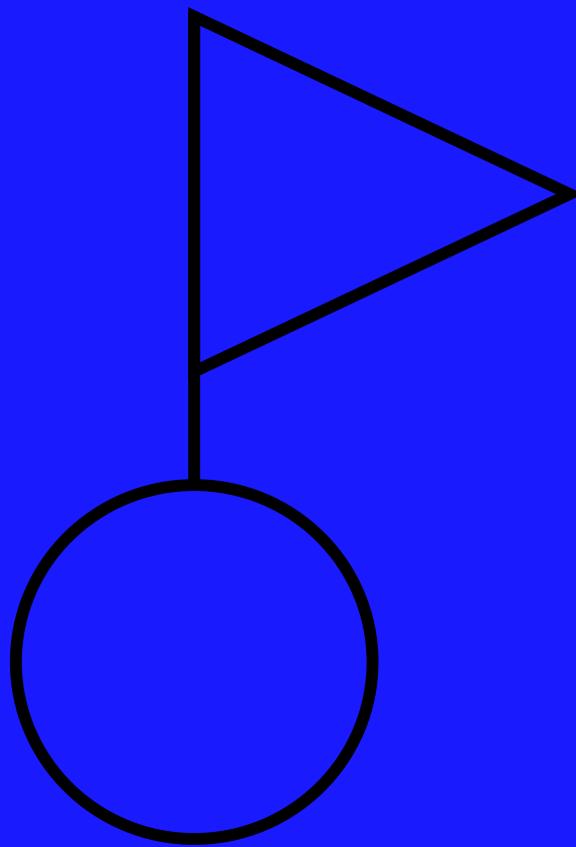


Hypnagogia and the colonisation of memory







Sleep is the sheer delight of forgetfulness.
 If you dream, it's because memory remembers
 what you have forgotten of the obscure.
 – Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*.



John Henry Fuseli, *Nachtmahr* [The Nightmare], 1781. Oil on canvas. 101.6 cm × 127 cm.
 Detroit Institute of Arts, Midtown Detroit, Michigan.

You wake up. You open your eyes and see. You try to move but you can't move. Soon, you realize the sound is disturbed. You feel "something" that paralyzes you. Your heart is beating faster, harder, heavier. You want to speak but you can't. Your eyes go frantically from top to bottom; left, then right. You are testing your senses. Still you can't move. You think you are sweating, you must be sweating, but you don't feel it. You want to scream. You feel helpless. Panic reaches the highest point. You lose consciousness and faint... Time passes by. When awake, you don't know if it was a dream or if it was real. It didn't seem like a dream since what you experienced didn't have this mist that belongs to dreams.

This phenomenon is called hypnagogia or sleep paralysis. Psychologists have related this phenomenon to a disruption of REM sleep which normally keeps the muscles in an lethargic state to prevent the sleeper from acting out his dream. Different cultures refer to it as a "ghost pressing on body" or "what sits heavily on something" since sufferers of hypnagogia feel awake in the mind but paralyzed in the body.



Masao Adachi, *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, 1969. Film still.

Landscape's hypnagogia

Some cultures believe that our body is the memory of our ancestors. Thus, our body carries previous memories and remembering becomes a way of restoring forgotten memories to the body.¹ I imagine the Spanish landscape as an asleep body which suffers hypnagogia. It is a witness that can't talk and rarely moves. Perhaps something sits heavily on the body, pressing on it, preventing it from acting out of a dream that holds the memories and myths of the defined territory, our national history. But what could this paralysis mean for a landscape? And what could cause it?

Filmmaker and activist Masao Adachi developed a film theory called *fukeiron* or theory of the landscape. It hypothesizes that systems of power – which aren't fully visible – are better seen by filming landscapes and places, rather than people. With this method, Masao intended to reveal structures of oppression set up by political systems that cause social alienation.² What is interesting about this method is the capacity to look what lies beyond the specific object, in this case the landscape, in order to create a different image of what we think reality is representing.

When flying over the Spanish landscape, it seems like any other territory with a diversity of rocky surfaces, high mountains, green meadows, forests, shores and cliffs. If one takes a picture one sees nothing more than the landscape. Could we see an image of the landscape different from what we think we see? What could this reveal?



David Ortiz Juan, *Los Hechos son Hechos* [Facts are Fabricated], 2014. Film still.

Obfuscated history

We have been told that we are at the ‘end of history’. One of the main premises comes from the creation of a single thought, mirrored by the end of ideologies. Another discourse comes from the overabundance of history, consequently, of memory. But as Paolo Virno puts in *Déjà Vu and the End of History*: “the idea of an ‘end of history’ is not the consequence of excess, as Nietzsche hypothesizes, but rather the consequence of its obfuscation.”⁴ Is there anything obfuscated in the Spanish landscape, and therefore, the Spanish memory?

Remember the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the subsequent dictatorship that lasted until 1975?⁴ People’s courts condemn citizens of the other band to be led to what is known as *paseo* [walk].⁵ In this case it is exactly the opposite situation of the hypnagogic feeling. You are awake but you would prefer to be dreaming. You don’t want to move but you can’t stop walking. The smell of cold metal pushes your back to keep walking. You have been judged without a trial and found guilty for belonging to the wrong side – any side. You must go underground. A body merges with another body.

Years later, in 1977, democracy is restored in Spain after a turbid transition period of two years. A transition which included what came to be called *el pacto del olvido* [pact of forgetting] between Spain’s new political order and the outgoing dictatorship. The pact has prevented subsequent generations of Spaniards from prosecuting crimes committed under Franco’s long rule, due to an Amnesty Law that absolves anyone responsible of political crimes committed during the Civil War and the dictatorship;⁶

a law that currently violates international human rights.⁷ *Paseos*, and other mass killings, led to the formation of thousands of mass graves throughout the territory.

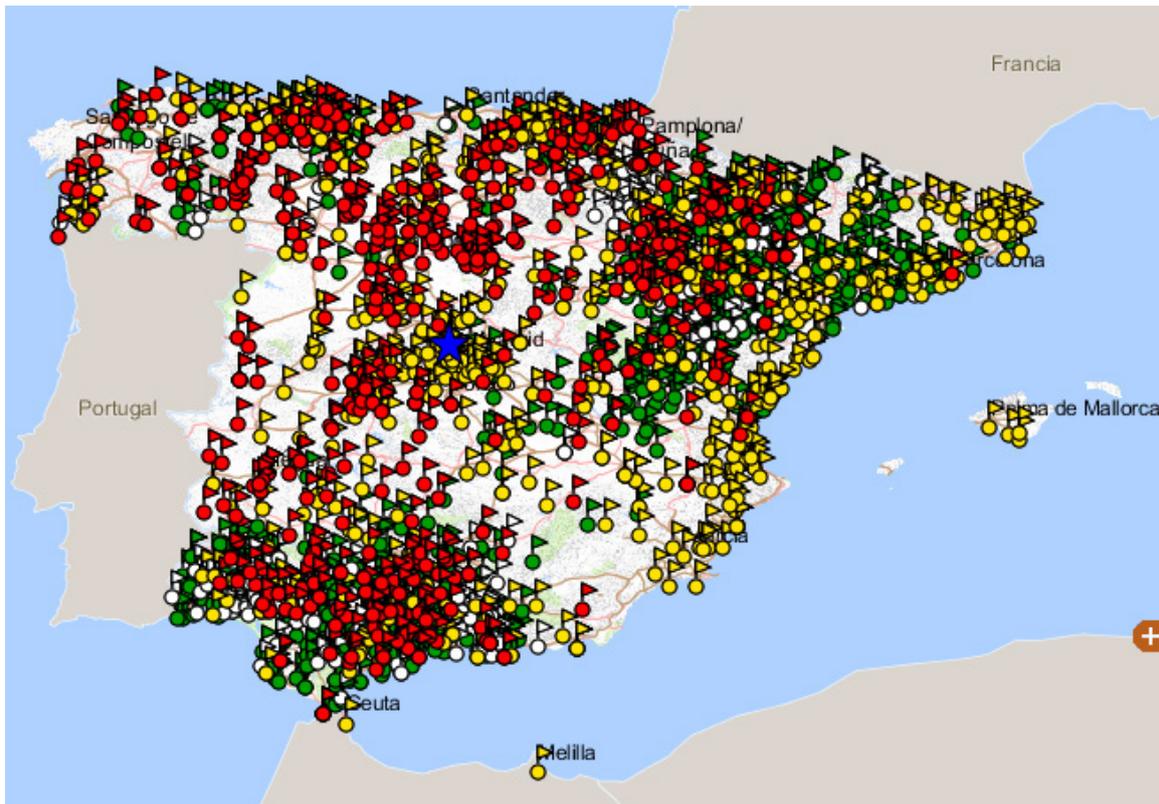
The dictatorial regime undertook the recovery and reparation of the memory and remains of those fallen in battle defending his ideology, but never that of the defeated, except in the case of few Republicans remains that ended up in *El Valle de los Caídos* [The Valley of the Fallen], a monumental temple raised to glorify and “perpetuate the memory of those who fell in our glorious Crusade.”⁸ The memory of a side, not a nation’s memory. The memory of the defeated fell into silence and oblivion. Once in democracy, the same policy has remained, silence and oblivion. The graves and remains of the defeated are still a taboo in Spanish society.

Exceeded the early years of democracy, and the fear of a new confrontation, relatives of the disappeared began a struggle for the recovery of both, the remains and the memory of their relatives. Since 2000, several regional associations for the Recovery of Historical Memory were created by the descendants of the missing. In October 2007, the Congress of Deputies approved the Law of Historical Memory, a bill proposed by Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero during his tenure as president of the government with the Socialist Party.

The Law of Historical Memory mainly recognizes victims from both sides of the Spanish Civil War, gives grant rights to victims and descendants of the victims of the Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship, and condemns Franco’s regime, but in any case takes responsibility for the opening of the mass graves. The law leaves the exhumations in hands of the regional associations, limited to small and insufficient aid. These private associations lack economic means, making exhumations and DNA tests an almost impossible task. The law became a gesture.

Between 2010 and 2012, these associations created a map with the locations and documentation of all mass graves,⁹ and a short list with the names of the disappeared. Due to the aforementioned Amnesty Law and the ineffectiveness of the state, today there is still more than 114,000 missing persons,¹⁰ more than 2,000 mass graves scattered throughout the Spanish territory where lie opponents of the coup and the dictatorship. This policy has kept open the social and political wound.

Although contemporary power rests increasingly on infrastructure and impersonal forms (in opposition to traditional forms of power based on representation and persons),¹¹ political struggle remains a struggle over representations.¹² We could say that in this context the political struggle is conditioned by the representation of a colonized historical memory. Can memory be colonized? If so, who is the colonizer? What could it mean for the memory of a country? And for the memory of oneself? Can a person’s memory suffer hypnagogia?



Map with all illegal mass graves in Spain created by the regional associations for Historical Memory between 2010 and 2012.

The colonisation of memory

Here, landscapes are places associated with negative memories. Silence and trauma become personified into an oppressing feeling passing generation after generation. The state, with its refusal to annul the Amnesty Law and prosecute the perpetrators of the atrocities undertaken during the dictatorial period and its ambiguity against the more than 2,000 mass graves, reveals its denial towards historical memory. Thereby, imposes its own version of history and truth. A version, and this shouldn't be forgotten, that comes from a dictator who extends his power posthumously.

Bertolt Brecht said that “the truth should not be something general, high and ambiguous, since these are the gaps where the lie slips.”¹³

2014, on a cynic broadcast by the Spanish state TV channel covering the International Day of the Disappeared,¹⁴ the presenter speaks of the worldwide injustice of the more than 80,000 disappeared people in the world due to political conflict. In the video, several countries from all continents were mentioned – mainly so-called third world countries. In the news, the testimony of an African father who has no news of his three daughters, lost twenty years ago, emphasizes the suffering and injustice endured by the man. The message is clear: something has to be done. But curiously, and this is where the lie slips, in the two minutes of the covered news, there is no mention of the more than 114,000 disappeared in Spain. We become the colonized spectator.



3D version of the newsreader broadcasted from the Spanish state TV (RTVE) on 2014.

The ultimate weapon of the colonizer is his ability to impose his image over that of the colonized.¹⁵ In terms of historical memory, it becomes an inwards colonisation of the individual that subjugates its citizens by psychological force through the conquest of the narrative of history — our memory. A narrative shaped by spreading a fear of national disunity,¹⁶ seconded by the maintenance of monuments, statues and street names of the old regime. These are some of the signs of the colonisation of the historical memory, a colonisation based on image making.

We witness the politics of memory, informing us what memories we should bring to light, and what memories we should keep in the shadows as something that has never happened. But at any moment, memory will do what is meant to do, remember what you have forgotten from the obscure. It is an arduous task, like taking an over-exposed image and try to rescue a bit of its burned shadows. The result might not be a sharp glossy HD image but a grainy one. Is this the ultimate imagery of the absence? What if the imagery of historical memory detaches of its current outdated version?

The landscape of the possible

In the current context where utopian discourses has been dismantled and overcome by the totalizing imposition of the discourse of financial economy, it seems we are losing the ability to imagine since we have been convinced there is no room for alternatives.

According to Jacques Rancière, images change our gaze and the landscape of the possible if they are not anticipated by their meaning and do not anticipate their effects.¹⁷ In order to unveil hidden systems of power, to break the hypnagogic paralysis, the way historical memory is treated has to challenge its static scenery as well as the images that represent them. Thus, the collective fabric of the Spanish society needs to undertake a process of truth in order to reconcile itself with history and its victims. We know that the given hegemonic discourse of history presents a false reality of the facts. The struggle to unlock the current situation requires the creation of new images and scenarios other than the official version.

To give an end, and as an advance to the following part of this essay, I would go back to the imaginary of Mahmud Darwish. The thought of the poet serves to delimitate the scope of the written: “When the image is identical to reality, the imagination is compelled to be neutral. Therefore let the image of the object lie to the object so we can see what lies beyond the object, and in the light of that vision see what saves us from nothingness.”¹⁸ Will these images free the Spanish historical memory from the spirit of its colonization?



David Ortiz Juan, *Los Hechos son Hechos* [Facts are Fabricated], 2014. Film still.

Footnotes

- 1
Santu Mofokeng, Chasing Shadows, *Animism* (Volume I), Sternberg Press (Edition 2010, New York), 81.
- 2
“It’s a very simple matter. All the landscapes which one faces in one’s daily life, even those such as the beautiful sites shown on a postcard, are essentially related to the figure of a ruling power. This was the starting point for our discussions on the Theory of Landscape.” Masao Adachi. <http://www.midnighteye.com/interviews/masao-adachi>.
- 3
Paolo Virno, *Déjà Vu and the End of History*, Verso (2015), 70.
- 4
The Spanish Civil War that took place from 1936 to 1939, was fought between the Republicans, who were loyal to the democratic elected left-leaning Second Spanish Republic, and the Nationalists, a falangist (fascist) group who gave a coup led by General Francisco Franco.
- 5
Paseo [walk] is the euphemism taken from cinema which refers to a number of episodes of violence and political repression occurred during the Spanish Civil War, which took place both on the Republican side as by the member of the coup d’état. It was the product of the performance of popular courts that usually ended with the execution by firing squad of detainees, often in waste grounds and overnight. Sometimes they were carried out by common criminals.
- 6
This law is a law of continuity with the dictatorship and with the Decree-Law 10/1969 dictated by Francisco Franco in 1969, by which all crimes committed before April 1, 1939 were prescribed. Keeping this Decree Law, the Amnesty Law dictates a number of decrees and specific laws to try to compensate for the hardships and sufferings of those who suffered the vicissitudes of war, on the Republican side, or who were imprisoned in the Franco era.
- 7
In 2013 and 2014, the UN urged the Spanish government to present a ‘search plan’ for the disappeared during Franco’s regime within 90 days [2013: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13801&LangID=E>; 2014: http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/07/31/inenglish/1406815491_533145.html]. No plan has been carried out yet. Meanwhile, Spain has the second highest number, after Cambodia, of people missing due to political persecution.
- 8
See State Official Newsletter, Decree of April 1, 1940 (Spanish): <http://www.cuelgamuros.com/txt/historia/decreto.html>.
- 9
See the map of mass graves published by the Ministry of Justice: http://mapadefosas.mjusticia.es/exovi_externo/CargarMapaFosas.htm. The database has not been updated since 2011, year in which all action related with the law of Historical Memory came to a halt, together with the grants distributed to find and exhume the victims of the mass graves.
- 10
This number has decreased slowly in the last 5 years thanks to the Historical Memory Associations.
- 11
For a more detailed argumentation see: Comité Invisible, *A nuestros amigos* [To our friends], Pepitas de calabaza (Edición 2015, Logroño), 87-92.
- 12
Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, Sternberg Press (Edition 2009, New York), 35.
- 13
Bertolt Brecht, *Writing the Truth Five Difficulties*, 1934, (translated to English from the Spanish text).
- 14
Held annually on 30th August.
- 15
Concept developed further through: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, 2005.
- 16
“Open wounds of the past leads nowhere” said Mariano Rajoy (president of Spain since 2011) in 2008 when judge Baltasar Garzon opened an investigation in the High Court to make a census of the executed by firearm, the disappeared, and buried during and after the Civil War.
- 17
Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Verso (Edition 2009, London-New York), 105.
- 18
Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*, Archipelago Books (Edition 2011, New York), chapter XIX.