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Legacies of Haunting: Confronting my Grandfather, his Films, and my Ghosts

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An Introduction to My Grandfather's Ghosts

I come from a tradition of enforced forgetting. But here's what I *do* remember about my grandfather: how he smelled, the warmth of his soft hands streaked with raised veins, what it felt like to sit on his lap; my mother getting upset when my grandmother brought up my grandfather's films in family conversations; the disbelief verging on anger that my host family while studying abroad in Madrid expressed when I confessed I had only seen one of my grandfather's films. These personal memories rooted in direct experience are limited, in part because my grandfather died when I was seven and our relationship was subject to a strong language barrier. These memories feel even more limited compared to the firm preservation of my grandfather in Spanish collective memory and the way he is documented through cultural touchstones.

What I mean by a tradition of enforced forgetting, in one sense, is that my Spanish grandfather and mother were born and raised in a country that made a pact to forget in favor of achieving a peaceful transition to democracy post a decades-spanning dictatorship. The Pact of Forgetting, as it was literally called, involved a cultural consensus to avoid directly confronting the legacy of Francoism and legislation in the form of the 1977 Amnesty Law that prevented crimes which took place during the regime from being formally investigated. Given Spain's complicated relationship to memory, perhaps it is not surprising then that for me the memory of my grandfather is most defined by contradiction.

Publicly, my grandfather is remembered as an influential cultural producer who wasn't afraid to intimately confront the past. In Logroño, Spain, the *Biblioteca Rafael Azcona* remembers my grandfather through a physical public library, where his office now sits in a special room, reconstructed after being transported from his home in Madrid. *Imprescindibles*, a Spanish documentary about my grandfather, proclaims that those who understand the work of Rafael

Azcona better understand Spain.[1] The documentary claims that Azcona itched and pulled at the armhole of a Spain we are still living in, meaning that he challenged Spain's enduring investment in containment and silence.[2] Unlike for the rest of the country, the past was not a burden for him.

This starkly contrasts family memories that characterize my grandfather as a man who went to great lengths to create distance between his past and present. My mother recalls how my grandfather practically never returned to his hometown of Logroño, except in his stories and films. She remembers him as a man who never wanted to look back at the past, who believed it was always better to look forward. He was invested in the future, choosing to surround himself with younger people and immediately exchanging his typewriter for an Apple desktop computer. My grandmother shares how he rarely talked about his childhood and held shame around secrets he kept up until his death.

This contradiction and multiplicity surrounding the memory of my grandfather is where my project begins. This unknowing about my past as it constitutes myself led me to the theory of haunting, which illuminates my relationship to my grandfather and underpins this project. As I came to understand haunting theory, I came to understand myself as a figure haunted by the ghosts generated at multiple sites. One such site is the Spanish state, given its history and present of enforced forgetting of its violent past. The peculiarities of this haunt my grandfather and make his films another site of haunting. It is through wrestling with these two sites and seeing ghosts as generated not by the initial event but by the rupture from not talking about it that I begin to get my arms around the way my family and I are haunted by my grandfather.

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[1] "Imprescindibles: Rafael Azcona." *Imprescindibles*, written and directed by Fernando Olmeda, RTVE, 2016.
[2] Ibid.

Hauntology is the theoretical basis of my project. The work of hauntologists Avery Gordon and Grace Cho especially guide my thinking and my definition of haunting as the remnants of unresolved past violence or suppressed traumatic pasts that are making themselves known in the present. In the tradition of hauntology, I use the terms ghost, phantom, and specter to refer to when these remnants are seen or felt by the living; when the past is embodied in the present, despite efforts to contain and silence it. Western conceptions of time crumble in haunting as past bleeds into present and into future, in a way that makes demarcating temporalities a futile activity. The remnants of ruptured pasts in the present can be both oppressive and mobilizing. The impact of these traces is shaped by the response of haunted figures.

Understanding the silences that underpin haunting as a matrix of different social forces is crucial in my theoretical application. Haunting has a multidirectional quality that requires seeing the "fabric of erasure" as being composed of an array of threads; the threads of familial desire and shame but also the threads of hegemonic institutions and knowledge production.[3][4] While these threads are tightly woven and perhaps impossible to fully tease apart, an understanding of how they are intertwined can help reveal the implications of national and familial haunting. Nicholas Rand's work on transgenerational haunting brings us closer to understanding how the fabric of erasure functions. Transgenerational haunting, he writes, "enables us to understand how the falsification, ignorance, or disregard of the past—whether institutionalized by a totalitarian state . . . or practiced by parents or grandparents—is the breeding ground of the phantomatic return of

[3] Grace M. Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*, NED-New edition. University of Minnesota Press, 2008. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttsnfm, 17.
[4] Ibid., 12.

shameful secrets."[5] In other words, family storytelling and public discourse (or lack thereof) mutually shape each other to produce a haunting effect. This effect is like a "ventriloquist, like a stranger within"—a felt presence that is intimately a part of the self and something distant and unfamiliar.[6]

To gain familiarity with the absences in my family's stories, I examine the omissions on the national scale and the construction of memory by the Spanish state. Haunting forms my framework of observation as I listen to silences in public memory and enter "gaps in conscious knowledge" of my family history.[7] As I engage with silences and gaps, my objective is not to reconstruct the whole, but to become intimate with remnants and their nuances. I was obsessed with figuring out what really happened, especially when faced with dissonant versions of past moments and people. I researched and combed through archives in pursuit of the singular truth about my grandfather. I now find myself in a very different place and I hope to bring you along on this journey with me of revealing new truths as I seek to lay "bare the components of silence."[8]

In Chapter One, I argue that the Spanish state enforces forgetting which creates haunting. I postulate that the Spanish institutionalization and culture of enforced forgetting is haunting. I focus on the following modes of enforced forgetting: the Spanish Press Law, a censorship law passed in 1938 after the Spanish Civil War by dictator Francisco Franco; the Pact of Forgetting, a political decision made after the death of Franco in 1975 during Spain's transition to democracy that resolved to suppress lingering trauma from the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship; the Valley of the Fallen, a basilica-memorial-burial site complex that maintains myths constructed by

[5] Ibid., 30.
[6] Ibid., 1.
[7] Ibid., 11.
[8] Ibid., 17.

the dictatorship; and the mourning strategy of family photo collages that depicted comforting yet sanitizing and impossible versions of the past through though the visual doctoring of Franco's victims. I find Grace Cho's book *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War* especially useful in my reading of Spain's fabric of erasure and subsequent haunting.[9]

Next, in Chapter Two, I interrogate the hauntings of my grandfather by looking at the films he wrote as expressions of and responses to haunting. Film in post Civil War Spain was simultaneously subject to censorship and primed for responding to silences and creating counter-stories to Francoist narratives and mythologies. First, I analyze humor as a structure of haunting in *Belle époque*, utilizing David Archibald's article "No Laughing Matter? Comedy and the Spanish Civil War in Cinema."[10] Next, I show how Azcona used film to warp time, drawing on Avery Gordon's book *Ghostly Matters* in which she understands haunting as altering the experience of being in linear time.[11] I look towards *Los muertos no se tocan, nene*, L*a lengua de las mariposas*, and *La prima Angélica* as models of this alternative temporal sequencing. I then conceptualize Azcona's films as his response to his own haunting. I engage briefly with *La vaquilla*, *La grande bouffe, El verdugo* and more extensively with *La lengua de la mariposa* and *La prima Angélica* as examples of Azcona using fiction to confront a ghostly past otherwise too oppressive to return to. Toni Morrison's work in "The Site of Memory" and "Memory, Creation,

[9] Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*.
[10] David Archibald, "No laughing matter?". In *The war that won't die*, (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2019) accessed Mar 24, 2023, https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526141842.00011.
[11] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters : Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

and Writing" guides this section and shapes my understanding of fiction as a memory recuperation method and way of knowing amidst omissions, silence, and trauma.[12][13]

In Chapter Three I interrogate myself as a haunted figure. I reflect on the evolution of this project from one about my grandfather, facts, and recalling the past to discover the truth to one about my relationship to my grandfather, fiction, and creating as a form of memory and a liberatory embodiment of the past in the present. In Q.M. Zhang's book *Accomplice to Memory* she offers up the term "memory work" and uses it to describe the researching and writing into diasporic familial silences. I use the term to describe my attempt in this project to trace my past in the face of historical omissions and intergenerational secret-keeping.

It is Sue Campbell in her book *Relational Remembering: Rethinking the Memory Wars* who helps me identify the stakes of this project as my sense of self and illuminates that having a sense of self necessities being able to integrate your past into your present. Tiya Miles in her book *Tales of a Haunted South* and Rebecca Hall in her graphic novel *Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts* join Campbell in her argument and explore how the past can be retrieved and integrated as a source of power rather than oppression. Drawing from Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory, I further explore the effects of my haunting. Building on Hirsch and turning again to Cho, I begin my analytic foray into diasporic haunting. I argue that diasporic subjectivity is marked by haunting and look specifically at the third generation as distinctly positioned to respond to haunting. Drawing from a range of authors but especially Katherine Hite and Paloma Aguilar, I examine generational dynamics in Spain and the country's recent

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[12] Toni Morrison,"The Site of Memory." In *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, 2d ed., ed. William Zinsser (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 83-102.https://blogs.umass.edu/brusert/files/2013/03/Morrison_Site-of-Memory.pdf

[13] Morrison, Toni. "Memory, Creation, and Writing." Thought: Fordham University Quarterly 59, no. 4 (1984): 385-390. https://blogs.umass.edu/brusert/files/2013/03/Morrison_Memory-Creation.pdf9

mobilization of a haunted younger generation that is working to recuperate memory and move away from a culture of enforced forgetting. I continue with the topic of diasporic haunting, but shift to consider the implications of language loss and postulate that translation is a structure of haunting. I end the chapter by postulating that forms which can hold dissonance and maintain the integrity of uncertain pasts are most generative and effective in responding to haunting.

I conclude by thinking about remnants as physical rather than only metaphorical. Considering bodily remains and legacies, I question what it means to live with the dead.

Chapter One: State Forgetting

Spain is marked by haunting. The disavowal of the country's oppressive past and its legacy is baked into Spain's identity and culture in a way that generates ghosts. This landscape of enforced forgetting institutionalized by the state is a backdrop to my grandfather's haunting. Initially, I wanted to base this investigation of the state as haunted using public memory and publicly available sources. I hoped to develop a solid understanding of Spanish public memory before diving into family memory that feels incomplete and probably unimportant. I believed that if I could split public/state and private/family into different categories for organizational purposes, I could more clearly understand the character of ghosts. My family memory felt too fragmented to include. I wasn't sure that I would be able to access enough memory to form a narrative. Yet Grace Cho, a hauntologist and professor of sociology and anthropology, argues this very uncertainty is a mark of haunting. More important than "explicit narrative content" are the "traces of trauma that remain."[14] Cho writes that to tell uncertain histories in a way that makes sense would involve smoothing over the gaps. Rather than filling in these gaps, she is "compelled to enter these empty spaces to find out what emerges."[15] So rather than start my investigation of the state and its haunting with public memory sources, I feel compelled to enter the empty spaces of family memory and assemble pieces I think I know.

First I introduce the state of censorship imposed by Franco during post-Civil War Spain. I examine the 1938 censoring Press Law and the mythmaking performed by the dictatorship as two modes through which "fictional elements" were spun into "factual sociological knowledge."[16] Next, I follow the afterlife of unresolved social violence into post-dictatorship

[14] Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*, 18.
[15] Ibid., 17.
[16] Ibid., 42.

Spain. I lay out the re-designed state of censorship, focusing on *The Pact of Forgetting*, a cultural and legal pact of forgetting, and the Valley of the Fallen, a monumental complex that works to erase a history of forced labor and Republican death while maintaining dictatorship myths through its evocation of *La Reconquista.* I end by examining state enforced forgetting as the backdrop to Azcona's childhood and the grounds for his haunting.

A Pact of Forgetting

Following the Spanish Civil War, the new Francoist dictatorship created a state of censorship in order to control the national narrative and citizens. Secrecy, silence, and shame were essential to maintaining order. The Second Spanish Republic spanned from 1931 to 1939 and was a period of profound progressivism. Yet when the nationalists won the Civil War in 1939, this society not only turned over on its head but it was virtually erased. The Republic with legalized abortion, progressive divorce laws, and fifty different cinema magazines vanished from the national narrative.[17] The press was destroyed and strict censorship was imposed with the signing of the Press Law in 1938. The church, which was in lock step with Franco's regime, was in charge of censorship regulation which meant that everything had to be approved by a committee of priests. Any criticism against Francoism was not allowed. More than that, there was only one permissible narrative.

In addition to performing censorship, Franco's regime molded memory through the production of a mythological version of the Civil War. Paloma Aguilar, a Spanish political scientist who specializes in memory of the Spanish Civil War and the legacies of Francoism, conveys the overwhelming and obsessive presence of this founding myth.[18] She describes it as an

[17] Eva Woods Peiró, Personal interview. 6 Dec 2022.
[18] Paloma Aguilar, *Políticas De La Memoria y Memorias De La política: El Caso Español En*

instrument of legitimization of the regime installed at the end of the war, which was presented as the first necessary and then inevitable result of a critical situation without possible alternatives.[19] In other words, the Civil War became this glorious national uprising in which Franco rescued Spain from being destroyed by dangerous republican politicians and re-established law and order. He stoked fears of instability and violence and kept the population in line by developing a threatening, destructive "other" in republicans and non-Catholics. Through this manipulated version of the past, Franco intended to legitimize the present and control the future. Franco so consummately disseminated and embedded his dominant narrative to the extent that his influential reach extended past his death.

The Pact of Forgetting, which was a legal policy and cultural agreement, reflects the national consensus during post-Franco Spain to avoid confronting the realities of a dark past in favor of achieving a peaceful transition to democracy. When Franco died in 1975, the dictatorship came to an end and the country experienced a process of opening and liberalization. This uncertain period was marked by "the desire to ensure the stability of the new regime above all else."[20] This societal priority and widespread consciousness of collective guilt for the failure of the republic wasn't incidental but was specifically cultivated by the regime. Aguilar writes that Francoist socialization and propaganda formed an enduring very close link in the minds of many Spaniards between the polarization of the republican stage and the civil war.[21] There was strong embodied awareness of the atrocities that took place during the Civil War, yet it was an awareness that omitted the unevenness of violence. Instead of thinking critically about which

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Perspectiva Comparada. Alianza Editorial, 2008, 99.
[19] Ibid., 100.
[20] Paloma Aguilar and Katherine Hite, "Historical Memory and Authoritarian Legacies in Processes of Political Change: Spain and Chile." Authoritarian Legacies and Democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN, 2004, 192.
[21] Aguilar, *Políticas De La Memoria,* 234.

side committed more crimes and the difference in the type of violence prevailing on each side, the deeply traumatized country stuck with Franco's narrative of mutual responsibility and republican failure. This narrative also included spinning the dictatorship as "an era of economic prosperity and social peace that contributed to establishing democracy in Spain."[22]Aguilar explains that the traumatic memory of the conflict induced political elites to adopt an institutional design that was as far away as possible from that which had already been experienced.[23] This meant that while the autocratic censor was gone, caution and restrictive control remained.

In Spain's new democracy, political elites chose to adopt an institutional design that involved "A Pact of Forgetting." Instead of a truth-and-reconciliation commission or a similar accountability institution, Spain passed the 1977 Amnesty Law that generally absolved regime members of their past crimes and prevented crimes that took place during the regime from ever being formally investigated.[24] Leaders from the left to the right championed the need for peaceful democracy, even when that meant rejecting popular calls for justice and investigating human rights violations that had taken place. José Maria Aznar, a former prime minister, reflected this sentiment in a speech when he stated, "Let's not disturb the graves and hurl bones at one another—let the historians do their job."[25] Whether Aznar means let historians remember or let historians do their job of forgetting is unclear. What his statement does clearly reveal is how politicians were staunchly opposed to opening up old divisions. Despite this resistance to

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[22] Aguilar and Hite, "Historical Memory and Authoritarian Legacies," 195.
[23] Aguilar, *Políticas De La Memoria*, 233-234.
[24] Connal Parr, "The Battle for the Future - Spain's Ongoing Civil War." *International Brigade Commemoration Committee,* UNITE Union Headquarters, Belfast, 2015, 10.
[25] Nicholas Casey, "Taken Under Fascism, Spain's 'Stolen Babies' Are Learning the Truth" *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, September 27, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/27/magazine/spain-stolen-babies.html

engaging with fissures in the present, Aznar admits that graves do exist and even implies a sort of afterlife through his belief that graves can be disturbed. The risk and reality of haunting lie beneath his plea to leave the dead alone and to forget.

Forgetting at The Valley of the Fallen

Within this framework, the Catholic basilica and monumental memorial known as Valley of the Fallen operates at the state level to silence the struggle of republican victims, obscure nationalist-enacted violence, and render Francoist memory dominant. It is a physical expression of the nation's resistance to honestly engage the past and disturb graves. Built between 1940 and 1958 under Franco's decree, this monument commemorates the struggle of Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War and specifically exalts two fascist leaders—Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera and (until 2019) Francisco Franco—by housing their bodies in the center of the basilica.[26] What is unmarked, however, are the graves of over 33,000 victims; civil war dead from both sides. Many of these bodies are unidentified, their existence unknown to even their closest family members.[27] This mass grave was built primarily with the forced labor of Republican political prisoners and the suffering of these workers cannot be separated from the monument.[28] Yet the official audio listener's guide to The Valley of the Fallen does just that. The English translation "carries one brief sentence acknowledging the fact that political prisoners built the monument" but there is no such acknowledgment in the original Spanish version. What is emphasized instead is "the grandiosity, the beauty of the setting, and the remarkable feat of architectural

[26] Goldberger, Tyler J. "Memory Surrounding a Mausoleum: Transforming Spain's Valley of the Fallen Into a Site of Conscience." *Space and Culture*, *25*(2), 2022 https://doi.org/10.1177/, 232.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 237.

achievement."[29] Rather than remembering the true loss that took place or honoring the bodies and bones that remain, the state chooses to tell a story about martyrdom and the heroism of Fascist leaders.

Through its design and evocation of the *Reconquista*, The Valley of the Fallen constructs a Spanish Civil War narrative that selectively honors Nationalists while failing to acknowledge republican victims. Just fifty kilometers from central Madrid stands a Catholic basilica, an abbey, and a 150-meter high cross. Through its geographic centrality, the memorial's designers work to tell a story of universal national representation, yet the Spain that constitutes their version of the nation excludes many. In 1940, Franco declared that the stones of this monument "must defy time and forgetting [to] perpetuate the memory of the fallen in our Glorious Crusade."[30] This declaration establishes and promotes the perpetuity of the narrative that the civil war was "a crusade or holy war to restore Spain's moral and religious order."[31] While Spanish culture has always been diverse and included North African, Arab, and Muslim influences, Franco perpetuated the myth that the *Reconquista* restored Spain back to its natural monolithic state. The monument's giant cross is perched high on a cliff and looms over the capital city almost as a threat; a symbol that says this version of history is what has been ordained by God. The austere and grand Catholic iconography is intimidating and disciplining. Franco understood the power of memory and enlisted the state religion to ensure that his version of memory was physically embedded into the Spanish landscape. The Valley of the Fallen reveals the legacy of dictatorial memory that is permanently etched into stone and embedded in collective memory.

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[29] Katherine Hite. "Memorializing Spain's Narrative of Empire." *Politics and the Art of Commemoration: Memorials to Struggle in Latin America and Spain*, Routledge, London, 2013.
[30] Jacqueline Sheean, "Monument and Memory: Spain's Valley of the Fallen." Public Diplomacy (2019): n. pag. Print." 49.
[31] Ibid.

Manipulation of the Past Through Photo Collage

Manipulated photo collages as a mourning strategy exemplifies the Spanish tendency to engage with the past in an artificial and sanitizing way. In her article, "From mourning severed to mourning recovered: Tribute and remembrance strategies for families of the victims of Francoist repression," Aguilar focuses on grassroots resistance to the regime's efforts to eradicate tributes to republican victims that simultaneously repeated national patterns of memory avoidance. Through visual analysis of family photo collages, Aguilar looks at the interplay between Franco-imposed restrictions on mourning with the need for families to remember their relatives.[32] Photo collages were a tool to circumvent authoritarian power and pay tribute to lost family members within a dictatorship that often prohibited the cemetery burial of republicans executed by Francoists. By refusing to give victims a burial with a marked grave and not allowing survivors to pay tribute to their kinfolk outside the home, the dictatorship erased the memory of the dead from public space, withholding dignity from victims. As "both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence," photo was a tool families used to bear witness, restore dignity, and "sustain the illusion that the family remained united."[3334]

While the grassroots memorial strategy of photo collages was a mode of resistance that offered consolation and dignity, it functioned by avoiding the confrontation of a traumatic and flawed past. In this manifestation of private mourning, "the disappeared are inserted alongside members of the family in an impossible composition."[35] Loved ones displayed these visually reconstituted versions of family in their home. An example of this impossibility and

[32] Aguilar, Paloma. "From Mourning Severed to Mourning Recovered: Tribute and Remembrance Strategies for Families of the Victims of Francoist Repression." *Memory Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2020, pp. 277–294., https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698020914013.
[33] Ibid.,103.
[34] Ibid., 281.
[35] Ibid.

manipulation is a photo of Pedro and Eloísa Talaverano Soto. The siblings died at eighteen and twenty-three, respectively, yet they are portrayed as more mature. An altered version of Pedro is smoking a cigarette, despite never having tried tobacco. Aguilar analyzes this as an attempt to represent the siblings "at the age they would have been had death not taken them away so soon."[36] She highlights the editing technique, describing how "photographs were often adjusted using the bromoil process so the dead would appear in the most favorable possible light (carefully groomed, smartly dressed, self-assured expressions, etc.)."[37] Aguilar argues that this "was a way of deleting from memory the pain their violent death must have caused them."[38] In a way reminiscent of the Pact of Forgetting and Amnesty Law that had yet to be passed, families chose to manufacture a less painful past to create a more manageable present. Aguilar views such manipulation as "somewhat distressing because the dead usually appear smiling and elegant, feigning a happiness they are no longer able to enjoy."[39] The doctored photographs offer an easier version of the past that comforts and deceives.

Figure 1. Manipulated photo of Pedro and Eloísa Talaverano Soto.[40]

[36] Ibid., 282.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 282.
[40] Ibid.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher and cultural critic, uplifts what forgetting offers, especially the forgetting of painful memories. His theorizing suggests that forgetting might be part of being mobilized by haunting. In his 1874 essay "On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life," Nietzsche writes to a Germany that he believes is suffering from an excess of history and culture. He writes, **"**there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing, whether this living thing be a man or a people or a culture."[41] In other words, the act of memory is deadly. Imagining the example of a man who "did not possess the power of forgetting at all," Nietzsche writes that "such a man would no longer believe in his own being, would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flowing asunder in moving points and would lose himself in this stream of becoming."[42] Nietzsche sees forgetting as essential and considers how sorting through and cutting out memories is essential to form a life narrative.

Conditions for Haunting in Azcona's Childhood

Nietzche theorizing presents forgetting not as a tool of fascism but as a tool of survival in a painful world. While enforced forgetting certainly was a key weapon in the dictatorship's arsenal, forgetting can also be experienced as a liberating act. Nietzche imagines the past when it is clung to relentlessly as a "chain," a "burden," a "pressure" that pushes down and encumbers.[43] To break free from a chain is perhaps the pinnacle image of liberation. This discussion reminds me of a story told by my mom about my grandfather, in which he asks: Why would you look at the past when it's so painful? Why would you talk about where you came from when you're

[41] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: Untimely Meditations*, Edited by Daniel Breazeale, Translated by R. J. Hollingdale, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 1997, 51.
[42] Ibid., 62.
[43] Ibid., 61.

somewhere better now? While my grandfather was tightlipped about this painful past in his interpersonal relationships, I've gradually picked up bits and pieces about his childhood from conversations with family members.

Born in 1926 in Logroño, a small city in the northern provinces of the country, the Spanish Civil War and subsequent fascist dictatorship marked Azcona's upbringing with trauma. Growing up, Azcona—"Yayo"as I know him—was worried that his father, a tailor and a republican, would be taken away and killed for his political identity. Whenever people were laughing joyfully at home, Yayo's mother, Prudencia, would cryptically and fearfully declare *ya lo pagaremos*: we're all laughing now but later something bad is going to happen and we will pay for it. My mother remembers that whenever the doorbell rang, yayo would immediately and anxiously interject with *voy yo*: I'll go, I'll get the door. He was saying, in other words, I'm scared of who might be on the other side of the door and I want to protect the rest of my family from that potential danger. The fear of nationalists knocking at Yayo's door to take away and execute his father was never actualized, but this terror lived on in his imagination. So did the trauma of Yayo's father ultimately dying in his arms, which was an experience that he virtually never talked about, but my mother is certain profoundly impacted him.

As a young boy, Yayo was always reading. Books were his chosen form of escape from the endless masses, rosaries, and a miserable education ruled by punitive Catholic monks. When his public school closed at ten years old, his sole option was to enter a Catholic school where the only permissible version of history and of the present was Franco's. At twenty-four years old, Yayo physically escaped his small province where, he has remarked, existed the sense that *la vida es para sufrir*, life was to suffer. He moved to Madrid, Spain's capital, and practically never returned to Logroño, a decision that fits my mother's memory of him as a man who never wanted

to look back at the past and believed it was always better to look forward. It was in Madrid where he would build a life for himself and go on to become one of Spain's most important screenwriters.

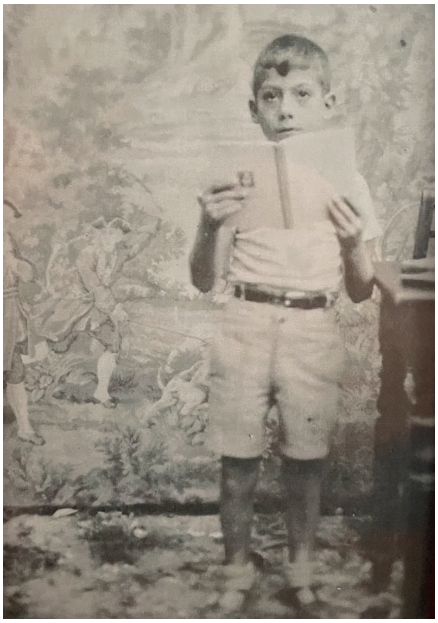

Figure 2. My grandfather pictured in a school photo. He is reading a book, which my mother tells me he was instructed to hold in order to hide a hole in his shirt.

Contextualizing these biographical pieces within the state of enforced forgetting that was his life's backdrop, the conditions for my grandfather's haunting emerge. As Nietzche lauds the forgetting of the past, he also warns how the past "returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment."[44] In the next chapter, I explore Azcona's entrance into cultural production and his response to ghosts through screenwriting. I consider the duality of Azcona's silence and forgetting in his personal life and his bold and candid engagement with the past in his art. I examine fictional film as a structure of haunting and a site of memory production.

[44] Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations,* 61.

Chapter Two: Hauntings and Methods of Uncertainty in Azcona's Films

In this chapter, I explore the haunting of my grandfather. Or more precisely, the *hauntings*; Azcona's films are haunted in multiple ways and he uses multiple techniques to express this haunting. First, I consider how the censorship, mythology, and culture of forgetting institutionalized by the state shape and haunt Azcona's films. This haunting is represented by the way Azcona plays with time and uses humor. I then consider Azcona's films as haunted by his personal trauma-informed constructs of memory and the past. I hear this haunting in Azcona's use of fiction, specifically the way he abstracts autobiographical elements and practices "willed creation."[45] Film was not not only a site for him to recuperate national memory, but it was a vessel for him to represent and process autobiographical memory. Azcona remembers and creates *despite* silencing forces and *because* of silencing forces. In his response to haunting, he haunts. The paradoxical nature of this may be confusing to the reader. I urge the reader to become intimate with this confusion and view it as helpful. Azcona's films excavate a past that has been disavowed by a matrix of silencing forces, including Francoist violence and mythology. The "over-and-done with comes alive" through his art. This past emerges, however, as fragments, uncertain histories, an assemblage of the unconscious, and a narrative that refuses linear chronology and continuity.[46] This creation of narrative marked by confusion—confusion as a mobilizing force and a product—is the texture of haunting.

I argue that the abstraction of life through fiction provided a protective distance from Azcona's traumatic past, creating space he otherwise didn't have within a culture of enforced forgetting to resolve past violence through storytelling. Vietnamese filmmaker and theorist Trinh

[45] Morrison, "Memory, Creation, and Writing," 386.
[46] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters,* xvi.

T. Min speaks to the false binary between fiction and documentation: "when one operates under the assumption that fiction is at the heart of documentation, there is room in which to acknowledge the spectrality of data."[47] She posits that what we take for granted as factual is ridden with fictional elements and secrets-turned-phantoms. With this binary collapsed, it is also possible to consider the ways documentation is at the heart of fiction. The illustrator Antonio Mingote, a cartoonist and good friend of Azcona*,* speaks to the documentation of autobiographical nonfiction in film: all of the characters are alter egos of Rafael. The dead, the child, the old woman; all are Rafael.[48] Mingote claims that the official poster he designed for *Los muertos no se tocan, nene* also functions as an alter ego: the poster is an extension of Rafael, of his absurd and sardonic humor, but also subtle and full of intention.[49]

Before delving into the expressions and techniques of haunting in Azcona's films, I briefly contextualize the role of film in Spanish culture post-Civil War. Then, I structure my analysis of the modes and expressions of haunting in Azcona's films with three sections. I examine humor as a structure of haunting, investigate how Azcona used film to warp time, and consider how Azcona used fiction as a site to return to his past and respond to haunting.

In the specific context of Spanish cinema, censorship, national mythology, film gains distinct power as a haunting mechanism. The film world and accompanying social sphere that Azcona operated in during Franco's dictatorship was primed for countering dominant memory and rewriting stories. Film was certainly subject to censorship, but it was well positioned to tell new narratives that subverted censorship due to two reasons: film tradition in Spain was not yet established and its audiovisual form lent itself to abstraction. References to the dictatorship and

[47] Ibid., 42.
[48] "Los muertos no se tocan, nene," LaHiguera.net, accessed April 18, 2023, https://www.lahiguera.net/cinemania/pelicula/4068/comentario.php.
[49] Ibid.

the Spanish civil war were systematically and rigorously removed by censors. Sexually explicit material and anything that challenged the state's strict Catholic values was also cut and silenced during Franco-era censorship. Yet as the censor repressed, it paradoxically fueled creation. Azcona speaks to this in an interview, stating that censorship stimulated creativity and sharpened his wit and hunger to tell stories.[50] Amidst censorship, film opened possibilities for constructing new modes of seeing.

In many ways, film was the heart of intellectualism, creation, and critique in postwar Spain. This was especially true during the 1950s, a period when Franco became more popular with Americans and the country experienced slight opening and modernization.[51] Spain is a very cinephilic nation, yet many Spaniards held the belief that their films were inferior and insignificant. With no big names and little precedent, the Spanish film landscape was a void. While most other facets of society were saturated with storytelling rules, film rules had yet to be established. Filmmakers like Luis García Berlanga and Marco Ferreri, frequent collaborators of Azcona, were determined to play a role in this definition and create in this new empty space. But they shouldered a big burden; as they worked to produce counter-memory and say something original that people would listen to, they were also trying to pass censors and successfully play the game of the state.

Humor, Allegory, and Carnal Pleasure

Azcona used humor, irony, and symbols rather than scathing direct commentary to challenge sedimentary stories, which meant his stories were often affective, decontextualized,

[50] Aragón TV, "El Reservado. Rafael Azcona (12/02/2007)," YouTube video, 29:34, posted by Aragón TV, July 2, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMVw-il29P4.
[51] Woods Peiró, Personal interview.

and interspersed with gaps—elements present in haunting. Avery Gordon, an author of sociological theory and imagination, writes that haunting "is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely."[52] Indirectness to avoid the regime's censor was a precondition of creation. As scholar David Archibald writes in the chapter "No Laughing Matter? Comedy and the Spanish Civil War in Cinema," the world of cinema was subject to strict censorship and therefore utilized humor to critique life under the dictatorship.[53] He points out that the "subversive nature of humor…is [also] evident in a strand of satirical cartoons." He turns to the Oxford Dictionary definition of comedy as "chiefly representing everyday life" to argue that in its representation of the everyday with satire and amusement, comedy created a distance from drama and the mainstream which facilitated subversive thoughts.[54] He quotes Eagleton's point that "comic estrangement allows the audience to 'think above the action' [...] thought is freer than pity or fear" and Benjamin's point that "spasms of the diaphragm generally offer better chances of thought than spasms of the soul."[55] By giving importance to the lightness of everyday and playing with traditional order, comedy allowed audiences to more freely explore conflict outside of the dominant narrative.

Belle époque, a 1992 film written by Azcona, is haunting in the way the harsh political environment surfaces in traces after being filtered through comedy. The film is set at a utopian family villa. Azcona constructs home as a safe haven, a refuge from national violence, the Catholic Church, and patriarchal restrictions. A young man, Fernando, wows the house with his culinary skills and actively pursues marriage while a trio of young women "pursue only the

[52] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.
[53] Archibald, "No Laughing Matter," 116-119.
[54] Ibid., 116.
[55] Ibid.

transient joys of carnal pleasure" and explore the "potential fluidity of gender identities" and sexualities.[56]

Figure 3. From the film *Belle époque,* 1992.[57]

Archibald points to arguments that the film's comedic and romantic representation of Spain in the 1930s "conjures away the real conflicts of Spanish history" and is marked by "aesthetic amnesia."[58] The main characters aren't interested in the significant political events surrounding them, even viewing them as unimportant. Others point out that the film is set specifically in 1931, "a moment of historical potential" before the civil war itself, where the country was on the precipice of abdicating the monarchy and establishing the Second Republic.[59] Therefore, it can be considered historical accuracy rather than erasure for the film's tone to be hopeful and light.

The treatment of the character Violeta's lesbianism is evidence of the film uplifting rather than obscuring history. Archibald uplifts the connection that "the so-called new liberated

[56] Ibid.,119.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Archibald, "No laughing matter," 119.
[59] Ibid.

mentality of Socialist Spain is shown to have historic roots in the pre-Civil War era."[60] Violeta's lesbianism is not traumatizing but a source of pleasure. By presenting it as "socially acceptable both within the family structure and within the world of the film," Azcona draws links between the past and the "more liberated sexual politics of post-Franco Spain" in the present.[61]

Figure 4. Violeta at a carnival, dressed as a male soldier, seducing Fernando, dressed as a maid. From the film *Belle époque*, 1992.[62]

In this analysis of the film's haunting quality, it is important to note that the Pact of Forgetting was active during the film's moment of production in 1992. *De jure* censorship by the dictatorship was no longer an obstacle but a national culture of enforced forgetting persisted. The film's lighthearted comedic tone generated "spasms of the diaphragm" and free thought but by evading explicit traumatic events, the film was perhaps able to depoliticize itself and gain more acceptance. There is an ambiguity in the level of veracity the film is trying to achieve as it melds utopian ideals with realistic elements, evoking Bhatkin's carnivalesque.[63] This uncertainty over

[60] Ibid., 119-120.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Fernando Trueba,, dir., *Belle époque* (Miramax Films, 1992).
[63] Ibid., 117.

whether the film is erasing a traumatic past and whether fictionalized fragments are capable of telling historical and political stories is elemental to haunting.

Azcona's Use of Film to Warp Time

Filmmakers and screenwriters like Azcona played with time, mimicked the past, and transported viewers across temporalities in a way that expressed haunting and made remnants of the past visible in the present. I draw from Gordon's understanding of the way haunting "alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future."[64] Gordon's work helps me read time warping in Azcona's films and the implications it has as a mode of return to the past.

An example of this simulation of the past is *Los muertos no se tocan, nene* a film released in 2011 based on Azcona's 1956 book of the same name.[65] Work on the film version of *Los muertos no se tocan, nene* began in 1958 but was impeded by censorship until filmmakers took over the project decades later. The black comedy focuses on the social routines that surround death through the story of Fabianito, a fourteen-year-old boy living in 1959 Logroño where the wake of his great-grandfather, a local hero, is taking place. The film is in black and white and looks like it was recorded directly in the 50s. Not only is a different time being replicated, but the filmmakers work to create the illusion that the film was recorded in a different time. This illusion is sustained by the film's poster which was created by Mingote, the Spanish cartoonist who worked at La Codorniz at a similar time to Azcona. Sanchez emphasizes this illusion when he states that "hacer epoca"—to reproduce a different era—is the miracle of film. Despite its initial

[64] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.
[65] José Luis Garcia Sanchez, dir., *Los muertos no se tocan, nene* (2011).

prohibition by censors, *Los muertos no se tocan, nene* reinserts itself into the particular moment in history it originated in through visual stylization choice.

In film, cultural producers like Azcona integrated the country's traumatic past into present collective memory; an expression of haunting. The film *La lengua de las mariposas*, written by Rafael Azcona, illustrates this. I will analyze this example with the help of "La representación de la represión franquista en La lengua de las mariposas" by Gregory Kaplan, an American historian of Spanish studies.[66] In L*a lengua de las mariposas,* writer Azcona and director José Luis Cuerda eschew national norms of forgetting and use a microcosmic story to weave the regime's repression of republican history into collective memory.

The film is narrated by its protagonist, Moncho, who as an adult recalls his first year at a Galician school during the Second Republic. Moncho, who is about five at the time of the memory, starts off terrified of school but grows a deep affection for his teacher, Don Gregorio, a rumored republican and atheist. Don Gregorio makes learning an experience of joy, free-thinking, and discovery. He awakens Moncho's intellectual curiosity, which is particularly well received by Moncho's father who, like Don Gregorio, is a republican. Kaplan proposes that this is representative of the educational program promoted by the Second Republic.

[66] Gregory Kaplan, "La representación de la represión franquista en La lengua de las mariposas." Área Abierta, n.º 27, 2010, p. 1, https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/ARAB/article/view/ARAB1010330001A

Figure 5. Don Gregorio teaching Moncho. From the film *La lengua de las mariposas*, 1999.[67]

At the end of the film, Don Gregorio and other villagers are captured by Nationalist troops during the early stages of the Spanish Civil War. As the group of Republic-supporting prisoners is carted out in trucks, the rest of the village, including Moncho's parents, shout cruel insults. Moncho is forced by his mother to follow suit. The film ends with Moncho closing his eyes, a symbolic act that suggests the interruption of growth and a refusal to see the world as it truly is, mirroring the halt in national progress and construction of Francoist myths.

At its heart, Kaplan writes, the film is about a journey toward freedom of thought and, by extension, toward a free life.[68] Azcona's script makes the case for the positive transformative power of Republican education and the worlds that open up by confronting fears. He tells a story about everyday people that goes against the dominant narrative to show how personal transformation and authentic development are repressed as a result of Francoist politics. He accentuated the consequences of violence rather than attempting to sanitize their impact.

[67] José Luis Cuerda, dir., *La lengua de las mariposas* (Sociedad General de Televisión, 1999).
[68] Kaplan, "La representación de la represión franquista," 4.

La prima Angélica is another film written by Azcona that warps time and represents haunting. The 1974 film directed by Carlos Saura follows a middle-aged man living in Barcelona, Luis, who returns to his family's village to bury his mother's remains.[69] Returning to his village means going back to the site of his childhood; a traumatic period marked by the Spanish Civil War and separation from his republican parents who were forced into hiding. Like Azcona who practically never physically returned to his family village, adult Luis still associates the village with feelings of trauma and abandonment; memories from the past are baked into the present via the landscape. The permanence of place throughout time, especially as something that can carry over the past reflecting the way landscapes can hold memories across temporalities. That landscapes hold memory is emphasized in a flashback to young Luis and his cousin Angélica carving their names into a wooden cross in the middle of a field.[70] When Luis revisits his family village, the present reality of returning is woven together and overlapped with flashbacks.

Azcona and Saura construct a narrative where past and present float into each other, one temporality no less tangible or real or primary than the other. Imagination infuses memory. Unprocessed childhood trauma forms the present. Luis relives his past, yet he relives it as his older self, creating an uncanny moment of not-quite-repetition, of simultaneous familiarity and esotericism. To use the language of hauntology, the present is so saturated with ghosts from the past that it is hard to delineate the two temporalities.

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[69] *La prima Angélica.* Directed by Carlos Saura. 1974.
[70] Patricia M. Keller, "Reading the Ghost: Toward a Theory of Haunting in Contemporary Spanish Culture." Order No. 3328862, University of Michigan, 2008. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/reading-ghost-toward-theory-haunting-contemporary/docview/304572171/se-2, 165.

Figure 6. Adult Luis riding a bicycle with young Angélica. From the film *La prima Angélica,* 1974.[71]

Yet they are nonetheless bound to the past. Azcona speaks to the influence of childhood in an interview, stating that the only homeland is childhood. It is there you acquire language and acquire your tastes.[72] Visual and sonic memories stemming from Azcona's childhood in Logroño—the place where he developed his form of seeing and listening—leak out in his creative work. *Los muertos no se tocan, nene* is both narratively set and filmed in Logroño. Azcona's good friend Bernardo Sánchez takes this parallelism a step further, asserting that the main character Fabianito is, in some way, a self-portrait of the screenwriter himself.[73] While Azcona rarely returned to his birthplace physically, he uncannily returned again and again through fictional film, revisiting the past through his imagined characters.

[71] Carlos Saura, dir., *La prima Angélica* (1974).
[72] Aragón TV, "El Reservado."
[73] Sanchez, "Los muertos no se tocan, nene."

Figure 7. El Puente de Piedra, Logroño. From the film *Los muertos no se tocan, nene*, 2011.[74]

Figure 8. A photograph of El Puente de Piedra that I took while visiting family for the first time in Logroño, 2022.

Fiction as a Site of Return and Response

Azcona's films were not just expressions of haunting, but responses to haunting. Azcona's storytelling was shaped by a matrix of silences, which included personal shame and trauma as well as institutionalized enforced forgetting. These silences meant that Azcona was attempting to tell personal and national stories about something that couldn't fully be known."[75] This challenge of partial knowing is something various memory theorists have commented on.

[74] José Luis Garcia Sanchez, dir., *Los muertos no se tocan, nene* (2011).
[75] Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*, 12.

Cho calls stories that have been both very present and often hidden "ghosts." She writes that ghosts don't lend themselves to easy narrative but a key to studying them is "focusing on personal memories and the dream work—on the unconscious aspects of looking."[76] In its telling of history, Western society typically doesn't value abstraction or the integration of the personal and internal that Cho argues is the key to remembering "that which has been violently repressed or made to disappear."[77]

Cho turns to the writing of English professors David Eng and David Kazanjian in her expansion on communicating loss and partial knowing. She quotes, "what is lost is only known by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained."[78] She suggests that the production and sustaining of remains—which can be achieved through storytelling—is the only way that something lost can be known. She builds on this claim using American philosopher and scholar of Gender Studies Judith Butler's words. Quoted by Cho, Butler writes "somewhere, sometime, something was lost, but no story can be told about it; no memory can retrieve it."[79] Here, she insinuates that if a story could be told, then the thing lost could be retrieved. Cho argues that telling a story about something that cannot fully be known is less about "the explicit content of narrative than the traces of trauma left on it."[80] She explores whether "alternative methods of experimental writing" such as fiction might bring us closer to an affective understanding…that cannot be conveyed through traditional narratives."[81] The experimental writing of fictional film might have been a site for Azcona to represent and process traumatic autobiographical memory.

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[76] Ibid., 42.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 5.
[79] Ibid., 1.
[80] Ibid.,18.
[81] Ibid.

Autobiographical elements stretch across Azcona's work. The Spanish bullfighter is one such theme. Azcona's father, my great grandfather, was a bullfighter and this fact from decades past seeps into various fictional films. A bullfighting scene appears in *La vaquilla* and the dinner scene in *La grande bouffe* is marked by the drama, showmanship, and "oles" characteristic of a *torero*.[82] The documentary *Imprescindibles* draws a direct link between fact and fiction by stating you can't explain the end result of the tailor space *La lengua de la mariposa* without the indelible personal memory of Azcona's father Dionisio in the tailor workshop in Logroño.[83] The family tailor workshop shows up once again in another of Azcona's films, *El verdugo*.

Figure 9. Bullfighting scene. From the film *La vaquilla*, 1985.[84]

Figure 10. Photograph of Azcona in a bullfighting ring.[85]

[82] Olmeda, "Imprescindibles: Rafael Azcona."
[83] Olmeda, "Imprescindibles: Rafael Azcona."
[84] Luis García Berlanga, dir., *la Vaquilla* (1985).
[85] "Imágenes De Rafael Azcona," Biblioteca Virtual Miguel De Cervantes, Cervantes Virtual, https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/rafael_azcona/imagenes_azcona/.

While Azcona was not the original author of the story, there are notable parallels in *La lengua de la mariposa* that make the film a recuperation not only of public memory, but also of Azcona's personal memory. Like the film's protagonist Moncho, Azcona grew up in a small, tight-knit, town in the provinces of Spain. Both boys had tailors for fathers and homes connected to the tailor workshop. Moncho and Yayo occupy the same temporal and political positioning. The two boys experienced the Second Republic and an educational system that promoted freedom of thought. They both lived through the Spanish Civil War, and it can be assumed that both boys abruptly transitioned to a church-controlled school. The pair similarly recall seeing Republicans being carried out of town by nationalist soldiers. Azcona remembers people singing while being taken on wagons to their death and while he avoided this topic in family conversations, this imagery of neighbors being carted away appears on film.

Additionally, there are striking similarities between Luis, the protagonist of *La prima Angélica*, and Azcona. As I explained in an earlier section, Luis revisits the village of his childhood; the place where he experienced the Spanish Civil War and the separation from his republican parents who went into hiding to escape the violence of nationalists. Like Luis, Azcona's dad was a politically active republican, and as a boy Azcona feared he would come back to the news that his father had been taken away or executed. Both Luis and Azcona have strong traumatic associations with place that lead them to live their respective lives elsewhere.

Fiction writing was a space where Azcona could be mobilized by haunting. While a matrix of silencing forces made it difficult for him to talk about childhood memories to family members, film was a vessel to tell these previously unspoken stories in a way that people would listen. American novelist Toni Morrison pays special attention to fiction as a response to haunting. The link she makes between personal narrative and fictional narrative is evident when

she calls memory a "form of willed creation."[86] Her description of writing *Song of Solomon* exemplifies this. She states that writing the book was about her "memories and the need to invent" after her father's death left a void in her life.[87] She created a non-biographical world set in her father's time period through writing with the quest of "trying to figure out what he may have known."[88] In the void that her father's death left—a void that haunts—Morrison builds a world in which she can mine memories (her own, her father's, the public's) to discover and create links between her and her father.

For Morrison, memories within and recollections need to be combined with the act of imagination in order to gain "total access to the unwritten interior life" of people, which is the goal that drives her work. In the imaginative act of creating fiction, she relies on "remains [that] were left behind" to reconstruct worlds that might have been.[89] Morrison is responding to haunting, to a past interspersed with gaps, when she uses remnants and excavates traces to "yield up a kind of a truth."[90] In this discussion of truth, it is important to note that Morrison is not interested in making a distinction between fact and fiction, but between fact and truth.[91]

In her writing practice and theoretical considerations, Morrison explores how both remembering and forgetting are part of storytelling and recovering lost memory. While Azcona comes from a different place being a white man from Spain, it is valuable to integrate Morrison's theoretical interventions as a fiction author who similarly engages with remembering and forgetting through creation as a response to haunting and traumatic memories.

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[86] Morrison,"The Site of Memory," 83-102.
[87] Ibid., 102.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 92.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 93.

Morrison's work has roots in her lived experience as a Black woman writer and in a literary heritage of autobiographical slave narratives.[92] Many slave narrative authors interrupted and cut short their stories with a phrase such as "but let us drop a veil over these proceedings too terrible to relate."[93] Keeping this veil correctly positioned meant silence, "forgetting," and calculative choices regarding rendering, recording, and documentation. This veil helped formerly enslaved black writers to remain palatable to white audiences. Self-censorship aided them in their goals of documenting historical life and persuading white readers of their humanity, while at the same time allowing them to communicate to black readers in particular ways.

Morrison, who is writing more than a hundred years after Emancipation, has temporal distance from enslavement. She identifies her job as something different; to discover "how to rip that veil drawn over 'proceedings too terrible to relate.'"[94] Moving this veil requires trusting her own recollections and depending on the recollections of others, which makes memory central to how she writes and determines significance. While Azcona lifted the veil over terrible proceedings through his fictional work, the veil remained dropped in his personal life, hiding his past from his family. Thinking with Morrison, I hypothesize that this duality of remembering and forgetting enabled Azcona to respond to haunting; to be mobilized by it, rather than be totally paralyzed.

Using Morrison to read Azcona, Azcona's screenwriting can be seen as a response to haunting in the way its form reflects the incongruent, cyclical, nonlinear presence of repressed memory. Instead of documentary, nonfiction, or autobiography, Azcona tells stories categorized as fictional. Fiction allows him to create a splintered narrative that is authentic to traumatic

[92] Morrison, "The Site of Memory," 85.
[93] Ibid., 90-91.
[94] Ibid., 91.

memories he confronts. In the essay "Memory, Creation, and Writing," Morrison writes "As I began developing parts out of pieces, I found that I preferred them unconnected-to be related but not to touch, to circle, not line up because the story of this prayer was the story of shattered, fractured perception resulting from a shattered, splintered life."[95] Rather than pursue a straightforward linear factual story, Morrison and Azcona create narratives that honor the fragmentation and incongruence of memory. By holding pieces adjacently and moving them around experimentally rather than attempting to seamlessly attach them, they create a site where new stories can be told and new relationships to old memories can be developed. More important than the factual accuracy of the reconstructed scene is the process of reconstructing the scene and having the opportunity to redefine and reimagine a traumatic memory. Narrative—screenwriting specifically for Azcona—is a way to organize and house this reconstruction. In the next chapter, I explore how my family and I mirror this process in our own lives, continuing this legacy of creation in response to haunting.

[95] Morrison, "Memory, Creation, and Writing," 388.

Chapter Three: Third Generation and Diasporic Responses to Haunting

My desire to know my grandfather initiated the focus of this project. I wanted to carve out the time and space to watch my grandfather's films and engage in conversation with people who knew him and his work intimately. Before this project, I had barely scratched the surface of the vast amount of work he produced and wanted to seize the opportunity to change that. I hoped and thought that through his creative work, I could come to know him better. I thought if only I could watch the right film clip or conduct an interview that unlocked the right memory, I would sift through the truth and fiction to gain access to my grandfather's internal world. I now recognize this as impossible and have become less interested in the idea of a factual and singular truth.

Replacing this is an interest in how one's sense of self is connected to storytelling and connection to the past. In the hybrid text *Accomplice to Memory*, Q.M. Zhang opens the prologue with a detailed, engaging narrative about her father leaving China. At the end of the prose, she reveals that for her father it's not the details, but is the "destination that matters," so "I have to embellish the story for myself…I need to dress up the man in order to see him more clearly."[96] That is to say, Zhang's opening narrative was embellished, not factual. This speculation in order to see an unknown familial figure (a father) more clearly is reminiscent of Morrison's memory work in *Song of Solomon.* The authors build respective worlds that blend biographical and non-biographical elements in order to forge an intimate emotional link that can no longer be cultivated in person, with the specific goal of knowing their fathers. Zhang uses the term "memory work" to describe "the turning to creative forms of writing and image making, the researching and writing into the silences within diasporic family histories."[97] Zhang and

[96] Q. M. Zhang, *Accomplice to memory*. Kaya Press, 2017. 3-4.
[97] Q.M. Zhang, "About Q.M. Zhang," Q.M. ZHANG | MEMORYWORKS , Accessed April 18, 2023, https://www.qmzhang.com/about-qm-zhang

Morrison's creative writing can be categorized as memory work, as can Azcona's creative writing.

In this chapter, I explore this project as memory work in response to haunting, in the way it weaves together different sources to build narrative in a state and familial landscape of silences and phantoms. I am still interested in "fleshing out ghosts" by becoming intimate with what produced them, understanding how "fictional elements" are spun into "factual sociological knowledge," and analyzing my grandfather's films as memory work.[98] Yet it is another question that now guides me: what do I need to make with traces of the past?

Thus far, I've researched and wrote into the silences within my diasporic family history by focusing on the state and cultural production levels. Notably, I've spent less time at the family level. This level is critical, as I've stated in my discussion on the matrix of silencing forces that contribute to haunting. I am resistant, however, to using this academic form to explicate the specific causes of family silence and dissonance around my grandfather. I do fear that by only brushing up against this trauma and not naming it, I am continuing a cycle of secrecy and shame and generating new ghosts.

Yet, I don't think specifically naming the trauma that informed my mother's decision to not lead a Spanish life is necessary. What is important to know is that neither my mother nor her brother live in Spain. She has raised her family in the United States, he has raised his family in France. My mother didn't raise me and my sister speaking Spanish nor watching our grandfather's films. My mother doesn't have a Spanish community in New York and doesn't visit Spain often. The story I'm trying to tell is one of diasporic haunting. This haunting is the

[98] Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora*, 42.

implication of my mother's decisions; decisions which can be viewed as responses to her own haunting.

I want to shift the focus to my personal experience of haunting as a diasporic third generation grandchild of the Spanish Civil War. I reflect on the stakes of this project and conclude that my sense of self is inextricably linked to my ability to integrate the past with my present. As a haunted subject, I argue that the site of this integration is creation and imagination. I explore this idea further through the theory of postmemory which asserts that powerful memories are transmitted across generations through creative production rather than recall. I look at the mobilization sparked by haunting, especially among the third generation in Spain—a group I argue is uniquely positioned to be mobilized, as evidenced by recent movements to recuperate Spanish memory and reckon with the past. I engage with the diasporic experience of haunting and producing post memory work as a response to this haunting. I take a closer look at the language loss often experienced by diasporas and argue that translation is both something that haunts and creates space for responses to haunting. Finally, I argue that forms and disciplines which can contain hybridity and contradiction are most suited for memory work projects. I consider the form of this thesis alongside the dissonance at the heart of it.

The Stakes Are the Self

The stakes of this memory work are my sense of self. The haunting I experience makes links between my past and present tenuous, which contributes to an uncertain sense of self. In her book *Relational Remembering: Rethinking the Memory Wars*, author and memory theorist Sue Campbell proposes that having a sense of self requires at least "opportunities to understand

yourself in relation to your past" and "some of your experiences becoming your memories."[99] Without the ability to remember the past, it is difficult to form a sense of self, especially in Western Culture where "our understanding of memory links it to the concept of moral personhood" and an inability to remember undermines someone's claim to full membership of a "moral community."[100] Campbell's theorizing sheds light on the desires that motivate my memory work. There are ruptures between me and my past—specifically, between me and my grandfather, and perhaps to a lesser extent, between me and my mother. These ruptures caused by enforced forgetting prevent me from integrating the past into my sense of self and contextualizing my present.

In her book *Tales of a Haunted South,* American historian and hauntologist Tiya Miles describes how the past can be used as a resource for identification and creation in the present. She cites the Rosenzweig and Thelen study that reveals how history "shapes our individual identities as persons in time, as well as our collective identities as members of cultural communities and citizens of nations."[101] Given this link between the past and the present, Miles asserts that knowing history "gives us the collective ability to put our present into context, to imagine and plan for our future, and to make sense of our lives."[102] These words speak to my desire to make sense of my life, to contextualize, and to imagine futures

American historian and activist Rebecca Hall joins Campbell and Miles to argue that links between the past and present are critical in the development of a sense of self. She explores this at length in *Wake*, a part graphic novel, part memoir story that chronicles Hall's journey to

[99] Sue Campbell, *Relational Remembering: Rethinking the Memory Wars,* Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, 29.
[100] Ibid., 17.
[101] Tiya Miles, "Tales From the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era," UNC Press, 2005, 13.
[102] Ibid.

uncover the truth about women-led slave revolts that have been erased from history. Hall uses the language of haunting to describe living in the wake of slavery and being traumatized by its afterlife. She writes that "we reach the final stage of healing from trauma when we integrate the past into who we are" and argues that "the past is not a ghost we want to banish or exorcize…it is something we want to internalize."[103] Hall views this retrieval of the past as a source of power, not oppression, especially as a Black person in an American society that works to violently erase the history of slavery and Black resistance.

Haunting traumatizes but it also offers a site to imagine alternative temporalities, to reach into the past to 'reimagine a future otherwise.'"[104] Hall practices this very act in *Wake*. Hall utilizes measured historical imagination ("what absolutely could have happened"), historical archives, and the power of her ancestors to integrate the silenced past into the present. The graphic novel form she elects gives her the capacity to make the shape of absence visible and represent alternative temporalities. She explains that the "back and forth relationship [between texts and images] allowed me to put the past right up against the present."[105] Additionally, the graphic novel structure of panels with gutters (the blank space between panels) allows her to create from archival fragments—the splintered pieces remaining in the historical record that tell ruptured stories about enslaved women. In visually joining text with image, Hall can do the speculative work often required to see what isn't there; to expand, excavate, and imagine ancestral stories, restoring them to the historical record in a way that honors the impact of narrative gaps.

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[103] Rebecca Hall, *Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021, 195.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

Creation and Mobilization

Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory postulates how memory is transmitted intergenerationally and emphasizes the relationship between creation, the visual, and memory. In "Generation of Postmemory," the Memory Studies scholar conceptualizes postmemory as a structure of intergenerational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience embedded in multiple forms of mediation; a transmission so deep that it seems to constitute memories in their own right.[106] Hirsch writes that postmemory "approximates memory in its affective force" and is communicated in "flashes of imagery" and "broken refrains."[107] She also states that "postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation."[108] Rather than recall memories of my grandfather, I choose to mediate memory through creation.

Third generation members are simultaneously proximate and distant to the past which situates them as haunted and primed for mobilization. Hirsch articulates how the experience of traumatic memory is radically different for family members less proximate to the survivor generation. The third generation shares a legacy of trauma, but it is a trauma often diffused by temporal distance and informational gaps. Hirsch proposes that this can spark "the curiosity, the urgency, the frustrated *need* to know about a traumatic past."[109] This rings true in my personal experience, considering my interest in memory recuperation as the third generation juxtaposed with my second-generation mother's tendency to create distance between past and present. Paloma Aguilar and Clara Ramírez-Barat speak to this generational difference in their article

[106] Marinne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory." Poetics Today 1 March 2008; 29 (1): 106, doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019, 103.
[107] Ibid.,109.
[108] Ibid., 107.
[109] Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 35.

"Generational Dynamics in Spain: Memory Transmission of a Turbulent Past."[110] They argue that in Spain, the third and fourth generations are embodying bottom-up driven memory recovery processes. That is to say, the younger generation (particularly those from republican families) is expressing that the transition to democracy did not provide victims of the dictatorship with truth and justice.

Spain's haunting past has become a mobilizing force among younger generations for a more just memory. In the article "Presenting Unwieldy Pasts" by Katherine Hite and Daniel Jara, the Memory Studies scholars who identify haunting as a potential path towards intergenerational solidarity and structural reforms. They borrow Avery Gordon's understanding of haunting as an indication of existence and resistance of denial to conceptualize the past as "fissures in the present…that may tear open a new form of imagining emancipative possibilities."[111] The emancipative possibilities are especially noticeable within a political landscape like Spain. By this, I mean an initial traumatic event (the Spanish Civil War) followed by a long period of authoritarianism with persisting violence (Francoist Spain) followed by a democratic context of more open transmission (the protraction of the dictatorship after Franco's death). The distance between the worst period of human rights violations and democracy—a distance filled with enforced forgetting and no reckoning moment—makes it so the victimized generation is less likely to vocally confront the past head on, leaving it up to more distanced generations to undertake a reckoning process.

This phenomenon—a delayed activism undertaken by the younger generation following a brutal dictatorship—is occurring in Chile, a country which shares Spain's political and temporal

[110] Paloma Aguilar and Clara Ramírez-Barat, (2019). Generational dynamics in Spain: Memory transmission of a turbulent past. Memory Studies, 12(2), 213–229.
[111] Katherine Hite and Daniela Jara, "Presenting Unwieldy Pasts." Memory Studies 13 (2020): 245-252. doi:10.1177/1750698020914010, 250.

context. Chile's National Stadium—a detention center of the military dictatorship converted into a site of commemorative performances, events, and protests—is a collective memory project that has attracted younger generations of Chileans. In their article, "Memorializing in Movement: Chilean Sites of Memory As Spaces of Activism and Imagination," Hite and Badilla write that "for some, participation has been a means to gain knowledge about their own family members, a kind of postmemory experience" and a way to open up "a once silent familial space in relation to the past."[112]

Family members closer to the direct experience of violence under dictatorship typically are silent about their traumatic past, leaving their less-directly impacted children searching to contextualize themselves amidst this silence. An example of this searching triggered by ghostly presences is a group of young activists who put together a film series hosted at the stadium. One young woman who attended a documentary showing at the stadium expressed that she went "because her father had been a prisoner in the stadium but had never talked about it."[113] She exemplifies Ramírez-Barat and Aguilar's argument that repression of the past "can eventually become an invitation to find out more about what happened."[114] In this environment of haunting, younger generations become the ones to "decide how to tackle the violations suffered by their forebears" and the ones to create amidst silences.[115] It is this haunting that shapes subsequent generations who become the ones to reconstruct an unspoken past.

The mobilization that takes place among the younger generation as a response to a specific haunting is evidenced by recent Spanish movements against enforced forgetting. In

[112] Katherine Hite and Manuela Badilla Rajevic, 2019. "Memorializing in Movement: Chilean Sites of Memory As Spaces of Activism and Imagination". *A Contracorriente: Una Revista De Estudios Latinoamericanos* 16 (3):1-16. https://acontracorriente.chass.ncsu.edu/index.php/acontracorriente/article/view/1896., 15.
[113] Ibid., 16.
[114] Aguilar and Ramíerz-Barat, "Generational dynamics in Spain," 218.
[115] Ibid.

2007, Spain passed its Historical Memory Law which condemned the crimes of the Franco era and recognized its victims for the first time.[116] This law follows the Amnesty Law of 1977 which offered no accountability or reckoning for the dictatorship's crimes but was viewed as essential to maintain political stability during Spain's transition to democracy. While Azcona died three months after the Historical Memory Law passed and was never able to experience the implementation of this change after a lifetime of institutionally enforced forgetting, a generational shift among the descendants of Spanish Civil War survivors has led to the recent emergence of memory issues.[117]

Aguilar and Ramírez-Barat explain that in 2000, a wave of exhumations in the public arena began and a number of memory associations were created, with their demands ultimately leading to the ratification of the Historical Memory Law.[118] Often leading this public reckoning were "the grandchildren of the Civil War, who…grew up under a stable democracy, are devoid of the feelings of guilt or fear of their predecessors, and are much more comfortable with the international human rights law framework."[119] A significant portion of this generation is "convinced that challenging the institutional arrangements of the transition will not destabilize the political situation and that the time has come to provide public recognition to the victims of Francoism."[120] This generation has ties with their grandparents and a temporal and relational intimacy with the past; they feel it in their everyday life.

But there is also certainly a distance to the past, even compared with their parents. This distance offers protection, new vocabulary, wider perspective, and diffused rather than direct

[116] Casey, "Taken Under Fascism."
[117] Aguilar and Ramíerz-Barat, "Generational dynamics in Spain," 216.
[118] Ibid., 215.
[119] Ibid., 216.
[120] Ibid.

trauma. This distance also means the existence of silences, fragments, and gaps that the third generation knows were once filled with something but doesn't know with what. This simultaneous proximity and distance haunts and uniquely positions the third generation in Spain to respond and mobilize.

This phenomenon of simultaneous proximity and distance applies to diasporas, who I argue are also haunted and primed for mobilization. In *Haunting the Korean Diaspora,* Cho focuses on how "the naming of the Korean War as 'the Forgotten War' in the United States marks this event as a black hole in collective memory."[121] It specifically impacts second generation members of the Korean Diaspora "who grew up in the United States with neither their parents' storytelling nor a public discourse about the Korean War" and who, as a result, "felt affected by some inarticulate presence that had left its imprint on what seemed to be their normal everyday lives."[122] To use the language of hauntologists, the second generation was haunted by ghosts inside and outside the family unit.

While racial and cultural elements are significantly different, creating a differently textured haunting, the Spanish Civil War is also forgotten in the United States. The American involvement in the Korean War and the American neutrality during the Spanish Civil War were decisions that were controversial and arguably anti-democracy. The United States has kept this past under wraps in school curricula and has deemphasized it in historical storytelling. The first time I read an account of the violence during the Spanish Civil War, I was a senior in college. I argue that there are similar psychic implications for members of the Spanish and Korean diasporas in the United States, groups whose respective pasts have been systematically

[121] Cho, *Haunting of the Korean Diaspora,* 12
[122] Ibid., 11.

disavowed by hegemonic knowledge and familial shame.[123] More generally, I am reflecting on how being part of a diaspora lends itself to an experience of haunting.

"Diaspora" is a Greek word, a combination of the prefix *dia-* (meaning "through") and the verb *sperein* (meaning "to sow" or "to scatter").[124] This scattering—the quick separation of people thrown in different random directions—creates physical distance and language barriers within families that are breeding grounds for phantoms. This scattering leads to gaps and silences rather than a continuous family narrative. The diasporic act of turning back upon a homeland, loss, and memory and the diasporic desire to recuperate language and cultural practices, reconstruct links, and strengthen a sense of belonging and self strongly evokes haunting.

Translation as a Structure of Haunting

The language loss and translation often part of diasporic subjectivity is haunting, both in its fragmentation of the past and in its potential as a site for creation and reimagination. In her analysis of the diasporic inheritance of postmemory in fictional novels, Phung writes that "Language loss sets these diasporic characters adrift, leaving them searching for a sense of cultural rootedness" and spurring them to "find creative ways to piece together the loss with what translated fragments they can find."[125] This language-based disconnection to the homeland and relatives and culture gives way to a haunting in which a diasporic post generation senses residues of a past that is in many ways inaccessible, despite a strong desire to know that past.

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[123] Ibid., 12.
[124] Brent Hayes Edward, "17 Diaspora" In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies, Second Edition* edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, 76-78. New York, USA: New York University Press, 2014. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814708491.003.0022, 76.
[125] Malissa Phung, "The Diasporic Inheritance of 'Postmemory' and Immigrant Shame in the Novels of Larissa Lai," Postcolonial Text Vol 7 No 3 (2012), https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/viewFile/1322/1388, 3.

The movement inherent in diaspora shows up in the very etymology of the word translation. Trans- meaning across and -lation meaning to carry, translation means to carry across. Translation is a journey of displacement and movement. In this journey, some elements remain, and some elements get left behind. Fragments lead to the creation of something new, something reminiscent of the past but not its replication. While creation may not be typically associated with translation, it is typically associated with the word metaphor, meaning a symbol that is created to represent something else. Not coincidentally, metaphor shares the same etymology as translation. Meta- meaning across and -phor meaning to carry.

For the translator and poet Anne Carson, the act of carrying over in translation produces "the echo of the original."[126] This reverberation of the original work in the alien one can be interpreted as forgetting caused by rupture. In an essay on Carson's translations of Sappho, John Melillo argues that "the process of forgetting actually remembers us to the dismemberment that constitutes voice."[127] To translate is to haunt. While the forgetting involved in translation compromises what once was and can create a difficult experience of loss and searching, it is a forgetting that also binds present to past and conveys with integrity a ruptured past. It is a forgetting that allows space for creation in gaps.

In response to haunting, subjects forge links to the past through the act of translation, an attempt to reconstruct what once was. Yet translation is interpretive, creative, and agential, which makes this reconstruction attempt a postmemorial act of "imaginative investment, projection, and creation."[128] In her book *If Not, Winter*, Anne Carson speaks to translating as a creative and

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[126] John Mellilo, "Sappho and the 'Papyrological Event.'" In *Anne Carson: Ecstatic Lyre*, edited by Joshua Marie Wilkinson, 188–93. University of Michigan Press, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.7573555.33., 188.
[127] Ibid., 192.
[128] Hirsch, "A Generation of Postmemory," 107.

haunting process. She writes that the transparency of self is a translator fantasy and views gaps in translation as free space of imaginal adventure, as an important aesthetic element.[129] She is not interested in translations as an accurate record of what happened but as something that can record voicelessness. The act of translating fragments represents for Carson "the holes we have [and] the needs and desires we're trying to fill." It is an act of creation deeply connected to the self and a sense of belonging.

Similarly to haunting, translation operates under a nontraditional experience of time. Slowing down happens naturally when you're working in another language and so does a process of defamiliarization and revisiting; coming back to something that should be familiar but isn't, over and over again in an attempt to find meaning. Having to translate something can be an oppressive moment expressing disjunction and unbelonging and it can also be an opportunity to reconstruct and reimagine something on one's own terms. This searching inherent in translating evokes haunting, as does the act of translation and creating with fragments in order to draw connections across geographies and times.

Accessing New Knowledge Through Form and Dissonance

Q.M. Zhang, an educator and practitioner of memory work, posits that form itself gives us access to certain knowledge and opens new terrain.[130] Guided by graduation requirements, an academic thesis is the form I am using to figure out what it means to create from a place of haunting and experience new ways of knowing. Academia is embedded in a normativity that values output and a finished product that contributes to a larger conversation. Yet perhaps more

[129] Anne Carson, translator, *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.
[130] Q.M. Zhang, conversation with author, AMST 360: Memory Work, Vassar College, March 20, 2023.

important than the content of my thesis, is that I am getting things out, saying things out loud for myself, and creating links between image and word.

As I have been creating, I have been unsure about what story I'm trying to tell. I'm not sure how to structure my narrative or how to determine where the story begins, climaxes, and ends. I'm missing dates and plot points and who the characters are. I want to create with, not against, this frustration around constructing a linear narrative. This confusion and uncertainty is central to my experience and I want to convey this rather than reason it away.

Thinking about memory as shards of glass is a helpful metaphor for thinking about form and the completeness of fragmentation. Like memory, shards of glass are fragmented and broken. There are reasons why it broke. There are reasons why we're putting it back together. But we don't necessarily want to be picking it up—it can cut and draw blood. It is translucent, it reflects and refracts light. It can be smoothed over time. There are places where it can meet, but the edges are rough and not totally smooth. This metaphor suggests the inevitability and importance of messy jagged edges that no longer fit together because they have been changed by the breaking.

Initially, I thought that by essentially researching my grandfather through watching his films, I would get closer to understanding the multiplicity of his memories. I haven't successfully watched many more of his films, however, and instead, I've been swept up in the process of memory and how appearances become multiple. The location of my thesis in the field of American Studies has allowed me to preserve this multiplicity rather than rationalize it away, obscuring it. The American Studies scholar George Lipstiz writes that "many of the most generative frameworks and paradigms in American Studies have emanated from… cruel

contradictions and painful paradoxes."[131] It is this confronting this simultaneous existence, Lipsitz writes, that " has made American Studies into a never completed work of living sculpture."[132] Viewing this project as a living sculpture and considering dissonance as generative has allowed me to take haunting traces and fragments and make something with them, shaping my relationship to memory as one of creation rather than one of recollection. This shift allows me to preserve the uncertain character of the past with more integrity.

As part of this project, I've conducted interviews with my mother to gather research and have had more casual conversations where we share stories and process this project, specifically about my grandfather. In these interviews and conversations, I felt both interest and resistance coming from her. This resistance manifested as a refusal to have certain parts of our conversation recorded. She also denied secrecy and shame as something part of the memory of my grandfather. At the same time, she was also interested in drawing connections between memory work created by my grandfather and the work she does as a therapist; using narrative and storytelling to help clients integrate a traumatic past into their sense of self in a way that mobilizes rather than oppresses.

Interestingly, my mother and I share this desire to draw connections between our own work and my grandfather's work. Over the course of our conversation, she became more comfortable with exploring our family as haunted and identifying how her secrecy is part of the shame she grew up with. She did make the distinction, however, between keeping secrets and the desire to protect privacy. She claimed that keeping things private in one sphere and talking about

[131] Lipsitz, George. "What is American Studies?" ASA White Paper (April 2015): 1-3. https://www.theasa.net/sites/default/files/What_is_American_Studies.pdf, 2.
[132] Ibid.

them in another sphere isn't repression but is about feeling wrong to reveal something about someone else in a public setting.

My mother's strong reaction to private stories being made public brought to mind the ethics of storytelling as explored by Vietnamese-born Australian writer Nam Le in his short story "Love and honour and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice." In this story, Le interviews his father about his traumatic past and develops a manuscript recording his father's memories. When he shares the finished story manuscript with his father, his father burns it.[133] My mother's reaction also evoked Hirsch's question about the efficacy and ethics of storytelling: "how can we best carry their stories forward without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them?" I am still grappling with where one's story ends and another's begins, a challenging question when considering the transmission structure offered by postmemory theory and the impact of stories on people besides the holder of the direct memory.

[133] Nam Le, "Love and Honour and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice..." Prospect Magazine, Prospect Publishing, 27 Sept. 2008, https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/culture/books-and-literature/fiction/52556/love-and-honour-and-pity-and-pride-and-compassion-and-sacrifice...

Living With the Dead (A Conclusion For Now)

My grandmother shared with me that when Yayo was sick, she asked him, theoretically, how he would like his death to be handled. He told her, *Susi, ya lo sabes*. You already know what I want. So when Yayo died, she explained, she did what she thought he would have wanted. But she also did what *she* wanted. She had his body cremated and kept his ashes, giving a portion to each of her two children. "His body was in our home," she explained, and "my sister-in-law came to our home to say goodbye." This physical afterlife of Yayo, his quasi-corporeal presence in the home, and the autonomy and discretion Yaya had with his remains is quite a foreign story for many Spaniards. Specifically, for the families of Spain's unidentified bodies who were unable to say goodbye to their loved ones. Loved ones who still lie below ground, far from home and loved ones. By taking control over post-death rituals (families were prohibited from privately mourning), the state took control of narratives and shaped family memory, a strategic decision with lasting consequences.

Yet in my own family memory, control was maintained, and bodily remains—my grandfather's ashes—were able to be a source of closure, healing, and connection. Yayo made it known that he didn't want the state to be involved in what happened to him after his death. To affirm Catholicism's preference for in ground burial or entombment and conform to a state religion that had caused him so much strife in his lifetime was not in his plans. While the rejection of Catholicism and the state were guiding forces that led to cremation of my grandfather, I can't help but consider the impact of cremation on haunting.

Perhaps the decision in my family to cremate reflects an experience of being haunted by bones and dead bodies and an aversion to replicating that haunting. The physical human matter that remains in the Spanish landscape is a persistent painful reality. Despite efforts to exhume

bodies from The Valley of the Fallen, the "largest mass grave in Spain" as it has been described, tests have proven the exhumation of corpses to be structurally impossible. Ferrandiz writes that the corpses have ended up forming part of the structure of the building itself, having been used to fill the internal cavities of the crypts, and that because of humidity they have ended up forming an indissoluble collective corpse. [134] The mortal remains are so lasting that they have become permanently embedded in the Spanish landscape. The collective corpse Ferrandiz speaks of is literal, but it also poetically speaks to the collective Spanish experience of haunting.

The haunting remnants of the past that exist in the present is a theme that runs throughout my thesis. I mostly treat remnants metaphorically but now I treat remnants more literally. Specifically, I explore the haunting of bodily remains and the questions this haunting raises about death, legacy, and memory. My grandfather explored these themes in his films. La *prima Angélica* is centered around a son carrying out his mother's dying wish to be buried in the family crypt**.** *Los muertos no se tocan, nene* also addresses the corporality of death. The film's title translates to "You Can't Touch the Dead, kid" and right away references the corpse that remains when someone dies. They lived in the past yet remain in the present. They remain in a way that is certainly different but also eerily similar—this discord and temporal uncertainty is reminiscent of haunting. The sentiment of the film's title is strikingly evocative of former prime minister José Maria Aznar's warning to the country to "not disturb the graves and hurl bones at one another—let the historians do their job."[135] In this Spanish film, Azcona challenges national resistance to literally digging up the past by facing death head on and shedding light on rituals surrounding death.

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[134] Francisco Ferrándiz, "Guerras sin fin: guía para descifrar el Valle de los Caídos en la España contemporánea." Política y Sociedad 48, no. 3 (2011): ISSN 1130-8001. Published by Servicio de Publicaciones. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, 495.
[135] Casey, "Taken Under Fascism."

Figure 11. A group of characters touching a corpse. From the film *No se tocan los muertos, nene,* 2011.[136]

The power mortal remnants hold to haunt and mobilize is evidenced by the contestation of dead bodies currently taking place in Spain. In 2019, Franco's remains were finally exhumed from the Valley of the Fallen and transferred to his family mausoleum. In 2022, Spain passed the Democratic Memory Law which makes the central government responsible for the recovery of the bodies of people who went missing during the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship. The legislation calls on the government to create maps with potential location sites of the bodies of an estimated 100,000 people still missing and to set up a DNA bank to aid the body identification process.[137] Both exhumation efforts have faced intense backlash, revealing a nation polarized by the questions of what role does past have in the present and what should the response to haunting be. It also reveals a collective agreement that remnants are deeply powerful.

[136] Sanchez, *No se tocan los muertos, nene.*
[137] Cirán Giles, "Spain Rules Franco Regime Illegal in New Memory Law," U.S. News & World Report, 15 July 2022, https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-07-15/spain-rules-franco-regime-illegal-in-new-memory-law

My grandfather's corpse will never be contested, and his mortal remnants will never haunt. Yet he is immortalized by the visual and has been given an afterlife by his cinematic and cultural prominence, meaning that he is very much still alive in memory and image. This vitality is apparent in the television special *Coloquio*, a filmed roundtable discussion featuring a group of actors and filmmakers who knew my grandfather.[138] While the roundtable takes place in 2022, it is spliced with footage from past interviews and films. There is one instance where the shot cuts from the roundtable to a 2005 interview clip of Azcona. When the shot returned to the roundtable, it took me a moment to resituate myself in the present reality. In my mind, while watching the interview clip, it was as if Azcona was sitting at the table alongside the other participants, and they were just temporarily out of the shot. Despite firmly knowing that Azcona isn't alive and is unable to sit at the table, the juxtaposition of videos made me momentarily forget that I never watch Spanish national television, which means I heard about the airing of this particular episode from my grandmother over lunch together in New York. She heard about it from her friend living in Spain.

Reflecting on our conversation, my grandmother and I both experienced the warping of time while watching the roundtable. For her, this manifested in how the participants in the round table were talking about Yayo as if he was there. Even fourteen years later after his death, she noted with awe. Which was so meaningful, she explained, because when someone dies, how you remember them becomes everything. Her friend told her that 260,000 people viewed the roundtable, but my grandmother doesn't know if that is true, so she is emailing her friend to double check. She explained that if it is true, if that many people really did tune in, then she can

[138] "Coloquio Rafael Azcona," directed by Jose Luis Lopez-Linares and Javier Rioyo, RTVE, 2021, https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/historia-de-nuestro-cine/coloquio-rafael-azcona/6147471/

use that sort of prestige and demonstrated interest to try and convince the Film Forum, a theater in New York, to screen *Los muertos no se tocan, nene*.

Knowing how my grandmother views remembering as paramount following someone's death, her hope that as many people as possible will see Yayo's films carries a certain significance and speaks to the way (or at least her belief of the way) film and television can shape national memory. Additionally, it is interesting to note my grandmother's investment in the promotion of Yayo's work not just in Spain, but in the United States as well. Perhaps this investment is influenced by a Spanish diaspora in the United States, or the enforced forgetting practiced by the United States regarding its shameful neutrality during the Spanish Civil War and subsequent dictatorship. I wonder whether my grandmother is spurred by the belief that the survival of Yayo's ideas merit the viewing of his films or whether it is the memory of his personhood that she wants to keep alive. What does Yayo's legacy mean to my grandmother? What does it mean to me, as someone who has decided to immortalize him in a sense through this thesis? How do I want to live with the dead? How do I want to respond to haunting? I am still discovering the answers to these questions.

I conclude, for now, by taking a step back. In this project, I take a meta approach: I study a country to study my grandfather to study my family to, ultimately, understand me. When I talk about my grandfather's biography, I surely am talking about my autobiography, almost by definition. The real object of inquiry is not my grandfather himself, but my haunted relationship to him. It is this relationship that brings visibility to his absence and his past. While my object of study has mostly stayed constant through this thesis process, my relationship to this object of study is now different as I have come to see the dissonance and confusion conditioned by haunting as integral rather than inconvenient. Let me be honest that this thesis is peculiar. It is

idiosyncratic. In many ways, it is self-indulgent. I have found value in this self-indulgence. Yet there is also a universality to this thesis in the way it speaks to selfhood, searching, and belonging.

I would like to end with this quote from Anne Carson's book *Nox*:

> History and elegy are akin. The word 'history' comes from an ancient Greek verb *ίστωρειν* meaning to ask. One who asks about things—about their dimensions, weight, location, moods, names, holiness, smell—is an historian. But the asking is not idle. It is when you are asking about something that you realize you yourself have survived it, and so you must carry it, or fashion it into a thing that carries itself.[139]

The objective of this project is not to get rid of haunting but to fashion it into a thing that carries itself. In actively asking about my grandfather's haunting and fashioning its traces into this project, I realize I myself have survived it.

Figure 12. *The Executioner* written by Azcona, listed on the Film Forum Marquee in New York City, 2022. I took this picture before going into the movie theater to see the film with my family.

[139] Anne Carson, *Nox* (New York: New Directions, 2010).

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