Pictures That Save, Pictures That Soothe: Photographs at the Grassroots Memorials to the Victims of the March 11, 2004 Madrid Bombings

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Introduction

The spontaneous rituals in public spaces in response to deaths—whether of anonymous or prominent individuals—socially regarded as traumatic constitute a culturally significant phenomenon that began in the 1980s and has quickly expanded throughout Western countries in recent times (1). Although they vary in form, the rituals tend to follow a common pattern: through the public display—sometimes right on the very spot where the tragedy occurred—of funerary offerings, such as keepsakes, mementos, and messages in tribute to the deceased, a claim is made on the social significance of their deaths. These so-called grassroots memorials, which might at first sight appear to be just another spectacle intended for mass media coverage, originate nevertheless from deep-seated motivations and concerns that some researchers believe to be typical of the present age: the politics of death and of memory in the construction of nations, states, or other collective identities; and the growing interest in the memorialization of death, wars, and catastrophes (Doss **2008**; Huyssen **2003**; Margry and Sánchez-Carretero **2011**).

Although grassroots memorials may differ according to the events being memorialized, or the sociopolitical contexts they ritually interact with, photographs are one of the ever-present items of material culture that characterize all of them. On the basis of the examples of the grassroots memorials to the victims of the terror attacks in New York (September 11, 2001) and Madrid (March 11, 2004), an analysis can be made of the functions served by the massive amounts of photographs present in them. First, photographs bore witness to everything that happened, supplying a visual account of the events, which allowed for the construction of the kind of social memory required to individualize the victims and acknowledge them as a valuable—although missing—part of the social body. Second, the pictures of the missing and the dead enabled the reconstruction of people's sense of unity and belonging with their lost loved ones, thereby playing a key role in the unfolding of funerary rites and the social process of mourning. The photographs at the grassroots memorials in the railway stations hit by terrorist bombs in Madrid in March 2004 can, therefore, be seen to have fulfilled the need for individualized representations of each of the numerous victims, expressing recognition, solidarity, and condolences. To gauge the significance of such photographs in the memorialization process, I have examined the evidence supplied by the materials in the so-called Archive of Mourning.

The Archive of Mourning is actually a multiformat collection of documentary materials that started being gathered as soon as photographic records and oral testimonies began to accumulate in the early days right after the massacre, when the grassroots memorials were being erected and mourning was first becoming ritualized. As initially conceived by a team of researchers from Spain's National Research Council (CSIC), the aim of the archive was to document the sort of cultural manifestations that, on account of their spontaneous, makeshift nature, are not often preserved or integrated within collective

memory. The nature of the archive was substantially altered, however, when the memorials at the stations were eventually dismantled and the RENFE Corporation—the state-owned enterprise that manages, maintains, and operates Spain's rail transportation system—delivered the objects they contained for temporary deposit at the CSIC facilities, where they could be adequately classified, preserved, and studied in an academic setting free from external conditionings or ulterior motives. The items in the collection were, thus, officially established as those having been placed in public spaces over the period of three months immediately subsequent to the March 11, 2004 bombings. They comprise 2,482 photographs, 495 objects, 6,432 paper documents, 64 audio recordings, and 58,732 e-mail messages. Once classification and conservation work was finished, in March 2010, the whole collection, along with the corresponding databases, was transferred to the Railroad History Archive (Archivo Histórico Ferroviario)—a part of Spain's Railroad Foundation (Fundación de los Ferrocarriles Españoles)—which will be in charge of its management and preservation from now on (cf. Sánchez-Carretero et al. **2011**).

Pictures That Hurt

It is commonly accepted that exposure to media coverage of calamities and extreme suffering brought about by catastrophes and disasters of all kinds is one of the factors most decisively shaping our worldviews and our conceptions of present-day reality. As privileged spectators with a kind of front-row seat to other people's pain, but watching safely from the protection afforded by a huge distance (Boltanski **1993**), we may witness tragic events in their most minute details, sometimes even as they are unfolding "live" in real time (Brothers **1997**; Sontag **2003**; Taylor **1998**). In our societies, the growing habit of consuming live images of other people's suffering is matched by a parallel and no less acute need to minimize our own grief, barring any representation of death from our immediate surroundings.

Between 7:36 and 7:39 a.m. on March 11, 2004, ten bombs exploded in four commuter trains in the Alcalá de Henares-Madrid corridor, killing 192 (2) people and injuring a further 1,857 (3). This was not only the worst terrorist attack in European history, but also a true epochal event that—along with the attacks perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalists in New York and London—set up a chain reaction of political changes and transformations in multiple spheres, from security to communications (Gómez et al. **2004**).

Images of horror beyond description, as first witnessed by the surviving victims themselves and those who first came to their aid amid the wreckage of the bombed trains, were soon transmitted to the whole social body, as the number of eyewitnesses and spectators expanded to include not only those actually present at the site of the bombings, but also mass TV audiences consuming images of the massacre. Howbeit in a pale metaphorical reflection of the literal eye injuries sustained by many of the victims, these were pictures that *hurt* those who looked at them (Ferrándiz **2004**).

The harshness of the images of the 3/11 Madrid bombings is impossible to forget. The indiscriminate dissemination of some of the most horrifying photographs from the moment right after the blasts and the rescue operations (including some forensic pictures that were leaked to the media) was bitterly criticized by the relatives of the victims. It must be noted, however, that although there was no explicit censorship on sensationalist images, upon requests from all the parties involved, a kind of tacit agreement was reached

by the media (not without controversy), (4) to the effect that the coverage of the carnage and the victims' bodies was to be avoided (5) (Figure 1).

As regards visual impact, nevertheless, the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York remains unmatched (cf. Chéroux **2009**). Not only the images but also the narratives and the discourses (not to mention the actions) unleashed by the fall of the Twin Towers are tinged with heightened resonance and transcendence (Chomsky **2004**). The appellation "Ground Zero" marking the spot of the buildings' collapse is one example: originally intended to designate the area devastated by a nuclear strike, the term also evokes a starting point or *tabula rasa*, the core of an endangered, irreversibly transformed world (Sturken **2004**:311).

It has been pointed out (Taylor **2003**:239–240) that even for residents of the WTC area, the visual experience of the attack was a *televisual construct* that froze the temporality of the event into the endlessly repeated shots of the planes hitting the towers at 8:46 and then at 9:02, condensed in frozen frames isolated in time and unavoidable, irreplaceable. The feeling of *déjà vu* and the cinematic parallels evoked by the skyscrapers' collapse—no less than its traumatic significance—were the object of countless iconic, journalistic, and political analysis (Chéroux **2009**; Zelizer and Allan **2002**), and without doubt are now part of our new unreal/virtual worldview (Zizek **2006**). With the endlessly televised shots of the towers collapsing and a host of terrified people running toward the camera, escaping from the catastrophe literally falling upon them, the "passion of the Real," as Zizek remarks, paradoxically culminates in its apparent opposite: "a theatrical spectacle" (Žižek [**2002]2005**:14).

In his iconographic analysis of 9/11 as depicted by photo news agencies, photo historian Clément Chéroux (**2009**) showed how the press endlessly recirculated a handful of images that privileged the collapse of the towers over human catastrophe, attempting to ground the reading of the event as an act of war by drawing iconic parallels with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Likewise, Gérôme Truc's (**2011**) work on the photo-journalistic representation of the 3/11 Madrid bombings highlights the echoes of 9/11.

Everyone's Photos

The attack on the WTC was the most photographed disaster in history. It constituted a paradigmatic instance of "life imitating art": the skies over Manhattan finally became a huge screen (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett **2003**:18). Nevertheless, leaving aside the coverage of the attacks—their public representation—and the analysis thereof as developed by media professionals and theorists (Low **2002**; Zelizer and Allan **2002**; Žižek [**2002]2005**; Zuber **2006**), or other issues such as the well-known problem of the banalization of suffering inherent in photographic images—whether professional or amateur (Sontag [**1973]1981**:50–52, **2003**)—what interests us here is the decisive role played by many New York citizens as amateur photographers. Their pictures of the attacks and the wreckage zone were significant enough to prompt a ban from the city authorities: as part of the quarantine on the area, Mayor Rudolf W. Giuliani issued a statement banning unauthorized photography and video recording at the WTC Ground Zero. This order came alongside a number of recommendations urging people to return to normal life, including the "civic duty" to spend money on shopping, entertainment, vacations, etc. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett **2003**:12; Taylor **2003**:241).

While it may be legitimate to deplore the prospect of Ground Zero becoming a destination for sightseeing tourists wielding handheld cameras (a category all of us may nevertheless belong to at some point), regardless of that moral issue, the fact is that a political directive that included a ban on images was enforced throughout the rescue operations, and later during clean-up work at the wreckage area, which became "hallowed ground" for many Americans (Sturken **2004**:314). In the context of the arguments developed in this article, I believe that the focus of analysis should be shifted to those other visual discourses and uses of photography that in critical situations such as 9/11 might be eclipsed—or even cancelled—by the dominance of professional photography and documentaries. It might be conjectured to what extent the motives that lead TV and press agencies to mobilize their vast resources in such events differ from the reasons that may compel thousands of amateurs to take pictures with their nonprofessional cameras, namely to break out of the stupor induced by horrifying visions, to record what is actually happening, to bear witness for the future, to archive a segment of reality, the better to understand it (Zelizer **2002**:48–49). Obviously, the focus of media interest will differ from that of ordinary citizens (Taylor **1998**), especially in a globalized world (cf. Truc **2009**). In the words of Diana Taylor, one of the thousands of New Yorkers who felt compelled to do something, and who went down to the empty, ash-strewn streets in her neighborhood to photograph everything she was seeing, "photography, at this moment, was paradoxically both action and anti-action, performance and antiperformance, a doing, a click, in the face of the impossibility of doing" (Taylor **2003**:241).

In contradistinction to the passive consumption of other people's suffering as a reified construction of otherness, packaged and encoded for TV broadcast, photography as practiced by amateurs (and in a certain sense also by professionals) may become a tool for action that enables us to snap out of a state of terror-induced paralysis (Ortiz and Sánchez-Carretero **2008**). In Madrid, after the 3/11 attacks, the mayor called it "visual citizenship" (Ruiz-Gallardón **2005**:9); in London, after the 7/7 bombings, it was called "civic journalism": in both instances, it was the same citizen reaction in the face of traumatic events affecting the whole social body.

Photos Facing Death

In Madrid as well as in New York, photography started playing a significant role right from the start of the emergency rescue operations. Apart from their relevance for the technical and scientific aspects of police forensic investigations, photographs were essential in the search for the victims and their identification. This was particularly the case in the New York attacks, given the thousands of people who disappeared after the towers' collapse. Photos from ID cards or from family albums—of weddings, graduations, etc.—were copied and posted on street walls by the relatives of the people who worked at the WTC, in the hope of getting any news about their loved ones. With their stereotypical poses, sometimes accompanied by references to physical markers (such as tattoos or scars), these photographs were posted literally everywhere in Lower Manhattan, from street lamps to bus stops to hospitals.

Photos were employed in a similar fashion in Madrid, although on a much smaller scale. But both in Madrid and New York, photographs served another important function. Alongside everyday objects, such as letters, notes, T-shirts, placards, etc., photographs turned absence into presence through sheer massive repetition, filling the void left by the dead. Even though the immense majority of those who visited the improvised grassroots

memorials at the train stations in the Madrid area were not relatives of the dead—indeed, were not even acquainted with them—many of the notes and offerings referred to or were connected with the missing people's characteristics or particular circumstances. Besides helping find survivors, photographs presented the victims as individual subjects with their own names, physical appearance, and family context, thereby achieving an effect that was diametrically opposed to the depersonalization of the enemy that characterizes war. The aim was to prevent the dead from becoming a mere statistic (Santino **2006**:12–13). In New York, the walls near the WTC area where people posted photographs of their missing loved ones in the days after the attack were called *Wall of Prayers* and *Wall of Hope and Remembrance* (Fraenkel **2002**); they were preserved and well looked after—even covered with plastics as protection from the rain. Besides helping the authorities identify the missing, they served another important function: to publicly present and grant recognition to the heroes—not yet victims. As Diana Taylor puts it in her essay on these improvised memorials, "the photos occupied the space of the missing bodies" (Taylor **2003**:250).

Answering the popular demand for individualized recognition and memorialization of the victims, initiatives of a more formal nature were developed by the press in both New York and Madrid. On September 15, 2001, the *New York Times* began publishing a series of biographical articles on the missing, under the title "Snapshots of their Lives," which became "Portraits of Grief" when they were declared dead (Wrona **2005**). In Spain, a similar series was published in the newspaper *El País*, under the title "Vidas Rotas" ("Broken Lives"). Edited by Luis Matías López, it compiled monographic articles and photographs of the 164 victims of the train bombings whose families kindly allowed them to be published (Figures 2-4).

When at length all hope that the missing would return was finally abandoned, the walls covered with photographs, photocopied posters, banners, and notes became sites for other remembrances and offerings, such as candles, flowers, teddy bears, T-shirts, etc. These simple murals became spontaneous shrines in memory of the dead, materializing their presence in "paper monuments in the stone cemetery of the city" (Kuzub in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett **2003**:19).

Grassroots Memorials

In Madrid, the sad wait for the identification of the dead and the injured was shorter than it had been in New York, but the citizens' memorializing intent led to demonstrations of mourning at the sites of the massacre. Almost right after the injured were rescued and the bodies of the dead were recovered, people began placing candles, flowers, and notes (with messages of mourning, but also of peace and solidarity) on small improvised memorials on the platforms or the entrance hallways at the railway stations in Santa Eugenia, El Pozo, and Atocha, as well as in other areas in Madrid and in the neighboring towns where some of the victims came from (Sánchez-Carretero **2006**) (Figures 5 and 6).

Spontaneous shrines and memorials of this type, displaying popular reactions to traumatic deaths, whether at the collective or the individual scale, have become widespread in recent decades (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero **2007**; Santino **2006**). A well-known case occurred after Princess Diana's death (Kear and Steinberg **1999**; Walter **1999**), but improvised memorials also appeared after other, quite different situations: the Oklahoma bombing (Grider **2000**), the Columbine High School massacre (Grider **2007**), the death

of Pope John Paul II (Klekot **2007**), and the shooting at Virginia Tech University (Grider **2007**; Margry and Sánchez-Carretero **2007**). Roadside memorials to victims of car accidents are another variety of this phenomenon, with the same strong component of grassroots community activism (Clark **2007**). This social dimension is precisely emphasized by the appellation that these typically late modern rituals have received: "grassroots memorials" (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero **2011**).

Researchers have highlighted the performative and commemorative dynamic of these popular displays of mourning in public spaces, as well as their potential for political transformation. Not only do they constitute social expressions of collective grief over the death of people to whom the mourners are not directly connected but through their very occurrence in the public rather than the private domain, they also manifest a will to change reality (Figure **7**). Other major aspects are their makeshift, distinctly unofficial character and their representation as offerings (Santino **2006**). All these features distinguish them from other forms of public memorialization of death organized by institutions within the state apparatus (such as memorials to the fallen in war), or collectives within civil society that may be affected by an event that elicits that kind of response (as in the case of memorials to AIDS victims in the United States) (Doss **2008**; Holst-Warhaft **2000**; Sturken **1997**; Zuber **2006**).

Despite their spontaneous nature, grassroots memorials develop according to certain formal patterns (Grider **2001**:3–4) heavily influenced by the mass media (Cheshire **2007**). Improvisation, to begin with, does not mean randomness or incoherence. In their overall configuration, these memorials obey the cultural codes of signification that shape the expressions of bereavement and collective responses to death that a given society deems acceptable. That is why they may resort to modern mass media imagery as abundantly as to symbols and meanings rooted in religion and traditional culture. Makeshift memorials to the victims of the terror attacks in New York and Madrid, like the pictures taken on the days of the attacks, were dense, ephemeral, made from ordinary, easily available materials (Fraenkel **2002**; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett **2003**:23).

Thousands of Photographs

Regardless of the quite remarkable differences between civic expressions after the attacks in New York and Madrid, the similarities we have highlighted so far derive not only from the potential of photography as a tool for democratic action, but also from its special significance as purveyor of memory. This function has multiple meanings, beginning with photography's basic role as witness to facts and events. We are all used to the presence of professional and amateur photographers at the scene of a given event; in our culture, photo-reportage is one of the most common formats through which the media disseminate information that is presumed to be objective, and digital photography has expanded its potential to such a degree that nowadays images are literally part of events themselves (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett **2003**:20). New York already gave us an example of this on a massive scale on 9/11; in Madrid, on March 11, 2004, professional photographers (from the press or otherwise) became part of the wave of solidarity across the city and the whole country: all sorts of professionals, from psychologists and medical staff to truck drivers or taxi drivers, made the tools of their trade available to meet the critical demands of the early rescue operations. Likewise, photographers placed their cameras in the service of society (García-Vera et al. **2008**).

It wasn't simply a matter of bearing witness to the terror attack and the bomb blasts in the railway stations at El Pozo, Santa Eugenia, and Atocha. Like many other citizens who felt compelled to actively *do* something, photographers took to the streets to record what was going on all around them: how people all over the city felt personally grief-stricken by the massacre and joined in solidarity with the victims and their relatives, how they responded by taking to the streets in mass mobilizations, and how the feelings of grief and loss soon extended all over Spain (Truc **2011**) (Figure 8). Thousands of shots were taken in the days after March 11, 2004 (as had happened in New York after September 11, 2001), whose purpose was not merely to serve as evidence of what they showed, but also of our own collective existence, which they reinforced. Besides, the fact that there were so many photographs, from so many points of view, inevitably rendered their testimony democratic, affording visibility to social actors and facts that may not have been given any space in officially construed accounts of the massacre guided by political interests (Chéroux **2009**; Taylor **2003**:255–256).

One of the initiatives in the weeks after 9/11 in Manhattan was an exhibition called *Here is New York, Images from the Frontline of History: A Democracy of Photographs* (2002) (6). People were asked to kindly provide the photos they had taken, which were scanned, archived, and digitally printed (in regular quality paper), and then shown at a storefront in SoHo, where they were displayed as if they were laundry hanging out to dry: they were all attached to strings stretched in rows across the width of the room and along every wall, with no author's name, no hierarchical arrangement, nor any of the fancy effects commonly devised in installations at art galleries. All prints of the photographs (an archive of more than 5,000) were on sale at the same nominal, fixed price, with the proceeds going to the Children's Aid Society WTC Relief Fund. Although originally intended to last no more than two months, with more than 3,000 visitors a day, the makeshift exhibition generated so much interest that it had to be extended until September 2002. Some 300,000 people were estimated to have seen the exhibition over the 12 months that it occupied its original venue in SoHo. Eventually, versions of the exhibition traveled to Washington, and several other cities in the United States, Europe, and Japan. In 2002, a book entitled *Here is New York* was published, and a second exhibition was organized at the International Center of Photography, under the name *History Unframed*. In addition, a video and oral history component of the original exhibition, entitled *Here is New York: Voices of 9.11*, gathered stories and personal recollections of the 9/11 events recorded between April 2002 and February 2003 (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett **2003**:21–22; Taylor **2003**:258).

Other artistic projects besides *Here is New York* also made open calls for people to submit their responses to the 9/11 events in all expressive formats, including photographs: NYC art organization Exit Art, for instance, initiated a kind of multidisciplinary project called *Reactions*, which received about 3,500 submissions in the form of text, drawings, paintings, collages, and photographs. And to all of this must be added a great number of official initiatives from museums, archival institutions, and centers for popular culture studies all across the United States (Doss **2008**:16–17; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett **2003**:23–33; Zuber **2006**). A selection of photographs from the *Here is New York* exhibition became permanent exhibits at the *New York Historical Society*. On the sixth anniversary of the attacks, some 1,300 of those photos, along with objects recovered from the wreckage, and a film entitled *Voices of 9/11* with video/oral recordings of witnesses, were assembled into an exhibition called *Here is New York: Remembering 9/11*, curated by

Marilyn Kushner and Stephen Edidin at the *New York Historical Society* between September 2007 and April 2008.

Madrid in Memoriam

The above-mentioned projects in New York inspired a similar response to the Madrid bombings in March 2004, and a civic initiative called *Madrid in Memoriam* was launched two days right after the massacre by a group of young independent professionals led by brothers Adán and David R. Burgos. Just like the NY projects on 9/11, *Madrid in Memoriam* aimed at collecting images capturing photographers' and ordinary citizens' experience of everything that had been going on in the days right after the bombings. In the project's initial phase, the organizers made an open call for people to express their "rejection of barbaric terrorist acts of any kind" (Burgos and Burgos **2005**:394) by posting the photographs they had taken during those days on the project's website (7). Thanks to the website, privately taken photos became available for public viewing and formed a digital archive anyone could access. (A postal address was also set up for people sending their photos in paper format.) The project was a big success, with contributions from both well-known and anonymous photographers. The photos reflected people's expressions of support and solidarity with the victims and their relatives in the wave of ceremonies and demonstrations taking place not only in Madrid but all over Spain.

Two hundred and sixteen photographers contributed by donating their works to the project. As the project's organizers explained, it was not professional status or standards of quality that provided the criteria for selecting the photographs, "which were mostly taken by anonymous people, ordinary people out in the streets using traditional or digital cameras or even their cell-phones to photograph what was going on during those days. The project's pluralistic nature was thus guaranteed (housewives, students, workers, professionals, relatives of the victims themselves and a host of other various people kept sending us their photos). All pictures provided something equally precious to us" (Burgos and Burgos **2005**:394). Criteria for exclusion were limited to issues of political intent in the pictures, or to visual contents that might hurt the sensibilities of victims or their relatives or treat their grief disrespectfully. The latter gave their express consent—and lent their support—to the project, which the Burgos brothers had launched as a tribute to all those who perished or were injured, or suffered the loss of friends or relatives in the bombings. The website compiled a substantial number of photographs (about two thousand) depicting a broad range of people's attitudes and reactions in the aftermath of the massacre, yet none of them show anything that might in the least hurt or infringe on the dignity of the victims or their relatives. The initiative launched by the Burgos brothers also included an itinerant exhibition, as well as the publication of a book offering—as a lasting tribute in a printed format—a fairly representative selection of the quality and rich variety of the images collected by the *Madrid in Memoriam* project. The idea was that the sales of the book—however small a financial contribution they could make—would go to the injured and their families to help support them in their hour of need. The book was finally published and publicly presented in 2005 (Burgos and Burgos **2005**) (8).

Alongside other lesser initiatives of a similar nature, launched more or less in the same period, the *Madrid in Memoriam* project corresponds to what might be viewed as formally organized—as opposed to makeshift—memorializing schemes, despite the fact that it originated from civil society's response to the bombings, as embodied in public space, and expressed many people's spontaneous reaction of solidarity. Other initiatives

with a documentary intent flourished during those days in March 2004. A group of Madrid-based visual anthropology experts started gathering graphic documentation right from the very first moments after the attacks (Chulilla et al. **2005**; Lisón Arcal **2005**:16–17). Also, as a kind of quick-response initiative, the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) launched an urgent research project, the above-mentioned Archive of Mourning Project, headed by Cristina Sánchez-Carretero, which collected a large amount of graphic material (more than two thousand photographs), as well as video and audio recordings, electronic messages, and objects of various kinds, all of which comprise an ethnographic archive of collective demonstrations of mourning and solidarity in the aftermath of the 3/11 bombings in Madrid (Sánchez-Carretero et al. **2011**).

Another rather important set of memorializing initiatives worthy of mention here includes the official responses culminating in the monument to the victims commissioned by the Madrid Town Hall, which was inaugurated in 2007 (Figure 9). Located right next to Atocha Station in downtown Madrid, this monument actually draws its inspiration from the grassroots memorials and spontaneous demonstrations of mourning arising at the very sites of the massacre for two months after the event. Although the freestanding part of the monument is a tower in the shape of an 11 m high cylinder entirely made of solid transparent glass, this is merely a container for the memorial itself, which must be accessed from within the underground section of Atocha Station (quite symbolically, "two metres under the ground," as *El País* reporter Patricia Ortega Dolz noted) (9). Dubbed "the blue emptiness" by its creators, the memorial at the heart of the monument is a space that visitors may enter through a blue crystal corridor. As you walk in, you leave behind all the noise and the hustle of the station, and in the glass walls you can see the names of all the victims of the attacks arranged in alphabetical order. The blue corridor then leads to a fully pressurized, nearly 500 m^2 circular room topped by a translucent membrane of a high-tech material (ethyl tetrafluoroethylene) that seems to float in the air as a sort of irregular dome. Some of the messages left by citizens at the sites of the bombings in the days after the massacre are inscribed in that transparent dome. The ambient light, the quietness, and the lack of visible structures supporting the dome, which make it look so airy and light, all contribute to the impression of being enfolded by words of love and remembrance, somehow creating a form of connection with the victims. As scholars such as White (**2000**:526) point out, narratives elicit much greater emotional identification than images themselves.

Pictures to Remember

In the *Madrid in Memoriam* project, photography lived up to its key social role as a purveyor of democratic representations of traumatic events affecting the whole of the social body: to document and bear witness to events on the spot, even as they are unfolding, always maintaining objectivity, and to memorialize—indeed to preserve the memory of—the injured and the dead. This purpose was overtly declared by the projects' own evocative title *Madrid in Memoriam. Una iniciativa para el recuerdo* ("An initiative for remembrance"). And it was also explicitly stated in the home page at the project's website: "Their photos, your photos; public or private photos; photos from before or after; photos that were published or were kept in drawers; photos of those who helped, those who wept, those who cried, those who went quiet; photos to not forget, photos of silence, a project for remembrance, to generate memories." (10)

Photography serves all these functions not only in the public sphere of civic initiatives—as seen above—but also in the private domain. Photographs of dead people are known to evoke strong emotions in us; their power to elicit such reactions is based on the complex articulation of time in still pictures, which turns them into instruments for grief and mourning in the private sphere (Barthes [**1980]1999**:164–165). In the pictures of our dead loved ones, we see traces of their existence among us; their presence is somehow kept alive as the images evoke their features and the moments that are emotionally significant for us (Bourdieu **1965**:53).

The works of world-renowned artist Christian Boltanski show us in exemplary fashion how significant the footprints and minute traces of existence and death may be for our self-knowledge. Boltanski focuses on what he calls the "small memory" of the deceased—a memory concealed or deposited in the indexical objects, the names or the pictures our lives are constructed from. In conceptual pieces, such as *Ensambles*, based on a compilation of 99 lists of names of individuals, or *Les Suisses Morts*, where he appropriated the photographs and lists in a 1991 obituary from Canton Valais in Switzerland, Boltanski underscores the power of recognition lying in the enunciation of proper names. By tracking the signature of death on everyday objects, Boltanski opens pathways into the past in works such as *Sachlich* (1995). In the final analysis, what Boltanski is trying to accomplish through the use of photographs—such as the 1,070 anonymous photos in the wall installation *Menschlich* (1994)—is to exorcise not just death itself, but *oblivion*, the vanishing of individual lives and deaths into nonexistence.

Even though far removed from the sites where art is publicly displayed, as bearers of symbolic value, photographs of dead loved ones are located at specific and highly significant places in people's homes and in their daily lives (Batchen **2004**:8–19). In Spain, as in other Mediterranean countries, such photographs may even be found in tombs, sometimes encased in hard, durable frames embedded in the gravestones themselves.

As regards mourning for the victims of the 3/11 train bombings in Madrid as it developed in public spaces, the makeshift memorials at the railway stations most affected by the massacre soon became flooded with pictures of the dead. Alongside notes with written messages, the photographs asserted the presence of the victims as part of a collective "we": sentences such as "we were all riding those trains" and "we are a united people" were endlessly repeated in countless notes, banners, and placards (Figure 10). The dead were summoned, and their spiritual presence was expressed in intimate terms: "two hundred hearts beat inside of me," "I don't know you but I love you," "It's been a week since we were all murdered."

Just as in private rituals of mourning family and friends visit the graveyard and have a wake for the dead, in grassroots memorials anonymous citizens form a kind of imaginary extended family for the victims: the same flowers, obituary notices, expressions of condolence, and tokens of commiseration found in private mourning turned up at the makeshift memorials at the sites of the bombings, expressed in all kinds of ways, scribbled in all sorts of handwriting, in all imaginable formats and all kinds of materials (Figures 11 and 12).

Besides all these communal displays of grief—generally anonymous and unmediated by any direct connection with the victims—sometimes the friends and relatives of the victims

themselves externalized their mourning from private to public space, placing photographs of their lost loved ones at the memorials, alongside written messages expressing their love, their feeling of bereavement and loss, and their commitment to not forget the dead, ever. Despite the memorials' constant location shifts and extreme degree of mutability in the two-month period during which they flourished, there developed spaces devoted to specific victims in particular (as sorts of portable shrines that could be carried to other sites): there was one at Atocha Station, for example, paying tribute to a young girl called Sanae ben Salah, with notes and mementos left by her friends and schoolmates (Chulilla et al. **2005**:401) (Figure 13). These "personal" memorials, occupying their own sections in a corner within the collective "shrines," with childhood pictures and keepsakes, abounded in the case of child and youth victims, whose untimely death generally evokes a greater feeling of despair and is felt to be all the more unfair, but they expressed the same need to spatialize the ritual of mourning and individualize each and every one of those who perished in the attack on the commuter trains (Figure 14).

As was mentioned above, however, many of the written messages at the makeshift "shrines" in the railway stations were addressed to no one in particular; they did not refer to any specific victim, but to "all" of them as part of a symbolic "us" (Maffesoli [**1988]1990**:35–39). Even when offerings and keepsakes were personally dedicated to someone in particular, it must be taken into account that the number and exceptional nature of the deaths caused by the terror attacks far surpassed any given family's circle of friends, or community's capacity for mourning. As a result, traditional "channels of expression for the cultural articulation of death became vastly insufficient, and could not cope with the task of accounting for what had happened or helping people come to terms with it, restructuring the meaning of the deaths" (Chulilla et al. **2005**:397). That is why so many citizens felt the need to express their grief and take part in some sort of funerary ritual. The same overspilling of emotion beyond the boundaries of privacy was also manifested by the messages and keepsakes placed by relatives and friends of the victims at the public shrines. Through such forms of expression, participants in these rituals of mourning establish personal connections with the deceased which are no less real for being imaginary (Santino **2006**:13).

Conclusions

Among the things that grassroots memorials help us understand about our societies, this article's case study illustrates two basic dimensions of photography as representation, which Barbie Zelizer's (**1998**, **2002**:55) works mobilizes to throw revealing light on the relationship between social memory and the photographic depiction of atrocity, namely the twofold, tension-riven nexus between photography, mourning, and death, which Barthes theorized under the (now classic) rubrics of *studium* and *punctum*. On the side of *studium* lies photography as an (allegedly) aseptic, external documentation of the suffering caused by catastrophes whose representation is precisely rendered banal through its overconsumption (Boltanski **1993**; Moeller **1999**). On the other side of the dichotomy, in the polarity of *punctum*, there stand the victims of war, terror, or genocide jumping out at us from the photograph, their images offering us not just a possible form of knowledge, but something that our consciousness can internalize, individually and socially, a sort of wondrous talisman helping us cope with angst and grief, with the pain of loss.

I believe these amply theorized polarities are widely exemplified by this essay's case study. In the same setting, different subjects can be seen to have resorted to either

the *punctum* or the *studium* approaches as strategies of (re)cognition, by means of photographs of people they had a (real or imaginary) relationship with, a relationship interrupted by death.

The role of the grassroots memorials in railway stations after the Madrid bombings as vectors of communal mourning in public space illustrates how photographs of victims were employed in ritualized mourning to signal the passing away of the dead. Common citizens who did not know the victims saw themselves reflected in those photographs, nevertheless—or saw their families, their children, or grandchildren; their neighbors or their fellow countrymen and women; or their playmates from childhood and school days. In brief, they recognized those photographs as their own.

As for the friends and relatives of some of the victims, the tokens of solidarity from the public opened the possibility of expressing personal grief outside the bounds of privacy and the spaces where rituals of mourning are usually confined. Only an extraordinary form of mourning in non-private space seemed at the time commensurate with the gravity of deaths that were perceived to be out of the ordinary, incomprehensible, and unjust. The way the photos were placed in the memorials—as if they were in small altars dedicated to each individualized victim—and the accompanying texts with words of love and remembrance, show not only the workings of ritual, but also the performative purpose of the offerings themselves: to remember, to forestall oblivion, to learn from the event, to save the innocent. They show, in brief, a socialized form of mourning different from that experienced by relatives and friends, but no less significant or powerful.

In the case presented here, the memorials and forms of remembrance arising spontaneously as an immediate public response to social trauma were, by their very nature, communal and ephemeral, and stand in sharp contrast to the duration, the significance, and the forms of individual mourning as experienced by people afflicted by the loss of their loved ones in traumatic circumstances. From the very moment the grassroots memorials in tribute to the victims appeared on the streets, their names and their portraits began a symbolic new "life" as incarnations of absence in the memory of the living. But even long after all those ephemeral demonstrations of grief in public space are vanished and gone, the pictures of the dead—replicated in all kinds of formats, from the portrait of a young man encased in a gold medallion dangling from his mother's necklace, always close to her heart, to the face of a 19-year-old boy eternally smiling in the screen saver in his father's cell phone—all these photographs will remain forever anchored to the mourning and the grief in the hearts and the homes of a hundred and ninety-two families (Figure 15).

Notes

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INCIPIT-CSIC at Santiago de Compostela, as head of the Project and author of most of the photographs used here. The English translation of this text is by José Manuel Bueso, whom I must also thank for his skill and sensitivity.

2 Included in the official list of the dead are infant Nicolás Jiménez Morán, born two months after the bombings, who died as a result of injuries sustained by her mother, and bomb disposal expert Francisco Javier Torrenteras Gadea from the Spanish Police, who perished on April 3, 2004, when the terrorist cell responsible for the train bombings, upon finding themselves surrounded by police forces at a flat in Leganés (south of Madrid), committed suicide by detonating their remaining stock of explosives.

3 Initially, the official list of the injured as recorded in the proceedings of the court that investigated the case added up to 1,856 victims; on August 7, 2008, that number was increased by one when a ruling by the Spanish Supreme Court recognized the status of Nigerian national Kenneth Odey Agi as a victim of terrorism on account of his having been injured by the bombings.

4 On the graphic coverage of deaths caused by war or terror attacks, and its legitimacy or lack thereof in light of the protection of the victims' dignity, see, for instance, Soledad Gallego-Díaz, "Respetar el dolor, recordar el horror" ("*Respecting Pain, Remembering Horror*"), in *La herida abierta* ("The Open Wound," an *El País* special issue published on March 11, 2005, in commemoration of the first anniversary of the bombings, ed. Luis Matías López).

5 A detailed statistical and iconographical study of front-cover depictions of the Madrid bombings in the Spanish, European, and U.S. press was published by Gérôme Truc (2011).

6 Here is New York, "History Unframed," Here is New York: A Democracy of Photographs. http://hereisnewyork.org/updates/huf.asp, accessed February 25, 2010.

7 http://www.madridinmemoriam.org, accessed February 25, 2010.

8 The debt of gratitude owed by the *Madrid in Memoriam* initiative to the *Here is New York* project it draws its inspiration from is explicitly acknowledged by Adán and David Burgos not only in the account of their project's development (Burgos and Burgos 2005:393), but also in the material form of the book itself: in a clear allusion to the exhibition at SoHo in New York, the *Madrid in Memoriam* book comes in a case showing an image of photographs hanging from strings like laundry against a background of clouds and blue skies.

9 "Dentro del monumento del 11-M." El País, August 3, 2007. http://www.elpais.com/articulo/madrid/Dentro/monumento/11-M/elpepiespmad/2007, accessed February 10, 2008.

10 http://www.madridinmemoriam.org, accessed February 25, 2010.

Figures

Figure 1
Atocha station (Madrid), March 19, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning. Digital Photograph no. 1092. [Text in photograph reads: “We won't be tied with blood! Never again. Enough.”]

Figure 2
Alcalá de Henares Railway Station, March 22, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 575. [Text of the newspaper headline: “She loved and enjoyed life”; handwritten above it: “a beautiful person both outwardly and inwardly.”]

Figure 3
Atocha Station (Madrid), March 22, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 1336. Pictures from "Broken Lives," published by Madrid newspaper El País.

ESPAÑA
MATANZA EN MADRID *Las víctimas*

TQ.

Vidas rotas / 4

Cinco hombres y seis mujeres que tomaron aquellos malditos trenes

JOSÉ GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ

Figure 4
"T. Q. Te quiero (I love you"). Atocha Station (Madrid), March 2004. Pedro Reina (Madrid in Memoriam). Recorte de prensa pegado en la pared. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 2180.

Figure 5
The hallway at Atocha Station (Madrid), March 26, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 1565.

Figure 6
Outside Atocha Station (Madrid), March 19, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 1126.

Figure 7
Atocha Station (Madrid), March 26, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 948. The photographs of the victims are arranged in a ribbon pattern, a [then] conventional symbol of mourning after terrorist attacks in Spain. The text circumscribed within the pattern reads: “[Prime Minister] Aznar, remember: the people do not forget.”

Figure 8
Mass demonstration in downtown Madrid, March 13, 2004. Fernando Garrote. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 201.

Figure 9
Inside the Atocha Station Memorial, March 2010. Comunicación CSIC. Xiomara Cantera.

Figure 10
Atocha Station, March 25, 2004. Víctor Fernández. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 67.
In central placard with small mirror: “Look at yourself. It might have been you? (Enough!)”

Figure 11
Santa Eugenia Station, March 20, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 1978. “Angélica González, aged 19.”

Figure 12
El Pozo Station, March 20, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 1609. Text in placard: “Iris, we don't forget you. We love you.”

Figure 13
Atocha Station (Madrid), March 21, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 1460. One of the countless photographs in memory of the victims, in this case Moroccan girl Sanae ben Salah.

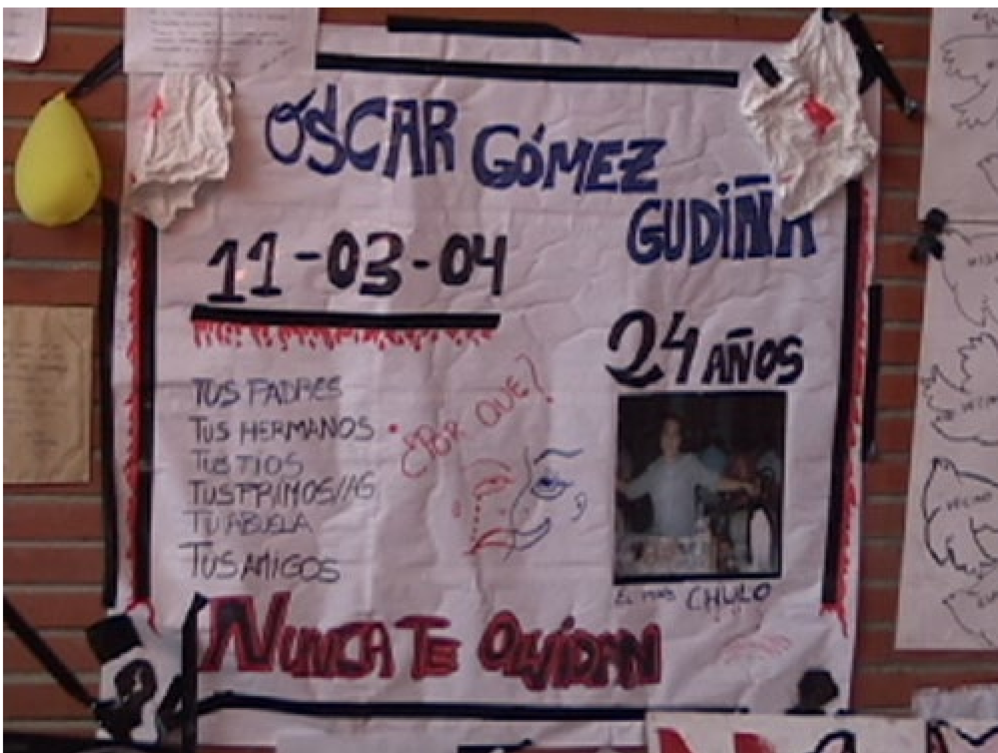

Figure 14
El Pozo Station (Madrid), March 18, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photo no. 1913. A young man's family mourns his death. Text in placard reads: “Your parents, your siblings, your aunts and uncles, your cousins, your grandmother, your friends, will NEVER forget you!”

Figure 15

Atocha Station, June 8, 2004. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero. Archive of Mourning, Digital Photograph no. 664. [“It is our duty not to forget.”]