



Virginia de la Cruz Lichet

UNIVERSITY OF LORRAINE

PhD in Art History from the Complutense University of Madrid (2010). Specialist in post-mortem photography in Spain. She is currently a lecturer at the University of Lorraine, France, and is working on her second doctoral thesis, entitled "Identitat i memòria. Construcció, re-construcció a través de l'art contemporani colombià" (Identity and memory. Construction and reconstruction through Colombian contemporary art).

Paraules clau: retrat, fotografia, difunt, memòria, Catalunya.

Palabras clave: retrato, fotografía, difunto, memoria, Cataluña.

Keywords: portrait, photography, deceased, memory, Catalonia.

Portraits of mourning. Portraits of child death in Catalonia

Similarities and differences¹

Introduction: the birth of photography and the first post- mortem portraits

When photography first saw the light in 1839, nineteenth century society was faced with a new way of looking at the world. From the small lens of a camera, professional photographers – and later on, *amateurs* – could capture the reality around them: their surroundings, the landscape and the people of the time in their private and public lives.

Thanks to scientific progress and the rise of the bourgeoisie, photography, and portraits in particular, reached the height of its splendour during the second half of the nineteenth century. From 1789, economic and political liberalism brought about capitalism and democracy. The bourgeoisie had a new positivist attitude, aiming to achieve a social status that could emulate that of the nobility. In the same way that the aristocracy used portraits as a means of reflecting the social status of the subject, the bourgeois also made the art of the portrait – both pictorial and photographic – their own, in order to present themselves within the new emerging society. The style they favoured was realist,

1

The images presented in this article form part of the exhibition *Imatges de mort. Representacions fotogràfiques de la mort ritualitzada* (Images of death. Photographs of ritualised death), December 2017-June 2018, at the Valencian Museum of Ethnology in Valencia, which has ceded the right to reproduction.

Des de l'inici de la fotografia, el retrat de difunt ha tingut un gran protagonisme i ha continuat realitzant-se fins ben entrada la segona meitat del segle xx; una pràctica que acabarà per integrar-se com una etapa més dins del ritu funerari. Malgrat que hi ha un mode de representació comú per a aquest tipus de retrat, la majoria de les vegades existeixen particularitats –que tenen a veure amb el lloc geogràfic de la seva execució i amb la mirada del fotògraf– que fan que cada retrat sigui únic. En aquest estudi, es presenten quatre casos d'estudi comparatiu de fotografies fetes a la zona de la Mediterrània (des de Girona fins a València) amb similituds i diferències.

Desde el inicio de la fotografía, el retrato de difunto ha tenido gran protagonismo y ha seguido realizándose hasta bien entrada la segunda mitad del siglo xx; una práctica que terminará por integrarse como una etapa más dentro del rito funerario. Pese a que existe un modo de representación común para este tipo de retrato, la mayoría de las veces existen particularidades –que tienen que ver con el lugar geográfico de su ejecución y con la mirada del fotógrafo– que hacen que cada retrato sea único. En este estudio, se presentan cuatro casos de estudio comparativo de fotografías realizadas en la zona del Mediterráneo (desde Girona hasta Valencia) con sus similitudes y diferencias.

Since the beginning of photography, the portrait of the deceased has played a leading role and continued into the second half of the 20th century; a practice that has become integrated as another stage in the funeral rite. Although there is a common style of representation for this type of portrait, there are particular differences to do with the geographical location where the portrait is taken and with the photographer's gaze – that make each portrait unique. In this study, we compare four cases of photographs in the Mediterranean area (from Girona to Valencia) presenting their similarities and differences.

because it was the most useful and faithful to the desired objectives. For this reason photography became the most appropriate tool to represent reality, by usurping the function of painting, at least initially.²

The 1840s were very important in the history of photography. Whilst in 1842 a daguerreotype cost 10.50 francs, by 1846 it still cost 10, so in just four years the cost had barely decreased. Initially, it appeared to be a magical, avant-garde process, but commercial demands soon brought this hegemony to its end (McCauley, 1994: 49). In addition to the remarkable rise of the bourgeoisie and extensive research into improvements in photographic techniques, the arrival in power in France of Louis Napoléon Bonaparte in December 1848 led to a period of stability, which followed a period of revolutions that came to an end that same year. So, the second half of the nineteenth century in France was a prosperous time in every way (commercial development, industry, etc.), and photography benefited as a result. The repercussion of the news of the invention of the daguerreotype was immediate in Europe. Only a few days after the presentation of this technique by Aragon to the Academy of Sciences and Arts in Paris, *El Diario de Barcelona* mentioned this new invention, as is pointed out by Publio López Mondéjar (1999: 15). Similarly, on 27 January 1839 in the *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, an anonymous article in the Sciences and Arts section, entitled “El daguerrotipo. Nuevo descubrimiento” (The daguerreotype. New discovery), states:

Mr Daguerre has found a means of fixing images that are painted on the bottom of a camera obscura, so that they are no longer a fleeting image of objects, but a fixed, permanent impression of them, which can be taken out of the presence of such objects, as if it were a painting or a print. (p. 27)

In Spain, competition between photographers was such that prices dropped significantly. However, they varied depending on the reputation of the photographer and, as

indicated by Publio López Mondéjar, the majority oscillated between the 60 reals of a velló (a velló was the equivalent to 25 cents of a peseta) that Constant was charging in 1842 and the 30 established by Clifford in 1852, probably for standard quarter- and sixth-plate portraits.³ However, the daguerreotype was no longer a unique, luxury item or only accessible to the few.

Louis Désiré Blanquart-Évrard once again expressed the need for the industrialisation of photography when, in 1851, he sent a letter, dated 4 April, to the *Société Héliographique*⁴ (*Identities...*, 1986: 14). The daguerreotype was worth five times more than an average salary; the high prices of developing a print went up to 1 or 1.5 francs, fixed by the commission. In addition to the high cost that held back the democratisation of this medium, there were technical limitations that were very cumbersome for photographers, such as the need to develop only on sunny days, exposure times that were too long, etc. A series of initiatives was proposed as a solution, which included using chemical reaction facilities that would allow photographers to developing their work regardless of the sun, reducing the working time for each development and necessarily lowering prices. Blanquart-Évrard designed a factory capable of producing between 5,000 and 6,000 developed photographs, thereby reducing costs and achieving a price of between 5 and 15 cents, depending on the format of the image (Gautrand, 1986: 199-200). In this way, demand would increase as it would be accessible to more potential customers.

On 28 September 1851, *La Lumière* published another letter from Blanquart-Évrard announcing his intention to set up a “photographic printing press” near Lille, based on the house of Hippolyte Fockeday (3, bis quai de al Haute-Deule, Loos). The idea was perfect, but his company did not prosper due to the continuing high prices of prints (Sagne, 1984: 161).

In a way, Blanquart-Évrard had an intuition of what would completely change the history of photography a few years later. The urgent

2

Regarding the rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe during the nineteenth century and the introduction of photography, see, amongst others, Bicknell, A. (September-October 1895). Life in the Tuileries under the Second Empire. By an inmate of the Palace. *Century Magazine* 50, 5-6, 709-726 and 915-931; Johnson, W. S. (1990). *Nineteenth-Century Photography. An Annotated Bibliography. 1839-1879*. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co.; Frères, M. and Pierson, P. L. (1862). *La photographie considérée comme art et comme industrie. Histoire de la découverte, ses progrès, ses applications, son avenir*. Paris: Hachette; McCauley, E. A. (1994). *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris. 1848-1871*. Dexter, Michigan: Yale University Press. Col. Yale Publications in the History of Art; McCauley, E. A. (1981). *Like-nesses: Portrait Photography in Europe 1850-1870*. Albuquerque: Art Museum. University of New Mexico; Melchior-Bonnet, S. (1994). *Histoire du miroir*. Paris: Auzas Editeurs; Nori, C. (1978). *La fotografia francese dalle origini ai nostri giorni*. Modena: Biblioteca di Storia della Fotografia. Col. Punto e Virgola; Pellerin, D. (1995). *La photographie stéréoscopique sous le Second Empire*. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France; Rouillé, A. and Marbot, B. (1986). *Le corps et son image. Photographies du dix-neuvième siècle*. Nancy: Contrejour; Rouillé, A. (1989). *La photographie en France. Textes et Controverses: une anthologie. 1816-1871*. Paris: Macula.

3

Workers' average salary ranged from 6 to 10 reals a day, although as Publio López Mondéjar states: “Catalan industrial workers earned between 4 and 7 reals for daily shifts of up to 11 hours, whilst Andalusian peasants barely earned two reals [a day...]. It was taken for granted that only members of the well-off classes, landowners, senior government officials or those belonging to the nobility or the up-and-coming bourgeois would go to the early photographic studios”. p. 22-23.

4

The creation of Société Héliographique was announced at *La Lumière* on 13 April 1851, quoted in: *Identities. De Disderi*

need for the democratisation of photography, together with the technical advances that took place from the 1850s — such as the invention of collodion and albumin emulsions, the visiting card format, etc. — would lead to the birth of a new type of business: the photographic studio. This new profession was organised around a closed space, the studio, as a result of a sociological need: producing photographic portraits. The setting up of a studio was linked to the presence of a potential clientèle. In Paris, these establishments increased from 12, in 1844, to 50 in 1851. In Spain, the 1870s and 1880s saw a huge growth in photographic studios, as López Mondéjar (1999: 65) points out. In Barcelona, for example, there was a total of 57 studios in the glorious era of the studio, which grew to 73 by the end of the century; Valencia was also important in this regard, with 32 photographic studios (López Mondéjar, 1999: 65). And it is in this dynamic of the democratisation of photography in which photographic portraits of the deceased must be included. Although this practice took place throughout the Iberian Peninsula, it is interesting to compare the similarities and differences between the portraits of the deceased in different areas of the Mediterranean coast, in a geographical context that ranges from Girona to Valencia.

The deceased child: variations in representation

The first photographic portraits produced within the framework of the funeral rite aimed to “portray” the deceased. Initially, just a single photograph of that moment was taken, due to the high costs of this type of commission. It is important to emphasise that the news article regarding the invention of the daguerreotype published in the *Semanario Pintoresco Español* (1839: 28) insisted that the best way to produce a daguerreotype is with motionless objects, without movement, saying: “The triumph, then, of the invention of Mr Daguerre is in still life or architecture”. Portraits of the deceased would thus prove an easier commission, since we may consider it as a type of still life. The body of the deceased and the features surrounding them were arranged in a specific

manner to achieve a photographic objective. However, this type of portrait did indeed bring about other complications, one such example being photographers' need to take the photograph in the home of the deceased, which would cause problems with lighting, decorative layout, etc., rather than in their studio's controlled environment.

Over the course of almost fifty years, the nineteenth-CENTURY Western world witnessed the emergence of new types of photographic representations of the deceased. This was accompanied by a change in attitude towards death which, to simplify greatly, may be summarised in two clearly opposed attitudes: the denial of death and its acceptance. In response to this attitude, three different types can be distinguished, as identified by Jay Ruby in his book *Secure the Shadow* (1995): the first type, called “*as alive*”, prevailed between the 1840s and 1850s and was especially typical for children. It consisted of representing them as if they were alive, as if at play, even with their eyes open in many cases. The second type, given the name “*as asleep*” was a kind of transition stage, taking place between 1860 and 1880. This type aimed to represent the deceased as if they were asleep, understanding sleep as the first idea of death. Finally, there came the “*as dead*” type by the end of the NINETEENTH CENTURY, which coincided with a change in attitudes to death, where the deceased is shown without simulation and is presented in their new social condition.⁵

By considering the photography undertaken along the Mediterranean coast, it is possible to observe the way in which these three types vary. Initially, it was common to portray the child as if they were alive, imitating poses or situations that could be seen in everyday life, such as the child surrounded by toys, sitting in a chair adapted to their size, or reclining on a sofa. In the portrait of a deceased child taken by Cantó, a photographer from Barcelona who carried out his work during the second half of the nineteenth CENTURY,⁶ we observe this type of representation. Faced by the overwhelming horizontal posture imposed by a lifeless body,

au photomaton. (1986). Exhibition catalogue in the Centre National de la Photographie (Palais de Tokyo). Paris: Centre National de la Photographie et Sainte Nouvelle des Éditions du Chêne. (Photocopy collection), p. 14.

5

This evolution and analysis of typologies, by way of introduction, is derived from the studio mentioned by Jay and Ruby, which, it should be emphasised, focuses exclusively on North American examples. This typology may be applied to other European examples, although in slightly different chronological order, depending on the evolution of photography and the attitudes in each place.

6

There are three photographers registered during the second half of the nineteenth century with the name of Cantó: Joan Cantó Esclús (circa 1833-1874), Augustus Cantó Mas (1856-1879) and Joan Cantó Mas (circa 1858-?). The first of them carried out his professional activity as a photographer between 1874 and 1879, located at Conde del Asalto, 18, mezzanine floor (from 1872 to 1874), and subsequently on the ground floor (from 1876 to 1877). August Cantó Mas was involved in the profession between 1874 and 1879, on the same mezzanine floor. One might think that he took the studio of Joan Cantó Esclús. Meanwhile, Joan Cantó Mas undertook his professional activity between 1874 and 1893, also located at Conde de Asalto, 18, under the trading name Cantó i Ôtnac, but we do not have further more information on him. In all events, it may be said that this portrait was undertaken by the Cantó studio between 1864 and 1893. The portrait's characteristics allow us to assume that it was made in the early 1860s, probably by Joan Cantó Esclús, although it is not possible to confirm this information. (Might there be kinship between these photographers? We can not be sure.)

this type of portrait reflects the desire and intention to conceal the true nature of the event. Here Cantó shows the whole scene, although in a very minimalist setting, with a dark, neutral background and tiled floor that allow for the creation of depth in the scene, a style adopted from Renaissance painters for interiors. The only feature that appears in the image is the sofa with the little girl resting on it. The small pillow allows the girl's torso to be supported and lifted, and it can be observed how her feet have been placed together, in small boots, to prevent them falling apart in a lifeless manner which would reveal the artifice of the whole scene. The same thing has been done with the little girl's hands, which are resting on her stomach to avoid them falling apart. Nevertheless, the rigidity of the lower part of her small body,

difficult to conceal, is evident (de la Cruz Lichet, 2017: 39).

Less common, but also a type that was habitually used, was the representation of the child in their cradle, or bed, as in Antoni Esplugas Puig's portrait of a deceased child in a cot, circa 1896 and 1899.⁷ This portrait shows the way in which the photographer decided to choose to present the child's side profile, thus avoiding the rigid frontal nature and rigorous profile that was common at this same time in other places, as was the case of Galician photographer Maximino Reboredo. This option gives a little more gentleness to the image since it offers a closer and less harsh portrait. We also see that the child is in the cot with his eyes half open. There are no flowers and the child is placed in a seemingly more natural way, which may

7

We can date this photograph between 1896 and 1899, since on the back of the photograph we can discern certain information, such as the address of the studio, located in Plaça del Teatre, no. 7, 4t. Thanks to the Clifford directory, a website on nineteenth-century photographers in Spain put together by FotoConnexió, we can consult and ascertain the production dates of this type of material.

Visit: <http://www.fotoconnexio.org/clifford/>



Cantó (Barcelona). Portrait of deceased little girl on a sofa.
Business card. Circa 1865-1901. JULIO JOSÉ GARCÍA MENA COLLECTION.



A. Esplugas (Barcelona). Portrait of a deceased child in a cot.
Cabinet. Circa 1876-1904. JAVIER SÁNCHEZ PORTAS COLLECTION.

raise the question of whether or not this portrait was actually taken posthumously. However, the fact that it was taken in the cot indicates that it is indeed a post-mortem portrait, as the family would surely have opted for another setting if the child were alive⁸ (de la Cruz Lichet, 2017: 48).

Little by little, representing deceased children as alive started to seem forced, unnatural, and people would soon lean towards a more appropriate image: the sleeping child. So, representations of children in their everyday surroundings led the way to representations of them placed on a delicately decorated post or table as a way to *present them* to the community. Therefore, vigils were chosen as the ideal moment to take photographic portraits, as they constituted the stage of the funeral rite for presenting the deceased to the entire community, who would say their last farewells and the necessary prayers.

Vigil comes from the Latin word *vigilia* (watchfulness), expressing people's desire to watch over and protect the body from the spirits before it is buried. However, this moment has a much more complex meaning and purpose: the laying out of the corpse, the well-being of the soul of the deceased and the psychological needs of relatives. In this way, this stage eases the anxieties of the most affected individuals and the group that witnesses the event (Gondar Portasany, 1987: 32; Puckle, 1929: 61-62). The custom of watching over the deceased is very ancient, but it did not always have the same purpose. According to Habenstein and Lamers, this custom comes from the Hebrews, where it was carried out in the form of a vigil at the grave itself. In the Greek tradition, it was customary to wait three days before the deceased were buried, a duration which is maintained by Poles and Italians according to Kephart, although in these cases it was habitually one night. Later, the Romans made this custom their own. And from there it passed to the first Christians and has been maintained, although with variations, to this day (Habenstein-Lamers, 1955: 67; Kephart, 1950: 640-641). But what is the purpose of a vigil? In the Roman era,

according to Apuleius, it was intended to prevent witches from mutilating the body; amongst the ancient Germanic tribes, it was a celebration in honour of the deceased; and amongst the Anglo-Saxons there is a legend that says that the body could be possessed by the devil, for which reason the corpse was not to be left alone until it was buried (testimony of the cleric Wace in *La crónica ascendente de los Normandía*, 1160). Therefore, from the twelfth century, the widespread idea was to watch over the deceased to prevent spirits from snatching its body, thus bringing to mind the Galician *corpo aberto*. For this reason, in thirteenth-century France, the body was laid out in the Church and kept under lock and key at night (Heran, 2000: 46-47; Lecouteux, 1999: 74-76). Moving forward to a more contemporary era – the nineteenth AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES –, the vigil acquires a significance of psychological restructuring, serving as a method for dealing with the anxieties that occur during this stage.

As Howard C. Raether states, the opportunity to see and observe the lifeless body of a loved one is a positive experience, as it allows those around them to adapt to the new situation. According to Raether, not seeing the body is an opportunity to deny death and convince oneself that the traumatic event has not occurred; seeing it is the first step towards accepting death, affirming it and seeing evidence of it (Raether, 1978: 292-293). The vigil is characterised by hospitality, a fundamental feature of the community, which encourages the funeral rite to be carried out properly. The family must feel supported, and this moment ends up becoming an expression of honouring the deceased, but also as a reason for a community get-together (Van Gennep, 1998: 558; Villa Posse, 1993: 121-125). The purpose of the group is to divert the attention of the affected family members and reduce the anxiety caused by the loss. There are, according to Gondar Portasany, three features which allow this distension, which are called “attention diversion mechanisms”: the get-together or visits, the *leria* (small talk) and the games and *falcatruadas* (jokes)

8

View the exhibition catalogue/*Imatges de mort: Representacions fotogràfiques de la mort ritualitzada*. (2017). Exhibition catalogue. Valencia: Valencian Museum of Ethnology.

(Gondar Portasany, 1982: 117-135).⁹ These moments alternate with others, the purpose of which is to channel anxiety and anger via the least destructive routes: as is the case of *planto* (crying). In this way, mechanisms are put in place which allow the community to be close to and support the grieving relatives. Given the trauma of death and the effects it causes (loss of appetite, distraction, and ultimately, total apathy), the vigil becomes, on the one hand, a time lapse that allows griever to adapt to life following the death of their loved one, including the consequent social restructuring of the family within their community. On the other hand, it is like community therapy, the features of which accentuate the most vital aspects of life in order to combat death, such as eating and drinking, jokes about death and laughing, all to an excessive degree with the sole purpose of confronting death, so that the funeral rite becomes a ritual of action (Di Martino, 1975: 214-229; Di Nola, 2007: 46-49; Metcalf-Huntington, 2006: 68-71).

As such, the portraits of the deceased were usually taken during the vigil. Gradually, children would be presented and represented

with the aim of seeking a more and more realistic final appearance, without forgetting that it ought to be gentle and delicate. For this reason, one of the options was to present the child as if they were an “Ophelia”, surrounded by floral garlands to imitate a kind of heavenly paradise, as in the portrait taken by photographer M. Piqué de Vilassar de Dalt. Although the coffin would slowly be included in the scene, as a container of a flower-surrounded body, symbolising the start of a new life under their floral shroud, as we see in the photography by M. Verdés, whose studio was located at Carrer Emparo Guillén 6, Cabanyal, Valencia. In the case of the portrait by Piqué, circa 1932-1933, the use of blurring manages to erase the features that surround the scene – not usually arranged for the portrait – to focus our gaze on the small body. However, it is possible to see neutral-coloured fabrics used as a backdrop and plants that cover the bed frame and background. The child is slightly turned towards the camera, as was the custom. In the portrait by Verdés, dated between 1928 and 1945, we may observe the way in which the photographer has taken a step further in the type of presentation of the deceased

9

Regarding this topic, see Di Nola, (2007: 243-279); Gondar Portasany (1987: 34-47); Gondar Portasany (1982: 117-135); Puckle (1926: 102-111); Walter (1990: 151-158).

M. Piqué (Vilassar de Dalt, Barcelona). Portrait of deceased child surrounded by flowers. Postcard. Circa 1932-1933. JAVIER SÁNCHEZ PORTAS COLLECTION.



child: the child no longer appears laid out on a table, but inside the coffin, and is placed on a structure that allows his torso to be raised. This resource meant a new type of presentation emerged: the child shrine. It was no longer a question of merely producing a portrait of the child, but of sanctifying them by imitating those Baroque sculptural groups of saints. These shrines defy the horizontal position imposed by coffins by means of different levels of depth. The layout, the backdrop, the arrangement of the child and all the features were paid very careful attention to. Nothing interrupts the scene.

Whilst one of the evolutionary features of the portrait of deceased children was this passing from the arrangement of the body on a sofa to a coffin, as has been observed, another feature that emerged between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries was the presentation of the child outside. In the portrait taken by an anonymous photographer in Valencia at the end of the nineteenth century (or beginning of the twentieth), we see the presentation of a child placed on a table, perhaps also in a subtly covered coffin, or turned towards us thanks to the placement of some pillows. Surprisingly, the photographer has not cut the image further, since we can see both sides, which again indicates the simulation of an inside portrait, when it is in fact an outside one which has been staged for photographic objective. In the last portrait, a photograph by Lázaro Vert, San Andrés del Palomar, Barcelona, in 1902, we are already with no need to conceal it. Moreover, the natural background of the wall is taken advantage of to blend in with the floral decoration placed on the table and with the decoration painted on the secondary cardboard support; decorated with a floral frame, these same floral features appear to give this sense of visual continuity (de al Cruz Lichet, 2017: 68). In this example, the photographer used his artistic creativity to create a compositional and iconographic unity of the whole scene.

As well as the photograph of the deceased child, as an individual portrait taken at the time of the vigil or outside of the house, we



M. Verdés (Cabanyal, Valencia). Portrait of a deceased child in a coffin. Postcard. Circa 1928-1945. JAVIER SÁNCHEZ PORTAS COLLECTION.



Anonymous (Valencia).
Portrait of deceased child
on a table. Postcard. End of
the nineteenth century to the
beginning of the twentieth.

JOSÉ HUGUET ARCHIVE.

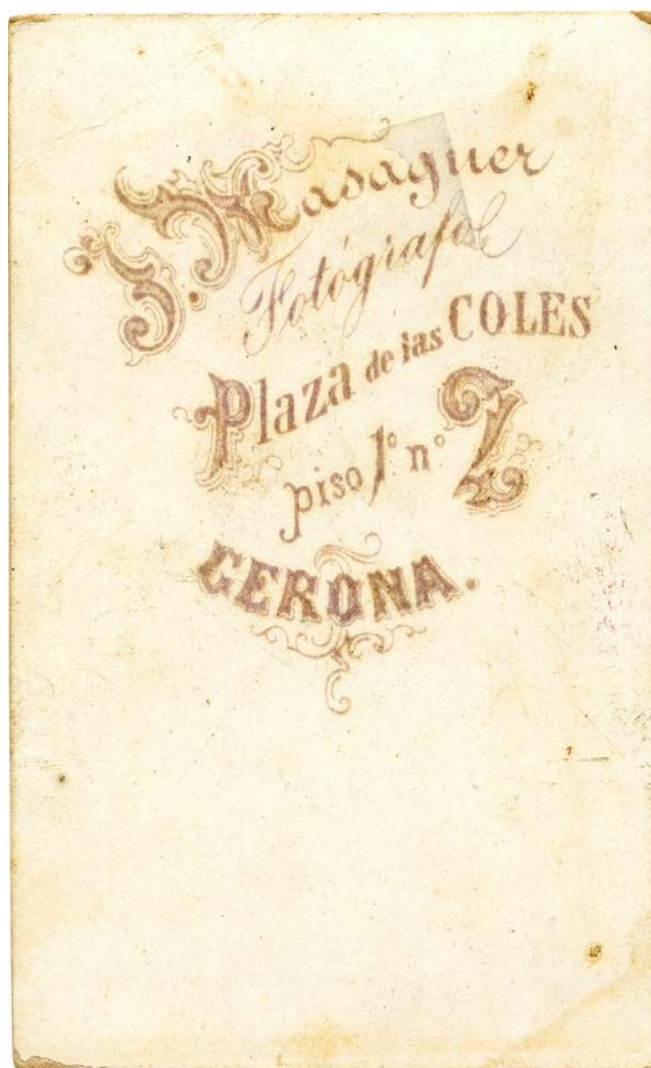


**Lázaro Vert (Sant Andreu del
Palomar, Barcelona).** Portrait of
a deceased child outside.
23.4 x 28.2 cm. 11 August 1902.

JAVIER SÁNCHEZ PORTAS COLLECTION.

must not forget the portraits of mourning, the group portraits in which the mother or father – or both – appear represented along with the deceased child in their arms, as if it were a family portrait. The posthumous portrait of mourning has the role of an icon for the afflicted family member. Being able to look at it is part of the mourning ritual, and it was common for first the painter, and later

the photographer to present the deceased as if they were alive. The production of posthumous portraits was at its height between 1830 and 1860. They were named posthumous mourning portraits by Phoebe Lloyd. That name was chosen because these portraits were commissioned by the family for use during the mourning period. Therefore, the portrait was looked at on repeated occa-



sions, particularly coinciding with the date of the death (Ariés, 1983: 268; Frank, 2000: 280; Juillerat, 2000: 6; Lloyd, 1981: 105). At the same time, these portraits of mourning were produced to present an image that included the parental bond between mother (or father) and child.

In this way, the portrait produced by the Masaguer Photography studio, the trading name of which was J. Masaguer i Fotografia de Joaquín Masaguer, which was in business between 1858 and 1876, allows us to observe a portrait of a mother and her son. In these cases it is more difficult to discern if it is a portrait of a deceased child. However, we may frequently detect certain features that indicate this, such as the position of the child, the placing of fallen hands, the rigidity, or the pose of the mother or father. This photograph, produced in Girona circa

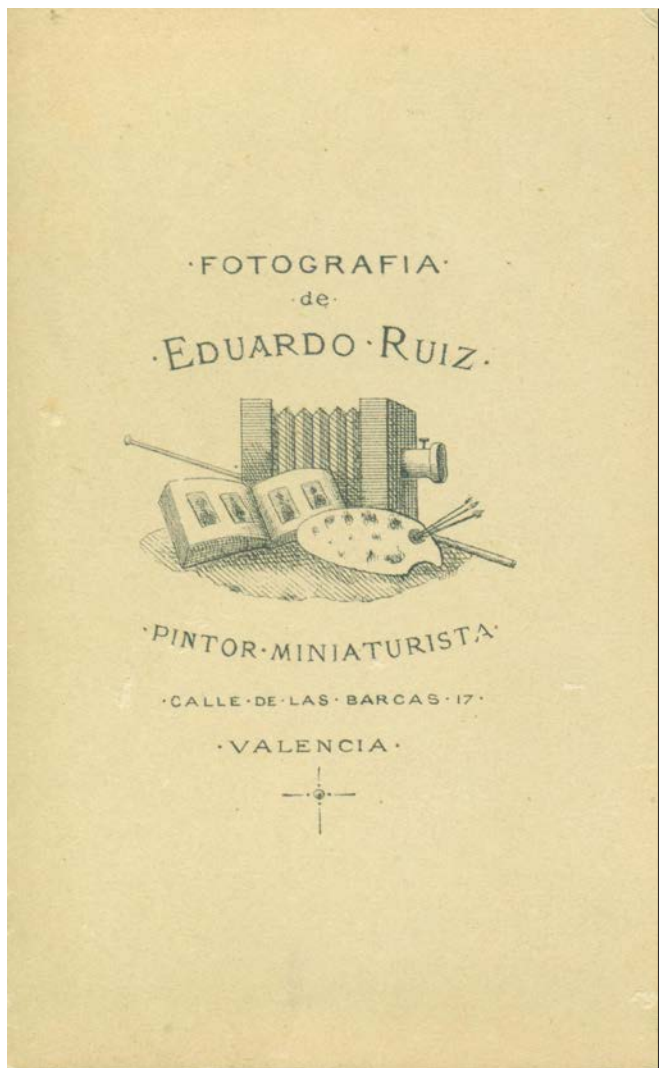
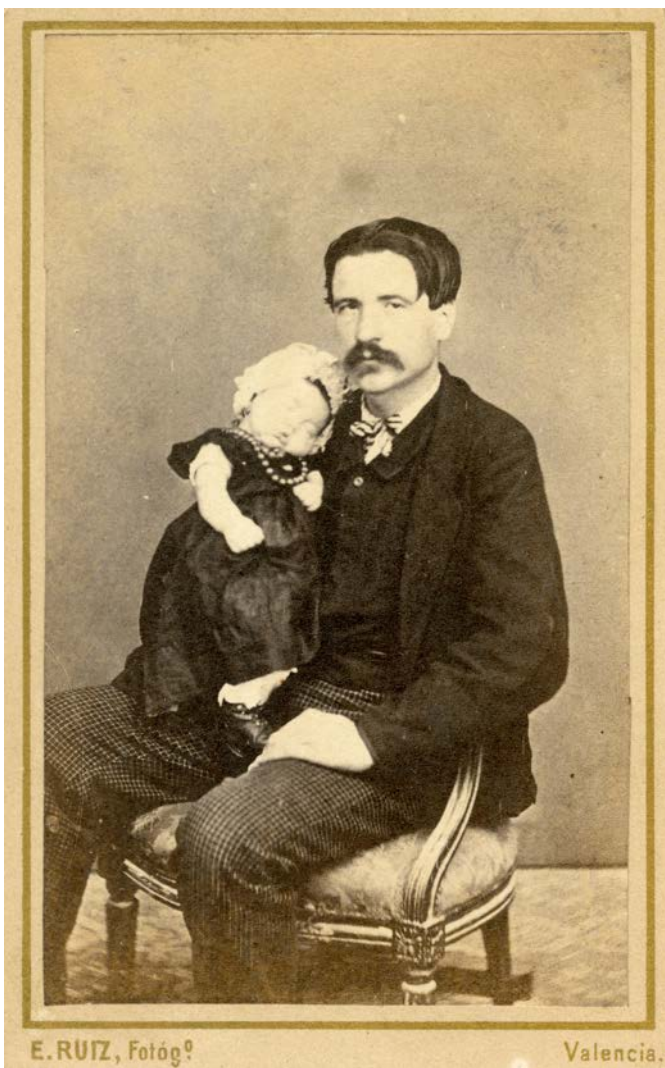
1870-1876,¹⁰ presents the mother sitting with the child in her arms with a neutral background. The portrait produced by Eduardo Ruiz made between 1860 and 1880 is very similar. This photographer had his studio at Carrer de les Barques 17, Valencia. In this example, we see a father with his little girl in arms. Here the pose of the child is more obvious: the girl falls under her own weight, as if sleeping on her father's shoulder. In these cases, the evidence of death is hidden, concealed; a more “as alive” presentation is sought. These two portraits coincide in date with the “as alive” style defined by Jay Ruby, which is unsurprising given the type of pose. Later, these portraits also changed and the coffin was allowed to be seen, with the parents around it looking at their child for the last time.

Masaguer Photography (Girona). Portrait of a mother with a deceased baby. Business card. Circa 1860-1880.

JAVIER SÁNCHEZ PORTAS COLLECTION.

10

We can ascertain this date because on the back of the photograph we find the publicity ink stamp of the photographic studio which states the address, located at Plaça de les Cols, no. 2, 1st floor. According to the Clifford directory, this photographer had a studio at this address between 1870 and 1876, which gives a slightly more accurate idea of the date that this portrait was undertaken. Visit: <http://www.fotoconnexio.org/clifford/>.



Conclusion

Through these Catalan and Valencian examples, we have been able to observe the similarities and differences between different portraits of the deceased. However, there are coinciding features that correspond more to an era and its respective attitudes towards death, than to a particular geographical region. However, there are small differences in some, for instance in the clothing of the deceased child, or in the choice of background fabric that might be decorative to a greater or lesser extent. Despite their differences, post-mortem portraits, or portraits of the deceased, have some universal features, at least in Western societies with a Catholic tradition. One stage of the funeral rite in particular is presented in these portraits: the vigil. What is more, the photograph became another stage of the funeral rite, since the taking of the portrait was a time

of great importance to the family, both in order to remember the face of their deceased child and capture the essence of that tragic day. The image also allows their memory to be honoured, to include the deceased child, despite their premature death, in the family album and, therefore, in the family history. These images were sometimes the only portrait of the deceased, and so they also helped loved ones deal with grief and overcome the period of mourning. Thus, this type of portrait had many functions that were superimposed on each other: from the psychological needs of the closest family members, who needed to overcome the traumatic event, to the representation of the day of the death within the community. In this way, these images not only integrated the deceased into the family history, they also depicted a proper funeral rite in case of media coverage. All these features are present

Eduardo Ruiz Fotógrafo (Valencia). Portrait of a father with his deceased baby. Business card. Circa 1860-1890.

JAVIER SÁNCHEZ PORTAS COLLECTION.

in these portraits. In turn, they also reveal how attitudes changed over the times: from the denial of death, with the representations of the deceased “as alive” or “as asleep”, to the inevitable acceptance of death by the nineteenth CENTURY, with the inclusion of the coffin in the image.

As Philippe Dubois (2002) affirms, the photograph:

[...] has been attributed with a credibility, an absolutely unique, real weight. And this irreducible virtue of bearing witness rests mainly in the conscience of the mechanical process of production of the photographic image: [...] the photograph as a mirror of what is real, the photograph as a transformation of what is real, and the photograph as a print of what is real. (Dubois, 2002: 19-21)

However, “the photograph is not just an ‘image’, it is also, by nature, a truly iconic act, an image, if you wish, but as work ‘in action’ [...] an ‘image-act’” (Dubois, 2002: 11) and “to cut from life to perpetuate the dead” (Dubois, 2002: 148-149) and to preserve it thus from “its own loss”. (The emphasis has been added by the author). Although at their beginnings photographic portraits of the deceased inherited and adopted some types of pictorial representation, post-mortem photography acquired its own language over the years. The images mentioned of those unmoving silhouettes are the irrefutable proof of their existence, and they became true obsessions with memory. A moment came when, as Belting (2007: 181) indicates:

[...] the “creation of images was more important than the possession of images”, because it was a way of actively defying the disruption of community life, whilst at the same time restoring the natural order: the deceased members of a community were thus given back the status needed to be present in the social nucleus [...] The image was not only a means of compensation, but, with the act of supplanting, a “being” was acquired that could present itself on behalf of a body, without it being

refuted by the appearance of the body that had ceased to be. (Belting, 2007: 181)

In this way, the portrait of the deceased had two main functions that depended on two very different moments: the moment in which the photograph was taken during the vigil and the moment in which it is viewed, taking place in a time-place that could be extended to a greater or lesser extent. In the first case, the portrait took on an active role during the funeral rite to actively defy death and restore the natural order within the community, as indicated by Belting. In the second case, however, there was a move from action to non-action, or an act of contemplation, that was decontextualised to a greater or lesser extent from the fact that it was part of a family and community history. If it was viewed by the members of the family who commissioned it, then it served as a means of overcoming the period of mourning and as a way of honouring the memory of the dead. However, if later generations with less of a bond to the deceased, or even strangers, looked at it, then the contemplation of these portraits becomes a reflection on ourselves, on our attitude towards loss and absence and, without a doubt, on death. In spite of everything, Antonio Ansón tells us:

We also have portraits of death. We no longer see absence in these images. The absence corresponds to a photograph which, belonging to a time gone by, resides, lives on. The absence continues to be enriched to the extent that it belongs to the lives of the living. It is a latent image, because it does not cease to create a current as it flows from inward reflection. Portraits of loss are there to grow, until they become a photograph, living with which turns into an lacklustre custom, the lessening clarity of the event causing the memory of it to eventually crumble away. (Ansón, 2007: 79) ■

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ansón, A. (2007). *El limpiabotas de Daguerre*. Murcia: Centro Municipal Puertas de Castilla. Col. de Ensayo.

Ariés, P. (1983). *Images de l'homme devant la mort*. Paris: Seuil.

Belting, H. (2007). *Antropología de la imagen*. Madrid: Katz. Col. Conocimiento, 3032.

El daguerrotipo. Nuevo descubrimiento. *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, 27 January 1839, 4, 27-29.

Di Martino, E. (1975). *Morte e pianto rituales (del lamento fúnebre antico al pianto di María)*. Turin: Boringhieri. (Col. Universale Scientifica Boringhieri, volume doppio, 123-124).

Di Nola, A. M. (2007). *La muerte derrotada. Antropología de la muerte y el duelo*. Barcelona: Belacqva.

Dubois, P. (2002). *El acto fotográfico. De la representación a la recepción*. Barcelona: Paidós Ibérica. (Col. Paidós Comunicación, 20).

Frank, R. J. (2000). *Love and Loss. American portrait and mourning miniatures*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Gautrand, J. C. (1986). *Hippolyte Bayard. Naissance de l'image photographique*. Amiens: Trios Cailloux.

Gondar Portasany, M. (1987). *A morte*. Santiago de Compostela: Museo do Pobo Galego.

Gondar Portasany, M. (1982). Velatorio e manipulación de tensions. In *I Coloquio de Antropología de Galicia*. Santiago de Compostela: Museo do Pobo Galego. Col. Cuadernos do Seminario de Sargadelos, 45.

Habenstein, R. W. and Lamers, W. M. (1955). *The history of American funeral directing*. Milwaukee: National Funeral Directors Association of the United States.

Héran, E. (2000). *Le dernier portrait*. Exhibition catalogue. Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux.

Juillerat, V. (2000). *Vie et mort dans la photographie post-mortem*. Mémoire de licence. Master's thesis. Art History Section under the supervision of professor Michel Thévoz. University of Lausanne.

Kephart, W. M. (1950). Status alter death. *American Sociological Review*, vol. 15, 5 (October), 635-643.

Lecouteux, C. (1999). *Fantasmas y aparecidos en la Edad Media*. Majorca: José J. de Olañeta.

López Mondéjar, P. (1999). *150 años de fotografía en España*. Barcelona: Lunwerg.

Lloyd, P. (1981). A young boy in his first and last suit. *The Minneapolis Institute of Arts bulletin*, vol. LXIV (1978-1980), 105-111.

Metcalf, P. and Huntington, R. (2006). *Celebrations of Death. The anthropology of mortuary ritual*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McCauley, E. A. (1994). *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris. 1848-1871*. Dexter, Michigan: Yale University Press. Col. Yale Publications in the History of Art.

Puckle, B. (1926). *Funeral customs. Their origin and development*. London: T. Werner Laurie.

Raether, H. C. (1978). The place of the funeral: the role of the funeral director in contemporary America. In R. Fulton, E. Markusen, G. Owen and J. L. Scheiber (Eds.), *Death and Dying. Challenge and Change* (p. 289-295). San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company, University of California.

Ruby, J. (1995). *Secure the shadow. Death and photography in America*. London: The MIT Press. Cambridge (Massachusetts).

Sagne, J. (1984). *L'atelier du photographe. 1840-1940*. Paris: Presses de la Renaissance.

Van Gennep, A. (1998). *Le folklore français. Du berceau à la tombe*. Paris: Robert Laffont.

Villa Posse, E. (1993). *Muerte, cultos y cementerios*. Santa Fe de Bogotá: Disloque Editores. Col. Investigación y Desarrollo.

Walter, T. (1990). *Funerals and how to improve them*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

Identités. De Disderi au photomaton. (1986). Exhibition catalogue in the Centre National de la Photographie (Palais de Tokyo). Paris: Centre National de la Photographie et Sainte Nouvelle des Éditions du Chêne. (Photocopy collection)

Imatges de mort. Representacions fotogràfiques de la mort ritualitzada. (2017). Exhibition catalogue. Valencia: Valencian Museum of Ethnology.