorca's romantic interest or chose to terminate their physical relationship. Each scenario paints Lorca as either the victim of unreturned desire or a scorned lover suffering from Aladrén's cruel machinations. Due to his emotional attachment and subsequent rejection, the loss of Aladrén's companionship devastated Lorca while also creating something of a social scandal in Madrid.⁸ In terms of his passport portrait, this cloud of suspicion and public scandal hovers in the background of the photograph. Lorca seems keenly aware of this symbolism when corresponding with Lynch and referring to recently survived brutal attacks to his character within the letter.

His association with Aladrén was not the only betrayal and personal loss casting a shadow on the poet and motivating his departure from Spain. At the time, Lorca also felt estranged from the Spanish artist, Salvador Dalí, whom he held in close

⁶ Aladrén "was a born womanizer, just the sort of person to cause misery to a sensitive homosexual admirer. And it seems beyond any doubt that at this time he was having exactly such an effect on Lorca" (Gibson, *A Life* 231).

⁷ "Aladrén era bisexual y tuvo relaciones físicas con Federico, pero el 'amor' (ese amor que a Lorca se le resistió tanto) no llegó o no llegaba. Para huir de ese duro desamor, Lorca se fue a Nueva York" ["Aladrén was bisexual and had physical relations with Federico, but 'love' (that love which Lorca resisted so much) was not received or returned. To escape this difficult heartbreak, Lorca went to New York"] (my translation) (Villena).

⁸ In the introduction to the English translation of *Poet in New York*, Christopher Maurer writes: "Aladrén seems to have played cruelly with Lorca's emotions and used him to further his own career. The affair was a subject of gossip in Madrid, and Lorca's disorganized, impulsive way of life was now a source of worry to his parents, who hoped that in New York he would learn to administer his time, and their money, more wisely" (Lorca, *Poet in New York* xvi).

confidence since 1925 (Lorca, *Poet* xvi). In early 1929, Dalí and Spanish director Luis Buñuel released a surrealist film collaboration, *Un Chien Andalou* in Paris. During his stay in New York, Lorca commented to a friend, Angel del Río, that “Buñuel has made a tiny little shit of a film called *An Andalusian Dog* – and I’m the Dog” (Gibson, *A Life* 229). While identifying his Spanish province of origin in the title, in some interpretations of the film, “the heterosexual impotence of ‘The Personage,’ played by Pierre Batcheff, was an allusion to Lorca’s homosexuality” (229). Regardless of the intended or accidental insinuation, “the poet undoubtedly believed that in the film Salvador and Luis were holding up to public scrutiny the private side of his personality” and Lorca considered the move an attack and betrayal of his friendship (229).

In retrospect, this perceived public critique of his sexual orientation further exacerbates the private loss of Aladrén, and again positions Lorca as a victim.⁹ Suggestions of these aggressions appear in his letter to Lynch when he mentions “las últimas brutales flechas,” as “recently [shot] brutal arrows” from an unnamed hunter pursuing his quarry. In the complete quote, Lorca writes: “Tengo además un gran deseo de escribir, un amor irrefrenable por la poesía, por el verso puro que llena mi alma todavía estremecida como un pequeño antílope por las últimas brutales flechas.” [“I also have a strong desire to write, an unrestrained love for poetry, for the pure verse that fills my still shaken soul like a small antelope by the latest brutal arrows”]

⁹ Maurer writes about the emotional crisis Lorca feels between his public and private representation as it relates to his sexuality as thematic within his poetry and correspondence. “The contrast between his public ‘image’ and his private self, both as a writer and as a man (for Spanish society could not accept his homosexuality and several of his closest friends chose to know nothing about it), was becoming ever more grotesque and painful” (Lorca, *Poet in New York* xv - xvi). This “contrast” that Maurer suggests seems to culminate in 1929 with the perceived slights by Dalí and Buñuel as well as his falling out with Aladrén.

(my translation) (Lorca *Epistolario* 611). While the concluding phrase of Lorca's remarks indicate the fragility of his emotional state, the opening statement signals a creative optimism. Despite, or perhaps because of this personal disquiet, Lorca's upcoming trip has inspired a renewed desire to write and an unstoppable love for poetry's pure verse.

While emerging from his depression, Lorca's initial travels outside of Spain and during his residency at Columbia University marked a professional turning point, the impetus of which the poet alludes to in the letter to his friend. Lorca scholar, Christopher Maurer elaborates the trajectory of this transition within the introduction to the English language translation of *Poet in New York*, the collection of poems written during his sojourn in the New World. In 1928 Lorca's third book of poems, *Romancero gitano*, translated as *The Gypsy Ballads*, was celebrated as a critical success and "had drawn national attention to his poetry for the first time" making "him known as a 'gypsy poet,' a term which had once amused him but which he now found revolting" (Lorca, *Poet* xv). Maurer notes that Lorca expressed irritation that the public "pigeonholed" him as a "savage poet" because of the conflation of his life and character into the ballads (xvi). Regarding this misidentification, Lorca commented to a friend: "The gypsies are nothing but a theme. I could just as well be the poet of sewing needles or hydraulic landscapes" (xvi).¹⁰

However, the collection of New York poems resulting from "his first visit to a foreign country, his first encounter with the racial and religious diversity of a

¹⁰ One can only wonder what Lorca would think of how his contemporary public image was crafted from this collection of poems out of his experiences in New York City as opposed his deeply personal last published work, the *Sonnets of Dark Love*.

democratic society,” as well as “his first, frightening glimpse of urban crowds” impacted Lorca, “who had always been deeply interested in social problems” (xiii). Regarding this thematic and stylistic turning point in Lorca’s work, Maurer writes that the collection of New York poems is “inspired by the city, rather than the country,” “not tied in some way to Andalusia,” and “directly address social injustice” (xviii). Echoing his remarks to Lynch in his pursuit of poetry’s pure verse, Lorca employs free verse more liberally and explores alternative poetic imagery (xviii). Likewise, “New York also served him as a great school of theater” (xiii). Lorca had recently begun his career as a dramatist after staging two of his own works in Spain, and seeing the third closed by government censors while in rehearsal (xiii).¹¹ According to Maurer, the trip gave him “the opportunity to distance himself psychologically from the Spanish theater” and consider larger questions such as the future direction of the performing arts (xiii). Lorca began writing two of his important experimental works while abroad, *Así que pasen cinco años* [*Once Five Years Pass*] and *El público* [*The Audience*] (xiii). Upon his return to Spain, these theater groups “served as models ... for the drama groups he himself founded during the first years of the Spanish Republic” (xiv). What Lorca observed regarding the conventions of American theater, he later adapted to remake Spanish theater. Apart from the substantial creative impact on his poetic and dramatic style, Lorca’s travels also debuted the poet-dramaturge to the international community, who would later claim him and embrace his legacy after his death.

In returning to Lorca’s correspondence with Lynch on the eve of his departure, the letter offers the modern reader a glimpse into the life of the poet at this given

¹¹ At the time of his trip, “Spain had been governed for almost six years by the dictator Primo de Rivera” and the office of the censor monitored cultural production (Lorca, *Poet in New York* xiii).

moment. Within this snapshot, we read the cusp of greatness, the origin of his international appeal rooted in a fresh start. He creatively begins anew while attempting to emotionally convalesce from a series of recent personal losses that further intensify his own anxieties regarding his sexual orientation. Coalescing around this mix of hope and despair, Lorca begins to conclude his correspondence to Lynch by interpreting a print of his portrait that he included in the letter. In a parenthetical epilogue that captions the photograph; he writes the following comments:

No me sustraigo a enviarte una prueba del espiritualísimo retrato que me he hecho para el pasaporte. Bordea la luz del asesinato y la esquina nocturna donde el delicado carterista guarde el fajo de billetes. Por capricho del objetivo surge detrás de mi espalda un arpa blanda como una medusa y todo el ambiente tiene un tic finito de ceniza de cigarro. (Lorca *Epistolario* 612)

[I can't resist sending you this most spiritualistic of portraits --- the one they took for my passport. It borders on the light of murder; borders on the nocturnal street corner where the delicate pickpocket stashes his wad of money. The whimsical lens has captured, over my shoulder, a sort of harp, soft as a jellyfish, and the whole atmosphere has a certain finite tic, like the ash of a cigarette.] (translation by Christopher Maurer from the opening pages of Lorca *Poet in New York*)

Lorca begins the reading by sending Lynch “una prueba del espiritualísimo retrato,” which Maurer translates in the opening pages of *Poet in New York* as “the most spiritualistic of portraits.” Depending on the context, “prueba” also means “evidence,” “proof,” and the sense of corroborating a belief. Given the known activity of the spiritualist movement in Spain at the time, the comments amusingly gesture to photography’s believed capacity to portray spectral entities. While sitting for the portrait, the poet apparently made contact with a spectral presence that came to inhabit the frame. Considering the notable contrast in light within the background and the

shadow casting on his face, perhaps Lorca also found the “arpa blanda como una medusa” [“a sort of harp, soft as a jellyfish”] over his shoulder uncanny. Similar to the mix of sentiments emoting within his correspondence, the reading of his portrait is sinister, whimsical, and finite. The darker tone predicts some form of violence in the bleakest recesses of the street, where thieves and murders prey on their victims. Contrary to the photograph as an artifact that immortalizes the subject by surviving the body’s decay, for Lorca the atmosphere “tiene un tic finito de ceniza de cigarro” [“has a certain finite tic, like the ash of a cigarette”] that burns out and deteriorates into delicate cinders. Lorca describes the image of a life about to be snuffed out like a candle. He concludes the letter by instructing Lynch: “Guárdalo o rómpelo. Es un Federico melancólico el que te mando y el Federico que te escribe es ahora un Federico Fuerte” [“Keep it or tear it up. A melancholy Federico is the one that sends it to you and the Federico who writes you now is a strong Federico”] (my translation) (Lorca *Epistolario* 612).

For the modern reader of his letter and photograph, this spiritualist portrait made visible the yet unseen future of Lorca’s death, the circumstances of which are familiar to scholars and historians. Predicting his own death, Lorca’s ghost inhabits the frame and casts a shadow across his face and within the background of his promising life, which ended too soon. The poet will be executed somewhere on a highway embankment between the towns of Víznar and Alfacar within seven years of having sent this letter and portrait to Lynch. Embedded with this correspondence, the poet has written an ominous epitaph that foreshadows not only his assassination but also the pending nature of his mortal remains on the landscape, which led to his

classification as a ghost. What was once a letter that lamented personal loss and alienation from friends and lovers became an eerie prophecy for the physical attacks that lead to his fate as one of the earliest victims of the war. Despite numerous recent exhumation attempts and against the wishes of his surviving family, Lorca's skeletal remains have yet to be found.

The public's relationship to Lorca, his melancholia and coming to terms with his death, bears striking similarities to the circumstances surrounding French philosopher, Roland Barthes's sudden accidental passing. Within his text, *Light in the Dark Room, Photography and Loss*, Jay Prosser analyzes the ongoing fascination with the philosopher in order to make sense of Barthes's loss within the academic community.¹² Barthes wrote *Camera Lucida*, his monograph dealing with death, loss and photography, while mourning the passing of his mother. The text was published on January 28, 1980, in France as *La chambre claire: Note sur la photographie*. On February 25, 1980, a laundry van struck Barthes down on the streets of Paris while walking home; he later succumbed to his injuries on March 26, 1980. Within two years, the English translation was published posthumously in 1982. Regarding this uncanny quality of predicting, realizing, and repeating unintended circumstances, Jay Prosser remarks: "Barthes's essay on photography was sparked by the *tuché* – the accident that returns the real – of Barthes's mother's death; and it collided with or elided into the *tuché* of his own death" (Prosser 20). This gesture then repeats in our

¹² Prosser mentions, "since his death in 1980 there have been some ten book-length studies, a biography and a wealth of critical essays, and much of this material is characterized by an incredible sense of loss" (19). One of the more recent collection of essays, Jean-Michel Rabaté's *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, is considered something of a memorial to Barthes, some seventeen years after his death. Prosser cites contributor, Daniel Ferrer, who states that "Barthes cannot be safely distanced, he is still relevant to us; the mourning period is not over, and I do not see any sign that it is coming to an end." (19).

own readings of *Camera Lucida*; we mourn Barthes from the position he occupied while keeping watch over his dying mother (20). Whatever Barthes mourned, or failed to mourn in the experience of losing his mother “has come to be embodied in our mourning” or inability to mourn him (20-21). Prosser attests that *Camera Lucida* “holds our melancholia” and became “the epitaph on Barthes’s tomb, or rather the stone we repeatedly roll back to keep Barthes’s tomb open” (20).

In terms of Lorca, striking parallels emerge between the celebrated poet and the renowned philosopher. Like Prosser’s text that mentions the litany of criticism hinging on the inability to mourn Barthes, Maria Delgado itemizes “an inordinate number of studies” which “dwell on death as primary motif” of Lorca’s oeuvre (34). One such example is Paul Julian Smith’s reading of “the elegiac approach as one of the dominant modes of Lorca criticism” (34). Smith writes that the text is considered “an unfinished monument to a life cut short, a theater in which future death is at once anticipated and commemorated” (qtd. in Delgado 34). Delgado agrees that these “theatrics of death” exist within his work. Indeed, Lorca provides many anecdotal and written illustrations of allying with death, such as the passport photograph and correspondence with Lynch. Others include his statements about death, “his concept of *duende* as the death muse,” his posing as a corpse, or appearing “decapitated or mutilated” in Dali’s artwork between 1924 and 1930 (34). However, these interpretations “are inextricably and often unwittingly” interwoven with the circumstances surrounding his tragic passing (34). While philosophy, photography, and literary criticism engages Barthes’s legacy and returns “him interminably as dead – the dead in our life,” Lorca’s perpetual failed exhumation returns his referent as

disappeared (Prosser 20). Given he lacks a tomb in which to inter and memorialize his missing skeletal remains, greater emphasis is being placed on constructing an alternative corpus of materiality for Lorca via his correspondence, creative legacy, personal effects, and photographs, which locate him on the landscape at sites he was known to have traveled or lived.

A salient manifestation of Lorca's *tuché*, concerning his perpetual return, coalesced around the rediscovered lost manuscript for *Poeta en Nueva York*. According to Spanish news outlets celebrating the discovery, on July 12, 1936, Lorca visited the offices of the magazine *Cruz y Raya* to finalize publishing details with his editor, José Bergamín (Fotheringham; Molina). Bergamín was not in the office and instead of speaking in person, Lorca placed the manuscript on his desk with a handwritten note: "Querido Pepe: He estado a verte y creo que volveré mañana. Abrazos de Federico" ["Dear Pepe: I was here to see you and I think that I'll be back tomorrow. Take care Federico"] (my translation) (Molina) (See Figure 1.6 – "Volveré mañana / I'll be back tomorrow"). Lorca never returned and instead fled Madrid for Granada to stay with his family due to the political unrest occurring in the capital. In the wake of the Civil War, which erupted weeks later, Bergamín carried the manuscript to Paris and then Central America while escaping Spain (Fotheringham). After the initial posthumous publication in 1940, the manuscript disappeared resulting in "disputes lasting for decades over the accuracy of ensuing published versions" (Fotheringham). In 2003, the manuscript resurfaced in the hands of an un employed Mexican actress; the auction house Christie's then sold the text to the Federico García Lorca Foundation (Fotheringham). Like the passport portrait and correspondence with

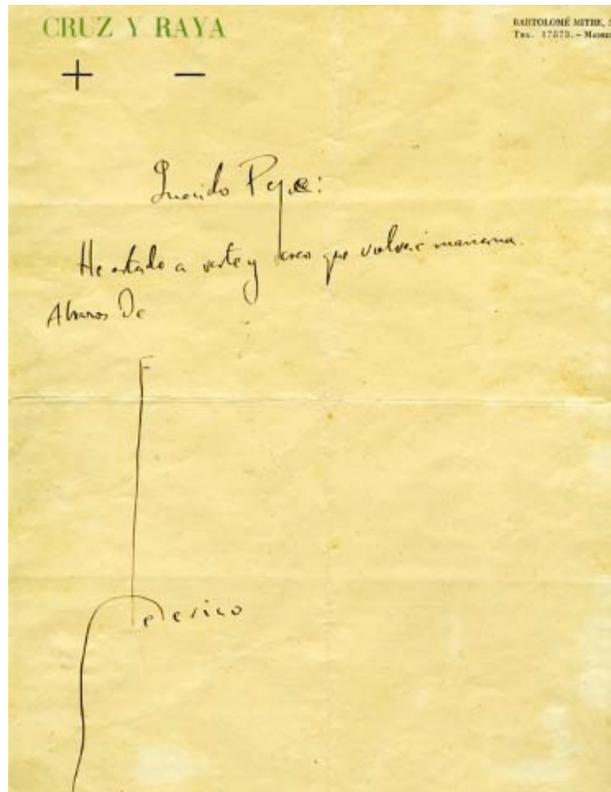


Figure 1.6 - “Volveré mañana / I’ll be back tomorrow,” 1936

Digitized letter written by Federico García Lorca and published online at *Entretanto Magazine*. In his article, “El viaje de Lorca,” Molina references the content of the letter.

“Querido Pepe: He estado a verte y creo que volveré mañana. Abrazos de Federico”

[“Dear Pepe: I was here to see you and I think that I’ll be back tomorrow. Take care Federico”] (my translation)

Lynch, both of which have been republished in editions of the same collection of poems, the lost manuscript as the missing referent to subsequent translations, is yet another allegory for the circumstances surrounding Lorca's passing and status of his remains as disappeared.

However, between April 5 through July 20, 2013, he symbolically returned to New York for a temporary exhibition, *Back Tomorrow: Federico García Lorca / Poet in New York*, curated by Christopher Maurer from Boston University and Andrés Soria Olmedo from Universidad de Granada. Taking their inspiration from the note to his editor promising Lorca's return, the exhibition was a joint venture between the New York Public Library and the Fundación Federico García Lorca. As part of a large scale citywide celebration of Lorca's trip, the commemoration also entailed a series of lectures, performances, panel discussions, and poetry readings. Displayed objects included not only the manuscript and letter, but also the remains of Lorca's personal effects such as his passport, bank book, library card, and guitar, along with other personal correspondence, photographs as well as drawings. In a nod to the title of the book and Lorca's cultural inclusion within the American imaginary, the New York Public library webpage advertising the exposition hailed these mementos as "traces of a Poet in New York ... and of New York in a poet" (New York Public Library).

These objects corroborate where he was, what he did, confirm his actions and correspond to events, much like physical evidence or photographs which gesture back to verifiable moments in time. This constellation of artifacts document Lorca; fix him in the present through recovering traces of his past and placing them in one location. While commemorating his legacy, these fragments of Lorca then also substitute his

disappeared referent now for a specific duration within a determined place. In order to compensate for the inability of finding his singular grave lost on the Spanish landscape, one encounters evidence of Lorca in the plurality of sites where he was known to be found, such as the streets of Harlem, the campus at Columbia University, and the New York City Public Library. Through this assemblage of traces, similarities arise with spirit photography which evokes a happening. Like portraits photographed while the subject was still alive, these objects remind a departed spirit of their earthly attachments in an attempt to coax them from their invisible realm and inhabit the space of a frame, or in this case, perhaps a room.

As part of this fascination with the materiality of objects and artifacts, or even facsimiles tracing directly back to Lorca, the curators also recreated the room he inhabited during his stay at Columbia University. Antonio Muñoz Molina, renowned author reporting for *El País*, remarked that Lorca had occupied “una habitación casi idéntica” [“an almost identical room”] while writing and drawing in three other Spanish residences: Huerta de San Vicente, Acera del Casino house in Granada, and his apartment on Alcalá Street (my translation). Molina compared this iteration with others throughout Spain, when writing: “Ha sido crear un trasunto y un resumen de todas esas habitaciones sucesivas, no de sus contornos tangibles sino de su atmósfera de recogimiento laborioso. El espacio físico es una cámara de tiempo, el ámbito de una conciencia desusadamente alerta a todo...” [“They have created a transcript and a summary of all those successive bedrooms, not their tangible contours rather their atmosphere of diligent seclusion. The physical space is a chamber from that time, the scope of a consciousness unusually alert to everything...”] (my translation) (Molina).

In Molina's comments, the phrase "cámara de tiempo" translated as room or chamber from a nonspecific previous era loses a second meaning. Figuratively speaking, his term also alludes to restaging of the room as a "time camera".

Molina's comparing the room to a time camera, harkens back to photography's capacity to allow a viewer to experience what lies beyond human perception such as revealing the invisible truths of the natural world or transporting the viewer back to a point in the past. However, this room in the spirit of other rooms in which Lorca dwelled, extracts referents from the past to construct the present and future. Maurer and Olmedo created something of an afterimage of his bedroom based on previous iterations, or images, of those identical spaces and captured the environment of what it might have been like for Lorca to live in this room with a heightened awareness of his unfamiliar New York City surroundings. An awareness that he sought out when writing and drawing in isolation, which having fewer furnishings permitted. Likewise, visitors to the exposition experienced this afterimage and walked away with a visceral connectedness to Lorca by occupying an iteration of the space that he inhabited in the past. By staging the space as a model based on others, gives the sense that Lorca might reappear to work at the desk and sleep in the bed. The room awaits his return.

As Molina's comments suggest, evoking Lorca within the space of the bedroom is a common commemorative motif. A similar restored bedroom space, in which he slept and worked, exists within the Castelar Hotel and Spa in Buenos Aires, Argentina.¹³ On October 13, 1933, during a subsequent trip out of the country, Lorca occupied room 704 for fifteen days while giving lectures and debuting his theatrical

¹³ The following link to the hotel website explains some of the history and details related to the guided tour: <http://www.castelhotel.com.ar/es/cultura.php>

work, *Bodas de sangre*, translated as *Blood Wedding* in English (Cornejo; Irigaray). The poet intended a month-long stay in Buenos Aires, but remained for half a year after becoming enamored with the city (Irigaray). When the space first opened in 2003, designer Laura Molina redecorated the room, which the hotel considered a “cuarto museo” [“room museum”] (my translation) (Cornejo). Molina claimed that “la idea no fue dejar el cuarto tal como estaba en la época de García Lorca. Sino reambientarlo” [“the idea wasn’t to leave the room as it was during García Lorca’s time. Rather to restage it”] (my translation) (Cornejo). Like the exposition in New York, Molina designed the room as an inhabiting experience for the visitors. Since 2013, the room has been fully restored and furnished with additional objects, which suggest a more material presence of Lorca including: a suitcase, bronze bed, night stands, a writing desk and chair, as well as a portrait of Lorca and written works within frames (See Figure 1.7 – “Castelar Hotel, Room 704”).¹⁴ The surface of the desk showcases an original Lorca drawing of the dramaturge and his friend, fellow poet Pablo Neruda, along with a vintage magazine reporting the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (See Figure 1.8 – “Castelar Hotel, Room 704, Writing Desk”). The juxtaposition of such artifacts alludes not only to Lorca’s enduring creative legacy, but also his tragic demise during the onset of the war. As the self-proclaimed Lorca museum in Buenos Aires, the Castelar Hotel also offers a guided tour of the room along with showing visitors other urban haunts frequented by the poet (Irigaray).

¹⁴ Image found online at *Huellas de Buenos Aires* under an entry titled “Federico García Lorca dejando su huella en Buenos Aires,” translated as “Federico García Lorca leaving his trace on Buenos Aires,” which highlights notable moments from the poet’s trip to Argentina. See the following website: <https://huellasdebuenosaires.wordpress.com/tag/bodas-de-sangre/>



Figure 1.7 – “Castelar Hotel, Room 704,” 2015

From the WordPress website, *Huellas de Buenos Aires*, managed by Leandro Vallejos, Técnico Universitario y Guía de Turismo. The photograph from an uncredited photographer appears within an entry dedicated to Lorca’s travels in the city.



Figure 1.8 – “Castelar Hotel, Room 704, Writing Desk,” 2012

Photographer unknown, image included in an article, “El ‘Tour Lorca’ en Argentina,” by Juan Ignacio Irigaray from *El Mundo*.

These places situate Lorca within the locales to which he traveled as well as celebrate the poet within international commemoration projects. For a season, Lorca historically occupied these rooms and dwelled in these cities while giving lectures, promoting his work, drafting manuscripts, and reacquainting with old friends. Like spirit portraits as a site which evokes a happening with a disincarnate entity from the invisible realm, these time chambers permit interaction with Lorca through staging his personal effects. Previously unperceivable and essentially invisible as foreclosed in time, this simulation creates the ambiance of a room from his past within our present. The spirit portrait and the time chamber, evidence differing qualities of immediacy and corporality. As an interface, the spirit portrait permitted the bereaved family contact with the deceased via a materialized semblance of their human form derived from previous vernacular photographs. As a once invisible entity perceived by the viewer in the present, the ghost manifested around the living subject within the developed print.

However, the space of a restaged room, furnished with artifacts and historical facsimiles, transports the visitor back to an imagined moment in Lorca's travels to Argentina and New York prior to his assassination in which we anticipate his imminent return to this particular bedroom. While we curiously peruse his belongings and examine the furnishings, at any moment Lorca might walk through the door to resume several tasks: dress for dinner or collect his suitcase, sit down to write at his desk or lay awake tossing and turning all night in bed. Like a viewer awaiting the revelatory experience of seeing a spirit that might elect to manifest within a photograph, we anticipate Lorca to emerge in the space of his one-time bedroom, in

which he inevitably returns as disappeared. While the spectral referent in a spirit photograph comes to occupy our realm in the present, visitors to Lorca's bedroom inhabit a moment in his past as opposed to the poet embodying the same room in our present.

In terms of Lorca's embodiment and mitigating his disappeared referent, I believe that these room-museums represent a progression towards a more forceful manifestation of the poet's spirit in our present via other art installation projects organized within similar spaces of inhabiting. In charting this trajectory from situating Lorca's absence and perpetual return abroad, the following section will analyze photographic representations localized to the area where he lived, died, and for many years was believed to be buried. Given the necropolitics of Franco's regime during and after the Civil War, the mitigation of Lorca's disappeared referent originates with photography that attempted to place him on the landscape.

An Olive Tree as Lorca's Referent on the Landscape

Much like the exhibitions tracing Lorca within the space of a bedroom, such as *Back Tomorrow* in New York and the room museum in the Castelar Hotel, photographs originating in Spain attempt to substantiate his disappeared referent through visual remains. In this section, I will elaborate representations isolated to the area of Granada, which provide a more localized view of the poet within the context of the Spanish landscape. The first set of photographs relate to Parque Lorca, a memorial space located off the highway between the villages of Alfacar and Víznar. The second set of photographs revolved around the *Everstill / Siempretodavía* exhibit held at family's summer home, Huerta de San Vicente, which was acquired in 1985 by the

local government in Granada and restored as a house museum. Art installations and photographs associated with these places, endeavor to create a trace of Lorca's remains on the landscape and within the family's summer home, which substantiate his recovery while engaging in a vicarious mourning ritual that perpetuate his cultural legacy.

While Lorca's reading of his passport portrait foreshadowed his trajectory as the foremost ghost of the Civil War, compensating for his disappeared referent in Spain begins with oral testimonies related to his presumed gravesite beneath an olive tree. To understand the olive tree as a significant Lorca referent, historical context will situate what happened to the poet after his travels abroad. Biographer Ian Gibson has dedicated his career chronicling the life, death, and the subsequent afterlife of Lorca's mortal remains concealed somewhere on the landscape. In his biography, *Federico García Lorca, A Life*, Gibson pieces together some of the events and circumstances surrounding the poet's arrest and disappearance. As mentioned earlier, he was in Madrid prior to the Civil War and unexpectedly departed the capital despite promising to meet with his editor. Just three days after his return to Granada, on July 17, 1936 the military rebellion against the Spanish government erupted in North Africa and spread throughout the Spanish mainland. Insurgents successfully managed to take control of Granada by July 23rd, establishing "a reign of terror ... in the city, which, over the following months, led to the deaths of many hundreds of innocent men and women" (Gibson, *A Life* 450). Rebels executed left-wing prisoners daily and "assassination squads operated with impunity, butchering and torturing and reducing the population to a state of absolute panic" (450).

For the García Lorca family, events took a turn for the worse when a group arrived at the Huerta to question the caretaker Gabriel Perea regarding the whereabouts of his brothers (450). The situation turned violent, and the poet attempted to intervene on behalf of Perea, who was tied to a tree and beaten with a whip (450). Upon defending Perea's innocence, Lorca was thrown to the ground and kicked. His attackers recognized him as "the little queer friend" of the socialist professor Fernando de los Ríos and placed the poet under house arrest (450). Fearing for his life, Lorca sought refuge with the Rosales family due to their conservative political connections. However, by August 15th another group arrived at the Huerta with a warrant for his arrest; the following day, the Civil Government took him into custody from the Rosales home in a very public display of force. "The block was cordoned off, police and guards surrounded it and armed men were even stationed on the rooftops to prevent the poet from escaping that way" (455).

After spending a couple of nights in the Civil Government building in Granada, on August 18th or 19th, he was transferred to La Colonia near Víznar, a summer residence for schoolchildren that the Falangist insurgency converted into a military position and makeshift prison during the war (464-465). Since July 1936, "the cars came each night with groups of condemned men and women" (465). Near La Colonia, prisoners were summarily executed on the slope or in the gully off the highway between the towns of Alfacar and Víznar (466). After being shot, gravediggers buried victims where they lay (466). Per oral histories, "shallow graves were dug all over the slope – there were no trees here then – the bodies were tossed in a thin covering of stones and soil was thrown over them" (466). By 1949, survivors

had marked “low hollows and mounds” with “a small stone” (466-467). However, by the early 1950s, “these headstones had been removed and pines had been planted, presumably to mask the outlines of graves which, none the less, were in some cases still clearly visible ten years later” (467). Somewhere in this landscape of makeshift roadside graves, Lorca was presumed to be executed and buried along with primary school teacher, Dióscoro Galindo González from Valladolid and two Grenadian bullfighters, Joaquín Arocollas Cabezas and Francisco Galdí Melgar.

In 1965 while visiting Granada to conduct research for his first book, Gibson became aware of the rumored roadside unmarked grave, the location of which had been passed down generationally to members of the community. Given that he was a foreigner, locals believed that the biographer would be permitted to ask questions and research the circumstances surrounding Lorca’s assassination with greater latitude. At the time, the Dictator Francisco Franco was still in power and the Guardia Civil occasionally monitored the area; unauthorized locals feared asking too many questions about Lorca’s possible burial within the embankment (Gibson, *La fosa* 17). As a matter of fact, Agustín Penón, the last researcher to inquire after the poet and to be escorted to the rumored grave, went missing ten years earlier after spending fifteen months investigating Lorca’s death (17). Continuing the research of the disappeared Penón, a local resident, Castilla Blanco, escorted Gibson to the rumored gravesite and olive tree.

After the transition to democracy, the provisional government of Granada became interested in the site. A formal inquiry was opened on February 29, 1980 in order to find Lorca’s grave and commemorate the site with a monument. The

following statement, as relayed by Gibson in his monograph, became part of the documentation surrounding a possible grave:

Que conserva una fotografía, que deja unida a este documento, del lugar en que debe estar enterrado el poeta García Lorca: lugar próximo a la carretera, en las proximidades de Fuente Grande, ante la peña que se ve en dicha fotografía. Lo sabe – sigue diciendo la señora Illescas – porque seis de los componentes de la llamada Escuadra Negra estaban alojados en casa de su tía, en Víznar, y la misma persona que lo fusiló mostró a su tío el lugar donde lo hizo, que fue delante del peñasco que se muestra en la fotografía; por consiguiente, deduce que el sitio de enterramiento lógicamente debería estar próximo.

[I want you to keep a photograph, which is attached to this document, of the place where the poet García Lorca should be buried: not far from the road, in the vicinity of Fuente Grande, before the rock shown in said photograph. It is known [as the gravesite] – Mrs. Illescas keeps saying – because six of the members of the so called Black Squadron were lodged in her uncle’s home, in Víznar, and the same person that shot him showed her uncle the place where he did it, which was in front of the rock which is shown in the photograph; so, it can be logically deduced that the burial site must be nearby.] (my translation) (19-20)

As evidenced by Blanco escorting Gibson to the site in 1965, Illescas’s testimony shows not only an urgency to document the location of the possible grave, but also corroborates that the community had long believed Lorca was executed and buried in this vicinity (See Figure 1.9 – “Lorca’s Olive Tree 1” and Figure 1.10 – “Lorca’s Olive Tree 2”).¹⁵ Mentioning the photograph three times in the text signaled the dire need to visually mark the terrain and safeguard the location. Plausible reasons for this urgency might entail some or all of the following circumstances: 1) substantiating oral testimonies with visual documentation; 2) the ongoing surveillance from the Guardia Civil and the public’s inability to access the site during the dictatorship; 3) the natural

¹⁵ Both images were found online in an article written by Gibson, “El Estado debe buscar de una vez a Federico García Lorca,” petitioning the State to search for his remains in 2009. Gibson did not reprint Figure 1.9 – “Lorca’s Olive Tree 1” within his monograph about Lorca’s grave. Instead the image inscribes the book’s cover, including writing in Spanish marking the embankment, the tree and the noticeable stone.



Figure 1.9 – “Lorca’s Olive Tree 1,” n.d.

As a precursor to his monograph, *La fosa de Lorca: Crónica de un despropósito*, Ian Gibson wrote a series of articles in *El País*. This image from an uncredited photographer was included in “El Estado debe buscar de una vez a García Lorca”.

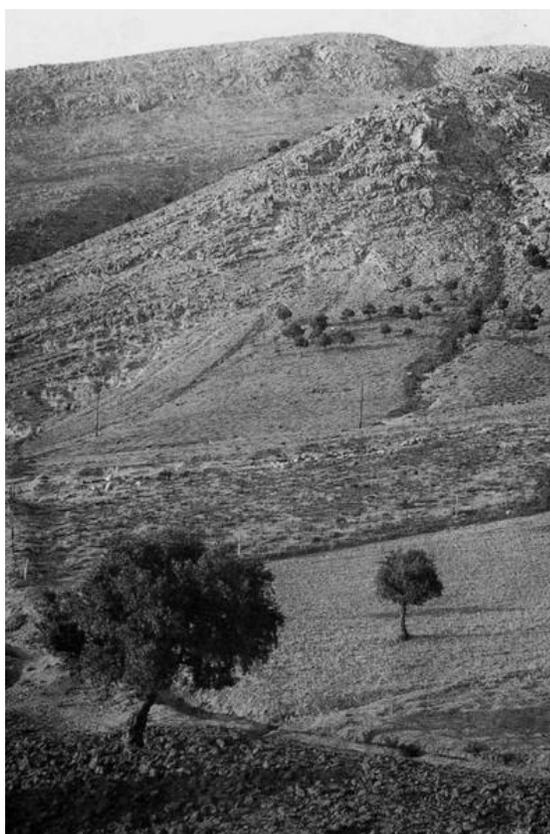


Figure 1.10 – “Lorca’s Olive Tree 2,” n.d.

As a precursor to his monograph, *La fosa de Lorca: Crónica de un despropósito*, Ian Gibson wrote a series of articles in *El País*. This image from an uncredited photographer was included in “El Estado debe buscar de una vez a García Lorca”.

erosion and development of the landscape over time; and 4) the planting of pine trees on the embankment, which further altered the landscape and problematized the issue of exhumation due to the developing root systems intertwined with human remains decaying in mass graves. In a familiar pattern of concealment via nature that started with disappearing bodies beneath the earth, the State weaponized the pine trees against the informal commemoration of the graves by the public, who were marking the “low hollows and mounds” with stones (Gibson, *A Life* 466-467).

Aesthetically, the unknown photographer recorded a well composed black and white landscape photograph (See Figure 1.9 – “Olive Tree 1”). To the left of the frame, the bushy olive tree, casts a full shadow straight beneath the foliage. The sun shines directly overhead, because the shadow casts evenly in a circumference around the trunk in proportion to the tree’s canopy. In terms of shade, texture, and similar color, the isolated rock formation, emerging on the curvature of the horizon line to the right, also attracts the eye like a landmark you would walk towards in order to glimpse the other side of the hill. Between the photograph’s perspective and the location of the rocks, the image captures something of an incline. The foreground begins with the sandy embankment which becomes more textured as grass begins to cover the hill. Overall the terrain is barren apart from respite of the tree’s shade. However, as we know from witness testimonies, the photographer’s perspective triangulates the grave’s location between the embankment, the olive tree, and no further than the rock seen on the horizon line. Like a map, the photograph makes a trace that substitutes for Lorca’s unmarked invisible grave and forges an indexical connection to the landscape. As a referent, this purposeful composition attempts to materialize his ghost by placing

Lorca on the terrain in the present and gestures to the possibility of his exhumation at some point in the future. Indeed, this image engenders a simultaneity of indices: he was assassinated here, he is buried over there, he will be exhumed here somewhere.

On April 27, 1986, this inquiry into Lorca's gravesite led to the inauguration of a memorial park honoring the memory of the poet as well as other local disappeared victims of the Civil War (See Figure 1.11 – "Viznar – Alfacar Memorial Park Plaque"). Since the opening of the park, in lieu of a photograph marking Lorca on the terrain, modest stone monoliths were erected on the embankment and near the olive tree (See Figure 1.12 – "Barranco de Viznar" and Figure 1.13 – "Lorca eran todos, 18-8-2002"). Lorca's disappearance enjoys a solidarity with other missing victims localized to the area. Each of his monoliths refer to his inclusion within the context of the larger mass grave phenomenon endured by the community. Demonstrating his status as the Republican everyman victim of the Civil War, etched on the most recent stone marker is the statement: "Lorca eran todos" ["They were all Lorca"] (my translation). While Lorca's travels abroad and passport photograph inspired international exhibitions, the memorial park and olive tree referring to his remains on the landscape have served as a point of departure for art installations inhabiting the family's summer home where visitors can experience Lorca's legacy and influence. As opposed to previous simulations where the visitor to the room-museum is transported to a staged bedroom imagined as part of the poet's lifetime, art installations within the domestic space creatively enliven the transformed living quarters through the enactment of Lorca's cultural heritage.



Figure 1.11 – “Viznar – Alfacar Memorial Park Plaque,” 2011

Photographed by Roció Díaz Gómez and posted as *El barranco de Viznar y Lorca* in an entry on her travel blog documenting her visits to Lorca cultural sites in Granada.

The plaque states: “Este parque, dedicado a la memoria de Federico García Lorca, y de todas las víctimas de la Guerra Civil, fue inaugurado por el Presidente de la Excm. Diputación Provincial de Granada. D Juan Hurtado Gallardo. El día 27 de abril de 1986.”

[“This park, dedicated to the memory of Federico García Lorca, and all the victims of the Civil War, was inaugurated by his Excellency the President of the Provisional Government of Granada. D. Juan Hurtado Gallardo. On April 27, 1986.”] (my translation)



Figure 1.12 - “Barranco de Víznar,” 2011

Monolith photographed by Roció Díaz Gómez and posted as *El barranco de Víznar y Lorca* on her travel blog documenting her visits to Lorca cultural sites in Granada.

The monument states: “A la memoria de Federico García Lorca y todas las víctimas de la Guerra Civil. 1936-1939”

[“In memory of Federico García Lorca and all the victims of the Civil War. 1936-1939”] (my translation)



Figure 1.13 – “Lorca eran todos, 18-8-2002,” 2016

Translated as “They were all Lorca,” video by Luis Almodóvar, captured from the article, “García Lorca: ¿a la tercera va la vencida?” from *El País*, written by Jesús Ruiz Mantilla.

Lorca's Spirit Embodied in *Everstill / Siempre todavía*

According to the website, “Huerta de San Vicente was the summer home of the García Lorca family from 1926 to 1936,” in which Lorca wrote “totally or in part, some of his major works” (Ayuntamiento de Granada). As summarized in Gibson’s biographical works on the poet, Lorca resided in the Huerta prior to taking refuge with the Rosales family before his arrest and assassination in August 1936. As opposed to sojourns to Columbia University and the Castelar Hotel, the family’s summer property holds significant value as a site of Lorca’s inhabiting, not only because he lived there while growing up but also because this was the last place that his family most likely saw him before his disappearance. After the government acquired the property and furnishings, the Ayuntamiento of Granada opened the house-museum to the public in 1995 with the objectives of conserving the home as well as sponsoring activities and events. Since then, the house-museum has hosted sixteen temporary exhibitions of photographs, sculpture, painting, drawings, documents, and artifacts associated with Lorca as well as his immediate family. Likewise, the property has sponsored activities for children, concerts, conferences, film series, a permanent collection of objects, readings, temporary exhibits, and operates as a local cultural center where visitors can find Lorca and celebrate his artistic, dramatic, and literary contributions through the space. This objective harkens back to comments made by curators in Buenos Aires and New York City, who envisioned spaces previously occupied by Lorca through the remains of his personal effects, or their semblance, in order for visitors to encounter the poet. However, through his drama and poetry, Lorca embodies new art forms, which celebrate his legacy and broaden his influence.

Between November 27, 2007 to July 20, 2008, Hans Ulrich Obrist curated *Everstill / Siempretodavía* at the Huerta house-museum as “an exhibition that navigated the cross-currents between art and literature” (Luke). In the catalog for the show, Obrist writes that while the poet “has been the subject of many books and exhibitions” abroad, “this is the first time contemporary artists have paid homage to Lorca in his homeland, Granada” (15). From a wide range of disciplines such as literary, performing, and visual arts, Obrist invited over thirty artists from around the world to contribute works for the show (9). Utilizing the space “between the park and the house, inside and outside,” artists were active in every room and “limited to using what was already there and working within at existing framework” (Obrist 17). The context and scale of the exhibition invited “new works which would be out of place in more conventional shows” due to the limitations of this unique venue (17). Regarding the title, British artist Douglas Gordon selected one that “suggests the language of tranquility with which Lorca described the house,” as well as “conjures the notion of death” mentioned in the poet’s “Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías” (Luke). Like the commemorative projects abroad which acknowledged his legacy and assassination, the title for the domestic exhibition alludes to Lorca’s own life at the summer home and his tragic death in the area. After reading the poem, Gordon “responded to the poet’s ‘insistence of the time present, and the will, or wish, of the audience or reader to suspend, not deny, the inevitable ... Ever. Still’” (qtd. in Luke). From this desire to savor the ephemeral, Lorca’s thoughts on *duende* informed the show’s performative dimension, which engages with notions of presence and deferring the end of an experience. Originally within Spanish tradition, the *duende* refers to a capricious

spirit or elf that inhabits domestic spaces. Yet for dramatists such as Lorca, this figure evolved to acquire new meaning as “an irrational muse that leads to tragic depths,” or a dangerous and exhilarating creative dynamism which brings the performer to the brink of death (Fuchs “Artists Look”).

In considering the artist’s capacity to conjure this force when performing, Obrist quotes Lorca’s lecture as a point of inspiration: “The *duende*’s arrival always means a radical change in forms ... announcing the constant baptism of newly creating things. The *duende* does not repeat himself, any more than do the forms of the sea during a squall” (20). As a force of inspiration, the *duende* arrives as something external to the artist that possesses the moment, a spirit that one hopes to summon but as an ever-changing creative energy, its actions cannot be predicted or anticipated. In some ways, the *duende* seems the equivalent of a disincarnate entity that elects to embody the performance similar to how a ghost might elect to manifest within a spirit portrait. However, from a technical standpoint, some of these comments on newness and originality also relate to the artists’ task in devising their projects commissioned for the venue. Given the unconventional venue, a historic dwelling converted into a museum, artists maximized the intimate space by utilizing rooms and existing furniture when crafting original works. However, as Maurer points out, “the *duende* seizes not only the performer but also the audience” (qtd. in Obrist 20). During this visceral experience, “art can be understood spontaneously” as “burst of inspiration, the blush of all that is truly alive, all that the performer is creating at a certain moment” (qtd. in Obrist 20). In this simultaneous mutual embodiment of time and space, we also fall under the *duende*’s sway, becoming captivated, enthralled, and immediately

connected with the performer in our desire to prolong the moment. As opposed to other Lorca themed room-museum spaces which simply curate artifacts and ambiance, in *Everstill / Siempretodavía*, we inhabit the performative space along with the artist and by extension Lorca as *the duende*.

Apart from his cultural legacy enlivened within the family's summer home, Obrist elaborates how Lorca as an individual is an inspirational phenomenon within the arts. In an interview with Dale Fuchs from *The New York Times*, he states that "Lorca is an artist's poet," who as a literary figure, has remarkably influenced "generation after generation," of visual and performance artists ("Artists Look"). In his own right, Lorca is acknowledged for working in dramatic, literary, and some visual media, while keeping company with notable figures from the avant-garde. "Part of his appeal stems from his close, though tumultuous, friendship with the Surrealists" such as Dalí and Buñuel, which Obrist considers a "multimedia 'magic triangle'" (Fuchs, "Artists Look"). Beyond his own creative production and famous associations with auteurs, fellow artists view him as a contemporary political symbol after "his murder by Franco forces, which condemned his homosexuality as well as his liberal ideology" (Fuchs, "Artists Look"). Others find Lorca's personal struggle and emblematic death a source of personal inspiration. After meditating on Lorca's bed, New York poet and performance artist, John Giorno, elaborated how he self-identifies with the poet within this intimate space: "That's where he wrote the poems, that's where he felt lonely, that's where he plotted the escape from the family he loved because he was a gay man like me" (qtd. in Fuchs, "Shadowy Imp").

In a similar vein of inspiration, Gilbert Prousch and George Passmore's photograph explores the identity politics concerning the poet's ongoing social anxiety because of his sexual orientation. The pair, also known as Gilbert & George, photographed themselves *In Bed with Lorca* in an image dealing with oppression and "hiding his sexuality from his mother" (See Figure 1.14 – "In Bed with Lorca") (Fuchs "Artists Look"). Within the photograph, "the pair lies rigid beneath a painting of a weeping Virgin Mary, like estranged lovers or two corpses at a wake" (Fuchs "Artists Look"). Given the tone of necrophilia, originally the two planned to entitle the work, *Dead in Bed with Lorca*, but opted for the "nicer" title which alludes to a living as opposed to deceased Lorca (Fuchs "Artists Look"). Documenting their sojourn in Lorca's bed, the framed living sculpture now hangs over his desk, which forges a current relationship between his typewriter and the work space where he expressed his sexual desire through writing (See Figure 1.15 – "In Bed with Lorca Framed"). Integrated into the design esthetic of the room, this reference to his repression is made accessible on the wall in dialogue with other recognized Lorca references, which denote his identity as an artist, poet, and dramaturge. "That Gilbert & George's picture appears in the home of the family to whom Lorca was never able to reveal his true feelings makes it all the more powerful" (Luke). Acknowledged as part of the décor, the photograph exposes his secret and finds acceptance within the home.

While many of the artists and their inspired works were derived through the process of personally inhabiting the spaces in which the poet dwelled, other artists sought to embody the experience of such an inhabiting for those visiting the exhibition. For example, Tacita Dean reinforced a present tense relationship between



Figure 1.14 – “In Bed with Lorca,” 2007

Living sculpture photographed by Gilbert & George. Within articles promoting the exhibition at the Lorca summer home, this photograph was widely circulated online. This higher quality image was posted on Jessica Kloville’s site, *Looking & Seeing, Art and Photography*.



Figure 1.15 – “In Bed with Lorca Framed,” 2008

This image from an uncredited photographer was found online within an article written by Dale Fuchs, “Chasing a Shadowy Imp, García Lorca’s Muse,” published in *The New York Times*.

Dalí and Lorca via her olive tree post card photograph. While staying in Spain, Dean heard a story about the two meeting under one of the olive trees on the same property, which years later was destroyed in a fire (Luke). However, Dean photographed an alternative tree and fashioned a period postcard in the 1920s-style based on the image (Luke). For the duration of the show, the Dalí foundation in Port Lligat near Cadaqués sent a *Lorca's Olive* postcard to the Huerta, which “arrived daily during the eight months of the exhibition and was placed on the sideboard every morning, replacing that of the day before” (Luke; Obrist 18-19). Substituting the missing referent of the original olive tree of his assassination, this photograph does not refer to Lorca’s disappearance. As alluded to in his letters, this representation of their friendship does not equate to the alienation he once felt from Dalí. Instead, their amiable affiliation endures during the show via this resurrected semblance of the original olive tree. As Ben Luke, a reporter for *The Guardian* writes:

Like much of her work, Dean’s postcard for *Everstill* engages with memory, and with the blurring of fact and fiction. The correspondence between the poet and the artist is an expressive record of their friendship, and Dean’s project will, in a sense, be a ghostly continuation.

While righting the unresolved frictions between Dalí and Lorca, the postcard also lends to a sense of presence that Lorca still resides within the home as an occupant who receives mail and corresponds with friends. As opposed to observing personal effects such as Lorca’s onetime passport encased in glass within the temporary exhibition of *Back Tomorrow* in New York, the postcards enliven the home and renew the relationship between former friends.

This theme of Lorca's embodiment also occurs in Koo Jeong-A's *Untitled* (See Figure – 1.16 “Untitled”). In the catalogue for the show, Obrist describes the object and the location on the second floor as follows: “In a storage room, the most secret corner of the house, Koo Jeong-A's work, a tailor – made suit a bit smaller than Lorca's actual size – hangs surrounded by a strong odour of mothballs” (19). From a single wooden hanger, the two-button single breasted dark suit jacket and matching pants hang suspended from the rafters in the corner of the small storage room. Over the right shoulder of the coat, just under the collar, the artist placed a loose red and gold striped bowtie. Preserved in the attic, the suit and bowtie are reminiscent of other suits in which the poet was frequently photographed wearing, such as his passport portrait (See Figure 1.4 – “Passport Portrait”). Like the postcard that arrived daily, Jeong-A's suit lends to a presence of Lorca, storing a favorite suit while safeguarding the fabric from moths and decay over time. While the suit was not made to measure, the viewer recognizes the iconic bowtie and imagines that Lorca might intend to wear this particular suit, crafted from the photographic remnants of other suits he did wear, at some point in the future.

Prior to the photographs of the suit in the catalogue for the show, Obrist included a pixilated black and white photograph of a “cross of flowers in the ravine of Víznar (Granada), marking the spot where Federico García Lorca's remains are believed to be buried,” which “was the point of departure for the reflection by Koo Jeong-A” (145). The image resembles Figure – 1.17 “Acto inauguración,” where locals celebrated the inauguration of the recent memorial monolith at Parque Lorca. The photograph of the flower cross that inspired Jeong-A was taken a few years earlier



Figure 1.16 – “Untitled,” 2007

Koo Jeong-A sewn three-piece wool suit, dummy stuffed with mothballs, dimensions variable. Image scanned from *Everstill-Siempretodavía Volume 2* bound exposition catalogue, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist (53).



Figure 1.17 – “Acto inauguración,” 2014

This image from an uncredited photographer has been posted on various news and historical memory websites. A group of spectators stand between flowers marking a grave and the “Lorca eran todos” monolith in the background. This photograph was found online at the blogsite *La H/historia en la memoria*, which catalogues memory spaces across Spain.

and perhaps the artist found the image online or experienced the scene in person. As previously mentioned with the spontaneous memorialization of burial sites in Víznar and Alfacar, residents in the area often marked the mass graves with stones, flowers and occasionally photographs. In considering the suit within this context, Lorca might have worn such a suit to his funeral or while lying in state on his bed at the summer home. As a memorial to Lorca, the suit simultaneously references his failed burial because of his disappearance in addition to his pending burial given the potential to recover his remains through exhumation.

As evidenced by Giorno's meditation on Lorca's bed or Gilbert & George's photographs, the intimate chamber in which the poet slept and worked inspired many of the artists. In addition to creating a sense of ongoing inhabiting, installation projects corresponded to a full spectrum of activities from Lorca's lifetime including adolescence and middle age. Invoking a sense of childhood innocence, Bestué & Vives staged a puppet show under the bed, *The Story of the Scorpion in Love*. Spectators watching the performance had to lay on their stomachs and peer under the bed to watch the show. Animating objects of frequent use, Roni Horn, designed a replica of "an old *perula* – a receptacle used to conserve oil" and placed both ceramic vases on the writing desk in the poet's room (Obrist 129). Rivane Neuenschwander designed a bedspread for the poet adorned with birds from Granada, labeled in his own handwriting based on his sketches, drawings, and writings (Obrist 178). When not sleeping, Neuenschwander devised a modified typing machine and manuscript, *Otros diálogos*, for working at his desk. Drawing from Lorca's inspiration, each of these projects enlivens the space and welcomes the poet's and spectator's inhabiting. As

opposed to wandering the room and touching authentic facsimiles of furniture and personal effects, the performances and art installations of *Everstill / Siempre todavía* produce something more than a mere time chamber. Instead of occupying a moment from Lorca's past, which has been projected into our present, visitors encounter Lorca's embodied artistic influence and legacy. In the same bedroom where he contemplated life, death, and sexual desire as well as wrote his verses of poetry and passages of dramatic dialogue, we find Lorca as the *duende*. Here, Lorca is not an anonymous mass grave victim lost somewhere on the landscape, but rather found, celebrated, and experienced as an ever present disincarnate being.

Conclusion

During Lorca's life, the olive tree came to symbolize his affiliation with Dalí, the site of his assassination as well as the poet's place on the landscape which marked his disappeared body for future exhumation. Yet, this symbol of Lorca myth and legend now also encompasses his failed exhumation. Witness testimony and corroborating documentation of the olive tree photograph encouraged the decision to search for the poet and exhume his remains from the presumed roadside grave. Between 2009 and 2016, three failed excavation attempts occurred at various locations within Parque Lorca (See Figure 1.18 – "Map of Excavation Sites"). For as many oral accounts and official documents that place Lorca's assassination and gravesite between Víznar and Alfacar, a multitude of circulating rumors situate the fate of his remains elsewhere within Spain and as far away as Uruguay.

Prior to the publication of his monograph cataloging the excavations, Gibson wrote an opinion piece reflecting on Lorca's ability to still captivate the public some



Figure 1.18 – “Map of Excavation Sites,” 2016

This image capture documents the most recent exhumation attempts to find García Lorca. This map appears within the article, “García Lorca: ¿a la tercera va la vencida?,” written by Jesús Ruiz Mantilla for *El País*.

seventy years after his death. Within the article, Gibson elaborates some common conspiracy theories entailing secret exhumations by various parties for their own intents and purposes. For example, days after his execution, realizing their grave political error, a group of rebels “quitaron el cadáver de donde estaba y lo inhumaron otra vez en lugar secreto” [“removed the body from it was and buried it again in a secret location”] (my translation) (Gibson, “Lorca: setenta”). In the early years of the dictatorship, another theory salaciously claims that the García Lorca family paid an exorbitant ransom for his remains and quietly interred the poet on their property in Huerta de San Vicente in yet another secret unmarked grave (Gibson, “Lorca: setenta”). Supporters of this theory contend that Lorca’s descendants felt obligated to oppose the recent calls for exhuming his remains because the family already knew he was successfully recovered and wanted to avoid the discovery of their secret deal with the regime (Gibson, “Lorca: setenta”).

Conspiracy theorists abroad have alleged that his onetime lover, Enrique Amorín, a married communist millionaire, amateur writer, and one time seductor-cum-body thief, managed to locate the unmarked grave, steal the remains, and smuggle them out of Spain (Sigüenza).¹⁶ Supposedly, in 1953 Amorín interred Lorca’s bones in a white box while publicly erecting a memorial to the poet in the town of Salto between the banks of the rivers which separate Uruguay from Argentina (Sigüenza).

¹⁶ From an article published online *¿Róbo el amante uruguayo de Lorca su cadáver?* by Carmen Singüenza announcing the publishing of a new book by the Peruvian historian Santiago Roncagliolo. The direct quote states: Y una investigación que empezó con el interrogante de saber si sería verdad que Enrique Amorín, un escritor seductor, comunista, homosexual casado, y uruguayo y argentino a partes iguales, había robado el cadáver de Lorca, como él mismo dijo tras haber hecho un homenaje en 1953 en Salto, a orillas del río que separa Uruguay de Argentina ante multitud de gente, para enterrar una caja blanca – que se supone que contenía sus huesos- y levantar un monumento al poeta. Moreover no one questions the veracity of the claims, “cuarenta y ocho años después, el monumento y su misterioso contenido sigue ahí”, says Efe Roncagliolo, “pero nadie quiere decir ni una palabra sobre si es verdad o no”.

Almost half a century later, the monument still stands and the mysterious contents endure as the subject of speculation; yet no one has confirmed the veracity of Amorín's elaborate story (Sigüenza). To proffer another uncorroborated theory, during the necropolitics of the 1950s and 1960s, Franco might have even transferred Lorca's remains to el Valle de los Caídos while excavating the Nationalist mass graves within Republican held zones during the war. Given the politics surrounding their concealment as well as the multitude of mass graves still pending exhumation, Lorca's skeletal remains could be located anywhere geographically.

However, as Gibson remarked in his article prior to the recent failed exhumations, in his material absence from the landscape, Lorca's fame only increases. Currently, the poet enjoys the status of a cultural icon appreciated not only for his work, but also what he represents to marginalized individuals, such as members of the LGBTQ community, or as a lasting emblem of Republican and civilian victims of the Franco regime. What first began as honoring his legacy through publishing his last book of poetry, reading his spoken word, and staging his performances has evolved into art exhibitions, books, films, and international festivals, which celebrate his oeuvre and inspire new generations of artists, writers and performers. In continually attempting to mitigate his disappeared referent on the landscape, we celebrate an enlivened Lorca within his home and abroad as an embodied *duende*. While failing to prove how he died, where he was buried, or even beginning to determine how his material remains should be monolithically commemorated, Lorca is more alive than ever before.

CHAPTER 2

SETTLING THE AFTERIMAGE, TRAUMA AND MASS GRAVE MEMORIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

When looking at photographs, viewers forge relationships with images based on their previous or imagined interactions with their corresponding referents, which in the case of portraiture, these representations become imbued with something more than the identity of the individuals portrayed. Within *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes describes the referent as “co-natural” or innate to photographs; a relationship so closely aligned, he compares the two to a man condemned to death and his resulting corpse (76, 5). The camera exposes subjects to a duration of light at a given sitting wherein “the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent” (80). Photographs permit the viewer to interface with these emanating bodies which lead to various interpretative ends depending on our intimate knowledge of the individual within the frame or our familiarity with the moments that comprised their life.

While the first chapter engaged with manifestations of the missing Federico García Lorca through his embodiment in art installations, photography and performances, this chapter investigates the recovery of those referents previously considered as lost and claimed by the violence that led to their disappearance. While Lorca remains hidden on the landscape and possesses the capacity to be invoked within the spaces he used to inhabit, these mass grave victims are on the brink of recovery. This restoration entails not only incorporating their lost physical remains

back into the community, but also integrating the history of violence which marks their representation within images. No longer adhering to the event of their photographing, vernacular photographs of mass grave victims are marked by a traumatic afterimage emanating from the partially known or corroborated circumstances resulting from their forced absence. Removed from their context and appropriated by trauma, these images commonly found within the family album become unsettled and disturbing to the viewer. Considering Spain's political climate and the current mass grave exhumation phenomenon, I am interested in how the practice of photography symbolically restores these referents as a form of memorial photography, which has a social function based in traditional post-mortem portraiture coinciding with funerary customs aimed at mitigating death.

In order to arrive to this particular use of photography, I will first elaborate a brief history of how vernacular photographs become decontextualized and marked by trauma in the writings of Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin. Barthes occupies the position of a viewer experiencing deep personal loss which translates as a trauma, while Benjamin manages to see the immediacy of a graphic suicide experienced by the referent inscribed on her portrait, which he then appropriates for his own ends. Each of their theoretical points of view converges on the fraught relationship that surviving family members have with the portraits of disappeared loved ones, concealed in mass graves, whose remains were manipulated as undead on the Spanish landscape in systemic Francoist repression. From the position of the image branded by trauma, the second half of the chapter explores how post-mortem portraiture simultaneously permitted the narration of a "good" death despite tragic circumstances while also

allowing the bereaved to mourn and prepare the corpse for eternal repose. Some of these same visual codes become apparent in Clemente Bernad's documentary photography, which examines various mass gravesites across Spain. Moreover, in the lack of a single monolithic Civil War memorial to Republican memory on the landscape, Bernad's project universalizes the recovery experience by acknowledging photographing the collectivities of mass graves as one commemorative entity within his monograph. As a result, the discovery of the remains of the once missing loved one have become found and located on the landscape and the individual can finally reunite with the surviving family. Within this process, a symbolic undoing occurs not just in the sense of acknowledging the site of the mass grave and their history of violence, but in restoring the individuals, repatriating them, settling their restless remains, contextualizing their deaths while returning them to the larger community.

Unsettled Images, Violence and Vernacular Photographs

Similar to graphic depictions of bodily injury and trauma, vernacular family photographs are also imbued with the histories of violence and loss experienced by the individual portrayed within the frame. As viewers, we notice this tendency from differing vantage points depending on our relationship to the individual photographed. When the subject is a family member or loved one, the loss intimately affects us and we react to the image based on what we know or imagined happened. In other cases, we might occupy the position of a member within a larger community of viewership who shares a collective knowledge of the distressing circumstances that impacted the photographed subject. Perhaps we heard something about the events that transpired or knew someone who witnessed the tragedy first-hand. Regardless of the viewer's

proximity, the violence experienced and the subsequent loss of the individual portrayed disrupts the context in which we situate these vernacular photographs and results in unsettled images.

To succinctly explain this phenomenon of the unsettled image, in the experience of viewing a given photograph, we often register “*this* photograph’s *here and now* ... as a translation of the specificity of a particular *there and then*” (Richter 157). Our relationship to the image accounts for the plausible circumstances surrounding the making of this representation at that time. We contemplate the identity of the referents, their relationships to others within the photograph, the rationale behind their possible photographing, while also considering their pose, clothing and the background setting. Habitually, we employ this knowledge and intuition when creating meaning in our present as we evaluate an image from our experienced past or a historical one in which we imagine. In the previous chapter, Alan Trachtenberg’s reading of Abraham Lincoln’s last portrait taken by Alexander Gardner demonstrates the translation between the photograph’s present-tense “here and now” and the viewer’s interpretation of what happened “there and then”. Lincoln’s smile charms Trachtenberg as the writer ponders what the President might be thinking in that moment while being photographed. Perhaps the sitting President reflects on the notable events which comprise his life or something more mundane such as when he will eat his next meal. Whatever the case, Trachtenberg’s relationship to this portrait of Lincoln does not foreshadow his assassination, funeral, or forthcoming incarnation within a spirit portrait. In his interpretation of Lincoln’s smile, Trachtenberg searches to understand Lincoln’s present as opposed to seeing the

traumatic events of the future within the photograph. In this regard, I would consider Lincoln's photograph a rather settled image, undisrupted by the violence that his body later experienced. However, in other cases, a viewer's relationship to public and private photographs becomes destabilized by a known or suspected trauma experienced by the individual within the portrait.

Within photography theory, both Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin have occupied the position of a public or private viewer written about unsettled images displaced from their context. From a personal vantage point, this relationship to trauma and vernacular photographs is clearest in *Camera Lucida*, written by Barthes while grieving his mother's tragic passing. In *Light in the Darkroom, Photography and Loss*, Jay Prosser argues that "the trauma of losing his mother ... suspends the connotation procedures of photography" (29). Prosser charts this trajectory beginning with Barthes's earlier writings such as "The Photographic Message," and by extension "Rhetoric of the Image," where the philosopher ponders the nature of the traumatic image within his semiotic approach to photography. Within these essays, Barthes establishes an interpretive language based on how images connote and denote within a larger framework of representation. Denotation points to the elements that compose the photograph, "a literal image in a pure state," frequently tethered to their implied relationships occurring beyond the frame (*Image, Music, Text* 42). The viewer codes this "photographic analogue" of people, objects, and the overall scene, with meaning derived from "various connotation procedures" based in part on cultural, historical, and sociological contexts influenced by other learned behaviors and experiences (20).

Given that connotation and denotation are so closely aligned, extricating the “this” of the photograph from the interpretative “what” of the image proves challenging.

Acknowledging this balance between connotation and denotation, when concluding “The Photographic Message,” Barthes questions which categories of photographs might prove exceptional to these referential characteristics by denoting independently of their connoted entanglements. As such, he advocates that “pure denotation,” an objective pointing to the subject matter of the image, occurs not on the level of the insignificant, neutral, or mundane representations, but rather “at the level of absolutely traumatic images” (30).

Truly traumatic photographs are rare, for in photography the trauma is wholly dependent on the certainty that the scene ‘really’ happened: *the photographer had to be there* (the mythical definition of denotation). Assuming this (which, in fact, is already a connotation), the traumatic photograph (fires, shipwrecks, catastrophes, violent deaths, all captured ‘from life as lived’) is the photograph about which there is nothing to say. (30-31)

As opposed to common vernacular photographs within the family album, Barthes limits his comments to shocking photographs circulating on news outlets accessible to the public. In the scope of these examples, he considers imagery we readily associate with denoting violence, distress, and loss of life, such as the outbreak of war, a natural disaster, or photographs of a disturbing crime scene. When the average viewer thinks about trauma, such graphic imagery might come to mind.

Taken from the continuum of events comprising “life as lived,” Barthes’s remarks parallel Susan Sontag who claimed that “in one version of its utility, the camera record incriminates” by furnishing evidence via photographs (5). Prior to seeing the image, one might doubt the veracity, which “seems proven when we’re

shown a photograph” (Sontag 5). The photograph corroborates oral and written accounts of disturbing events. Viewers of these images assume the photographer witnessed and recorded what truly happened, something of the horrific incident that occurred under his watchful gaze. The subject matter of the image is shocking and one might not fully comprehend what is happening, which results in “a suspension of language, a blocking of meaning” (Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* 30). Demonstrating this distance between connotative and denotive representational elements, Isabelle Wallace has suggested, “representations aimed at the traumatic do little more than point to their own limitations, producing as their ultimate subject the insurmountable distance between themselves and the traumatic event they seek to evoke” (3).¹⁷ Failing to understand the violent image, the viewer only registers that this photograph denotes some form of unspeakable upset. Depending on the viewer’s proximity to the events relayed via the photograph, the level of affectation varies, which destabilizes Barthes’s interpretative framework: “one could imagine a kind of law: the more direct the trauma, the more difficult is connotation” (*Image, Music, Text* 31).¹⁸

As Prosser has noted within his monograph, Barthes’s relationship to trauma and photography evolves in *Camera Lucida* because of the philosopher’s own personal loss. As such, trauma no longer only encompasses the documentary evidence of explicit physical injury or striking devastation, but also an experience perceived as

¹⁷ She bases these observations on Lacan who contends that trauma is “the very thing about which nothing can be said, written, painted or performed,” which align with Barthes’s comments related to the failure of language associated with viewing traumatic images (3).

¹⁸ On the opposite end of the spectrum by theorizing images that purely connote, Anandi Ramamurthy in “Spectacles and Illusions, Photography and Commodity Culture,” contends that “the balance between denotation and connotation which Barthes discussed is no longer apparent” in stock photography, image banks, and corporate media (241). These images “bought and sold across the world” neither “mark the existence of an event” nor “constitute advertising” (241). She claims that this is a genre of “photography in which there is only connotation,” wherein the images “no longer witness,” and “speak very little,” given that “the context provides meaning” (241).

personally distressing, such as death and mourning the passing of a loved one. This shift is apparent when considering the terms Barthes deploys when reflecting on images; *studium* and *punctum* complement his interests in connotation and denotation. Since the viewer filters both through a cultural lens, Prosser notices within Barthes's trajectory that his interpretative framework adapts wherein the *studium* also encompasses connotation (28). The *studium* entails what Barthes considers "an average affect, almost from a certain training" that one acquires (*Camera Lucida* 26). On some interpretative level, viewers enjoy looking at images and engage with "the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions" (26). The subject matter relays some "body of information" about a place, or newsworthy event. Viewers leisurely browse any category of photograph which they might find pleasing, or on the contrary, somewhat unpleasant (26). In the digital age, a comparable activity might involve scrolling through Instagram feeds, liking or disliking posted images, maybe leaving a comment. The viewing experience is habitual and routine, part of our everyday contact with images. These photographs have the capacity to maintain the viewer's attention; one might even stir when looking at them, and register a "general interest," wherein emotional responses are filtered through "the rational intermediary of an ethical and political culture" (26). Such images fail to arrest the viewer or affect and disrupt the experience of looking.

Considering the evolution of Barthes's second term, "denotation, which points to the thing itself, will become the much more traumatic, wounding, but similarly 'deictic' (pointing) *punctum*" in *Camera Lucida* (Prosser 28). For Barthes, this second element punctuates the *studium*; it "rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow,

and pierces me” (*Camera Lucida* 26). As entirely other, the immediate and unexpected *punctum* originates from the photograph and violently strikes the viewer like a projectile aiming for a target. In making direct contact, like how a traumatic image might purely denote, “the *punctum* is also unspeakable,” rendering the viewer incapable of isolating the aspects of the photograph that cut so deeply (Prosser 25). Carrying the sensation of an injury or a laceration, Marjorie Perloff writes that the *punctum* is “the prick, sting, or sudden wound that makes a particular photograph epiphanic to a particular viewer” (37). This epiphanic power to reveal, deeply affects the viewer resulting in an immediate and palpable shift in perception.

Perloff’s remarks concerning the revelatory capacity of the *punctum* to abruptly disrupt the viewing experience correlate to Margaret Iversen’s work on trauma and indexicality. Within her text, Iversen elaborates Charles Peirce’s tripartite theory “binding together the sign, the thing signified, and the cognition or feeling produced in the mind of the interpreter” (18). The index establishes “an existential or causal link to its referent, either by directing our attention to something or by being physically impressed or affected by it” (18). Focusing the viewer’s awareness of the referent’s relationship to the material world, has been widely discussed in terms of either a directive kind of index as a “pointing finger,” or the index as trace like a “fingerprint,” which distinguishes my hands from those of any other person (18). Iversen claims that “the crucial difference is that pointing fingers and demonstrative pronouns must be simultaneous with and adjacent to their objects, while the fingerprint is a mark or trace of some past contact” (18).

In terms of photography, when departing for a trip consider the difference between taking a photograph of the row and lane in which a traveler has parked his car at the airport as opposed to the “selfies” placing him in front of scenic landscapes and monuments abroad. The former points to the location of his vehicle in the parking deck, like a map or other reference permitting the traveler to find the same coordinates upon his return. While the latter marks the history of his summer excursion overseas, situating the traveler within the setting of this specific trip and all the various points traversed along the way. From the perspective of the traveler, these respective indices relay “my car is here” and “I was there”.

Iversen contends that these differing functions of the index “are not necessarily in tension” and occasionally result in a doubling, which arguably affects the viewer much like Barthes’s epiphanic *punctum* (18). Consider the classic metaphor of the index as trace, where someone walking on the beach has left impressions in the sand, marking the evidence of their recent presence on the shore (18). If the impressions also “drew attention to something,” the status of the footprints as an index would be “doubled,” which in Perloff’s terms, stirs something “epiphanic” within the viewer (18). Iversen illustrates this doubling with an example; if the literary character Robinson Crusoe encountered footprints on the beach of the deserted island he assumed to be uninhabited, this discovery would result in “a radical shift in his state of consciousness” (18). While pointing to these tracks in the sand, this index also addresses the castaway directly and reveals a multitude of simultaneous shifts to his present condition and perhaps even elicits a call to action – an action that he would not have taken otherwise, without becoming aware of the index. For Crusoe, these

footprints signify “you are no longer alone,” because “someone was/is here.” Subsequently, the tracks also imply “you will be rescued,” or perhaps signal an eminent threat such as “danger is near,” because cannibals have returned to the island. Moreover, this new information likely leads to action, wherein the castaway seeks out, hides, or flees from the individual who left the tracks. Regardless of the course of action, the index has altered the previous state of the viewer and left him radically changed.

For Peirce this disruptive capacity characterizes the index; he claims: “The index asserts nothing; it only says ‘There!’ It takes hold of our eyes, as it were, and forcibly directs them to the particular object, and there it stops” (qtd. in Iversen 18). For Iversen, this exclamatory forced noticing is innately traumatic. The index makes contact, sustains the viewer’s attention, and radically alters his insight. She contends, “since any sudden change of perception is to some extent shocking, every index carries with it a potential shock. On this account, then, the index has an inherently traumatic power” (18). As noted earlier with Barthes’s purely denoting traumatic image, the quality of shock and the level of intensity varies between viewers depending on their assumed proximity to the subject matter that sustains their attention. Considering again Iversen’s example of Robinson Crusoe, the denoted footprints in the sand on his deserted island connote less forcefully from the vantage point of a random viewer on the mainland, whose perception would doubtfully register any change whatsoever. In Barthes’s photographic terms, this viewer might have a “general interest” in the tracks and catalogue them as part of the *studium*. However, these same footprints would shock other viewers on the mainland and encompass

something of a *punctum* for those who shared an affiliation with Crusoe and/or the context of the subject matter. For example, a family member or loved one of Crusoe who observed these tracks on the shore would be deeply affected.¹⁹ Similarly, other island castaways with knowledge of Crusoe's experience would empathize and understand what these tracks might imply.

When writing *Camera Lucida*, Barthes's was keenly aware of this difference between viewers reading his monograph and looking at the images accompanying his thoughts on photography. Thus, the photograph whose *punctum* affected him the most, whose index traumatically halted his viewing experience, remains absent in the text and was subsequently withheld from circulation. For members of the public looking at the Winter Garden photograph (1898), the portrait of a five-year-old girl standing with her older brother "at the end of a little wooden bridge in a glassed-in conservatory," the image would not potentially wound and at most only interest their *studium* (*Camera Lucida* 67, 73).²⁰ Yet for Barthes, this photograph carried the essence of his mother, the "assertion of a gentleness," a kindness which she maintained throughout her lifetime despite her difficult upbringing (69). Something about her pose and youthful innocence reminded the grieving philosopher of the

¹⁹ When writing about the photograph's relationship to time, John Berger refers to this phenomenon as "a shock of discontinuity," one of two aspects present when viewing photographs, which largely go unnoticed due to the viewer's lack of connection to the referent (56). Viewers consciously register the image as "a message concerning the event photographed" (56). Even if the person is unknown to the viewer and the event seems ambiguous, "what the photograph shows goes with any story one chooses to invent" (56). However, this set of circumstances changes, when "the person photographed was familiar to us and is now far away or dead" (56). "In such circumstances the photograph is more traumatic than most memories or mementos because it seems to confirm, prophetically, the later discontinuity created by the absence or death" (56). These comments align with the traumatic capacity of the index, when the viewer retains a connection to the subject matter or perhaps identifies a proximity to the events.

²⁰ Barthes writes in *Camera Lucida*: "(I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the 'ordinary'; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your *studium*: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound)" (73).

unique qualities he had always admired about her. This photograph not only corresponded with aspects of his mother's being, but also struck a chord of profound pain, reminding a son of the loved one he had lost (70). Here the photographic index doubles, evidencing the essence who Henriette Barthes was as a child, and later a mother, while simultaneously gesturing to her absence for Barthes in the present.

Likewise, this photograph led to a sudden traumatic shift in Barthes's awareness. Apart from the philosopher's own comments regarding viewership and a reluctance to share this deeply personal emblem of his mother with the public, the philosopher's shift in awareness also impeded the image's distribution via text. As Perloff has commented, perhaps he elected to not reproduce the photograph within *Camera Lucida* given that this "overwhelming" *punctum* became "implicated in Barthes's anticipation of his own death" (37). Such a move suggests the shocking nature of the index, which radically altered his previous perceptions associated with life and mortality. While the Winter Garden portrait remains absent and inaccessible to the public, for Barthes this image no longer occupied a similar context as other "ordinary" photographs of his mother, which "were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth" (70-71). Connoting differently from other childhood photographs, this image stood apart as unsettled and detached from its original context.

To summarize Barthes's trajectory, his interpretative framework first questioned the prospect of how graphically violent images on news outlets might purely denote and then evolved to demonstrate how instead a private family portrait, which does not explicitly depict a trauma, carries the capacity to shock. As a deeply

personal emblem of his mother, the image is unsettled in the context of her other childhood photographs as simultaneously imbued with her essence and serving as a present-tense reminder of her tangible loss. Barthes withholds the Winter Garden portrait from public viewership, which safeguards the image from scrutiny and possible appropriation via a competing interpretation of her photograph in tandem with his writing. As opposed to an individual with intimate knowledge of the photographed subject, Benjamin occupies the position of a viewer engaging with vernacular images which have crossed the threshold from private reflection to public display.

Regarding unsettled images within the public sphere, while Barthes's interpretative framework considers the possible effect of graphic traumatic imagery on a viewer, Walter Benjamin demonstrates how vernacular photographs from the family album become marked by explicit violence. Within his essay, "Little History of Photography," while elaborating the difference between interpreting paintings versus photographs, Benjamin also reveals distinct tendencies related to viewership which further distinguish the two genres. Questions of the interpretative permissiveness associated with photographs, as well as the contamination of vernacular images by an adjacent trauma, revolve around Benjamin's comments on the portraits of two women: an anonymous Newhaven fishwife, photographed by David Octavius Hill and a couple's portrait of Karl Dauthendey with his fiancée. In the opening pages of his essay, the philosopher remarks that the interpretation of a given painted portrait, or the reading of the individual portrayed, resides with the family who owns the art piece (510). This family conveys the oral history of the individual and the story behind the

painting of the portrait, but “after two or three generations this interest fades; the pictures, if they last, do so only as a testimony to the art of the painter” (510). For the viewer outside the family who commissioned the portrait, one admires these images not for the referent portrayed, but rather for the artist’s mastery, style, use of color, the composition, and other criteria evaluating the given work within a larger oeuvre or in dialogue with other painters. Perhaps when viewing these works in a museum, one knows or learns some historical information that contextualizes the individual, but not necessarily the story associated with their sitting for the portrait. These surviving narratives reside with the painting’s provenance and belong to an elite viewership of those who possess the object.

However, the advent of photography and the pervasiveness of photographic images mark an interpretative shift from the object’s maker towards the subject matter and referent, the narrative of which no longer belongs to a select viewership, but rather becomes crafted and appropriated by the public. Benjamin demonstrates this shift in his reading of Hill’s anonymous Newhaven fishwife (See Figure 2.1 – “Newhaven Fishwife”).²¹ After commenting on her downcast eyes and “seductive modesty,” he notices “something that goes beyond testimony to the photographer’s art, something that cannot be silenced” (510). Apart from the aesthetic qualities that one attributes to the photographer’s skillset, as a viewer the image fills Benjamin “with an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed in ‘art’” (510). Instead of

²¹ Kaja Silverman’s scholarship has identified the woman as Mrs. Elizabeth Johnstone Hall within her text, *The Miracle of Analogy or The History of Photography, Part 1*.



Figure 2.1 – “Newhaven Fishwife,” c. 1843-47

Photograph by David Octavius Hill, salted paper print from paper negative, posted online at the MET.

marveling at Hill's mastery, within this referent-centered reading of her image, regardless of her anonymity, or perhaps because of it, the portrayal of this woman captivates the philosopher and enlivens an immediacy of presence that would be lacking in a painted portrait.

Benjamin further illustrates his own fascination, as well as the democratic provenance of photographic interpretation, by attributing a few verses from the German poet Stefan George to the fishwife's beguiling visage: "And I ask: How did the beauty of that hair, those eyes, beguile our forebears? How did that mouth kiss, to which desire curls up senseless as smoke without fire" (510)? While many art forms result in objects owned or selectively displayed within exhibitions, galleries, and museums, the performative aspect of recited poetry can never be possessed. Indeed, the circumstances of this woman's photographing remain unknown, yet the multitude of stories circulating about her "seductive modesty" are as infinite as the spoken word and the possible reproduction of her image. Reminiscent of Sontag's comments, wherein the camera "turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed," in a sense, her referent belongs to the public who can desire her body while circulating and crafting narratives at will.

Benjamin elaborates his interests in the photograph's immediacy by contrasting his aesthetic interpretation of the "Newhaven Fishwife" with a reading of the couple's portrait of Karl Dauthendey and his fiancée. While the philosopher did not know the identity or events comprising the life of the bewitching fishwife, he became acquainted with the Dauthendey's history after having read a biography written by his son, the poet Max Dauthendey (Azoulay 36). Abruptly shifting from

George's poetic verses attributed to the mysterious fishwife, Benjamin becomes equally captivated by the camera's ability to record and communicate the eventual untimely demise of the future Mrs. Dauthendey (See Figure 2.2 – "Karl Dauthendey (Father of the Poet), with his Fiancée"):

Or you turn up the picture of Dauthendey the photographer, the father of the poet, from the time of his engagement to that woman whom he found one day, shortly after the birth of her sixth child, lying in the bedroom of his Moscow house with her veins slashed. Here she can be seen with him. He seems to be holding her, but her gaze passes him by, absorbed in an ominous distance. (510)

Instead of commenting on the occasion of photographing the couple for their engagement or directing his remarks to her husband who would discover and grieve the body, Benjamin's sensational reading centers on the event of her suicide, which evidences the immediacy of the photograph. Most likely having succumbed to postpartum depression, he elaborates the nature of her death and condition of her body: "veins slashed," as well as her location and position, "lying in the bedroom" perhaps having bled out on the floor, or reclining in the same bed where her children were conceived and born.

Regardless of the details, the self-inflicted violence resulting in her death marks this couple's portrait which might otherwise connote a celebrated milestone in the life of a young woman. Moreover, as a member of the public familiar with these circumstances, Benjamin searches the "picture of Dauthendey and his fiancée for signs of her future suicide" (Batchen 261). He encounters the eventuality of her tragedy branded on the photograph as a "spark of contingency, of the here and now, which

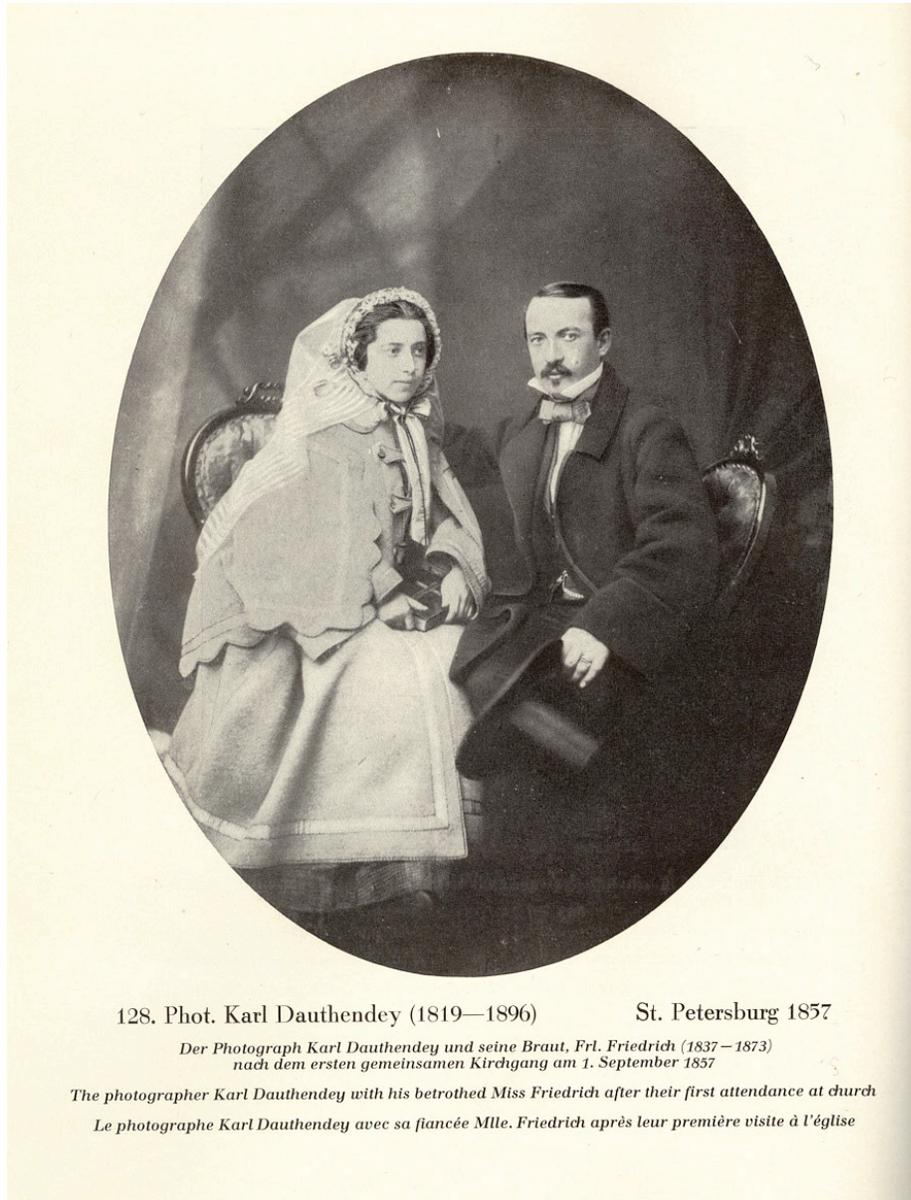


Figure 2.2 – “Karl Dauthendey (Father of the Poet), with his Fiancée,” 1857

Photograph by Karl Dauthendey. While this image is readily available online, this image was found at *The Great Leap Sideways*, which is currently inactive.

reality has (so to speak) seared the subject” (510). The camera burns this eventual trauma on the referent’s body; a forewarning that Mrs. Dauthendey herself observes “in an ominous distance” as she resists her husband’s embrace and sets her gaze beyond the frame (510). Instead of noticing the beginning of her life as a married woman, viewers see this “long-forgotten” moment that foreshadows her tragic end and categorizes her as a suicide victim (510). Like the portrait of Barthes’s mother in the Winter Garden, which contained the essence of Henriette Barthes, for members of the public, this decontextualized image of Mrs. Dauthendey is unsettled, imbued with trauma, and removed from its original status as a vernacular photograph that heralds an upcoming wedding.

However, Kaja Silverman’s scholarship discloses that Benjamin mistakenly identified the woman in the photograph as Karl Dauthendey’s first wife, Anna Olswang, “who committed suicide in 1855,” as opposed to his second wife, Fraulein Friedrich, eighteen years his junior who consequently “also died at a very young age” (145, 141). Due to Benjamin’s interest in the couple, Silverman proves a detailed background into Dauthendey’s marital history, an exegesis of the philosopher’s research, as well as her own interpretation of the photograph, which accounts for Karl and Fraulein’s body language, clothing, gaze, and pose. She remarks how curiously the photographer composed the portrait: the two wear street clothes within the interior space of a studio, accompanied by props that seem to evidence a recent return from church; the cramped curvature of the loveseat fails to accommodate their bulky and contrasting attire or create any intimacy; each of their gazes diverge (144). Instead of uniting the couple, the photograph seems to divide them (144). Given the context,

Silverman's reading becomes a proprietary declaration on behalf of Fraulein's soon-to-be husband:

Dauthendey's attempt to anchor the photograph to a particular moment in time presumably has something to do with his engagement – with his desire to experience and preserve the longed-for “now” in which Friedrich, who was much younger, and reluctant to marry him, was fully and completely what the caption declares her to be: his betrothed. (144)

Through informally recognized rituals of couple-hood and after having stepped out into society together, the photograph reinforces Dauthendey's possession of Friedrich through the staging of an event that might coincide with their engagement such as attending church together. This symbolic possession of her referent through photography becomes fulfilled via their subsequent contract of marriage, wherein he gains rights to her body.

Apart from Silverman, other theorists such as Ariella Azoulay and Geoffrey Batchen have attempted to figure out Benjamin's intention as well as the ramifications for his arguments on photography based on this discrepancy. According to Carolin Duttlinger, the philosopher deliberately misidentifies the woman in the photograph for the sake of “positing a photographically induced delirium,” in service to “his temporal rhapsodies” (qtd. in Batchen 261). For Azoulay, regardless of the woman photographed, what Benjamin sees is external to the subject matter as traces of death's presence and absence in the form of a traumatic event not denoted within the frame (38). Furthermore, after becoming “drawn to the story about Dauthendey's first wife” because he too was contemplating suicide, Silverman contends that Benjamin mistakes the image for a photograph he previously saw that structurally resembled a portrait of

Olswang and Dauthendey (146). Regardless of intention, “the photograph therefore ends up inducing an emotive response to something other than itself” (Batchen 261).

From this perspective, the adjacent trauma of Olswang’s suicide becomes branded on Friedrich’s referent. The sensational narrative circulating in public related to Olswang’s taking her own life in 1855 disrupt and supersede the context of Friedrich’s unhappy engagement portrait photographed just two years later in 1857. Further unsettling the photograph, by merely occupying the role of a future Mrs. Dauthendey, she becomes embroiled within a powerful trauma narrative by association. Likewise, regardless of intention, Benjamin appropriates and makes claims with her referent for a suicide narrative germane to his larger argument related to photographic immediacy. In this gesture, he actively unsettles her image; a move which theorists attempt to either resolve or perpetuate in academic writing that engages the philosopher’s “Little History of Photography” as a point of reference.

However, Benjamin’s misreading of Fraulein Friedrich’s symbolically appropriated body is decidedly a low stakes consequence in the interpretation of an ordinary vernacular photograph. Like the Newhaven fishwife, we habitually prescribe uninformed or partially informed meaning to photographs. While claims of trauma overshadow the future Mrs. Dauthendey’s referent, her material body suffered no harm nor a violent end at anyone’s hands. Upon her death, she was most likely mourned, buried, and memorialized like countless other women of her generation. While this photograph is unsettled, there exists no challenge to Friedrich’s ambiguous legacy or public memory. Her surviving family, with intimate knowledge of her life, might even consider Benjamin’s academic fascination with her portrait as something

comprising Barthes's *studium*, a general interest. Yet, this engagement portrait evidences how referents are appropriated for larger symbolic purposes; in other cases, the photographic subject's body or mortal remains can become ensnared within those claims.

Accounting for both Barthes's deeply personal connection with the portrait of his mother as well as Benjamin's symbolic appropriation of Friedrich's body within a trauma narrative, I would like to consider the case of an image whose referent encompasses both points of view. While each philosopher engages with shock and loss on some interpretative level, I am interested in the convergence of their lines of thought wherein a vernacular photograph portrays a referent who has suffered some form of suspected violence as well as whose body is symbolically appropriated within a larger trauma narrative. The nexus between these two vantage points and their engagement with photography, results in a more forceful iteration of how photographs become unsettled and displaced due to direct violence experienced by the person within the photograph, whose body and referent are subsequently manipulated by an aggressor. In cases where this subject of photography's status is disappeared, depending on the circumstances, this displacement further amplifies resulting in an afterimage that only references trauma.

The Afterimage of Trauma and Spain's Mass Graves

In his essay, "The Intimacy of Defeat, Exhumations in Contemporary Spain," Francisco Ferrándiz personalizes the widespread mass grave tragedy by narrating one family's experience with a disappeared loved one. Fifteen months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Nationalist soldiers claimed the city of Gijón in Asturias on

October 27, 1937 (304). As part of a systematic repression policy, “designed to produce and extend a regime of terror necessary to consolidate the emerging political and military power,” the nascent dictatorship identified civilians on “death lists” marked for execution (304). One such individual was Emilio Montoto Suero, a married thirty-eight-year-old father, who at the time was working at the local monastery in Valdediós, which had been repurposed as a psychiatric hospital (304). Along with “seventeen members of the hospital staff, twelve women and five men, many of them nurses,” Montoto was “shot to death by soldiers in the outskirts of the monastery-hospital” after hearing his name called aloud from the “death list” (304). Montoto’s wife, Emilia Carolina Ricca, followed the group, which soldiers had escorted away to a field for summary executions, and “managed to see ‘something’ of what happened in the neighboring meadow” (304). Given her distance from the executions, one cannot know for certain if she witnessed her husband’s death. However, the shock from the deaths she did witness now serve as the point of reference to his murder, wherein all victims suffered the same fate.

Whatever Emilia witnessed in the field that day, “‘traumatized’ her to the point of leaving Spain for Cuba about one year later with her three-year-old daughter” (304). Emilia later remarried and relocated to the United States. Years after beginning her new life, she rarely discussed with her daughter, Esther, the killing of her father or what transpired near the monastery in Valdediós (305). Her aunts told Esther that her mother “wanted to ‘block it out’ from her memory, ‘as if it had never happened’” (305). Lost to a mass grave somewhere in the area, the family never recovered his remains. However, the family did secure a record of his death: a

certificate that her mother and grandfather managed to obtain from the monastery claimed Emilio “had died in a ‘war accident’” (305). Knowing that something unusual happened to her father, Esther pieced together his remains “scattered in conversations here and there” (305). Perhaps to shield her daughter from the truth, Emilia withheld letters from the Asturian relatives that mentioned her disappeared husband as well as concealed photographs revealing his identity (305). After Esther married at the age of eighteen, she did not even know “that her father had been shot” or “what he looked like” until one of her aunts gifted her a photograph (See Figure 2.3 – “Emilio Montoto Suero”) (305).

Prior to his marriage to Emilia, the sepia toned photograph depicts a head-to-toe portrait of a thirty-something Emilio during a wedding that he attended in La Habana, Cuba. Standing upright, dressed in a light-colored suit, wearing a white shirt with an elaborately patterned tie and wing tipped shoes, he gazes directly at the camera. The sleeves of his jacket are noticeably wrinkled, perhaps from sitting with his arms resting on a table while conversing with other wedding guests. The image portrays an attractive man in his prime; his symmetrical facial features are slightly offset by his unevenly receding dark hair. While wearing his best suit, his strong hands, unmarred from manual labor, suggest middle class employment. Given the photograph’s pleasant tone and his welcoming demeanor, one could easily imagine Emilio interacting and caring for patients. Likewise, in celebration of Esther’s marriage, the handsome portrait seems an appropriate wedding gift from her relatives. In his absence, she now safeguards a memento that emblematically gestures to what he



Figure 2.3 – “Emilio Montoto Suero,” n.d.

By an uncredited photographer. Image captured online from the essay, “The Intimacy of Defeat: Exhumations in Contemporary Spain,” which Francisco Ferrándiz captions as the following:

Image 1: ‘I never understood the reason for my mother’s silence.’ This photograph of Emilio Montoto was shown in La Habana (Cuba) to her daughter Esther when she was twenty by her aunt Enriqueta, Emilio’s sister. This was around eighteen years after his death. The picture had been taken in La Habana before Emilio and Emilia Carolina Ricca married and travelled back to Asturias (Spain) in search of new opportunities, a life project which ended tragically with his murder in Valediós during the Spanish Civil War. In the picture, according to Esther, Emilio was ‘around thirty’. Courtesy of Esther Montoto. (Ferrandiz 379)

might have looked like as a younger version of himself if he had attended her wedding.

However, while Emilio's sisters considered this portrait a cherished memento of their brother, for his widow this photograph, along with any other image of her disappeared husband, is imbued with the violence his body presumably experienced during his summary execution as witnessed by Emilia in the murder of other victims. Moreover, like Barthes's initial suggestion that images of graphic violence might purely denote, wherein the photographer had witnessed the events firsthand, Emilia now sees the trauma she observed in the field when looking at his portraits. As opposed to seeing the continuum of other milestones the couple experienced together, such as courtship, marriage, their daughter's conception or even her birth, his image evokes the circumstances of his murder as well as Emilia's fear for her own safety. From the standpoint of her personal loss and survival, the collective *punctum* of his photographs, the repetition of his very referent, deeply wound Emilia and continue to trigger an unspeakable shock. Continually affecting her state of consciousness, the index multiplies and connects to this episode of violence directing Emilia's attention to her relationship with Emilio's referent in the material world. His photographs indicate "he was murdered," "he is disappeared," and "something happened in that field," the personal pain of which she wished to spare her daughter.

The index pointing to "something happened in that field" evidences a significant interpretive shift from unsettled vernacular photographs removed from the context of other images or plausible structures of connotation. Emilia deduces her husband's assured fate from a firsthand experience witnessed at a distance: a

distressing series of events culminating in the execution of civilian prisoners on the outskirts of Valdediós. The details of her husband's specific fate are unknown and this witnessed collective death replaces his individual passing. Aspects of what she observed, as well as the horrors she most likely imagined, became inscribed on every photograph that records his likeness. In regard to his referent in the photograph, the unspeakable shock and trauma of the event continues to impact her perception.

Emilia's reaction to this precise stimulus correlates to Joshua Hirsch's Holocaust studies on film and the afterimage of trauma. As an optical phenomenon, the afterimage is a semblance of a visual image which persists after the removal of the stimuli. By way of a practical example, after staring at the sun for a few moments and then looking away, one still sees a bright spot. On a smaller scale, the flash from a camera also leaves a lasting impression under the right circumstances. In the case of Holocaust studies, in the absence of a referent, whose material body went missing, the viewer substitutes the loss with an afterimage that approximates something of the traumatic experience. Hirsch elaborates his understanding of the term with a personal illustration related to his family members who perished in concentration camps: "No photograph remains to show that my grandparents, my uncle, and all the rest have ever existed. Their images existed only in my father's decaying memory" (ix). As a second-generation survivor, Hirsch does not have the direct experience of having known or seen these family members who remain undocumented by photography. Most likely, his father told him stories and communicated an oral history. After watching *Night and Fog*, Hirsch substituted their loss and what happened to them with images produced on the screen: "The image from that film of a bulldozer pushing a

pile of emaciated bodies into a mass grave became the most vivid icon with which I visualized the Holocaust” (ix). In order for Hirsch to integrate their absence and the finality of their deaths, this poignant moment from the film approximated what most likely happened to them. This well-crafted historical fiction estimated the details of their deaths that he can never surmise from his own lived experience.

As opposed to Hirsch, Emilia had intimate knowledge of her husband as well as photographs that documented his identity and existence. However, the singularity of their life together and the unique circumstances surrounding the occasions of his photographing could not survive the reverberations of brutality she witnessed or the death she substantiated for her husband in the meadow that day. Comparatively, if the traumatic event were the sun, despite looking away, every photographic referent from the past became scorched in the future. For Emilia, from not knowing what transpired or due to the impossibility of integrating the event, the witnessed collective trauma engulfing the victims in the field that day marks his absent referent.

Parallel to the status of his absent remains and for substantially different motives, Emilia’s treatment of his photographs resembles the State’s conduct regarding his executed body as a result of the alleged “war accident”. Like other civilian victims of the Civil War, soldiers most likely had hastily buried Emilio in an undisclosed location and disappeared him from the landscape. Subsequently, his widow concealed her husband’s referent within boxes and removed his images from sight within the home and family albums. As opposed to the engagement portrait of the Dauthendey’s that became marked by adjacent trauma, the same authors of Emilio’s demise seared his image with the violence he directly experienced. In a sinister reading of symbolic

appropriation, after taking his life and manipulating his body in death, his referent and material remains became entrenched in claims made by the Francoist regime within a methodical pattern of subjugation. An appropriative force so strong, that his image in vernacular photographs overwhelms his widow.

In another article, “Mass Graves, Landscapes of Terror,” Ferrándiz elaborates this “systematic form of repression and discipline” that offensively placed victims in unmarked mass graves (111). As we have seen in the context of Montoto, after towns in the Republican zone fell to the insurgency, members of the civilian population presumed to be a threat were tracked on death lists and marked for summary executions. As previously mentioned with the murder of Federico García Lorca in Granada, soldiers rounded up locals, detained them in makeshift prisons, tortured them prior to their execution on the side of the road or in open fields, and then improvised an anonymous grave where they lay alongside other victims. Ferrándiz remarks that burials in this context are a form of punishment beyond brutalizing victims and taking their lives:

All the animal-like burials carried out after deaths that resulted from a coordinated, repressive strategy designated to exclude those killed from the community of the dead through the absence of funerary rites and mourning practices; and burials where bodies were piled up, undifferentiated, ‘thrown’ in a disorderly manner are still entangled in the violence that put an end to individuals’ lives (110).

In addition to obscuring their individuality and excluding the disappeared victim from the community of the dead within a local cemetery and an imagined afterlife, perpetrators likewise denied family members and loved ones the possibility of mourning and commemorating these individuals. Moreover, this literal entanglement

of bodies within widespread systemic violence reproduced across Spain, also marks their corresponding photographic referents, which in extreme cases, exist as a traumatic afterimage.

Considering the mass graves in Spain, how do we recover and restore these referents and their remains to the family album and larger community? From an anthropological standpoint, Ferrándiz has wrangled with the latter. Currently on the peninsula, differing opinions exist “regarding how to revert the systemic violence waged on persons and cadavers during the war” and subsequent dictatorship (111). From one standpoint, communities “in Oviedo where at least thirteen hundred bodies are buried, believe the most appropriate homage to those killed is to preserve the burial ground in a way that keeps it intact and unexcavated” (111). As such, the community acknowledges the site through yearly commemorations that honored the disappeared and demystified the open secrecy of the location. Inaugurated in 1986, the García Lorca Memorial Park on the highway between Víznar and Alfacar prescribes to this approach. As Ian Gibson remarks in his biography on the poet, during the dictatorship, the Guardia Civil surveilled suspected mass grave locations and prohibited members of the community from marking the graves, leaving flowers, or even approaching the area (*La fosa* 17). By officially recognizing the site, acknowledging the graves with monoliths, providing benches and areas where the public can walk and reflect on the departed, all lend toward integrating the space as well as welcoming the spirits of the disappeared back into the community.

This symbolic approach to reincorporating the disappeared into the community by honoring their locations was “displaced by the body-centric turn in the memory-

recovery field,” wherein exhumations occupied public debates (111). Ferrándiz remarks that “the condition of being ‘below ground’... refers to a kind of subterranean exodus, perhaps an extreme form of interior exile,” which parallels “those who were exiled, banished or forced to abandon Spain after the war” (“Subterranean Autopsies” 62). In such cases the State officially repatriates disappeared Spaniards while restoring skeletal remains to the surviving family members for reburial within an individual plot in the community. Since the year 2000 as a more detailed forensic approach, this position further evolved towards “open exposure of the cadaveric remains” while cataloguing “victims’ wounds and their personal objects wherever possible,” in order to simultaneously return the remains to the community and understand what transpired in their last moments of life (Ferrándiz, “Landscapes of Terror” 111).

The undoing of the mass grave site forcefully responds to claims made on victims’ remains not only in death, but also in ongoing legislation during the Franco regime that negated their commemoration. According to Ferrándiz, post-war funerary legislation clearly favored the victors of the Civil War who were exhumed by Francisco Franco and ceremoniously interred within el Valle de los Caídos over the course of his dictatorship:

Francoist law applied only to the cadavers of the ‘heroes’, ‘martyrs’ and ‘fallen’ of the ‘Crusade’; Republican corpses, and, by extension, the mass graves that contained them, were excluded from politically legitimate and socially prestigious sites of reburial, commemoration and dignification. (“Subterranean” 63)

This legislation demonstrates longstanding “ideological discrimination against the Republican space of death” and further problematizes leaving mass graves intact (63).

From one standpoint, not exhuming remains in an open public display of support for the Republican dead continues to reinforce Francoist prejudices and their exclusion in the context of all those who died during the Civil War. Moreover, considering Nationalist and Republican sites of death on the landscape, a significant disparity exists between current optics of commemoration. As listed on the Ministry of Justice's website, some 2,000 mass graves have been documented across the country.²² As we have seen with the memorial park between Víznar and Alfacar, regional communities, such as Granada, honor the Republican and civilian population in the vicinity of their recognized mass grave sites with memorial plaques and monoliths. However, over the course of the dictatorship, Franco constructed a pharaonic monument carved out of a mountain just north of Madrid to commemorate all the Nationalist dead, whom the government exhumed from former Republican zones well into the late 1950s when an "astonishing number of corpses" flowed "from mass graves across the country" to el Valle de los Caídos (Ferrándiz, "Intimacy" 308). To illustrate the commemorative difference, during this same period in Víznar and Alfacar, the State planted pine trees on the roadside embankment to impede survivors from marking the outlines of mass graves with small stones (Gibson, *A Life* 466-467). Over time, remaining Republican graves throughout the country "have themselves disappeared below urban developments or freeways, along with the traces of the massacres" (Ferrándiz, "Intimacy" 307).

Currently, no monolithic commemorative structure like el Valle de los Caídos exists for the Republican dead. Apart from the building costs as well as the politics of

²² See the following website for the Mapa de fosas: <http://www.memoriahistorica.gob.es/es-es/mapafosas/paginas/index.aspx>

a comparable endeavor, the feasibility of such a project is questionable given the sheer number of remaining mass graves as well as the resources needed to exhume, identify, and inter these repatriated Spaniards. Yet monoliths such as those in Granada declaring “Lorca eran todos” or “They were all Lorca,” demonstrates the desire for an emblematic form of representation that encompasses the collective mass grave experience; a form of Republican commemoration that unites multiple sites into something particularly recognizable and universal. Moreover, there is a need to settle these referents and recontextualize how they connote on the landscape as remains pending exhumation, entrenched in claims made through the violence enacted on their bodies in death, as well as mitigate the unresolved grief and trauma perpetuated through generations due to their abrupt disappearances. Indeed, these referents demand some form of restitution. While the question of how to commemorate them on the landscape is still a source of debate, I believe through memorial photography there are ways to symbolically restore their dignity and provide a measure of closure to the family. Prior to explaining such a photographic intervention, I would like to elaborate some of the conventions of post-mortem portraiture and how the genre has historically mitigated the experience of death. I believe the social uses of this genre serve as a strategy to globally honor the lost and disappeared referents on Spain’s landscape. In the same vein, this practice of photography also reclaims the body from its appropriation by the State as well as provides an alternative to the traumatic afterimage of the individual’s unknown passing.

Memorial Photography and Interment Rituals Ensure a Good Death

After conflating photography and death so often within *Camera Lucida*, Barthes pauses for a moment to mention “the case of photographing corpses” (78). He states that the presence of the thing photographed “is never metaphoric,” particularly in the case of the life force from “animated beings” within the frame (78). Consequently, in this immediate presence, a photograph of the deceased “becomes horrible ... because it certifies, so to speak that this corpse is alive, as *corpse*: it is the living image of a dead thing” (78-79). While Barthes clearly finds this scenario troubling, the animation of something dead, there is a long-standing tradition that “focuses on the ways in which people have taken and used photographs of deceased loved ones and their funerals to mitigate the finality of death” (Ruby 1).

In her monograph, *Photography and Death*, Audrey Linkman historicizes the tradition of memorial portraiture since the invention of the camera and considers how the living coped with the mortality of recently passed loved ones. “In these portraits the dead body was neither neglected nor rejected. The physical remains that had once been the living person were still the object of love and care” (Linkman 7). “As these photographs show, death was not hidden away, but prepared for, both mentally and spiritually, and celebrated through religious ceremony, morning rituals ... and through the funerals themselves” (Bunge and Mord 9). Family members professionally commissioned these portraits out of a desire “see and remember the person in death” in the intermediary period prior to burial (Linkman 14). Likewise, in these dual actions of sight and recollection, the memorial portrait endeavored to construct a visual narrative that framed how the passing should be observed by the family and

community. Like strategies employed in traditional ante-mortem portraiture, the photographer posed the deceased and included objects or props to assist the viewer in interpreting their photographic referent in passing peacefully to the hereafter. These images also “served as a vital part of a healthy grieving process, providing a tangible way to keep the memory of a departed loved one alive and close at hand in times of need” (Bunge and Mord 9). Additionally, these portraits coexisted alongside surviving family members, “displayed in parlors and in family photo albums, side by side with photos of the living” (9).

As a continuation of the grieving process, mourners circulated these images with correspondence to absent family and friends who were unable to pay their respects to the recently departed in person. Out of town mourners inscribed emotions associated with grief and loss on the paper corpse as “the living image of a dead thing,” referencing the decaying body beyond the frame during these funerary customs. Regarding the relationship between correspondence and post mortem portraiture, Virginia de la Cruz Lichet’s scholarship has illustrated instances of memorial post cards that circulated in Europe. One from 1938 shows the deceased lying in state within her casket surrounding in the background by a row of flowers and then her surviving family. The reverse side of the card includes form boxes for writing a message as well as the receiver’s address. Such an artifact historically suggests it was more commonplace to send and receive such images within the community as well as evidences a greater familiarity with mortuary imagery within society.

In his text, *The Hour of Our Death*, Philippe Ariès historicizes anthropological notions of death associated with western civilization. Traditionally, Ariès writes that society considered the “tame death” as a milestone within an individual’s life, “whose purpose is to express the individual’s solidarity with his family and community” (41). This tame death unfolds in stages, which entail three defining moments: the individual’s acceptance of their active role in passing, “the scene of the farewells, and the scene of mourning” (41). Often these moments occurred in the privacy of the individual’s bedroom, surrounded by family and friends expressing that “the life of a man is not an individual destiny but a link in an unbroken chain” (41). Under the best of circumstances, these moments encompass the process of fading away and the coping mechanisms that survivors deploy to mitigate the loss of a passing perceived as natural. Moreover, customs surrounding a tame death prepared the individual’s passage into the afterlife within an interval “between the moment of death and the end of survival” that “has extended to eternity” (41). Within a Christian tradition Ariès writes: “the afterlife is essentially a period of waiting characterized by peace and repose. In this state the dead wait, according to the promise of the Church, for what will be the true end of life, the glorious resurrection and the life of the world to come” (41). Likewise, early memorial photography coincides with staging a tame death and perpetuating the immediacy of the moment after the deceased has passed away on the deathbed surrounded by mourners.

The photographing of these deathbed scenes corresponded to the interval between the moment of death and survival, wherein the memorial portrait would connote the qualities of a “good” or ideal death (Linkman 15). Similar to Ariès

observations related to tame death, Linkman qualifies such a passing as taking place within the home, “where the dying person, lucid, conscious and surrounded by loving relatives could take meaningful last farewells from family members, resigned to God’s will and comforted by the assurance that they would meet again in heaven” (15). For example, the “Photograph of Miss Horth in her Bedroom in a Dying Condition,” communicates the profound faith and tranquil passing of a young woman by picturing the deceased clutching a rosary in her left hand, eyes cast downward, partially open, and gazing at the crucifix in her right hand. Dressed in white with a veil covering her head, the serenity captured on Miss Horth’s face invokes allusions to the Virgin Mary or a youthful nun contemplating the mysteries of her faith (See Figure 2.4 – “Miss Horth”) (15).

While the historical context of the events surrounding Miss Horth’s fading away are unknown, one would probably not categorize her demise as a good death despite the codes and props working to the contrary. In her anthropological studies of the Vaqueiros of Spain, María Cátedra isolated three different categories of death, including “good,” “bad,” and “tragic”. “The positive and negative aspects of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ deaths do not refer only to the moment of death itself but also to the circumstances that precede it” (Cátedra 77). Deaths observed as good are rapid, absent of pain and lack the awareness of dying, such as a heart attack that allows “one to work and lead a normal life until the last moment” (77, 78). Similar to the milestone of the tame death, such a demise occurs at the end of a completed life cycle “from intrinsic and entirely predictable causes” (78). Without exposure to disease or suffering violence at the hands of another, the elderly simply “terminate” (78).



Figure 2.4 – “Miss Horth in her Bedroom in a Dying Condition,” 1863

By an uncredited photographer. Reproduced from Audrey Linkman’s text, *Photography and Death*: “Watson, Great Yarmouth, ‘Photograph of Miss Horth in her bed Room in a dying condition,’ 1863, albumen silver print. Sussanah Horth died in Yarmouth in June 1863” (15).

Conversely, a passing interpreted as bad might include chronic illness that prolongs suffering and heightens the awareness of mortality, which distresses not only the person dying, but also members of the household; “the foreknowledge of one’s own death, or the observation of a painful death in others, produces ‘apprehension’” (77, 78). The anguish associated with the difficult passing of a loved one intensifies in an instance of tragic death, “caused by external agents or accidents” and viewed as “an interruption of the natural order, by occurring unexpectedly and prematurely” (78, 79). Moreover, a subset of this category includes “violent” death whose origin is human in nature such as a murder or the taking of one’s own life by suicide. The repercussions of the circumstances surrounding such death resonate throughout the community, inevitably resulting in an autopsy, police investigation or subsequent court cases, which continually provoke the trauma of the passing (79). As we have seen with Benjamin’s misidentification of Mrs. Dauthendy, independent of the subject matter recorded within the frame, such instances of traumatic death also reverberate within photographs.

In returning to the image of Miss Horth and the characteristics of a good death inscribed on her photographic body, more markers suggest that at best she passed very tragically. As a young woman in her prime, the viewer can assume that some type of illness, possibly chronic and prolonged, lead to her demise. In addition to her family and friends, she most likely was keenly aware of her condition and mortality. However, post-mortem portraiture allowed the family to claim, narrate, and commemorate her passing as peaceful and ideal. “Survivors drew great comfort from expressions they could interpret as calm, peaceful and serene, especially if the final

illness had been particularly painful, or if the death was due to an accident or an act of violence” (Linkman 17). In cases of a bad or tragic death, the post-mortem portrait could mediate the history of violence written on the body from a sudden and unexpected passing. In many instances, specifically with children or someone who was never photographed, idealizing the hour of death and this desire to see and remember the deceased corresponded to a notion of the photographic referent as visual substantiation of the individual’s existence. The photograph established their identity within a given community as well as corroborated their passing. Individuals within the community might have heard about the death and the photograph authenticated those reports while debuting the person as deceased. Considering the higher infant mortality rates in the 19th century, the post-mortem photograph was often the only image ever recorded of a child who died within the first few years of life. Moreover, the memorial photograph served as a substitute for the family portrait that never occurred and “provided proof that the child had been brought into the world” (See Figure 2.5 – “Sleeping Child Post-Mortem Portrait”) (18).

In the 19th and 20th centuries the body was cared for at home prior to burial. So, photographers staged most memorial photography within the domicile, coinciding with formal and informal funerary customs, or in elaborately furnished studios that simulated a domestic space. In order to prepare the departed for eternal repose, focus was given to the deathbed and the motif of “death as sleep,” even when positioning the body upright (See Figure 2.6 - “Post-Mortem Portrait of a Child in a Chair Surrounded by her Dolls”). For the living, sleep is a familiar and routine activity common to the domestic space and in some way “tames and domesticates the alien and frightening



Figure 2.5 – “Sleeping Child Post-Mortem Portrait,” 1850s

By an uncredited photographer. From Audrey Linkman’s text: “Southworth and Hawes, Boston, Post-Mortem Portrait of an Unidentified Child, c. 1850s, daguerreotype, whole plate” (23). Image found online.



Figure 2.6 – “Post-Mortem Portrait of a Child in a Chair Surrounded by her Dolls,” c. 1900

By an uncredited photographer. From Audrey Linkman’s text: “Unknown photographer, Post-mortem Portrait of a Child in a Chair Surrounded by her Dolls, c. 1900, gelatin silver print, cabinet” (28). Image found online at *Open Culture* within an entry related to post-mortem family portraits.

aspects of death” (Linkman 21). Since death is unknown until the moment experienced, the activity of sleeping approximates the body’s drifting away in tame death. In staging aspects of a tame or good death, memorial photography obscured the line between representing the body as dead as opposed to as sleeping. We categorize the attributes of death as “stiffness, rigidity and straight lines” while the body as sleeping implies gentle curves and flexed limbs (25). In memorial photography, the ever-stiffening body was made to conform “to the pictorial representations of sleep” (25). “In the case of post-mortem portraits of adults, gentle curves were normally restricted to the positioning of arms and hands on top of the bedcovers” (25). However, portraits of children regularly depicted “the full-length body, free of any sort of covering, fully clothed and dressed as they would have been in life” (25).

As suggested in cases of tragic death, the photographer attempted to hide physical imperfections as well as “evidence of injury, disfigurement or decay” (27). “Unightly symptoms of disease or decomposition, which invoked death rather than sleep, were normally hidden through choice of pose, arrangement of bedcovers and skilful [sic] lighting” (27). Like the work of a mortician, the photographer ensured that the corpse appeared as lifelike and healthy as possible. To animate the deceased, the photographer applied make-up that disguised necrotic flesh, which enlivened the face, cheeks and lips. Moreover, in conforming to notions of the body at rest, the deceased was made to sleep soundly beneath a pillow within a satin padded casket as opposed to the confines of a sturdy pine box. Knowing that the body appears comfortable in faux slumber eases the family, friends, and fellowship of mourners as well as prepares the body for eternal repose. As Ariès suggests and Linkman

confirms, this making the body to sleep repeats during a series of intervals; first between life and death, then again between death and burial as well as burial and resurrection within the context of Christianity. After subscribing to a set of rituals, the individual's soul or life force endures in the afterlife, and in the Christian tradition, will join the body made whole when the dead resurrect during the second coming of Christ. Likewise, during these intervals between the moments of death and the end of survival suggested by Ariès, the living tend to the body in a series of informal and formal funerary customs depending on a variety of religious, social and familial factors. Notwithstanding a given custom, we regard human death with greater care than other nonhuman animals; we owe the corpse ethical treatment. "The body of the deceased is not regarded like the carcass of some animal: specific care must be given to it and a correct burial; not merely for reasons of hygiene but out of moral obligation" (Hertz 27). Within this moral obligation, our behavior alters to accommodate the special duties imposed by the dead (27). Regardless of personal feelings, mourners "show sorrow for a certain period, change the colour of their clothes and modify the pattern of their usual life." (27)

Coinciding with these intervals, while attempting to capture the immediacy of the body's fading away after the loved one has terminated, memorial photography directly engages with the pre-burial funerary custom of the wake, either through documentary or stagecraft. This interval occurs between the body's discovery as deceased and funerary customs which result in interment. Within her text, Linkman acknowledges the importance of this period, just after death and prior to burial, within the community: "This ritual enabled family members, close friends and neighbours to

demonstrate their affections and regard for the dead, and show their concern and support for the bereaved” (Linkman 18). Moreover, depending on the circumstances “more people observed the obligation to pay last respects than attend the funeral” (18). This visitation to the home and “paying last respects could provide a final opportunity to spend time with the deceased and view, touch, kiss or talk to the physical remains” (18). This type of intimate contact with the bereaved and the deceased differs from how mourners interact at the funeral and burial, when the dead depart the home after the wake. Likewise, “those prevented for whatever reason from taking part in these meaningful parting rituals may have found consolation in a post-mortem portrait that gave vicarious access to the deathbed” (18).

Given Linkman’s comments, for the family and community, the intimate setting of the wake had a unique value to that of the more public funeral by allowing individualized, spontaneous, and unmanaged time with the deceased via their deathbed. Mourners continually inscribe dignity and respect on the surface of the body in various interludes. The gathering of the bereaved within a domestic space, the careful washing, the mindful selection of clothing, each living touch bestowed on the exposed flesh, every one-sided conversation, the tears, the grief, and the observance of prescribed rituals continually inscribe value, worth, and dignity on the body prior to burial. Post-mortem portraiture illustrates and engages viewers to participate in some of these same funerary customs, which prepare the body for burial and the afterlife. First, the laying out of the body after death and prior to burial historically occurred within a domestic space or a simulation of such a space. Unlike the public spectacle of a funeral transpiring under the curious gaze of onlookers, the bereaved organized

wakes as more informal and private affairs. While alive, the deceased served as a member of various affiliations including secular, religious, professional, collegial, public as well as private. Only community members who shared one of these affiliations or someone paying respects to the family were invited into the home for the wake.

Second, within this more private domestic space, family and friends prepared the body for the upcoming public funeral and burial. “Custom required that the dead body be respectfully and carefully washed, dressed and then laid out, usually on a bed” or in the individual’s bedroom (17). Family members attended to garment selection and the body’s appearance; dressing women in their wedding gowns and burying men who served in the military as soldiers in uniform. Likewise, children were ceremoniously dressed or wore clothing that invoked innocence and youth. Grooming of the body was also important given that the family debuted this individual to the public as deceased within this intermediary period after death and prior to burial. Previously, the public recognized this person as living; by revealing the deceased state, the community begins to acknowledge the loss, which is the third function of the ceremony. The wake affords the family, friends, and members of the community visual and physical contact with the deceased. This space of interaction serves as proof that this individual has died. Moreover, this contact confirms a death announcement initially relayed verbally by someone who heard of the death or read about the passing in an obituary. Now, their identity is made known and the body in state confirms the individual’s demise. In seeing the body as evidence, mourners accept the certainty of death. Likewise, being located with a space that permits

contact with the body allows each mourner to dialogue with the deceased and emote a spectrum of reactions. The wake serves as an affective space necessary for the grieving process.

In the case of the post-mortem portraits, the photograph was included in personal correspondence that described the wake and funeral, essentially a narrative that guided the long-distance mourner to an interpretation of the accompanying image. Like welcoming the mourner into the home for the wake, the letter invited the reader to experience the memorial portrait of the deceased via a select community. The viewer participates in the funerary customs by extension, notices visual codes within the photograph, and accepts the news of the burial from the accompanying correspondence. Most importantly, the long-distance mourner has proof of the demise and affectively engages the paper corpse via visual and tactile contact with a two-dimensional printed photograph. While unable to react to the actual body in the repose during the wake and funeral, the image of the departed loved one is continually available to the viewer for ongoing reflection.

Within her monograph, Linkman includes a photograph, which she believes epitomizes this tremendous regard for the deceased by presenting “death as beautiful and meaningful in a community that cares for its dead” (See Figure 2.7 – “The Wake”) (157). Aesthetically adhering to the genre of memorial photography, “this beautifully framed image ... reflects the values of a documentary tradition that believed in a shared humanism and a sense of social justice” (157). In these comments, she is referring to an American photographer, W. Eugene Smith, who traveled to Spain for his documentary project “Spanish Village” and recorded an iconic image of the



Figure 2.7 – “The Wake,” 1951

From the photographer W. Eugene Smith’s “Spanish Village” originally published in *Life*. The uncaptioned image appears within Linkman’s text. Image found on ARTstor.

recently deceased, Juan Larra Trujillo lying in state. While she praises Smith's capacity to animate the living image of a death thing, clearly Linkman is unaware of Spain's necropolitical situation and the systems of repression surrounding death, burial, and commemoration for this generation of Spaniards just 15 years after the Civil War. However, the real value of the photograph lies not in its aesthetic, but rather how it implicitly reveals what perpetrators deprived executed Republican soldiers and disappeared civilian victims, such as Emilio Montoto Suero and his family.

W. Eugene Smith's "Spanish Village" and Juan Larra Trujillo's Wake

As a photojournalist and war correspondent for *Life* in the 1940s, Smith's work included many images of death resulting from violence and conflict. However, the political plight of the common man and economic situation in Spain had captivated the imagination of the famous American photographer, who by the spring of 1950 had petitioned *Life* magazine for months to allow him to photograph in Spain (Hughes 241). Smith desired to document and "show – in incontrovertible black and white – the effects of Franco's oppression on common people" (241). In May of 1950, after fortuitously receiving a letter of permission from the Spanish government, which mistakenly granted him *carte blanche* to photograph whatever he wished, the photographer, his assistant and interpreter set out for the Spanish countryside and covered 10,000 kilometers of territory before happening upon the village of Deleitosa nestled in the barren mountainous region of Extremadura (251, 252).

In addition to allowing Smith "to photograph the most intimate scenes of their way of living," the congenial villagers willingly reconstructed episodes from their

daily routines that Smith might have observed the day before (253). His assistant Ted Castle explained, “We were breaking the story down to living, health, politics, survival day in and day out, death – those types of things” (253). Regarding the purposeful staging and recreation of scenes for this grand narrative, “the picture was not found and taken, but visualized and created” as if a cinematographic work being directed by Smith, who was also taking copious notes nightly for his script of image captions (253). Thus, “Spanish Village” maintains a balance between documenting previously observed scenes, staged portraits, as well as spontaneous scenes fortuitously witnessed and recorded. In “many scenes, he would see something and ask them to recreate it,” such as a woman spinning thread or a young girl carrying hot loaves of bread (255). In other instances, Smith directly asked the subjects to pose for a shot that he had envisioned, such as his iconic photograph of the three soldiers from the Guardia Civil. Due to the uniqueness of the events, few images within the collection resisted recreation or staging; such intimate moments included the ritualized aspects of village life such as a christening, a first communion as well as funerary rituals associated with death and mourning. One such milestone documented by Smith, included a portrait of recently deceased Juan Larra Trujillo lying in state. As Linkman has remarked, photographing a wake in process inevitably demonstrates many of the culturally encoded elements common to post-mortem portraiture within the resulting image.

The family placed Trujillo within a presumed domestic enclosure, the dimensions of which are difficult to ascertain, which affords mourners affective contact with the body. Given the intimate setting and proximity to the mourners, it

appears to be a small room and is most likely a bedroom within one of the village homes. Within the caption, Smith chose not to identify the body of the deceased or the six female mourners holding vigil alongside the corpse. On the bottom right page, over the legs of the body in repose a white caption in capital letters reads: “His wife, daughter, granddaughter and friends have their last earthly visit with a villager” (See Figure 2.8 – “The Wake from *Life*”) (Smith 129). The caption situates his identity within the community as a husband, father, grandfather and friend. The viewer interprets the cluster of individuals surrounding his body as mourners who were invited into the home in order to witness the result of his passing, pay last respects, as well as console the widow and bereaved family. The woman directly over the right shoulder of the widow appears to console her and the women in the last two rows gaze in the direction of the widow and the dead man’s head. In their moment of grief captured by the camera’s lens, it seems as if the photographer and viewer were likewise invited into the home to experience the private funerary rite and the creation of a portrait in the moment. The family carefully washed, prepared, and laid out Trujillo comfortably beneath a pillow as if sleeping. As the image of fresh death, his facial expressions do not appear frozen, rather enlivened by Smith’s use of light, equal to the visage of this granddaughter in the front row center. As if slumbering, by appearing so peaceful and serene, one might believe his body is merely at rest if not for the presence of mourners. As for his clothing, he most likely wears his best suit, white shirt, dark jacket, and trousers; none of which suggest need of mending. The garments are not dusty from working in the fields, although his rugged hands, crossed naturally, intimate a lifetime of such labor.



Figure 2.8 – “The Wake from *Life*,” 1951

From the photographer W. Eugene Smith’s “Spanish Village” as originally captioned in *Life*. Image found on ARTstor.

Comparing his use of light to that of Rembrandt, Smith's images have been celebrated for their more painterly qualities, an art critic once claimed that Smith "must command the sun" in his ability to photograph scenes from daily life and "achieve such precise effects" (Hughes 271). The photograph of the Trujillo's wake is no exception; the use of light in the photograph only enhances and illuminates the "skull like face" that radiates the embers of the "last trace of life" from the dead man's body (256). Being an elderly man, at the end of his life cycle, he embodies "natural" if not "good" death. His face, glowing on the cusp of death, attracts the gaze of his granddaughter seated in the front row between the widow and the man's daughter to her left. She is the only onlooker contemplating the deceased's face. The women seated behind the trio of mourners surrounding the body, glance towards the widow, who looks towards her husband's mid-section. The daughter to the far right seems disconnected from the group with her arm propped on the bed as she looks towards the left beyond her father's lower extremities. The granddaughter's gaze, the illumination of her young face and wide eyes, in addition to her position at the center the photograph, make her figure the focal point as she meditates her personal grief. In addition to this image of Trujillo in repose, Smith also photographed a group of mourners lined up in the hallway of the rustic home, either waiting to pay their respects or showing their solidarity (See Figure 2.9 – "Untitled"). In this unpublished photograph from "Spanish Village," Trujillo's eldest surviving son, whom Smith had previously carried into the neighboring town to use the phone, stands in the foreground in the threshold to the room where his father lays. As the only male presence, he stands apart from the cluster of similarly dressed women wearing black

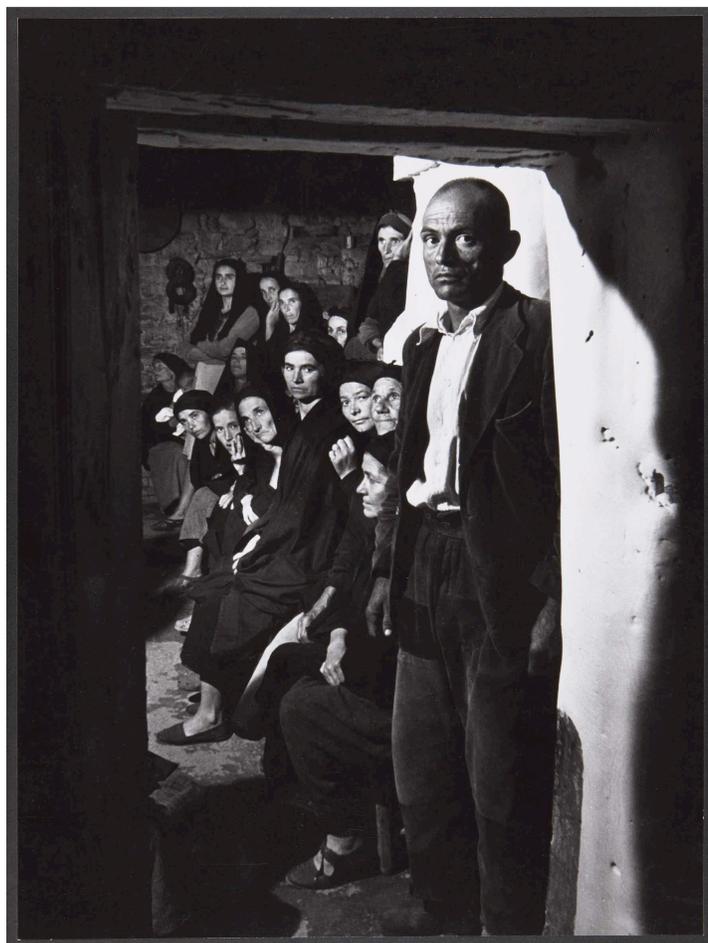


Figure 2.9 – “Untitled,” 1950

This unpublished photograph by W. Eugene Smith is part of the permanent collection of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Image found online.

garments and head coverings, whose faces evidence boredom, worry, or mild interest in being photographed. These members of Trujillo's community, honor his memory in altering their daily routine by paying their last respects prior to his funeral.

In the aftermath of the prevailing dictatorship, Smith desperately wanted to expose the plight of the common man and narrate a history of Francoist repression suffered by rural Spaniards. In "Spanish Village" he endeavored to craft an explicit photographic narrative which depicted menacing authoritarian figures from the Guardia Civil, poor economic conditions, and as yet to be implemented technological advancements. However, for the historical readers of *Life* magazine, his efforts fall short. Instead, Smith portrays daily life in a charming asynchronistic village where the community celebrates religious milestones and honors the dead in picturesque chiaroscuro scenes. Considering victims of Francoist repression such as Emilio Montoto Suero, who would have been from the same generation as Trujillo, Smith's documentary reveals the moments of death and subsequent mourning customs, which perpetrators deprived Republican soldiers and civilians. After brutalizing their bodies in death, these victims were denied the pre-burial wake and funeral that would allow the family to grieve their loss and prepare the dead for eternal repose in the afterlife. Despite the passage of time, I believe that photography can still mitigate these intervals associated with grief and loss as well as supplant traumatic afterimages in the form of memorial photography that documents some of the mass grave exhumations. In the unlikelihood of exhuming all Republican victims, memorial photography can recover and restore their referents.

Clemente Bernad's *Desvelados* as Mass Grave Memorial Photography

In an interview with *El País* on March 8, 2012, Clemente Bernad discussed the motivations behind his most recent documentary project, *Desvelados*, or *Kept Awake*, in which he photographs various mass grave in the process of exhumation across Spain. For Bernad, the practice of photography equates to a civic responsibility: “Fotografiar es un acto político” [To photograph is a political act”] (my translation) (Machado). For a reader of his monograph, this political act translates to a moral obligation to the concealed dead, which one first notices in the simplicity of the layout. While a deeply divisive topic in contemporary Spanish politics, the format of the monograph does not explicitly choose sides and allows evidence to inform the viewer’s interpretation. In Bernad’s text, all the images are black and white, unorganized by theme or chronology, and only a white page number situates the images in a discernable sequence. The monograph begins with a landscape of an assumed gravesite prior to excavation and ends with a close-up of individuals, cleaning and carefully brushing away the earth surrounding the bones still embedded within the grave. Between these bookended scenes, photographs document: vacated graves upon removal of skeletons; a constellation of forensic objects and personal effects; family members traveling towards or standing near gravesites; as well as rows of exhumed bones and artifacts in plastic containers. Depending on the image, Bernad dedicates one or two full pages to its printed representation in the monograph. Interspersed within the collection he includes essays and photographs of forensic drawings mapping the position of skeletal remains. However, these points of

reference do not correspond to specific images, rather the totality of the mass grave experience for families with disappeared loved ones in Spain.

Regarding his curation of the monograph, Bernad abstains from placing captions on or near the printed photographs. At the end of the text there is an index of brief captions, which identifies the individual photographs by page number. The captions are sparse, data driven, and rather forensic in nature, similar to a headstone for the collective grave. Consider the following caption, which corresponds to Figure 2.10 – “Grave Filled to Capacity”:

Loma de Montija (Burgos), 2011.
Exhumación de los restos de 24 personas asesinadas y enterradas en una fosa común en noviembre de 1936. Más de la mitad de los esqueletos tenía las manos atadas a la espalda.

[Exhumation of the remains of 24 people murder and buried in a mass grave in November 1936. More than half of the skeletons had their hands tied behind their backs.] (my translation) (Bernad, *Desvelados* 260)

Including the location of the grave as well as the exhumation year, the contents elaborate the number of victims, the date they went missing, and a brief forensic fact that informs the circumstances surrounding their deaths, which often suggests a summary execution. The caption does not sensationalize the photograph; viewers find the subject matter deeply moving without a guided interpretation. Moreover, Bernad does not embellish the subject matter via captions or choose sides in the historical conflict by suggesting an assailant. Likewise, victims are not personalized by attaching an excerpt of testimony from one of their surviving descendants. Such strategies would impose a narrative on the image instead allowing the photographs to



Figure 2.10 – “Grave Filled to Capacity,” 2011

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Loma de Montija (Burgos), 2011.

Exhumación de los restos de 24 personas asesinadas y enterradas en una fosa común en noviembre de 1936. Más de la mitad de los esqueletos tenía las manos atadas a la espalda.

Exhumation of the remains of 24 people murder and buried in a mass grave in November of 1936. More than half of the skeletons had their hands tied behind their backs. (my translation)

Captions in Spanish are from Clemente Bernad’s text, *Desvelados* (260). This image was found in the photo essay, “La memoria de la tierra,” published online in *El País*.



Figure 2.11 – “Three Skulls,” 2004

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Villamayor de los Montes (Burgos), 2004.

Exhumación de los restos de 46 personas que fueron excarceladas de la prisión provincial de Burgos el 24 de septiembre de 1936, asesinadas y enterradas en las inmediaciones de la carretera de Madrid.

Exhumation of the remains of 46 people who were released from the provincial prison of Burgos on September 24, 1936, murdered and buried in the medians of the Madrid road. (my translation)

Captions in Spanish are from Clemente Bernad’s text, *Desvelados* (259). This image was found in the photo essay, “La memoria de la tierra,” published online in *El País*.

relay their own accounts. Due to the format, viewers are permitted their own unencumbered affective interactions with the photographs.

As a result of the format, one cannot immediately orient to the gravity of the subject matter. For example, a photograph such as Figure 2.11 – “Three Skulls,” which focuses exclusively on partially exhumed craniums, could be interpreted as an archeological dig site from antiquity in any part of the world. The viewer is unaware that something more contemporary transpires without the totality of the images which display moments of contact between the living and the dead, such as relatives carrying flowers while walking down a road or serving as pallbearers transporting the individualized remains in plastic containers. Other photographs portray more procedural content, such as the cataloging of miscellaneous personal effects in the hope of identifying an individual, or images that document the likely cause of death, such as a visible hole in the skull from a gunshot wound. As individual photographs, one could interpret the images as pertaining to a contemporary crime scene or cold case file. Like the gradual excavation process of removing layers of sediment to encounter the remains in a mass grave, the subject matter of Bernad’s project becomes more apparent to the viewer upon reflection and interaction with each photograph.

In returning to Bernad’s interview with *El País* and his comments related to this moral obligation to document the exhumation process, he mentions something of how photography restores the remains by not only bringing them above ground but also by returning them to the living. The photographs document the process of repatriation and the homecoming of the deceased while permitting the living interaction with the dead:

Igual que es necesario que salgan a la luz los huesos de estos miles de muertos, es imperativo proteger las imágenes que nos los muestran y mostrar cómo la vida y la muerte se encuentran en torno a esas fosas.

[Just as it is necessary that the thousands of bones of the dead are brought to light, it is equally imperative to protect the images that show them to us and show how life and death converge around these graves.]
(my translation) (Machado)

In death, perpetrators denied these individuals contact with friends, family and the larger community. Individuals abruptly disappeared and were never confirmed as dead. As related to Bernad's comments, there are two ideas worth exploring in relation to the seeing and remembering remains in full decay as well as the convergence of the living and the dead within the space of the mass grave.

First, there is a line of thought common to Linkman's work on memorial photography where the family found value in seeing and remembering the person as dead. For Bernad, the protecting and safeguarding of photographs, which document violent death, becomes equally significant. In Linkman's collection, the family enlivened the deceased's body to idealize the positive aspects of death to narrate and commemorate their passing. Photographers camouflaged evidence of tragic death on the body with make-up or clothing, which concealed injury. In the case of Miss Horth, accentuating her serenity and narrating her devout dedication to her faith with religious props, distracted from the troubling passing of a young woman from chronic illness. However, for Bernad, there is tremendous value in the images of an excavation in process and the bringing to light of skeletonized remains, which to the viewer serve not only as a stark reminder of mortality, but also as an archive of a very dark chapter in Spanish history. What is the value of illuminating bodies in an

advanced state of decomposition? From the onset, it seems quite intrusive. We prefer to imagine that once we make the body to sleep the deceased forever slumbers just as we intended, comfortable in the repose of the casket deep beneath the manicured grass of a headstone. However, as Bernad's title suggest, the bodies within mass graves were not made to sleep and are otherwise restless kept awake.²³

In the case of the mass grave, the dead body as restless involves an obligation to the corpse "that takes the form of a traditionally mandated duty... in a human imperative to dispose of the dead deliberately and ceremonially" (Pogue Harrison 143). As mentioned earlier by anthropologists such Ferrándiz, given that the Francoist regime disappeared these individuals during the Civil War and subsequent dictatorship, the family was unable to fulfill this obligation and the cycle of mourning was suspended. I have alluded to the funerary and religious tradition of making the body to sleep, but Robert Pogue Harrison best summarizes the severity of the punishment to the disappeared individual and their family:

In the absence of a body... their grief could not find its proper object; hence the work of mourning, by which the dead are made to die, was destined to fail. The missing body meant that the deceased person was fated to remain, in effect, *undead* – a condition, once again, that speaks above all of the open-ended, reconciled psychic state of the grievers. (144)

As suggested by Bernad and fulfilled in systematic Francoist repression, essentially the disappeared are kept awake in their denial of eternal repose. Given that the family did not possess the body, whose ownership belonged to the State, they were unable to

²³ Likewise, as Layla Renshaw has mentioned in her text, *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War*, archaeologists, family members and the community, accustomed to bodies placed "face up, straightened limbs, and arms folded upon torso" noticed a restlessness of remains in Spanish mass graves (151). "Skeletons instead appeared animated by a violent movement, and their stillness was more suggestive of an action shot or a freeze frame than of repose" (151).

make the corpse, or subsequent skeletal remains, as sleeping. Moreover, in the absence of a pre-burial ritual, the family doubts the definitive finality of the disappeared body's fate and mortality. In the case of Emilia Carolina Ricca, and other such victims whose spouses were executed, the not knowing what transpired, the absence or uncertainty of the last few moments of death, leads to memories replaced by traumatic afterimages devised from what might have happened. Classified as presumed dead, most likely not living, perpetrators denied the family closure. Thus, these disappeared individuals linger between certain death and unlikely life while categorized as undead. As such, through the denial of basic funerary customs, the family cannot witness the transformative presence of the corpse lying in state, which proves the demise of the individual who previously inhabited the body. Moreover, the bereaved are unable to inscribe their grief on the body and foreclosed access to the deathbed. As we have seen in other funerary customs, often this interval between the last moments of life and interlude prior to burial have greater value to family members than the formal interment ceremony.

Along the same lines as Pogue Harrison's idea of an obligation to the dead, in his work on testimonies of Francoist repression, Álvarez Fernández forcefully contends that corpses denied burial or interred inappropriately demand the dignity of a proper burial (74). In the context of Spanish Catholic society, he elaborates the two-fold punishment for the family and the deceased of such deprivation. This indignity "refleja de manera diáfana su exilio de la comunidad de los muertos, y la extinción de su identidad social inmediatamente después de su fallecimiento" ["clearly reflects their exile from the community of the dead, and the extinction (also translated as the

extinguishing) of their social identity immediately after their passing”] (my translation) (76). This action of being kept awake, in the denial of a proper burial has dual ramifications in the afterlife. In a material afterlife, the family is unable to fulfill their obligation to the body and inscribe the proper dignity in mourning, because the deceased is not buried within a family plot at the cemetery after a funeral. Moreover, the disappeared body in decay is in service to the claims being made upon it by the assailants who purposefully manipulated it as undead. Such actions also imply repercussions in an imaginary afterlife. Beyond being denied eternal repose, because of the punished body, the itinerant soul is prohibited entry into the larger community of souls. In a Catholic context, treated as atheists by Franco’s troops, these victims were denied last rights and purposefully condemned to Hell.

Returning to the second aspect of Bernad’s statement regarding this space of convergence between life and death, or the living and the dead. In the case of the mass grave of Spain, multiple significations and temporalities coexist. The site is not just one of burial and recovery via exhumation, but also one of unnatural death by execution to create invisible monuments to terror. These bodies were systematically dehumanized, marked by violence, and denied appropriate burial in order to mass-produce disappeared bodies. Recently, the historian Paul Preston has compared the episodic violence of the Spanish Civil War to genocide due the premeditated extermination of Republican forces and presumed civilian sympathizers from the onset of the conflict. Historian Paul Preston claims, “The Spanish proletariat” was viewed as “an inferior race that had to be subjugated by sudden, uncompromising violence” (xii). All manner of modern weapon of war was unleashed on the civilian population,

including air bombardments of villages. Few prisoners were taken as the forces marched through Republican occupied territory. The atrocities committed against the community served as a warning to cities and towns that might have considering mounting a resistance. The claims of terror made on the bodies of the dead were orally communicated by way of surviving refugees who recounted their experience as they fled from one village to the next (xiii). According to Preston, in addition to physical trauma, the invading forces made the body a victory prize:

The Legion as well as the Regulares mutilated casualties, cutting off ears, noses, sexual organs and even heads. Such practices, along with the massacres of prisoners and the systematic rape of working-class women, were permitted by the rebel officers in Spain as they had been in Morocco by Franco and others (313).

Occasionally, captives were forced to dig their own graves prior to being shot and if the wound was not fatal, they were buried alive (309). Likewise, in the chaos of being thrown into open pits, victims were buried “*bocas abajo*, meaning ‘mouths down’ or ‘the mouths to the ground,’ ... drawing on traditional beliefs around the impiety and indignity of being buried face down or having soil in the mouth” (Renshaw 153). In this cleansing of the countryside pregnant women were also violated and shot (Preston 307). At the culmination of an elaborate spectacle that fused Fascist-Catholic aspects of ceremonies such as music from “a band and a field Mass” captives were even executed publically (320). Towards the end of the war, “later executions were accompanied by a military band playing the royal anthem and the Falangist hymn” (320). These calculated tactics served to dehumanize the dead, strip individuals of their dignity while objectifying their bodies as war trophies.

The site of the mass grave culminated in an invisible monument to terror, whose publically hidden, yet privately well-documented construction continued into the dictatorship until months before Franco's death on November 20, 1975 (Fernández 11). As evidenced by the deprivation of last rites for individuals not viewed as true Catholics and the public executions that incorporated a secularized Fascist-Mass, in his treatment of the godless Republicans, Franco viewed the ruling party like Muslim infidels. According to Antonius Robben: "General Franco regarded the Civil War as a divine reconquest of Spain --- reminiscent of the Reconquista by the fifteenth-century Catholic kings and queens --- that reclaimed lost symbolic and national territory from the Republican atheists" (269). After a successful campaign, the recently acquired territory was marked by the appearance of mass graves in the Republican zone. "These graves were material proof of the military's superior force and gave the troops the confidence they were winning the war against the atheist revolutionaries" (270).

This is not to say that massacres which produced mass graves did not take place within the Republican zone. However, there were fewer instances, many of which were more spontaneous, less calculated and overall reactionary to the forceful stance taken by Franco's troops. "The repression of the rebels was about three times greater than that which took place in the Republican zone" (Preston xvii-xviii). As for the victims of violence at the hands of the Republican forces, "the targets were not just the military ... but also the wealthy, the bankers, the industrialists and the landowners were regarded as the instruments of repression" (xiv). However, on the Spanish landscape there are few, if any, surviving Nationalist mass graves as a result of Republican retaliation. As previously mentioned, the regime was diligent in its

general commemoration of the Nationalist dead in the postwar years and compulsive in their interment into the basilica of el Valle de los Caídos. In terms of the remaining mass graves, once lost, how is it possible to inscribe dignity on the body? How are remains humanized and welcomed back into the eternal fellowship of the dead?

In returning to Bernad's comments on the mass gravesite as a space of convergence between the living and dead, pre-burial imagery unfolds in reverse throughout the entirety of his project during the process of documenting multiple exhumations. In the traditional wake, the identity of the body is known as a given element of the funerary rite. The family washes the body of the acknowledged relative; the community pays last respects to someone familiar. Yet in the case of a mass grave, the process of excavation gradually reveals the identity of the body. As Layla Renshaw has remarked, "the transformation from buried body to revealed body in the Spanish exhumations is not a single moment of revelation, but rather a sequence of discernible shifts in material register" (148). The unearthing evidences an allocation from collective anonymous human remains to a single recovered loved one. Part of the process of restoring dignity to remains dehumanized by ritualized acts of violence involves naming the victim in order to reunite them with the surviving family for the purpose of memorialization. After identification, these individuals are finally granted a funeral and proper burial that includes some marker, a headstone or a plaque, which continues to commemorate them in the future. These bodies become located, found, fixed in space instead of shifting from various plausible sites hidden on the landscape. In undoing the mass grave space by way of excavation, in addition to the recovery of their identity within the community, the living cares for the dead. At

the gravesite, the family observes excavators brush the bones clean by removing dirt and debris for reburial. The remains anticipating identification become individually protected in a container that serves as a temporary casket. Furthermore, the mourners enter an affective space in order to experience the body in full view of its transitioned state from collectively disappeared to individually parsed remains. In viewing the skeleton and confirming the identity, via personal effects and DNA testing, survivors receive confirmation of the passing; resulting in remains that no longer exist as undead.²⁴

In considering pre-burial imagery as previously demonstrated in memorial photography, among the images from *Desvelados* Figure 2.12 “Berlangas de Roa” most approximates the experience of a pre-burial custom. Prior to reading the caption towards the end of the monograph, the viewer would not necessarily assume that the elderly woman looking in the direction of the individual skeleton was his daughter. However, this exhumation project reunited them. While afforded visual and tactile contact with his remains, his identity was made known to her. Gazing at his collapsed skull, she braces herself against the wall of the grave. His found remains evidence his demise and he no longer lingers as disappeared. The exhumation has led to the embodiment of his ghost. She touches him; speaks to him; weeps before him. The full spectrum of feelings derived from grief and mourning can be inscribed on his

²⁴ During the exhumations, archaeologists and witnesses tend to humanize the remains by interpreting gestures and body language from their positions. Renshaw writes: “People stopped and observed skeletons that appeared to be performing particularly lifelike gestures with their hands, or that had their arms interlinked as if in an embrace or a protective gesture, or their heads touching as if conferring. Since the bodies in the grave were of neighbours and relatives, these gestures were easily read by the viewers as signs of intimacy, solidarity, and consolation” (152). Regardless of the violent end, in merely seeing the remains and opening the grave, the claims on their bodies begins to shift.

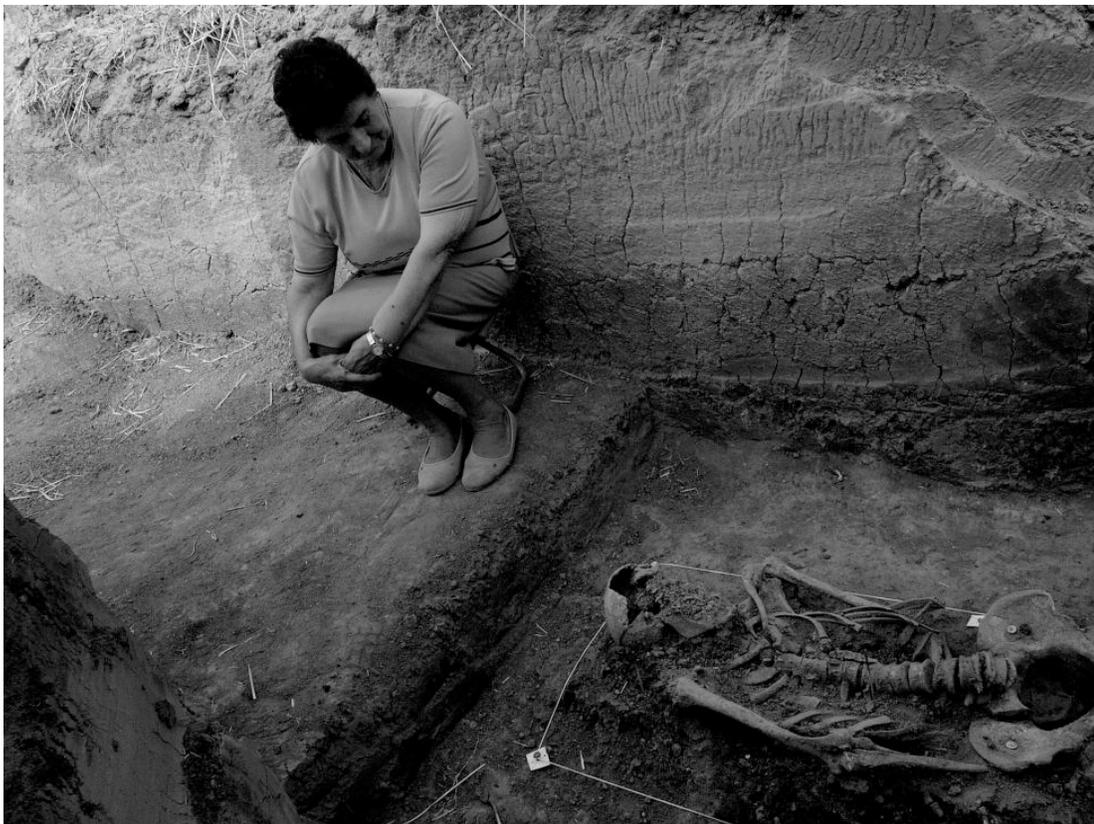


Figure 2.12 – “Waking Exhumation,” 2004

Páginas 248-249

Berlangas de Roa (Burgos), 2004.

Exhumación de los restos de cinco vecinos de Haza (Burgos) detenidos y asesinados en agosto de 1936, entre los que se encontraba el alcalde de la localidad. En la fotografía, la hija del alcalde asesinado junto a los restos de su padre.

Exhumation of the remains of five residents from Haza (Burgos) detained and murder in August of 1936, among those found was the mayor of the town. In the photograph, the daughter of the murder mayor is next to the remains of her father. (my translation)

Captions in Spanish are from Clemente Bernad’s text, *Desvelados* (265). This image was found in the photo essay, “La memoria de la tierra,” published online in *El País*.

body to humanize and encode dignity. Even quietly crouching before him, she is present and acknowledging him while confirming his status as deceased.

The revealing of his body occurs within a series of enclosures simulating the intimate space of a traditional pre-burial wake. Moreover, there is an interior quality to this space, like the enclosure of a domicile, which has been made separate from the exterior terrain. First, similar to every preliminary mass grave exhumation in Spain, the families must grant consent or invite the team to conduct an excavation. Second, descendants actively participate in the process as volunteers or witnesses holding vigil. Excavators carve out the terrain, shaping a series of levels transitioning from a landscape presumed to contain bodies, to a surface evidencing some collective forms imbedded in the earth, to then a much deeper individualized plot where singular remains are corded off and separated from the others. This photograph geometrically depicts the transitioning terrain, gradually framing the upper extremities of the identified figure of the father within a rectangular white line mimicking the boundary of a deathbed. In framing of the photograph, a horizon line is not visible in the foreground. The lack of sky or contrast between earth and sky gives the setting interiority to what would be an open space.

To the left of the segmented rectangular areas outlining the remains, the woman positions herself at the base of an inclined triangular space that permits access to the unearthed deathbed. As a point of entry from the upper to lower levels of earth, this aperture serves as a passage between the two locations and conceptually simulates the space of a room, with an open door that allows the body to be viewed by others who wish to pay last respects. Members of the community can enter and depart while

continually tending to the gradually revealed and extracted remains. The ability to enter and leave the site changes the significance of the space. Originally these exposed ditches did not have a point of departure, only the wide-open space of entry. A portal permitting contact between the living and death changes the space from one of loss, as a mass grave, to one of recovery, in the revealing space of a wake.

Conclusion

In thinking about the convergence of life and death around the site of the mass grave, Bernad includes a puzzling image within his monograph that aptly illustrates this merging. In Figure 2.13 – “Performing Remains” the excavation team reenacts the positions of the exhumed skeletal remains to demonstrate the volume and orientation of the bodies when perpetrators tossed them into the open earth. These individuals choreographed themselves within the excavated grave trace, in the presence of two levels of spectatorship, the onlookers surrounding the freshly filled open pit and the viewer of the photograph. This convergence is inverted in the sense that the dead, who previously filled the grave, are now situated above ground, while the live bodies inhabit this space of death. In the series, there is no other photograph where the excavators occupy this position and perform as remains. In a way, such an act demonstrates regard and respect for the dead as well as camaraderie.

After spending time face to face with the skulls, handling the bones, cataloging the personal effects, a series of cumulative actions transforms the space. As a mass grave, no living soul entered of their own volition; victims were forced, tossed, thrown, and piled on top of each other in no determined pattern. Yet, after the gradual excavation and careful removal of the remains, through intimate contact with the dead,



Figure 2.13 – “Performing Remains,” 2005

Páginas 78-79

Fustiñana (Navarra), 2005.

Fosa común de la que se exhumaron los restos de siete vecinos de Murchante (Navarra) asesinados el 20 de noviembre de 1936. En la fotografía, los miembros del equipo de la exhumación reconstruyen con sus propios cuerpos el aspecto y volumen originales de la fosa.

Mass grave in which the remains of seven residents of Murchante (Navarra) were exhumed who were murdered on November 20, 1936. In the photograph, members of the excavation team reconstruct with their own bodies the original aspect and volume of the grave. (my translation)

Captions in Spanish are from Clemente Bernad’s text, *Desvelados* (260). This image was found in the photo essay, “La memoria de la tierra,” published online in *El País*.

the excavators honor the victims in this choreographed representation. In the process of exhumation, they created a deathbed, a space permitting a wake; a space that people decide to enter and leave of their own volition when paying last respects to the dead and their families. Similar to the family and friends unable to attend the pre-burial ritual, the viewer participates not only as a witness, but also as an invited mourner by proxy of the photograph.

Given that not every surviving family member recovers the remains of the individual whom they lost to the mass grave, a project such as Bernad's provides them with a measure of closure. In seeing what happened to their friends and neighbors, they know with certainty what happened to their loved one. Emilio's wife died before ever learning if her daughter Esther would recover her father's remains in Asturias. One can only wonder if seeing the forensic evidence of what transpired in the meadow that day might have challenged the powerful afterimage she developed based on her observations from a distance. Ferrándiz reports that Esther's attempts to find her father proved unsuccessful, "but she was anxious to recover some objects that might have belonged to him" ("Intimacy" 322). In a graveside interview, she elaborates: "A watch, a wedding ring, a shoe ... even the bullets. The ones that might appear in his body, I do want them!" (qtd. in Ferrándiz, "Intimacy" 322). After returning home to the United States, Esther continued to correspond with Ferrándiz and "insisted on having a bullet from the shooting ... no matter how deteriorated it was" ("Intimacy" 322). The anthropologist did not have "access to the objects recovered in the exhumation," but instead "sent her via email a picture of one of the detonated bullets" ("Intimacy" 322). Given that excavators were unable to identify Emilio, the recovered

bullet most likely made contact with some other victim. Yet, such a distinction clearly was not a concern for his surviving daughter. In the exhumation process, the photographic bullet represents Emilio's abrupt disappearance and brutal murder. Moreover, as a referent to her father's death it also experiences a resignification as an object recovered from the gravesite that stands in for her father. In this way, Bernad's memorial photography also has unique social value. In seeing the repetition of multiple mass graves, which he treats as one entity and one experience endured by many families, Spaniards recover disappeared loved ones despite who actually appears in the photograph.

CHAPTER 3

DEATH EMBODIED, EL VALLE DE LOS CAÍDOS AS AN UNSETTLED PICTORIALIST COMPOSITE

In considering the subject matter of this chapter, the human remains interred within el Valle de los Caídos differ in terms of place, representation, signification, as well as permitting a space of interaction between the living and the dead when compared to Federico García Lorca and the mass graves across Spain. In terms of place, el Valle is a singular and locatable site on the landscape unlike the constellation of mass graves concealed beneath the earth or the ephemeral art projects which conjure the spirit of the lost poet within domestic dwellings he previously inhabited. As such, el Valle has an object permanence given its substantial material presence which radiates from the geographical center of the Iberian Peninsula. In contrast, the lost graves containing Lorca and other missing Civil War victims aspire to a sense of presence, which manifests gradually in the exhumations of the Republican dead or the ongoing quest to find exactly where Lorca died in order to resurrect him. Likewise, the Spanish government and historical memory associations are in the process of progressively mapping these known and suspected locations of obscured graves in order to foster greater visibility. From this standpoint, el Valle is fixed, known, highly visible, and by no means a site in development.

Concerning representation, the previous two chapters address questions related to Republican mourning, exhumation, proper burial, and remembrance. These projects unfold either locally, where the community formalizes a material space of

Republican memory, or nationally and internationally, where artists honor these victims through art exhibitions and photography which creates an immaterial memory space within a legacy of cultural production. A case of the former is the memorial park established within the province of Granada to acknowledge the mass graves scattered between the towns of Víznar and Alfacar. While instances of the latter include the temporary art installation, *Everstill / Siempre todavía*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, which honored Lorca at la Huerta de San Vicente or Clemente Bernad's *Desvelados*, which documents mass grave exhumations across Spain via memorial photography. Concerning representation on a national level, el Valle is decidedly a Nationalist space of remembrance, currently sanctioned and maintained by the State. Originally these soldiers perished in Republican zones or died of old age. After the Civil War, the regime exhumed all the Nationalist mass graves within former Republican territories, or as the Falange party members terminated, buried their dead in the monument during and some years after the dictatorship.

With respect to exhibiting the dead, el Valle fulfills to excess the mourning rights and rituals denied Republicans. Whereas Lorca and his compatriots were relegated to ghost-hood and condemned in the afterlife through the denial of burial rituals and proper graves, family members of Nationalist soldiers mourned their dead privately prior to the State then honoring them publically. As fallen Spaniards enshrined within the quasi-religious monument, the State anonymized all the Nationalist dead as sacred martyrs for Christ and Country. Yet despite this lack of individual commemoration, the memorial provides the surviving family members a space of interaction to visit their loved ones and reflect on their absence within one of

two chapels. As discussed in the prior two chapters, perpetrators denied Lorca's family, as well as other victims tossed into makeshift mass graves, access to their loved one's location. Given these political circumstances, el Valle is the single most contested Civil War commemoration site in Spain.

Derived from aspects of other places, the monument's complexity as a site and symbolic location of Nationalist memory speaks to the mastery of its design and capacity to survive well beyond Spain's transition to democracy. As disparate components amalgamated into a unified assemblage, el Valle is something of a citadel, church, cultural center, hostel, monastery, school, tomb, and tourist attraction. Misaligning together various ideologies, these components simultaneously refer to Catholicism, Fascism, Monarchism, Mysticism and Nationalism, all under the auspices of memorializing the dead and reconciling the Spanish Civil War. This structural and ideological complexity problematizes approaches to a comprehensive analysis of the monument in terms of anthropology, architecture, art, history, economics, politics, religion, and a spade of other unmentioned disciplines. Given this material and immaterial combination of elements, I would like to think through el Valle de los Caídos as a composite site, an assemblage of dissimilar parts, which appear totalizing in fashioning a unified whole. This idea of assemblage is based on the practice of compound printing methods pioneered by pictorialist photographers, who combined negatives from previously developed scenes to manipulate a single ideal composition. At first, the resulting visual narrative appears authentic, as an image composed by means perceived as natural by the viewer. Yet upon closer inspection, one notices the unsightly seams resulting from the process, which

undermine the outcome of the composition as a fiction, which only manages to perpetually disrupt and disturb the viewer. This unsettling disruption of the viewing experience when looking at a pictorialist composite, informs how el Valle conditions the bodies of visitors to a set of behavioral and somatic parameters, while manipulating the dead as characters within a remade world of fiction.

Conditioning Visitors to the Complexity of the Monument

Given the pharaonic architecture deeply embedded in the surrounding Sierra de Guadarrama within the Cuelgamuros Valley, el Monumento Nacional de Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caídos, translated as The Valley of the Fallen, appears settled in terms of having a well-established relationship to the landscape (See Figure 3.1 – “El Valle de los Caídos o la Abadía de la Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caídos”). Indeed, the architect responsible for the site began consolidating this association with nature in 1940, one year after the Spanish Civil War. Upon completion in 1958, the monument emerged as a formidable presence on the horizon. At almost 60 years old, this symbolic as well as physical visibility lends to the site’s considerable presence not only in terms of the environment, but also within a religious context. Measuring 150 meters high and 40 meters across, solidly planted on the peak of the mountain, and seen from miles away on approach from Madrid, the largest memorial cross in the world unmistakably incorporates the site’s location within Christendom. In tandem with the determined architecture, the entrenchment in nature, and marked religious affiliation, the monument appears settled in terms of its material and ideological foundations.



Figure 3.1 – “El Valle de los Caídos o la Abadía de la Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caídos,” 2012

Photograph by Jorge Díaz Bes. In the background, the highway is visible beyond the green tree line. The concrete bridge, within the far right third of the frame, is part of the winding road which weaves through the forest, which later bifurcates at the main entrance to the basilica on the other side of the mountain as well as the abbey, visible in the foreground.

By placing the site within a national and religious imaginary, the name further lends to this sense of stability: The National Monument of the Holy Cross of Valley of the Fallen. From the perspective of a visiting tourist, the purpose and referent seem rather straightforward: a singular statewide memorial for the Spanish Civil War dead, located on hallowed ground which commemorates those who died because of the conflict. For someone unfamiliar with Spain's history, the name and scale of the architecture suggest that the cross marks the whereabouts of a pivotal skirmish that defined the outcome of the war. Perhaps countless brave young soldiers succumbed to their injuries on a field of battle not far from the surrounding woods. As a resting place, the name strikes a conciliatory tone wherein the monument and holy cross simultaneously commended the dead to God and country. A guidebook summarizing the history, reinforces this "alliance between the church and the state in Spain which lasted for many years" when mentioning the "Christian sense of the Monument" as a symbol of "Peace" (Gaspar 15). Furthermore, as a nation working towards peace, José Luis Sancho Gaspar states that the memorial was apparently the culmination of a series of "grandiose churches and nationalistic military monuments which arose out of the alliance formed between the Church and the conservative middle class in Spain in the middle of the 19th century" (15).

Lending to this sense of stability and overall normalization as a culturally viable site on par with former monarchical holdings across Spain, el Patrimonio Nacional, an institution which manages State properties, currently oversees the administration and preservation of the monument in addition to its fixtures and furnishings. Within the foreword of his guidebook, Gaspar elaborates the purview of

this institution, whose dossier of properties include “a number of palaces, monasteries and convents founded by Spanish monarchs, all of which are of great historical, artistic, cultural and, most significantly, of outstanding *symbolic importance*” (7). A few of these impressive holdings include el Palacio Real de Madrid, the residence of the current monarch, as well as el Palacio Real de El Pardo, a former royal residence operating in part as a cultural center which awards prizes for literature and visual arts, hosts a concert series, houses the royal library, publishes a catalogue of royal sites, and sponsors a variety of educational programs. As a thriving part of the community, Gaspar contends that el Patrimonio Nacional has a civic duty to make “the buildings and possessions it administers available for study and research and visits by the general public” (7).

Despite these established aspects, straightforward premise, official oversight, and inclusion within royal patronage, the site at Cuelgamuros connotes and denotes a troubling complexity in almost every meaning of the word. In terms of architecture, the monument was designed as a multifaceted complex or juxtaposed collection of structures, each of which references other institutions. El Valle de los Caídos is not only a war memorial constructed to honor and house the remains of the victors from the conflict, but also operates as a choir school, Benedictine Abbey, hostel, library, tourist attraction, which includes a cafeteria, gift shop and nature trails, as well as an active cathedral and worship center. This array of faith-based structures lends to the perception that el Valle is integral to a local community of Spaniards, who send their children to school, attend weekly mass, participate in annual religious festivals, meditate at the stations of the cross on the trail surrounding the complex, and abide

with their loved ones interred within the chapels of the basilica. Subsequently, given the objectives of el Patrimonio Nacional, this openness would seemingly extend to travelers interested in similar historic and religious destinations found on the peninsula and managed by the institution. El Valle might be just one of many stops on a traveler's itinerary. The official website seems aware of this possibility by marketing their hostel to travelers also interested in a day trip to San Lorenzo de El Escorial, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located fifteen kilometers away, which serves as a monastery as well as the final resting place and one-time palace of Spanish royalty. Likewise, guidebooks printed in the 1960s and 1970s, printed maps in the opening pages which inscribed the monument within a network of surrounding tourist destinations.

In terms of religious tourism, given that the complex displays traits similar to other spiritual communities across Spain, a traveler making a pilgrimage to el Valle de los Caídos would expect to pass through a nearby village, which at some point, came to foster a symbiotic relationship with the holy site. For example, pilgrims destined to honor La Moreneta, the dark-skinned Madonna of Montserrat, first catch the train to Monistrol de Montserrat in Catalonia and then ride the funicular up the mountain range to reach the neighboring cathedral and monastery nestled within the peaks. Likewise, San Lorenzo de El Escorial is embedded within a village which bears the same name as the monastery and royal crypt. After a day of spiritual reflection, one might return to town for dining, lodging, shopping, drinking a *caña* at the local bar, perusing the galleries of a museum, or strolling unhurried through plazas and promenades. However, instead to traversing a populated area in order to reach public

transportation, visitors quickly discover that the metro line does not stop anywhere remotely near the mountainous Cuelgamuros and that the bus from the nearest village runs intermittently. Despite the multiplicity of features which suggest the site's religious value to local Spaniards or its national "symbolic importance" as a historic property managed by el Patrimonio Nacional, the memorial does not coexist seamlessly within any public realm. Instead, a series of physical and ideological barriers foreclose el Valle's inclusion within the community.

Considering its geographical seclusion on the fringes of Spanish society, the complex's layout within the terrain lends to a lingering militarized affect, akin to a stronghold or other such modern fortification, the evidence of which entails a series of three active check points that authorize passage towards or within the monument. Upon exiting the highway, travelers driving towards the looming cross on the horizon encounter the first checkpoint: a white granite wall with three iron gated apertures managing automotive traffic, which does not permit re-entry after dusk (See Figure 3.2 – "El Valle de los Caídos Entrada"). Moreover, the entrance features a pair of surveillance cameras monitoring those who pass through the gate as well as a ticket booth which resembles a guard's post. Designed in the same style as the monument, over the entry for busses and larger transport vehicles, the barrier prominently figures the official emblem of el Valle crafted in wrought iron between two columns adorned with rusting lighted sconces. As far as optics, when comparing the architecture of the monument to that of the granite checkpoint, the iron emblem replaces the holy cross as the apex. Given this prominence, the symbol reappears frequently throughout the entire complex in a spectrum of sizes and formats. Like the elaborate emblem over



Figure 3.2 – “El Valle de los Caídos Entrada,” 2012

Photograph of the entrance to the complex by Victor Henriques. Image found online.

the gate, the larger and more conspicuous iterations were carved on exterior wall façades or etched on interior placards within the monument. While staying at the hostel, the miniature varieties imprinted on mundane objects make physical contact with visitors through dinner china, disposable napkins, wall signs, as well as documents distributed by the front desk.

For the visitor passing through the gate, the emblem aptly encapsulates the monument's ideological complexity. What the wrought iron outline lacks in detail, official guidebooks for el Valle display as a compact iconography of the multiple ideologies fused together within the site (See Figure 3.3 – “Valle de los Caídos Official Emblem”).²⁵ The most recognizable elements, the profile of two eagles, backs resting on each side of a cross with wings spread open and upward, principally comprise the emblem. Two additional markings are inscribed at the base of the cross: a yoke for harnessing a pair of livestock and a set of arrows bound by a ribbon. Three shields are overlaid on the bodies of the eagles and their wings, which gesture towards adulation, ascension or prayer. When comparing the photograph of the entrance on the cover of the guidebook with the emblem on the reverse side, the white cross rising between the heads of each imperial eagle references the monument's most visible feature: la Santa Cruz.

²⁵ During the course of my research, I have acquired a series of guidebooks promoting el Valle de los Caídos for English speaking international visitors to the site. Curiously the seventh and tenth editions, published in 1971 and 1974, are the only two guidebooks which include any depiction of the official emblem. Even the edition from the earlier days of the monument in 1962, which appears to be the first edition, does not include the iconography. However, the photograph on the front offers a clear view of the coat of arms adopted by Franco placed on the façade of the monument seen in the first third of the frame at the end of the arcades. Moreover, editions printed after Franco's death, during the transition to democracy and so forth, again omit the symbol (editions from these years include 1984, 1985, 1990, and 2003). Yet, in the waning years of the dictatorship the emblem appears on the reverse side of guidebooks.

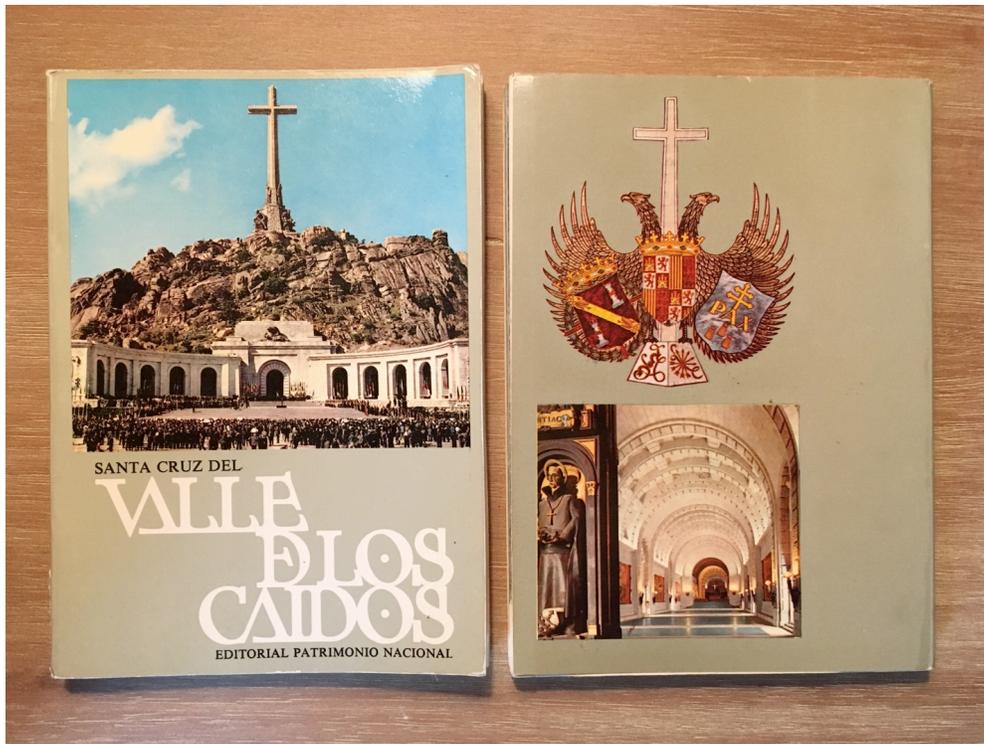


Figure 3.3 – “Valle de los Caídos Official Emblem,” c. 1970s

Pictured on the left is the front cover of the tenth edition of the guidebook published in 1974, and on the right, is the back cover of the seventh edition published in 1971. The cover art for each edition is identical. The upper right-hand side of the photograph shows a detailed graphic of the same emblem which appears over the gated entrance to the monument.

In looking at the shields, the center coat of arms is an adaptation of the “Eagle Escutcheon,” utilized by the Francoist regime after taking control of the legitimately elected Republican government. In a representational change of tone from the previous political system, this shield harkens back to one used by the celebrated Catholic Monarchs who fortified Spain as a new nation in one faith and territory after conquering Granada in 1492. In considering the “Eagle Escutcheon,” similar elements in differing configurations appear on el Valle’s emblem (See Figure 3.4 – “Eagle Escutcheon”).²⁶ For example, the double eagles surrounding the cross refer to the single eagle grasping the regime’s shield within his talons. Likewise, this identical coat of arms appears within both emblems. Moreover, at the base of the el Valle’s cross the same yoke and arrows hover beneath the “Eagle Escutcheon,” which the same religious monarchs, Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon, also adopted during their reign. However, the Fascist Party, el Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista, appropriated these icons and placed the yolk over the arrows to later create their own insignia. As for the remaining two shields on el Valle’s emblem, the one on the right represents the order of Benedictine monks, who intercede on behalf of the dead interred with the monument’s basilica, and the last shield to the left is the coat of arms approved for the Head of State

²⁶ In his article, “El Escusón,” Andoni Esparza Leibar writes a brief history on the official shields of Spain. Regarding the escutcheon adopted by Franco, he writes: “El escudo se inspira en el utilizado por los Reyes Católicos, probablemente porque entendieron que representan el momento de máximo poderío de una monarquía puramente española, antes del advenimiento de los Habsburgo al trono” [“The shield is inspired by the one used by the Catholic Monarchs, probably because they understood that they represent the moment of maximum power of a purely Spanish monarchy, before the accession of the Hapsburgs to the throne.”] (248). Liebar’s comments also imply other actions taken by the Catholic Monarchs, such as the expulsion of Muslims from the peninsula in 1492, solidifying power around a national language, and allying closely with Catholicism. As I will mention later with cultural production in the early years of the dictatorship, Franco relied on this mythology and attempted to inscribe himself and his legitimacy as the Head of State within this legacy. In the contemporary iteration of this rhetoric, the defeated Republican forces occupy the position of the Muslims, whose faith and morals were a threat to Christendom.



Figure 3.4 – “Eagle Escutcheon,” 2011

Unknown author. Image found online and adapted from drawings which appear in an article by Andoni Esparza Leibar.



Figure 3.5 – “Head of State Coat of Arms 1940 – 1975,” 2011

Unknown author. Image found online.

between 1940 and 1975 (See Figure 3.5 – “Head of State Coat of Arms 1940 – 1975”). During his years in power, the dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde claimed this symbol as his own, which was based on the royal standard for the Crown of Castile. The Royal Bend of Castile, or the diagonal dragons in opposite corners connected by a golden band, appeared on the royal standards for the Catholic Monarchs as well as Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor.

By way of a rudimentary summary, within this palimpsest of ideological complexity, el Valle’s emblem denotes and places in dialogue all of the following entities: 1) the monument and National Catholicism via the cross; 2) the figure of the dictator, Francisco Franco via his shield; 3) the Francoist regime via the “Eagle Escutcheon”; 4) the order of Benedictine monks living onsite as evidenced by their coat of arms; and 5) the inscription of the yoke and arrows at the base of the cross simultaneously represents the Crown of Castile, the Catholic Monarchs, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand II, not to mention the Holy Roman Emperor, Carlos V, as well as el Falange, the Spanish Fascist party who later adopted both symbols. Unbeknownst to the visitor passing through the first gated checkpoint and casually observing the ironwork overhead, this intricate web of associations, represented by a single emblem and fused together within one site, connotes infinite complexity and contradiction. In light of such information, naturally one would question the ontology of such a place. For example, to who or what does this site reference and what does the monument commemorate? Is this site holy or royal, fascist or democratic, civilian or military? What is the site’s legibility in the context of other properties managed by el Patrimonio Nacional as well as the many historical and religious sites within various

provinces across Spain? Given the relationship to Francoism and el Falange, how does this site reconcile the Civil War and account for the Nationalist and Republican dead? Above all, one also wonders what lies ahead beyond the gate at the next checkpoint.

After securing admission, navigating the serpentine road through the woods, and parking the car, visitors then scale a set of stairs to encounter one of two substantial esplanades. “The great granite steps one hundred metres wide leading up to it are in two flights, ten to each flight, symbolizing the Ten Commandments” (Gaspar 18). Measuring over thirty thousand square meters, the area was enlarged and leveled off with rock excavated while hollowing out the interior of the crypt (18). Offering a picturesque view of the Sierra de Guadarrama in the distance, this flat wide-open space functions as a second check point (See Figure 3.6 – “El Valle de los Caídos Esplanade 1”). Within urban settings, city planners design esplanades as either promenades, which allow bicyclists and pedestrians to leisurely amble along the shoreline of a waterway, or as an expansive median, which accommodates foot traffic through culturally vibrant inland areas of town. An example of the former includes la Esplanada de España located along the Port of Alicante, while Las Ramblas in Barcelona is an instance of the latter. Inviting crowds, commerce, tourism, backgrounds for photographs, and unfettered movement, each of these spaces has a linear starting and ending point that can be accessed from a variety of side streets and avenues. However, as a rather intimidating space, el Valle’s man-made plateau manages visitors’ mobility and limits their gazes to either the surrounding mountain range or the imposing cross which signals the only entrance into the monument



Figure 3.6 – “El Valle de los Caídos Esplanade 1,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while standing at the entrance of the monument looking out towards the Sierra de Guadarrama.

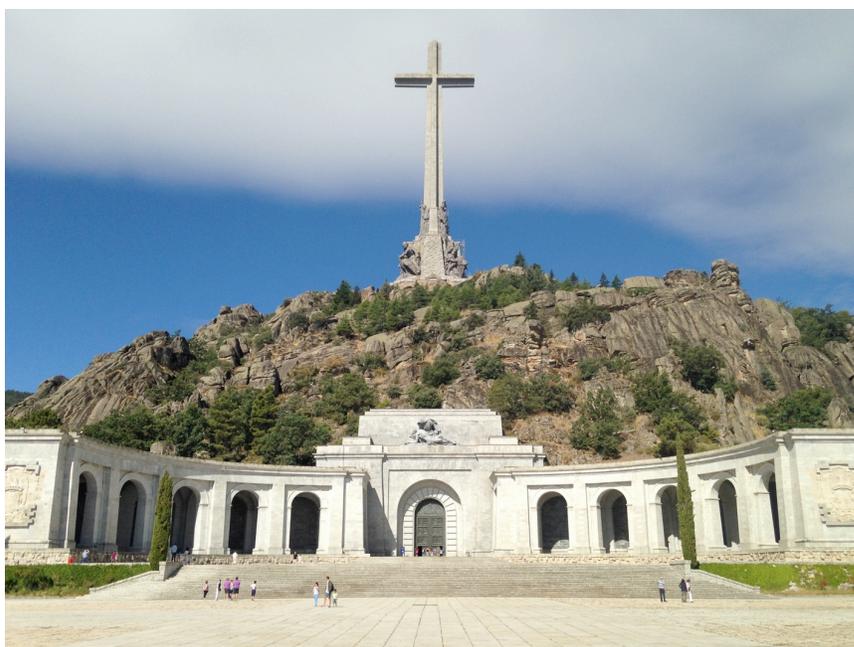


Figure 3.7 – “El Valle de los Caídos Esplanade 2,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while standing in the esplanade facing the visitor’s entrance to the monument.

beneath the 150-ton limestone Pietà of the deceased Christ (See Figure 3.7 – “El Valle de los Caídos Esplanade 2”).

Given the unobstructed openness of the enclosure, this esplanade resembles how tacticians strategically designed these spaces as fields of battle, which isolated a fortress from town or the surrounding landscape. For example, in the sixteenth century the Spanish constructed a citadel, el Morro, to surveil the San Juan Bay in Puerto Rico and guard against seaborne enemies (See Figure 3.8 – “Fort San Felipe del Morro, San Juan, Puerto Rico”). Surrounded by the ocean on each side and positioned on an incline, enemies attacking the fortress by land would first have to cross the open expanse of the esplanade, which provided no shelter from attacks (See Figure 3.9 – “The Esplanade of San Felipe del Morro in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico”). Protected within the high fortified walls of the citadel, Spanish soldiers bombarded enemies below with cannon fire in this kill zone. As a first and last line of military defense, while invaders such as the Dutch in 1625 managed to sack and burn the city, enemy soldiers unsuccessfully breached el Morro.

Returning to the esplanade at el Valle de los Caídos, the illustration of el Morro is apropos when considering the site’s complexity and problematic ideological resonance within contemporary Spain. As an initial and enduring decree that fortified fascism and the nascent totalitarian regime, the dictatorship commissioned the monument shortly after defeating the Republicans in a devastating Civil War. During the early years of the dictatorship, political prisoners along with regular waged laborers excavated the mountain and assembled the monument (Crumbaugh 425). Due to the precarious nature of the construction project, many convicts perished in



Figure 3.8 – “Fort San Felipe del Morro, San Juan, Puerto Rico,” 2010

Arial photograph of the fortress by Jaro Nemčok found online dated August 28, 2010.



Figure 3.9 – “The Esplanade of San Felipe del Morro in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico,” n.d.

Photographer unknown and image found online.

nearby prison camps while completing their sentences and working for “redemption” (425). In the 1940s and 1950s during construction and the meticulous ongoing exhumations of the victors destined for the basilica, Spanish cultural production touted the figure of the *caído* as a Nationalist martyr, the regime’s victorious dead in a Crusade against the immoral and godless Republican foe (Crumbaugh 421).

However, within a post-World War II international political environment, “the regime began to camouflage its ideological origins” and the rhetoric shifted to a memorial that honored “the sacrifice of both sides” (Resina 224). To this end, as the site neared completion, the government exhumed numerous unidentified Republican dead for inclusion within the monument’s crypt (Crumbaugh 425). While modern day Spain has returned to democracy, el Valle is the last bastion of the regime’s enduring legacy as a highly visible material vestige on the landscape. Other smaller scaled commemorative remnants of Francoism in urban areas were gradually retired as the country became more liberal and progressive during the transition to democracy. Such pervasive remnants included: monoliths, plaques, statuary, street signs as well as war memorials honoring the dictatorship and the “Fallen for God and Spain”. However, the monument endures as a problematic site of reconciliation as well as a flashpoint for the contemporary Historical Memory Movement, whose supporters have advocated for the exhumation, identification and restoration of remains purposefully concealed in Republican mass graves by the regime. Moreover, the esplanade, originally envisioned to accommodate teeming crowds witnessing spectacles of Fascist power, continues to surveil and defend el Valle’s position on the landscape and within the Spanish imaginary. Upon crossing the threshold of stairs symbolizing the

“Ten Commandments,” each visitor stands in judgement before the imposing cross and sculpture of the Virgin Mary cradling the body of Christ. While facing these figures, and isolated to the esplanade, visitors are deemed worthy of entry to the first and last bastion of institutional Francoism.

Given the absence of urban diversions, after circling around the esplanade, photographing the scenic landscape and exterior architecture, one then enters the last security checkpoint which permits passage into the interior of the mountain. Directly beneath the Pietà, segmenting the semicircle of the columned arcades, and at the top of ten shallow stairs, a set of bronze doors secures the entrance to the monument (See Figure 3.10 – “Entry to El Valle de los Caídos”). Measuring ten and half meters high and framed by a granite archway, this passage is unique in comparison to the entrances of other historical and religious sites across Spain. Often, booths or counters are located at this junction of the tourist site. Prior to immediately entering a cathedral, monastery or museum, visitors purchase tickets for entry or decide instead to peruse the gift shop and perhaps tour the site later. Often exterior entrances have large signage or banners advertising the touristic elements of the site in order to attract the visitor to the interior and encourage their spending at the museum shop. Likewise, such locations accommodate lingering visitors with outside seating or secondary plazas for spontaneous temporary habitation. However, visitors to el Valle have already purchased their admittance at the first gated checkpoint and the nearest seating area is located at the derelict cafeteria by the parking lot. Similar to the barrier that manages who enters and then surveils their admittance on camera, or the open esplanade that isolates movement and defends the fortress against enemy combatants,



Figure 3.10 – “Entry to el Valle de los Caídos,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while standing in the esplanade after the monument had closed for the day.



Figure 3.11 – “Mysteries of the Rosary and Apostles’ Door,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while standing at the entrance after the monument had closed for the day.

this passage strictly conduces the visitor to another set of behavioral and somatic parameters.

When looking at the photograph of the entrance after closing hours in the absence of people, it is difficult to discern the scale of the overall passage way and the magnitude of the heavy doors. However, the blue sign within the archway to the left in Figure 3.10 – “Entry to el Valle” measures approximately two meters high, the standard height for a person. Upon closer inspection, the various sculptural quadrants become more detailed and reveal the twelve Apostles and their corresponding Creeds in addition to the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, depicting stages of Christ’s life (See Figure 3.11 – “Mysteries of the Rosary and Apostles’ Door”). While marveling at the impressive bronze work, one fails to notice the practical aspects of the portal. For example, the door lacks exterior hinges which would permit entry into the vestibule from the vantage point of the visitor. Likewise, the sculptor who designed the quadrants, Fernando Cruz Solís, did not include a keyhole, knob, latch, or any other feature which permits one to access the doors from outside the visitor’s entrance. In fact, according to a schematic of the monument’s interior layout, the only way to open these doors is via the monastery on the opposite side of the mountain or through some inconspicuous service passage. This additional security measure, along with the foreboding scale of the bronze and granite passage, further contributes to the overall militarization of the complex through architectural features common to a stronghold, much like the entry gate and esplanade. In safeguarding the interior, the portal functions more like the door to a hermetically sealed vault, protecting the valuables stored inside against theft.

During hours of operation, this inhospitable aspect becomes heightened as visitors conform to somatic parameters when passing through the portal. Instead of fully opening all four quadrants of both doors, as seen in Figure 3.12 – “Entrance Gate to the Basilica” where two rows of uniformed guards stand at attention, visitors pass through a much smaller sized door frame as if walking between two rooms. At the base of each door, within the rectangular quadrant closest to the arched frame, another set of doors opens to permit visitors to enter and exit the vestibule. Essentially passing through the eye of a needle and unable to walk upright, the inner frame of the smaller door obligates individual visitors to step over and simultaneously lower their heads to cross the threshold in forced deference. After bending the knee, in order to move through the subsequent gate between the vestibule and atrium, as well as the screen before the nave deeper within the interior, visitors first pass through a metal detector and place their belongings on a conveyor belt for x-ray scanning by the security detail.

Once submitting your body and personal effects to inspection, while walking through the nave and towards the basilica or pausing within the adjacent chapels, the visitor’s behavior is continually monitored by monks, priests, security guards, or local Spaniards attending mass. In the absence of docents guiding visitors and elaborating the nave’s most notable features, such as the Apocalypse Tapestries, the impressive painted screens illustrating saints, or the wall sculptures of the Virgen, security guards follow and surveil all activity. The most pervasive form of surveillance surrounds the use of photography, which is strictly prohibited throughout the interior. Guards ensure that cameras remain in carrying cases and that cell phones stay hidden. The mere

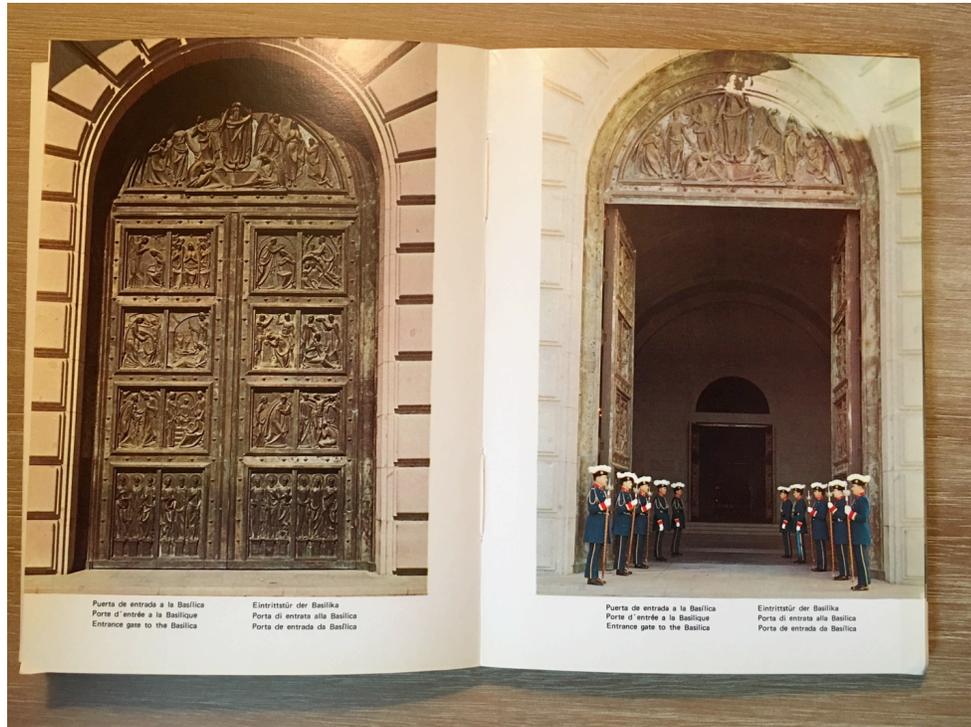


Figure 3.12 – “Entrance Gate to the Basilica,” c. 1970s

A photograph of the 1971, 7th edition of the *Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caídos Tourist Guidebook*, shows the scale of the door in comparison to guards as well as demonstrating the doors fully open with a clear view of the interior vestibule and atrium (44-45).

sight of an out of pocket cell phone attracts the ire of the guards, who frequently intervene and remind visitors of the rules.

This policy differs from other holy sites which authorize the photographing of designated zones or objects within the interior. For example, in order to protect sensitive painted wall murals or original portraits by El Greco, flash photography is prohibited within certain rooms of El Escorial. Moreover, signage within these zones clearly explains the rationale behind the policy. However, while touring the basilica at Montserrat, visitors are permitted to photograph stone statuary and carved icons, such as the famed La Moreneta, at their leisure. Yet, within el Valle, given the other instances of conditioning the body of the visitor, the prohibition of photography within the interior seems more a defensive strategy as opposed to a policy aimed at preserving valuable artifacts housed within the vault. Perhaps the officials who manage the memorial hope to avoid the production of photographs which document the decaying condition of the interior. Alternatively, maybe the policy simply reflects a deep veneration for the dead interred within the crypt. Because after gaining access to the inner sanctum, as opposed to finding the graves of provincial saints or local clergy revered for their faith, interred in the basilica are the notably commemorated remains of two leaders from the Spanish Fascist party: the founder of the Falange movement, José Antonio Primo de Rivera as well as the dictator himself, Generalissimo Francisco Franco.

Considering the prominence of these two figures, as well as the ongoing bomb sweeps which occur in the chapels adjacent to their graves, the policy prohibiting photography seems more a defensive strategy to safeguard the site against an

interloper collecting information on structural vulnerabilities for a future attack. Indeed, an attack some eighteen years ago by “a far-left militant bomb... destroyed a few confessionals and pews” (Jones). Regardless of the rationale, these measures which surveil and force the visitor to prescribe to a set of conditions, leads to a disturbing affect in what should be a space which foments tranquil reflection from members of the community. Despite Gaspar’s earlier comments regarding the mission of el Patrimonio Nacional as promoting sites “for study and research and visits by the general public,” el Valle de los Caídos is a confrontational space, which forecloses inclusion of individuals perceived as outsiders (7).

Concealing Sacred Remains within a Complex Psychology

To summarize, within the previous section I elaborated the idea of complexity in terms of a series of juxtaposed architectural and ideological components which disturb visitors by conditioning their bodies to a set of behavioral and somatic parameters. Despite el Valle’s perceived material stability, in the context of the landscape, and its institutional inclusion within the Spanish national imaginary, via el Patrimonio Nacional, the memorial is precariously unsettled on the outskirts of Spanish society. As a tourist destination or spiritual center, the militarized affect forecloses inclusion as security guards surveil visitors who have successfully qualified for admission after passing through a series of checkpoints. Within this section, I will mention one additional signification of the word “complex,” which equally informs the ontology of the site in terms of burial. Concerning the necropolitics related to the construction of el Valle, there was an underlying psychology, a complex nexus of emotions, desires, perceptions and prejudices, which

amalgamated into a central theme: the compulsive exhumation and re-interment of human remains for burial within the crypt.

As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, in the 1950s the government exhumed an astonishing quantity of human remains from across the country destined for placement in el Valle (Ferrándiz, “Intimacy” 308). In his research of el Valle, Justin Crumbaugh reports that the body count, estimated at up to 70,000, “befits the monument’s colossal scale, and was the result of a lengthy and laborious process of reburial,” which at times occurred at a feverish pace as construction neared completion (424). Daniel Sueiro provides an anecdote of this necropolitical complex, which manifested in the systematic hoarding of Nationalist human remains:

Day and night the funerary processions come, always with the same cargo, bones and sepulchers, which are piled in the galleries... There are at times when the workers and monks charged with receiving the remains collapse from exhaustion and fatigue. At the beginning of 1959 some 20,000 of the war dead were buried in this crypt. (qtd. in Crumbaugh 424)

Within the normalized death culture of Francoist Spain, “these staggering figures were never a secret, and the regime hardly considered the endeavor gruesome or macabre” (424). Instead, for propagandists, the “high numbers only added to the monument’s grandiosity” (424).

To further escalate the site’s grandiosity while shifting the rhetoric from a memorial that exclusively commemorated the victors, “the remains of tens of thousands of Republicans were secretly transferred from mass graves to the monument’s crypt” (425). In the early postwar years, “the regime was executing hundreds of political prisoners a day in nearby Madrid and struggled to find a place for

the accumulating corpses” (425). While concealing evidence of the atrocities committed by the victors during the Civil War, “for those already executed, the monument had the potential to serve as an anonymous mass grave with a positive connotation” (425). However, in increasing the body count, the inclusion of Republicans with Nationalists created a hierarchy of the dead in terms of burial, commemoration, and afterlife (425). The government never identified Republicans or treated their mortal remains with the same level of conspicuous ceremony. As such, the State did not consider their remains “as *caídos* strictly speaking but rather corpses of a lower order,” whose “anonymous remains were callously instrumentalized” as padding to increase the overall numbers (425). Demonstrating the entrenchment of this complex psychology, the State continued interring Nationalist soldiers within the crypt not only throughout the dictatorship, but also “nearly a decade after Franco’s own burial at the monument in 1975” after the transition to democracy (424).

Considering the fallen Spaniards entombed within the crypt and their relationship to the surrounding memorial, Joan Ramon Resina writes:

This granite dream of enduring empire remains a place of Fascist pilgrimage through the semantic manipulation of bodies. Hallowed with the body of the Falange’s founder and wrapped in the anticipatory aura of Franco’s earthly remains, the Valley of the Fallen was conceived as a shrine in advance of its relics. (224)

Within this passage, Resina’s comments signal the troubling religious character of the site. As previously discussed throughout the complex, visible iconography, architectural structures, as well as the bodies of prominent party leaders perpetuate a Fascist ideology imbedded within the institutional framework of Catholicism. Prior to ensuring the longevity of his regime through proven future State policies, in the

immediate aftermath of the Civil War Franco took active measures to secure his nascent legacy through the optics of the memorial. As such national Catholicism proved fruitful ground for the storage of forthcoming relics, which for Resina include the prominently commemorated remains of Primo de Rivera and Franco. Yet, in tandem with these individuals, the other stores of human remains must carry some weight as ritualized objects within the psychology of the monument through their semantic manipulation.

Considering the role of the Church, the figures who reinforce this framework include the onsite order of Benedictine monks, who continually tends to these sacred remains, as well as Pope John XXIII, who blessed the crypt as a basilica in 1960. In fact, the excavated size of the el Valle's basilica is larger than the Papal Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Within the sacrosanct dominion of the papacy, the monks provide ongoing generational interaction with the dead via ceremony, prayer, mass and instructing choir boys. In terms of temporality, these bodies as relics touched by the event of the Civil War in Spain's past, are also presently consecrated as sacred objects on holy ground within the context of global Catholicism. Given my earlier comments regarding how the monument conditions the bodies of the living to a series of behavioral and somatic limitations, one also wonders how the dead are similarly conditioned to conscription within the memorial. In the context of their commemoration, what is the nature of these remains in terms of their referentiality due to the complexity of el Valle? Because of their elaborate and determined enshrinement as some form of relic, apart from Primo de Rivera and Franco do these

human remains still manage to retain a measure of indexicality to the once living and breathing Spaniards, formerly cherished as members within a community?

Holding in tension these questions, Resina's comments regarding "a shrine in advance of its relics" also attends to the backward process of founding and installing the site. Considering other sites designed for public use, generally one builds a museum to house an existing or donated art collection. Depending on known enrollment, the university expands dormitories and classroom space to accommodate immediate student needs. However, commissioned a year after winning the Civil War, the colossal scale of el Valle predisposed a demand for relics needed to fill the space of the consecrated crypt. As a result, the concealed body archive is made up of rows of pine shelving and storage spaces, the inner workings of which are obscured from public view. Accessed by doors within the two chapels adjacent to the basilica, a series of hidden chambers "divided into nine levels, house and give eternal rest to the fallen" (Méndez qtd. in Crumbaugh 424). Likewise, a workforce of masons forged vaults "behind the walls of the nave, in the precise stretches covered by the tapestries" (Crumbaugh 424). Foreclosing the possibility of any direct interaction with the dead, "the large charnels are now full of remains, their entrances cemented shut and covered in carved stone" (Méndez qtd. in Crumbaugh 424).

Attributed to this predetermined network of concealment, within the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament and the Chapel of the Entombment, the presence of these relics is only apparent in a modest dedication (See Figure 3.13 – "Entrance to the Chapel of the Entombment"). Between a bronze cross and over a set of wooden portals, a memorial wall tribute reads: "Caídos por dios y por España 1936 – 1939 RIP" ["Fallen for God

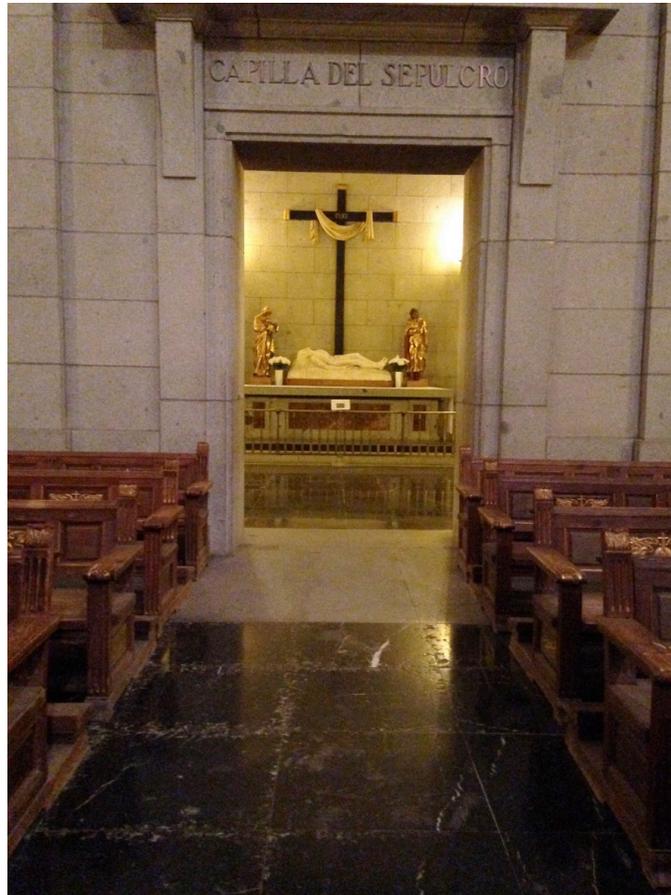


Figure 3.13 – “Entrance to the Chapel of the Entombment,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while standing under the dome of the basilica facing the chapel.

and Spain 1936 – 1939 RIP”] (my translation) (See Figure 3.14 – “Interior of the Chapel of the Entombment” and Figure 3.15 – “Interior of the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament”). Apart from this mention, within the interior of the memorial, the fallen are not named or referenced individually on any markers or monoliths. In terms of the overall complex, as a singular entity, the dead appear equally anonymous and the vastness of their exact numbers are likewise unknown.

A comparable example to the atypical crypt in el Valle is that of the “sober harmonious barrel-vaulted room” in the spiritual community of Montserrat. The intimate space of reflection and entombment “was opened in 1951 and designed as the burial place for Abbot Antoni M. Marcet and the monks who gave their lives to Christ in the civil war of 1936-1939” (Soler i Canals 64). Similar to other religious sites across Spain within the Republican zone, the monastery fell victim to an episode of retaliatory violence against the Church, which regardless of community affiliation was perceived as complicit with Franco’s regime. Some years after the event, the spiritual community decided to honor those victims by entombing them in a dedicated crypt. The modest chamber includes Abbot Marcet’s sarcophagus, sculpted by Joan Rebull in 1949, as well as tombs within two vaults “opened in the wall, each with a Carrara marble gravestone engraved with the details of the remains contained in the vault” (64). “At the back of the room there is a memorial stone to those monks whose remains could not be found” (64). While interring victims in hierarchies based on their role within the Church or due to the inability to recover their remains, the space still manages to visibly commemorate each former member of the local community by name. As separate individuals unified in the same act of violence, visitors can clearly

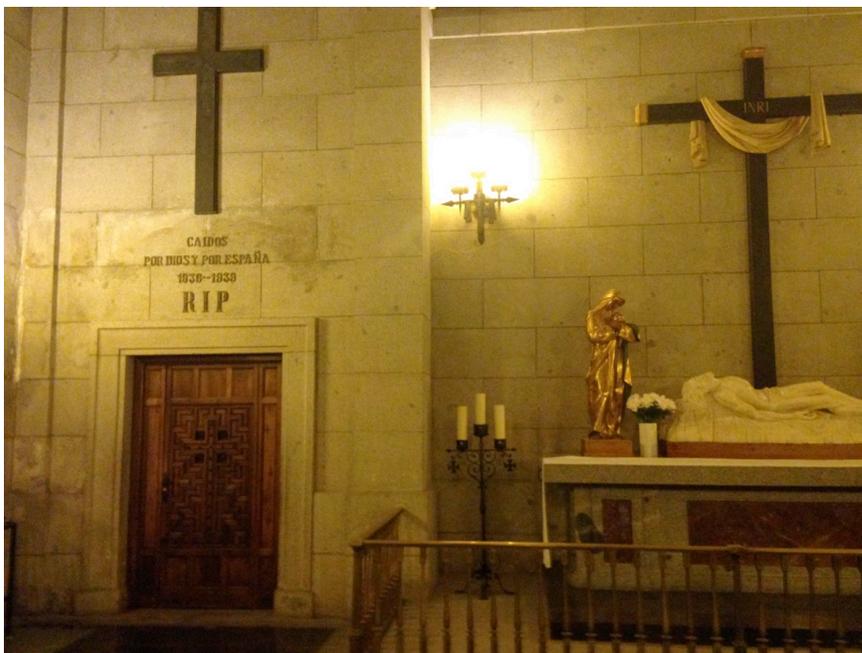


Figure 3.14 – “Interior of the Chapel of the Entombment,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while seated within the interior of the chapel facing the memorial door.

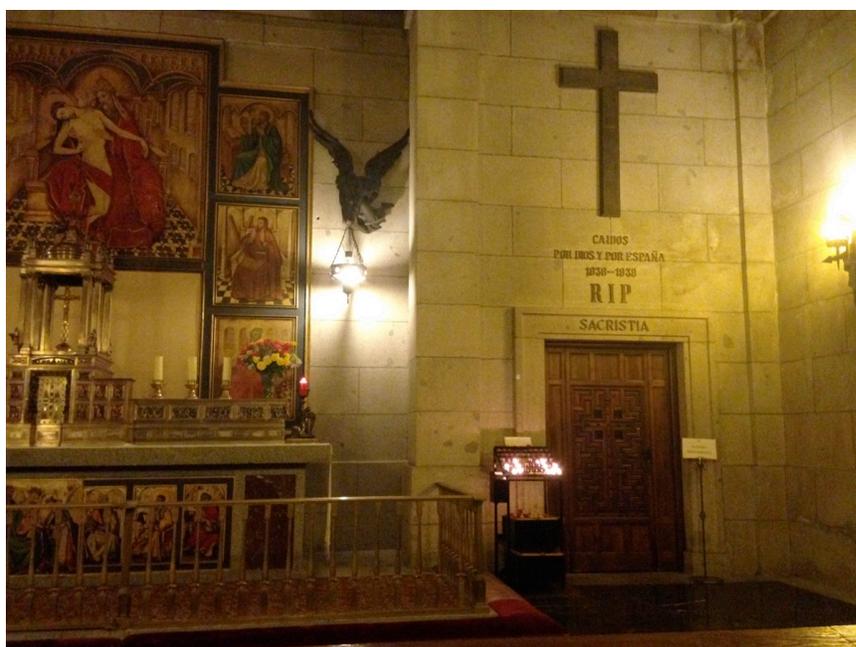


Figure 3.15 – “Interior of the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while seated within the interior of the chapel facing the memorial door.

read each name, touch the gravestones, trace their fingers over the memorial monolith, and reflect on their sacrifice and contributions to the community. Furnished with rows of wooden pews, the crypt encourages visitors to thoughtfully interact with the dead in the presence of their marked gravesites.

At first glance, while el Valle de los Caídos appears similar to other historical, religious, and royal sites throughout Spain, Resina's comments focusing on the construction procedure allude to a fabricated quality, wherein the complex was installed as opposed to gradually developing over the course of hundreds of years. Comparatively, the construction of the monastery and royal lodgings at San Lorenzo de El Escorial began in 1563 and ended in 1584. Likewise, the mountains of Montserrat and the founding of the spiritual community, predate the formation of Spain as a nation. According to Maur Boix, the first documented reference to Montserrat dates back to 888 with the hermitage of Santa Maria, where worshippers were venerating the Romanesque image of the Virgin Mary, presently known as La Moreneta (77). Each of these revered locations marks a much longer chronology within the Spanish imaginary as well as an evolutionary development as a site that one perceives as natural.

In the next section, I will explore this aberrant process of installation, wherein some aspect of the construction method gestures to its obvious unnatural assemblage. Similar to a poorly executed garment in which the tailor has misaligned darts and seams, intrinsically el Valle will never be perceived as a cohesive entity, and instead, continually gesture to its own fabrication process. In exploring this procedure-driven interpretation of an object, I will consider the genre of pictorialist photography in

order to establish concepts related to viewing el Valle as a composite site. Moreover, I also believe this approach will elucidate the relationship between the memorial and the entombed Spaniards in terms of their status as sacred remains as well as questions related to their commemoration and representation.

Composing the Authorial Mark in Photography

In an early critical text favoring photography's consideration as a fine art, an anonymous writer argues that photography, like architecture, music, and other accepted plastic and visual art forms, relies on composition as a qualifying technique. At the time, in terms of aesthetics and representation, photography was often compared to painting, which demonstrated the artist's unique mediation of the object via brush strokes, color palette selection, and a measure of creativity that translated onto the blank canvas after portraying a scene. Lacking a similar craftsmanship or corporeal interaction with the object, the finished photographic plate or print, was perceived as merely the end result of unintelligent machine labor and a chemical process that rendered the three-dimensional existing world onto a two-dimensional representation. According to this line of thought, photography was more an amateur science as opposed to some form of art. Aptly summarizing this prejudice, American photographer Alfred Stieglitz writes that early photography "was looked upon as the bastard of science and art, hampered and held back by the one, denied and ridiculed by the other" (117).

As a result of this cross-pollination between science and art, in the nineteenth century debates surrounding representation and meaning "generally assumed that photography had characteristics which made it a more accurate method of recording

and representing than previously existing methods” (Wells, “Reflections on Photography” 12). As a precise device and seemingly impartial observer of reality, the camera merely re-presented or revealed information regarding the existing world as opposed to bringing into being something new at the hand of an artist. As such, art critics historically minimized the authorial aspects germane to the overall process of photographic image making such as selecting individual subjects or envisioning the subject matter, thoughtfully discerning the environment when framing the shot, adjusting for shutter speed and lighting conditions, as well as a host of other creative decisions accounted for by the photographer. Whereas gaining mastery in traditional graphic, plastic and visual arts might take a lifetime, any amateur with a measure of technical expertise could now become a capable photographer. Given the technological advent of the camera, photography as a field redefined the limits of what it customarily meant to be an artist, author, or creator.

In “Is Photography a New Art?” the anonymous writer discredits evidentiary corporeal interaction as a criterion for qualifying an object as fine art by comparing the practice of photography to that of architecture. In architecture, proof of the architect’s literal handprint on the structure does not substantiate the building’s artistic merit. Likewise, the successful completion of a construction project does not rely on a single set of hands, but rather a workforce of many, which follows the plans drafted on paper as translated from the mind of the architect. Similarly, a symphony orchestra performs the music written by a composer, who harmoniously transcribed a series of notes on a staff. In considering these two examples which lack the artist’s tactile presence in some material vestige, the writer claims that “man cannot truly create,” but

he can juxtapose elements “in such a way as to illude into the belief that he has created” (137). In his estimation, these finished works of art are a result of composition, a “creation by the brain, and bringing into existence by the hands,” which is an esthetic quality that “all the fine arts must possess” and “is the only one which they must possess in common” (136-137). Because of composition, or the process wherein the artist’s vision is brought to fruition through physical actions, the anonymous writer assures critics that all fine art objects, buildings, performances, or even photographs, bear an authorial mark, or trace of the artist.

In this early text attempting to elevate the practice photography, the anonymous writer also brings to the fore questions regarding indexicality. In mentioning hand work, corporeal interaction, and that “personal touch is necessary in the fine arts,” the writer alludes to the possibility that an authorial mark on the object directly gestures to that particular artist beyond the fine art piece. From the perspective of photography, I briefly mentioned this tendency in my last chapter when discussing referentiality in relation to Walter Benjamin’s interpretation of an anonymous Newhaven fishwife photographed by David Octavius Hill. Regarding inherited painted family portraits, Benjamin writes, “the pictures, if they last, do so only as a testimony to the art of the painter” as opposed to pointing to the individual portrayed as the index (510). The mediated aspects of the painter’s style, use of color, composition and so forth, repeat across other paintings within a larger oeuvre, which viewers recognize as encompassing his legacy. In mentally cataloging this unique expertise, we see the artist when meditating on his creations. Moreover, the value of collecting renowned paintings lies in ensuring the authorship of these works as well as

meticulously maintaining the provenance. In owning their painting you then possess some material trace of the artist.

On the contrary, the photograph of Hill's fishwife, "goes beyond testimony to the photographer's art" as "something that cannot be silenced" (510). As a bewitching subject, the fishwife captivates the philosopher who has "an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed in 'art'" (510). Moreover, in this inability to silence her, she maintains a certain agency and a perceived capacity to articulate something to the viewer. As a subject of photography, while still an object this woman resists certain proprietary claims pertaining to the photographer's testimony as subscribed within his artistic legacy. She appears as herself within the frame and even in anonymity the portrait is an index which gestures back to her. Essentially when looking at the photograph, the viewer sees more of her, the subject of photography, than David Octavius Hill, the photographer who composed the portrait, developed the image and exhibited the print. The following comments by pictorialist, Henry Peach Robinson, typifies this concern related to the visibility of the photographer within the photograph: "Those who have only a superficial knowledge of the possibilities of our art contend that the photographer is a mere mechanical realist without power to add anything of himself to his production" (92). Given these comments by Robinson and the anonymous writer's defense of photography as a fine art, an underlying indexical tension was brewing between traditional forms of visual representation and emerging photographic representation. Beyond evidencing their creative authorship by

composing scenes, early photographers were concerned with their own visibility and deployed more painterly techniques within images to display their presence.

In returning to the use of composition in photography, according to David Bate some of this mediation entails “decisions about the position of the camera within and toward the event, the spatial relations of it,” and so forth, which “organizes the staging of the scene” (58). Apart from camera placement, the composition organizes “raw material into photographic codes, a rhetorical form to create a reality effect” (58). In organizing elements through the view finder, the event photographed achieves a sense of cohesion, wherein the overall structure permits the viewer “to recognize the scene as a scene” (103). Moreover, good compositions are concerned with sustaining the eye of the viewer to encourage active seeing, which provokes a drive towards mastery over the image (102). After seeing a well composed scene, this mastery involves the viewer’s desire to understand the image and make sense of what was photographed. As opposed to attempting to derive meaning from the image, the viewer might otherwise find a well composed photograph affecting and arresting. The implied conventions of photographic composition are in no way universal and vary by genre. For example, in documentary photography, viewers perceive the veracity of an image is jeopardized when a photographer overtly manipulates elements within the scene or actively poses subjects.

However, in terms of pictorialism, “a good composition ... gives a certain type of satisfaction and pleasure for the viewer, which results in the spectator having an experience of the beautiful” (103). In producing this aesthetic, pictorialists often fashioned elaborate bucolic tableaux and directed every detail much like a stage

production. Prescribing to a sense of idealism, compositional strategies common to painting influenced how photographers such as Robinson composed their images. When writing about composition and Impressionism, the photographer stresses how “unity and order of impression” focuses the attention of the viewer (Robinson, “Idealism, Realism, Expressionism” 94). Likewise, when describing his own unique printing methods, Robinson repeats these guiding principles stating, “that the same laws of balance, contrast, unity, repetition, repose, and harmony are to be found in all good works, irrespective of subject” (“Pictorial Effect” 156). Similar to the anonymous writer, Robinson equalizes the role of composition in paintings and photographs by explaining that “the arrangement of . . . pictures in which true art is visible is based on the diagonal line and the pyramid,” which guides the eye of the viewer (156).

Composite Printing and the Ideal Mechanism of Pictorialist Representation

While the anonymous writer makes a reasonable argument for how critics might contend with the growing role of technology in creative production, early practitioners of photography often emulated painting either in form or process to legitimize the discipline as art and themselves as artists. As a representational hybrid between the two visual forms, pictorialist photographs emulated painterly aesthetic qualities as if enlivening models, props and scenery directly from a finished canvas. In differentiating the camera’s capabilities from those demonstrating more resolute human intervention, these photographers experimented with “light and chemicals, including contact printing” as well as staged “allegorical subjects, including religious scenes” or framed and titled images “to suggest the metaphoric” (Price and Wells 15;

Wells, “Reflections” 12). Further imitating painterly qualities and minimizing the accuracy of the camera, other pictorialists “ensured that the image was out of focus, slightly blurred and fuzzy... and those who worked with the gum bichromate process scratched and marked their prints in an effort to imitate something of the appearance of a canvas” (Price and Wells 15).

This hybridization between painting and photography reached its pinnacle, or threshold depending on the point of view, with early composite printmaking. Taking the practice of composition to a more mediated end, photographers pieced together negatives in order to craft a single compound image derived from the most desirable compositional elements of previously photographed scenes. Similar to painter envisioning the elements to include within a future work, pictorialists would likewise study aspects of a scene by sketching, painting, and photographing components of the overall intended composition. In describing how the camera and its operator could surmount representational difficulties in emulating such painted works as Frederick Goodall’s “Swing,” Robinson explains the technical virtues and process of composite printmaking within his book, *Pictorial Effect in Photography*:

The means by which these pictures could have been accomplished is Combination Printing, a method which enables the photographer to represent objects in different planes in proper focus, to keep the true atmospheric and linear relation of varying distances and by which a picture can be divided into separate portions for execution, the parts to be afterwards printed together on one paper. (156)

In this painterly approach which granted the photographer greater tactile dominion over the subject matter, the operator could “devote all his attention to a single figure or sub-group at a time” (156). Moreover, the imperfections of an undesirable component

could be “substituted by another without the loss of the whole picture, as would be the case if taken at one operation” (156). In adhering to the photographer’s ideal vision for the picture, Robinson believed the ends not only justified the means, but that the resulting composite was the equivalent to a straight photograph “taken at one operation”.

As a staunch advocate, Robinson avidly utilized this process and is considered one of the most prolific practitioners of composite printing methods. “To compose a photograph from more than one source, Robinson made a print from one negative, cut out the unwanted figures or background elements, and then pasted these back over the original plate” (Talbot 146). For example, he devised his picture, “Bringing Home the May,” from approximately nine plates depicting individuals, objects, and scenery from differing planes of vision (See Figure 3.16 – “Bringing Home the May, Composite Print”). On the far right-hand side of the print, two girls walk away from the cluster of women towards the left and center of the image, who carry hawthorn in bloom, also known as may, in their arms and over their shoulders. Dressed similarly, the older girl places her right arm over the younger girl’s shoulder. Given the scale of the and quality of this reproduction, the viewer cannot easily perceive the careful attention that Robinson devoted to this particular sub-group of figures. However, he comprised this plane from various plates including a section of the wooded background, which was manipulated to accommodate the two girls standing in the foreground. The precise white shadow of their outlines is clearly seen in Figure 3.17 – “Bringing Home the May, Background,” which squarely aligns with their profiles in Figure 3.18 – “Bringing Home the May, Girls in Foreground”. Essentially constructing a new image



Figure 3.16 – “Bringing Home the May, Composite Print,” c. 1860s

Composite print by Henry Peach Robinson, image found online at ARTstor.



Figure 3.17 – “Bringing Home the May, Background,” c. 1860s

Composite wet plate by Henry Peach Robinson found online at ARTstor.



Figure 3.18 – “Bringing Home the May, Girls in Foreground,” c. 1860s

Composite wet plate by Henry Peach Robinson found online at ARTstor.

from earlier photographs, pictorialists aligned these cross sections of film together in order to gain more visible authorial control over their subject matter.

For pictorialists such as Robinson, other aspects of this mediation of the composite print's composition entailed separately staging the background, which was later cut and craft into scenery from one or many separate landscapes. To exert greater control over atmospheric and environmental conditions, "rather than seeking an appropriate setting in nature, Robinson chose to build one in his backyard, covering a piece of turf with wildflowers to simulate a hill, and constructing a mountain spring by directing the wastewater from his printing apparatus" (Talbot 146). In this manner, the background was created to perform as nature or staged within nature, then segmented and manipulated as the context for the larger assemblage of sub-groups and figures. As scenery for the aggregate picture, this background behaved like a stage that the director – photographer populated with actors, props and other set pieces in order to communicate a thematic concept. In the case of "Bringing Home the May," the setting and title suggest that a group of women have recently harvested bunches of hawthorn, and upon completing their task, journey back home. The collective feminine aspect of the scene limits the figures to socializing younger girls and women in the flower of their youth. The title and setting also imply the idea of motion and movement; perhaps each spring the local maidens merrily venture out, reap the crop, and return home.

In selecting, editing, and manipulating sub-groups into planes within a single picture, the composite print resembles a painted composition in terms of representation. In his essay, "Photography and Representation," Roger Scruton

investigates how much like a painting “a photography may sometimes be the expression of a representational thought and not merely a simulacrum of its subject” (154). For Scruton, an aspect to this representational capacity entails how “the photographer could intentionally exert over his image just the kind of control that is exercised in the other representation arts” (155). In order to illustrate his point Scruton mentions the composite printing methods utilized by pictorialists as well as their evolution into “the techniques of photo-montage used by the surrealists and futurists” (156). In terms of the representational outcome of such a mediation image, Scruton writes:

Here our interest in the result can be entirely indifferent to the existence and nature of the original subject. But that is precisely because the photographic figures have been so cut up and rearranged in the final product that it could not be said in any normal sense to be a *photograph* of its subject. (156)

For instance, these young women and girls photographed by Robinson in the context of his tableau represent fictional characters arranged in service to his allegorical vision. Like raw material, the photographer extracts the figures from a photograph, arranges them in a montage, touches them up and adjusts them to satisfaction (156). After such thoughtful mediation, the organization of these figures now represents something thematic, such as “a lover’s quarrel; but it is not a photograph of one” (156). “It represents a quarrel because it stands in precisely the same intentional relation to a quarrel that a painting might have exhibited” (156).

After removing the photographic subjects from their original context, the arrangement of these figures within the montage no longer points to their identity as individuals. Moreover, this appropriation also results in their loss of agency as

photographic subjects, if not a violence, due to the cutting involved to sever them from the context of their original portraits. As opposed to Benjamin's reading of David Octavius Hill's portrait of the beguiling Newhaven fishwife, a viewer of Robinson's "Bringing Home the May" does not search the composite print with the same desire to know this group of women. As characters obligated to play a role within this heavily crafted composition, the index does not gesture back to them. Instead these figures placed within a fabricated scene signal the authorial mark of the artist, and given the hand work involved, evidence a trace of the pictorialist's tactile contact with the picture. In Benjaminian phrasing, after becoming "wholly absorbed in art," these figures, whose bodies conform to the theme of the composite print, become a testimony to the artist's creative work. However, pictorialists utilizing composite printing methods incited controversy in resolving this underlying indexical tension between traditional forms of visual representation, favoring the author, and photographic representation, favoring the subject.

In her essay, "'Mechanism' Made Visible: Process and Perception in Henry Peach Robinson's Composite Photographs," Emily Talbot explores the controversy surrounding the pictorialist's methods to situate photography within the visual arts as well as establish himself as an artist. Despite enjoying enormous popularity as an admired and frequently exhibited photographer, critics found his "seemingly innocuous" prints as "deeply divisive" and "debates about the visibility of Robinson's technical procedures ... dogged the photographer throughout his career" (Talbot 142). While Robinson's methodology was motivated by his intentions to construct uniform compositions on par with painted representations, "the process of combining images

from different sources inevitably undermined this goal” (142). Talbot writes that one’s “awareness of Robinson’s techniques – whether signaled by the prints themselves or conveyed by the photographer’s writings about his procedures – invited viewers to pay attention to process, and to take it into account in their evaluation of an image” (144). Instead of marveling at the effect of these harmoniously juxtaposed elements which comprised his idyllic scenes, critics scrutinized the results of his procedure for incongruities and irregularities. For instance, while looking at his pictures for the outlines of seams which betrayed the joined sections of film, critics also evaluated the light source in proportion to the shadows cast by figures and animals (142). Since Robinson promoted the composite print as equal to an exposure “taken at one operation” and exhibited his pictures alongside less manipulated straight photography, critics evaluated his pictures like other photographs.

Given these circumstances, some journalists covering these exhibitions claimed that Robinson intended to deceive viewers into believing that his pictures were photographed naturally and the subsequent “failure to suppress his process revealed the ‘art’ of composite printing to be little more than manual assembly” (142). Indeed, “the technique of combining multiple negatives on the same sheet of paper involved literal hand work – trimming, joining, measuring, and retouching – that was seen to assert itself in the perception of the print” (144). When reviewing Robinson’s “A Holiday in the Wood,” some of his sharpest critics categorized the print “as a series of patched-together pieces that revealed the outlines left behind by the photographer’s ‘scissors’” (146). Just as the camera was considered a mechanical device that merely recorded and re-presented information, by extension the

photographer as a laborer who then manually assembled the picture. According to critics, Robinson's composite prints only reinforced the representational boundary between photography and painting, given that artists would never reduce themselves to such mechanization (146).

This considerable awareness of Robinson's process "asserted a dichotomy between nature and composite photography" in terms of legibility (148). Given the subject matter, viewers assumed he composed his pictures in a similar manner to non-composite photographs. In something of a masquerade, viewers found Robinson's pictures unsettling and disingenuous, in so far as he arranged and printed composites which he likewise could have composed and photographed within a single operation. While assembling the components of a picture was laborious and time-consuming, the process was easier than the alternative, which would have allowed far less control over the resulting image. As opposed to the precarity of orchestrating his models, selecting an accommodating landscape, accounting for the weather and lighting conditions, ensuring that the models and livestock remained still during the photographing, Robinson carried out incremental photographic studies and selected the most desirable elements from a catalogue of set pieces and figures. Avoiding such risks, he remade the world to his liking instead of naturally photographing the scene. Once realizing the falseness of the reality-based illusion, the viewer then searches the image for the method behind the magic trick.

In and of itself Robinson's method is not to blame for the sharp criticism he endured during his career. In terms of photography as a discipline, Robinson's subject matter did not demand the application of his wrought technical approach as opposed to

the subject matter of other photographers utilizing composite printing methods to advance the field. As mentioned in his writings and overall philosophy related to photography, the possibility of emulating painterly representation and enlivening scenes from the canvas greatly informed Robinson's methods. As opposed to heralding the uniqueness of photographic representation or aspiring to something more, the pictorialist visually asserted that photography can achieve exactly the same results as painting. Essentially claiming that "photography can do this too," Robinson limited the compositional ambitions of photography as a visual art. Observe the difference in subject matter evidenced in Robinson's work compared to a print from Oscar Rejlander, a contemporary who utilized the technique in his image of John the Baptist's head laying on a charger (See Figure 3.19 – "Head of St. John the Baptist in a Charger"). Like other pictorialist photographs, Rejlander allegorical title orients the viewer to the biblical context of the bloodless severed head, which fills the oval platter in the center of the frame. As the bearded prophet's head rests serenely, eyes closed, within folded fabric, the image seems to capture the moments before Herod gifted the charger to Salome. Uncertain of his methods, critics celebrated Rejlander's picture, whose "combination printing did not implicitly detract from the artistic achievement of the image" (157). From the perspective of the viewer, either the photographer carefully staged the scene during photographing or deployed an alternative printing method during development, which resulted in the imagined beheading. Given that Rejlander's procedure is apparently manipulated to achieve this effect, the process does not divert from the outcome in the same way as Robinson's composites. In terms of seeing this work in a photographic exhibition, Rejlander's image stands uniquely on



Figure 3.19 – “Head of St. John the Baptist in a Charger,” 1858

Albumen print by Oscar Rejlander, found online at ARTstor.

its own instead of being camouflaged amongst other non-composite prints with the same subject matter.

By the 1920s with the emergence of a post-pictorialist generation, including Charles Sheeler, Paul Strand, and Edward Weston, photographers in North America and much of Europe expressed a waning interest in “photography’s aspiration to the condition of painting” (Solomon-Godeau 156). No longer viewed in competition with painting but rather complementary to other forms of visual representation, critics gradually settled arguments regarding photography’s legitimacy as a fine art. In terms of pictorialism’s lasting influence on the field, art historians generally view the genre as something of a necessary evil as photographers experimented with forms of representation and established the modern conventions of the medium. The painterly aesthetic of their pictures, the craftsmanship, as well as some of the methodologies devised by pictorialists “are now generally supposed to constitute an historical example of the misplaced, but ultimately important energies of art photography at an earlier stage of evolution” (Solomon-Godeau 156). As suggested by Solomon-Godeau and mentioned within this section, techniques devised by pictorialists evolved into some modern iterations. For example, surrealists and futurists such as László Moholy-Nagy and Hannah Höch adapted the composite printing method pioneered by Robinson into modern photo-montage techniques (Scruton 156).

Death Embodied, el Valle de los Caídos as a Composite Site

While the rest of the world abandoned pictorialism as a quaint misguided venture in the annals of photography, in Francoist Spain the genre thrived as the

regime's dominant visual aesthetic well into the 1950s.²⁷ Spanish pictorialism's "extended survival can only be explained by the determined support that it received from the upper echelons of the new regime" (Mondéjar *150 Years* 178). Concerning how the regime perceived the fine arts, photography historian, Publio López Mondéjar writes: "In the atmosphere of patriotic exaltation fostered by the military victory of 1939, art was seen as a merely ceremonial accessory that should at once be pompous, reverential and conservative" (178). Given this sense of military idealism as well as the values cherished by prewar Spanish pictorialists, such as "the greatness and unity of the Homeland, racial exaltation, tradition, and a baroque and rusty catholicity," the appropriation of the aesthetic adapted to the dictatorship's cultural doctrine (178).

As foreshadowed with the poet Federico García Lorca's intentions to flee the country at the outbreak of the conflict, "with the military victory, cultural life in Spain was violently curtailed; most writers, artists, musicians, and scientists went into exile" (Mondéjar *Franco's Spain* 14). Those remaining "were imprisoned or purged, or found themselves forced to go underground" in a self-imposed exile (14). "In any case, their work was persecuted and banned, and censorship was not lifted until the very last days of the regime" (14). In terms of visual artistic production, the Plastic Arts Department of the Directorate-General of Press and Propaganda censored works, organized National Photography Salons, and influenced a new generation of

²⁷ In his monograph, *The Photographic Impressionists of Spain, A History of the Aesthetics and Technique of Pictorial Photography*, S. Carl King has historicized three pictorial periods in Spain: 1900-1920, 1921-1936, and the Post-War years beginning in the 1940s. While not mentioning the systematic censorship by the state as a contributing force in prolonging pictorialism, King does succinctly summarize some of the socioeconomic factors: "In Spain the factors which contributed to the persistence of the pictorial aesthetics into the 1940s are all directly related to the immediate consequences of the Spanish Civil War: the truncation of alternative aesthetical models which had begun to emerge in the 1930s; the almost total cultural isolation of Spanish photographs from their counterparts in other countries; and the precarious economic condition of the 1940s, which made it all but impossible to import into the country photographic equipment and supplies" (212-213).

pictorialists (Mondéjar *150 Years* 182). As an extension of the censor, a network of civil servants enforced the guidelines “imposed by the authorities in order to watch over the purity of customs and safeguard the National Movement’s moral values” (183). Indeed, these measures were so stringent “that nudes were banned from salons and competitions until well into the 1960s” (183). However, as Mondéjar points out, the regime was less concerned with risqué subject matter, and “more interested in concealing and disguising the miserable reality of Spain under autarchy, with its rationing and its black market” (183). Tasked with masking, idealizing, and poeticizing reality through artistic photography, the censor promoted “an informal folklorism that stressed the values of a ‘virile’ Spain in contrast to an ‘industrial and liberal’ Europe” and “late pictorialism exalted the peace, happiness, honour and ‘harmony without distress’ of rural and agrarian life” (182).

Given these systemic repressive policies surrounding visual representation, the Francoist regime was keenly aware of the optics necessary to project a vision of Spain which concealed the country’s social and economic reality as a result of the war and during the dictatorship. In fact, when looking at official state publications for the 1950s, such as tourist posters attempting to attract visitors to picturesque villages or guidebooks marveling at the architectural achievement of el Valle de los Caídos, a marked pictorialist style visually obscures some of these realities and promotes an alternative. For example, the tourist posters harken back to an atemporal Spain, a place of mythic wonder, religious tradition, magnificent monuments, and an agrarian provincial way of life unaffected by the establishment of a dictatorship. Bearing in mind how the Francoist regime purposefully reinforced pictorialist optics, it seems

apropos to interpret el Valle de los Caídos as a composite print within the larger context of this instrumentalization of the photographic genre in the postwar years.

In the 1940s and 1950s the State actively canonized and propagated the genre while constructing the memorial complex. These pictorialist optics are apparent based on some of the architectural, ideological and psychological complexities previously discussed. For instance, consider again the idealized name, the moniker which captions the work: National Monument of the Holy Cross of the Valley of the Fallen. This glorious title reveres the soldiers not only as Catholics who died in battle, but rather a category of warrior-saints, *los caídos*, martyred for Christ and Country, whose sacrifice emanates from the holy cross. In Catalonia, the remains of the priests, nuns and monks interred within the modest crypt at Montserrat cannot even attest to such titular commemoration in excess of sainthood. Like other pictorialist works such as Robinson's "Bringing Home the May," which stages fictionalized characters in a world remade to his liking, the monument creates a space for this imagined category of militarized holy figure perceptibly made real.

As a contextual backdrop for the composite site's idealized title, laborers and political prisoners manipulated the mountainous Cuelgamuros and excavated el Risco de la Nava to form the base of the cross as well as the interior of the subterranean basilica hewn from solid granite. Prior to painstakingly cutting the landscape into a manageable piece of scenery for the complex, architect Diego Méndez prophecies the coming of the location:

Personal tarea del Caudillo fue, en largas excursiones a caballo y a pie, la búsqueda incesante de lo que habría de ser el Valle de los Caídos. En la sierra del Guadarrama tenía que hallarse el escenario tantas veces

por él intuido. No se trataba de buscar un emplazamiento, sino de descubrirlo e identificarlo.

[The Caudillo's personal task was, during long excursions on horseback and by foot, the incessant search for what would be the Valley of the Fallen. In the Sierra del Guardarrama, he knew intuitively that the setting had to be found. He was not searching for an emplacement, rather discovering and identifying it.]²⁸ (my translation) (Méndez 15).

Within the context of this passage, Méndez anticipates disapproval for the building project reflected in Resina's earlier criticism of the backwards process, which founded and then systematically installed el Valle as "a shrine in advance of its relics". As such, Méndez conveys how the future location was an active agent in its own discovery as opposed to Franco obsessively surveying the terrain for the ideal landscape in which to fabricate the complex. After religiously dedicating himself to the endeavor, el Caudillo gradually became attuned to the site's willingness to be discovered and identified. As such, nature ordains the building project and calls forth the monument.

Photographs taken by Francisco Javier Bravo Tarifa document el Risco de la Nava as it appeared in nature prior to manipulation (See Figure 3.20 – "El Risco de la Nava,") in addition recording the erection of the cross during construction (See Figure 3.21 – "Construcción del Valle de los Caídos"). Each image archives the future location of la Abadía de la Santa Cruz on the opposite site of the visitor's entrance into

²⁸ The second sentence in this passage has other connotations, which are difficult to convey within my translation. Some of the following meanings are easily found online via WordReference. The second sentence states: "En la sierra del Guardarrama tenía que hallarse el escenario tantas veces por él intuido". First of all, "escenario" could mean stage, scene or setting depending on the context. Likewise, "hallarse" in terms of geography means "to be situated," "located," or "found". However, in terms of an individual as the receiver of this action, the verb also means "to find yourself," "to feel right," or "feel like yourself". Given the additional meanings of these words, Franco is happening upon this setting, this stage, this scene. Almost wandering like a messianic figure in the wilderness anticipating an encounter. Likewise, in another interpretation, he finds himself within the scene or this scene feels right, almost as a staged production. Regardless, Méndez is attempting to convey something to the effect of "after much wandering the site impressed itself upon el Caudillo".



Figure 3.20 – “El Risco de la Nava,” c. 1940

Photographed by Francisco Javier Bravo Tarifa, prior to the construction of *El Valle de los Caídos*, image found online.



Figure 3.21 – “Construcción del Valle de los Caídos,” c. 1940-1950s

Photographed by Francisco Javier Bravo Tarifa, image found online.



Figure 3.22 – “Montserrat Mountain Range 1,” n.d

Uncredited image found online from a Montserrat website page that describes the Nature Park.

Regarding the photograph, the website states: “The geological origins of the massif are sedimentary. The rocks of Montserrat, formed by pebbles bound together by a natural cement of sand and clay, are very hard and resistant to erosion. Nevertheless, the wind and rain have, over time, shaped the mountain to form ‘needles’ or monolithic rocks with strange and varied forms. The popular imagination has seen human or animal shape[s] in some of these peaks, giving them names and inventing legends to explain their fantastic origins”



Figure 3.23 – “Montserrat Mountain Range 2,” n.d.

Uncredited image found online from a website dedicated to geological study in Catalonia.

the basilica. The first photograph shows the scale of the mountain in comparison to the vehicle almost within the center of the frame. Apart from the flatness of the summit, which serves as ideal raw material for the foundation of the cross and the interior crypt, the wide-open space in the foreground will become the second esplanade within the grouping of buildings that will later house the cultural center, hostel, and monastery. The second photograph shows active construction and a landscape in full manipulation. The cross nears completion on the summit and temporary housing surrounds the base of the mountain. Vehicles, paid workers, and prison laborers are not visible within the scene; yet, one can still perceive the marked human intervention in the scaffolding supporting the cross or in the numerous dwellings. What once was a barren field with low-lying grasses, is now a sandy well-traveled staging ground for the esplanade. While the exterior of the mountain appears mostly unchanged, workers lost their lives hollowing out the interior between 1942 and 1956, while precariously excavating with dynamite. From the perspective of the viewer, the majority of the most extensive hand work is concealed within the photograph.

Regarding the scene that Méndez paints for the reader in his documentary text on the building project, the selection and manipulation of the mountain as well as the fabrication of a mythical origin story are vital el Valle achieving a measure of legibility as a religious site. Under a different set of circumstances, perhaps el Risco de la Nava might have developed organically into something of a spiritual community. Comparatively, the mountainous terrain of Cuelgamuros appears similar to that of Montserrat (See Figure 3.22 – “Montserrat Mountain Range 1” and Figure 3.23 –

“Montserrat Mountain Range 2”). While el Valle is much smaller in scale, both rock formations evidence similar jagged shapes and a sense of substantial presence. However, as previously mentioned, the origins of Montserrat as a space inhabited by those faithful to Our Lady of Montserrat, pre-date Spain as a nation by some seven hundred years. No one knows for certain who carved the image of the Romanesque virgin, darkened by years of candle smoke burning day and night in her presence. Likewise, no one knows the origins of how or when people began inhabiting the valleys and ridges of the mountains surrounding her. The founding of the site pre-dates history and humanity’s relationship to the unique mountain range is timeless. Demonstrating this symbiosis between man and nature, many of the small peaks and stone formations are even personified with their own names and legends, which have been passed down through generations. Within this same mythical and atemporal tradition of the sacred site, Méndez attempts to inscribe the origins of el Valle. Moreover, without the scenic background of the manipulated el Risco de la Nava, the composite site has little chance of being mistaken for some other longstanding holy site across Spain.

Apart from the landscape, given its management under el Patrimonio Nacional, visitors perceive this composite site within the context of other monarchical, monastic, or historic holdings within the institute’s dossier. Comparatively, as if looking at an exhibition of other photographs, something about this composite picture misaligns alongside other representations such as San Lorenzo de El Escorial or el Palacio Real de Madrid. Like a photography critic finding the outlines of amalgamated groupings of negatives, one notices evidence of these unsightly seams when touring the site,

which reveal the unnatural juxtaposition of elements in dialogue with each other. For instance, the militarized components devised to defend the compound disjoin the perceived open structures of a religious tourism site intended to attract visitors. The most apparent outlines of this disassociation entail the series of checkpoints which condition the body of the visitor when approaching or moving within the monument: 1) the wrought iron gate permits passage through the valley towards the cross, while recording vehicle information on camera; 2) the esplanade, or promenade to nowhere, guards the entrance to the citadel; 3) the security detail surveils curious visitors and faithful parishioners.

While touring the basilica, visitors notice other unseemly joints which interfuse Fascist and Catholic ideology. Underfoot near the high altar, the most apparent are the remains of Fascist leaders Franco and Primo de Rivera, who were entombed in this place of honor as opposed to notable members of the clergy. In addition to this material evidence of a dissociative seam, the iconography throughout the interior is also imbedded with fascist symbolism. In their monograph on the Civil War and Francoism in Spanish society between 1936-2008, Walther Bernecker and Sören Brinkmann elaborate some of the more glaring cut-and-paste jobs inserted at the epicenter of the basilica:

El mosaico de la cúpula del altar mayor muestra a los héroes fallecidos en la Guerra Civil subiendo al cielo en la estela de los santos españoles, rodeados de banderas ondeantes del Estado y del <<Movimiento>>. Y entre las vírgenes de los altares laterales se ve a las patronas del ejército, la marina y las fuerzas aéreas.

[The mosaic of dome above the main altar shows the heroes killed in the Civil War rising towards the sky in the wake of the Spanish saints, surrounded by waving flags of the State and the “Movement”. And

among the virgins from the side altars one sees the patrons of the army, the navy, and the air forces.] (185)

Traditionally, other religious mosaics and related iconography avoid secular much less militarized subject matter. For example, the dome of St. Peter's basilica depicts fourteen saints in addition to the Virgin Mary and Christ the Redeemer, all of which were individually painted, proportionately represented, and equally identifiable. The imagery of the patrons watching over each branch of the arms services is yet another instance of the militarized affect previously discussed in architecture.

However, the mosaic designed by Santiago Padrós, which “depicts a seated Christ encircled by groups of deceased saints and martyrs, all on their way to heaven,” is a unique centerpiece because it visually approximates a representation of the fallen (See Figure 3.24 – “Mosaic of the Dome, el Valle de los Caídos”) (Crumbaugh 423).²⁹ When looking at the mosaic, the seated Christ presides within the dome as the largest figure with the greatest level of facial and body detail. From the floor of the basilica, one can still discern some his idealized features such as the ridge of his eyes, slender nose, closed mouth, shorn brown hair, and bearded faced. He wears a coral sash and his white robe drapes over his left shoulder; the openness of the robe displays his defined torso and right arm musculature. Within this visual hierarchy, lesser figures appear with fewer details, such as the angels or the Virgin Mary, whose faces are somewhat discernable. The level of detail then sharply decreases among the crowds of martyrs streaming towards the seated Christ. Merging together from these smaller

²⁹ In yet another connection between the two sites, Santiago Padrós also designed mosaics within Montserrat as well as other religious sites across Spain. His work included within the dome of the basilica provides an additional measure of legibility to el Valle in the context of other holy sites.



Figure 3.24 – “Mosaic of the Dome, el Valle de los Caídos,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while standing beneath the dome of the basilica near the high altar.

unidentifiable groupings in motion to compile a totalizing anonymous mass within the center of the dome, the visitor standing on the floor of the basilica cannot perceive the shapes and forms of some of their bodies, much less the individual details of their faces. Clearly, these figures have the most presence and numbers, but are conspicuously obscured from sight.

In terms of the referentiality, the mosaic also allegorizes the hierarchy of human remains enshrined within the crypt. As figures interfused with the surrounding components of the composite site, their inclusion within this composition informs the psychology associated with the regime's compulsive exhumations and interments. Similar to the image of the seated Christ within the center of the dome, Francisco Franco's presides over the basilica in the most visible tomb located in a position of honor close to the high altar. From this vantage point, seated parishioners can see the engraved granite slab of his shrine while attending services. While lost, he is never forgotten and the faithful continually mourn him with fresh flowers on the memorial marker (See Figure 3.25 – "Franco's Tomb"). Given his place in the basilica, his presence is actively integrated into the ritualized activities. As the closest approximation to a patron saint of el Valle, Franco officiates weekly masses, first communions, christenings, the occasional wedding, and a host of other Catholic ceremonies.

Within the composite site, his mortal remains are extracted and removed from the context of dictator, head of state, or family member. Instead as an imbedded sacred figure, his singularly identifiable remains refer to various fictional categories in this remade world. One such category is messianic leader in the Crusade to save



Figure 3.25 – “Franco’s Tomb,” 2015

Photograph taken by Edward Curran on August 16, 2015 while standing beneath the dome of the basilica near the high altar.

Spain from the amoral forces of the Civil War. Likewise, the placement of his remains also categorizes him as a saint, who watches over the clergy, monks, and local parishioners worshipping at el Valle, in addition to a patron, who sponsors his martyred *caído*'s entrance into heaven. Yet another character perpetuated within the composite is his role as Mother Nature's prophet, thanks to her revelation of el Valle as a result of many pilgrimages in the wilderness. Likewise, the remains of Primo de Rivera play a role in the founding of the sacred site of warrior saints. However, each of these categories is a fiction that would not otherwise maintain the same significance within the context of a typical burial site. If interred within the family plot, his remains would then remind loved ones of his role as father or husband. While placed in a military cemetery, his remains would be interpreted in the context of his military service as a soldier and dictator.

In returning the hierarchy of allegorized figures within the mosaic, the lesser figures appearing with fewer details refer to the *caídos*, whose vast numbers are obscured from sight within the side chapels, secret vaults, and labyrinthine network of shelving behind the walls of the basilica. As figures within the mosaic, these souls awaiting admission into paradise substantiate the majesty and power of the seated Christ, who grants their petitions and deems them worthy as judge and gatekeeper. Likewise, the bodies of the living and the dead conform to a set of conditions in terms of passage and entombment within the monument. On the ground in the basilica, as previously mentioned, the living conforms to a set of behavioral and somatic parameters in order to pass through the interior. Concerning the dead, Franco had a hand in the executive policies which played into the regime's complex "selection

process for prospective *caídos*,” who merited enshrinement in the sacred temple (Crumbaugh 424).

Regarding the administrative culling of these human remains, many “were directly solicited and earmarked by the regime officials as early as 1940, often without the knowledge or consent of family members” (424-425). While “others were offered by Francoist municipal leaders or admitted through family petition” (425). At the end of this process, instead of enjoying individual recognition, the remains are reduced to a single corpus. Their memory and presence is a mere gesture on a couple of inscriptions over the doors within the side chapels. Experiencing a similar public anonymity, some Republican soldiers as remains of a lower order found their way into the crypt within this hierarchy of the dead. However, as Crumbaugh has pointed out, these remains were not intended to perform as *caídos* per se, but as filler to magnify the numbers within an anonymous mass grave with a positive connotation. Despite this symbolic administrative snub and continuing to deny surviving family members of their rights to bury loved ones, from the perspective of a visitor or parishioner, no one can perceive their diminished status given their identical concealment. All remains become equalized as a component piece in the composite site. Whereas the seated Christ tends to the admission of his saints and martyrs in the mosaic, within the interior of the basilica the patron saint of el Valle presides over his corpus of supplicants embodying the figure of the *caído*.

In terms of representation, the human remains of soldiers interred within the monument no longer refer to who they once were as private individuals within the community. The family relinquished the remains to the government for the building

project and the State actively sought to consensually appropriate or secretly steal them. After harvesting the individuals, the family is denied access to their former loved ones even within what should be the public realm. While located in nature and placed on the landscape, a series of compartments prohibit interaction with individual graves or other singularizing memorial markers. Having trusted in the administrative system that transported their deceased loved one to the crypt, the family presumably knows the general vicinity of the remains, but the monument forecloses contact. In this regard, el Valle evidences some qualities akin to a single mass grave. Under surveillance in the side chapels, the memorial complex allows family members contemplative as opposed to corporal interaction. Unlike Franco's shrine, the families of the *caídos* cannot lay flowers on a grave, touch the vaults covered by tapestries, record photographs standing alongside a monolith engraved with the names of the fallen, or take some other corporeal action gesturing to the deceased individual.

Having lost their identity to become *caídos* manipulated within el Valle's idealized composition, the former individuals become a fictionalized character misaligned with the menagerie of other components that amalgamate the composite site. As Crumbaugh's mentions in his article, during the war and dictatorship "the ubiquitous glorification of the *caídos*" concerned with "death on the winning side became the central motif of a national construction project" (421). "The figure pervaded all forms of cultural production" and "what all the representations of the *caídos* share is an exaggerated estheticization of suffering, dying, and death that mystifies them and raises them to a super human level" (Crumbaugh 421). Their ultimate enshrinement in the monument thus fulfills their role in embodying and

perpetuating this death. As opposed to some memorialization that considers the sum of their lives, the composite site reduces them to useable parts idealizing the moment of their deaths.

Conclusion

Demonstrating the memorial's ongoing unsettled-ness within Spain, As I finish writing this chapter, Sam Jones from *The Guardian* reports that lawmakers "approved a symbolic resolution to exhume Franco from his tomb and have him re-interred elsewhere". Given that he died during the war as opposed to Franco, the remains of Primo de Rivera lying within the other visible tomb "could be allowed to stay if they are moved to a less prominent position in the basilica" (Jones). The vote demonstrates an effort to re-signify the site "so it ceases to be a place of Francoist and national-Catholic memory and is remade as a space for the culture of reconciliation and collective democratic memory" (Jones). The resolution is based on a report completed on November 29, 2011 by a group of experts commissioned by then president José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to provide the government with informed opinions regarding how reconcile the divisive nature of el Valle and its place within Spanish historical memory. The Socialist party, el Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), put forward "the non-binding proposal," arguing that the monument currently honors the victors as opposed to the soldiers from both sides who perished during the conflict (Jones). Given the other recommendations advised by the report, "the Socialists also want to see the creation of a truth commission, funding to be stopped to groups promoting or defending Franco, and the introduction of a DNA database to help identify the disappeared" (Jones).

Generations later, these politics of reconciliation still divide Spaniards.

Speaking out against the proposal, 68-year-old Ramón Mateo commented: “I think they should leave Franco where he is... He’s been dead for a long time and you should leave them dead where they are... If you don’t live in the present, you end up back in the past” (qtd. in Jones). Representing the other side of the argument, 91-year-old Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz worked on the complex as a political prisoner, who managed to escape the labor camp. While his imprisonment began in 1948, some of his compatriots “had been captive since the end of the war in 1939” and “hadn’t seen the outside world for nine years” (qtd. in Jones). For Sánchez-Albornoz, the punitive labor policy “was proof of the cruelty” that the monument represents, “forcing them to work on what would become the tomb” (qtd. in Jones). While one would think Sánchez-Albornoz fervently supported Franco’s removal, his comments reveal disappointment:

The same resolution could have been passed many years ago. For me, it’s shameful that the monument’s still there. It’s shameful for me as a Spaniard and for the victims of Francoism ... Hitler and Mussolini have disappeared from Europe, yet in Spain it’s seen as normal to have the tomb of someone of the same stripe. It’s high time for this. (qtd. in Jones)

For differing reasons, each man questions the value in removing Franco from what many consider his mausoleum. Considering his role as a figure within the composite, extracting his remains would alter his representation within the site. Interring him in a family plot within his local community would decontextualize Franco as a fictionalized messianic character within the hierarchy of the dead entombed in the crypt. Likewise, his day-to-day inclusion in Catholic ceremonies would finally come

to an end. Moreover, the exhumation would chip away at his legacy as the founder of the sacred location which was revealed to him by Nature.

While one can remove his remains from the crypt, it is impossible to erase the authorial mark of his index from the memorial complex. Extricating his tomb from the basilica only impacts his role as a figure within the world he remade. As a composite site, the juxtaposition of these misaligned structural and ideological components will always gesture to his hand as the architect. Similar to pictorialists such as Henry Peach Robinson who were deeply concerned with their own visibility as artists within their pictures, Franco ensured his trace within the monument. From the emblem at the wrought iron gate to the holy cross on the summit of el Risco de la Nava, visitors see Franco. From the insignia on the china and napkins in the hostel to the empty esplanade facing the Pietà, visitors dine and walk with Franco. While seated under the dome of the basilica marveling at the mosaic or reflecting on the sacrifice of the *caídos* in the adjacent chapels, visitors worship with Franco. From drafting the architectural plans, excavating the interior of the mountain, conscripting prison laborers, compulsively exhuming remains, installing the order of Benedictine monks, obtaining the papal blessing, in every invisible procedure that resulted in the formation of el Valle de los Caídos, we see the meticulous hand work of a dictator securing his legacy. Much like the dead interred within the crypt, the living walking the long tunnel of the nave become wholly absorbed in Franco's art.

CONCLUSION

Prior to depicting “literary themes or anodyne, idyllic scenes of rural life,” Henry Peach Robinson initially engaged with death and mortality within his combination prints (Linkman 156-157). Crafted from five negatives, in 1858 he exhibited “Fading Away,” which ideally portrays “a young woman dying of tuberculosis” surrounded by her immediate family who quietly anticipate her tranquil passing into the afterlife (See Figure 4.1 – “Fading Away”). Firmly supported by two pillows bracing her back, as well as the nape of her neck and head, the young woman reclines in a chair within a dark formal sitting room. The overall bleak tone of the scene draws the viewer’s eye to the dying woman dressed in white who gazes past the forlorn elderly woman seated on the left side of the frame. This gravely ill woman slightly parts her eyes and mouth as she drifts in and out of consciousness under the watchful presence of another young woman of comparable age who stands over her. In the background within the center of the frame, an elderly man brings his left forearm to his face between the heavy curtains of an open window. Instead of taking solace in the cloudy sky beyond the panes of glass, the man looks down placing his hand over his mouth, stoically concealing his reaction to the young woman’s impending death or her recent passing from the rest of the family.

As opposed to the ostentatious pageantry of his overwrought outdoor composite prints, such as Figure 3.16 – “Bringing Home the May,” Robinson’s authorial mark is less apparent in “Fading Away”. Instead of obligating us to see the craftsmanship of his artistic presence, he visually and critically engages the viewer



Figure 4.1 – “Fading Away,” 1858

Composite print by Henry Peach Robinson, image found online at ARTstor.

with something more universal and commonly experienced. As opposed to portraying recognizable figures from literature, such as Little Red Riding Hood or the Lady of Shalott, the seemingly authentic passing of a loved one from terminal illness personally resonated with historical viewers. Given the widespread practice of memorialist photography during the time, Robinson's picture brings to mind deathbed imagery which staged the body post-mortem to mimic the immediacy of a fading away scene, such as Figure 2.4 – "Miss Horth in her Bedroom in a Dying Condition". Critics likewise noticed these comparisons to post-mortem portraiture and the tragic relatability of the subject matter. While some approved of his choice of subject matter, "one outspoken critic accused Robinson of deliberately attempting to cause pain and anguish" given that many viewers who saw the picture might "have direct, personal experience of the tragedy it depicted" (156). Apparently deeply affected by the image, this same critic believed that viewers should derive pleasure from art as opposed to looking at "topical or contentious subjects," which might result in distress or trigger a previously experienced tragedy (157). Heeding the warning of his critics, Robinson completely abandoned any thematically controversial representations from lived experiences (157).

Considering the trajectory of my dissertation and the social uses of photography, this anecdote from Robinson's career is puzzling in terms of exhibiting the body and how the living engages with representations of the dead portrayed within photographs. Historically, spirit, memorial, and pictorialist photography occurred concurrently and served differing societal purposes in terms of death, funerary, and mourning customs. Derived from the spiritualist movement, spirit photography

corroborated a belief system surrounding the possibility to engage with the departed as previously disincarnate entities manifesting in a semblance of human form on film. As previously discussed, in the wake of the American Civil War, family members found comfort in the ability to visualize the loved one who failed to return home after the conflict. In their absence, the portrait allowed the family to commune with the spirit and rest assured that the individual had successfully crossed over despite the unknown condition of their mortal remains. Previously invisible and imperceptible to the living, the spirit being elected to manifest and interact with viewers in a semblance of their younger selves. Given this corroborating evidence, spiritualists believed that they had truly made contact with the dead thanks to the technology of the camera, and perhaps because of the departed loved one's ongoing presence, failed to mourn what was perceived as never absent. On the other hand, maybe this confirmation of their existence in spirit mitigates the loss of their body and allows their previous material form to be mourned.

In the same vein, viewers of memorial photography desired to visualize the body as deceased, and in earlier iterations, staged the corpse as living. As was the case with young children, often these individuals had not been photographed prior to death and the post-mortem portrait attempted to restore the dead. Enlivened with make-up in the midst of slumber, the deceased resembled something of their former condition and were placed alongside living members within the family album. The photograph documented their existence, ensured their inclusion with the family, and safeguarded their commemoration within the community. Like the spirit portrait, the departed loved one retains a sense of presence via the photograph, but in meditating on

the referent, the image also reminds the viewer of their death while restoring them to life. In the ability to continually return to the image, can the individual portrayed ever be mourned? Conversely, has the viewer definitively accepted the loss and integrated the memorial photograph into the collectivity of the album which also records other milestones and events?

At this juncture, I believe Robinson's anecdote proves intriguing considering what the composite print of a seemingly authentic representation of death evokes. Robinson's critic contends that this staged fictionalized fading away retains the capacity to forcefully remind the viewer of a specific loved one who also tragically passed too soon because of tuberculosis. While the portrait depicting the incarnated spirit being points to a future happening related to their manifestation, and the memorial portrait often gestures to a funerary custom in process, the arrangement of characters within this composite print disturbs the viewer by not pointing to the author who crafted the visual narrative, but rather the onetime experienced death of a loved one. The fiction traumatizes the viewer as opposed to a photographic representation which documented their actual body lying in state. In this regard, we mitigate personal loss through spirit and memorial photography. In these visualizations of the dead, we mourn their image, while the composite print points towards our own unresolved grief experienced within the memory of their loss.

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