

Chapter 5

Still Forgetting: Minor Photographic Approaches to Desmemòria in the Post–Franco Era

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author explores how artistic practice can contribute to understanding the local concept of desmemòria. The forgetting that was demanded of the population of Spain during the Transition has become naturalised. The resistance to communicating and repairing the damage done to the population between 1936 and 1975 has made it difficult to revert the effects of the Pact of Forgetting, creating a compressed space for memory in the public sphere, pushing it further into the private, where it risks disappearing permanently. Through a photographic practice, the author responds to the history of the flooded village of Faió and map the territory of desmemòria and the voices found at the edge. This chapter deploys Deleuze and Guattari’s minority to explore strategies of resistance and creation in the face of unmemory. Working on a family archive, the author maps the gaps that have resulted from a history of protracted silence and imagine new relationships between minority, photography, and memory.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter applies Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of minor literature (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986) to the term *desmemòria* to investigate the relationship between autobiographical memory and collective memory in Post Francoist Spain. I use an art practice around my family photographs to fill the gaps in memories of the Dictatorship and inquire about the politics of memory.

In 2017, I participated in a Referendum on Self-determination in Catalonia. Having grown up in Catalonia and involved in organising, I was invested emotionally and politically in this event. On the 1st of October 2017, after having lived in London for 19 days, I travelled back to Barcelona. That night, my friends and I slept in the schools where we would vote the following day; on the day of the vote, we spent all day trying to make sure people were safe; after the vote, it was clear that the relationship with

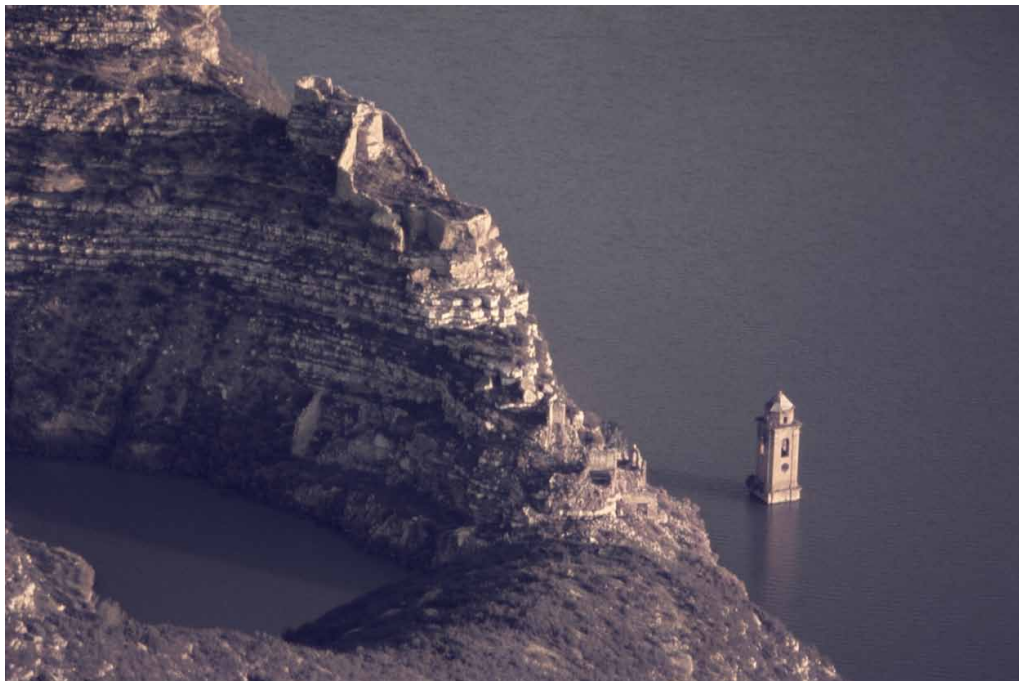
DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5337-7.ch005

Still Forgetting

Spain would not be the same again. The response of the Spanish State was disproportionate, resorting to violence of an intensity that marked that day with fire to the memories of many Catalans. The Referendum exposed the contradictions of the Spanish Democratic Project. The reaction of the right against the self-determination movement brought up ideological symbols and discourses reminiscent of the fascist ideology of Spanish ex-dictator Franco: the media condoned the brutal response of the police, and a month later, the socialist party supported the application of article 155 of the Constitution¹.

Those weeks brought so much of Spanish history to the forefront of people's memories and returned a small part of my history to me. In March 2018, as I was preparing to interview my grandmother Roser for a photographic project about the Referendum, I reencountered the family collection of photographs left in a room after my grandfather Sebastià died and asked my grandma to leave those to me as an inheritance. That would be the last day that I saw her alive. I mourned her with those photographs and, whilst doing it, rediscovered the history of Faió, the village where my grandfather was born and where I spent every summer as a child. Faió is a double village: my grandfather's Faió is underwater (Figure 1), and the Faió of my childhood is the village built to replace it. In this chapter, I speculate on ways of recovering lost memories and positioning them within a political critique through a personal archive of transparencies to explore the creation of different practices of remembrance.

Figure 1. Church of the old Faió coming out of the Riba-Roja enclosure. Archive Image. (© 2022, the author)



Research on the memory of the Spanish Dictatorship reveals that the State and other public institutions have not facilitated the investigation, mourning, and reparation of the past (Stucki and López de Abiada, 2004). It reflects the everyday experiences of many - whose family history is one of pain or

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