

Death and Photographs: “El Día del Muerto/Day of the Dead”

SUZANNE E HERMANOCZKI

El día del muerto – The Day of The Dead

I have a series of photographs. I don't show them to anyone but I know that they exist, that they are there. They tell of a moment, a person, a country, a history, a revolution, a journey, a life and a death. I cannot delete these photographs, and nor can I show them to you, but I can write about them and narrate them to you.

The day my father dies, I take a photo with my phone of him in bed. The light in the room is pale. My father's face is slightly grey; he had died only moments earlier. His cheeks are sunken. He stopped wearing his false teeth a couple of days before. He had spat them out and told me, his hija, to take them away. In the last days of his long illness, his mouth had shrunk to the point that his teeth didn't fit anymore. In the photo, his mouth is slightly open, like it was when he slept. With no bottom teeth in, his chin drops suddenly. He is all skin and hollows. Sunken eyes, a cave for a mouth. On the wall behind him, a carved crucifix made of bone; Jesús dying on la Cruz. Jesús with his head turned to the side captured in his last days of suffering. Only moments before his death Jesús had cried out for his Father, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” Only moments before, my father had raised his head and cried out in Hungarian for his father, too.

The bed is neatly made. The top bed sheet is carefully turned down and tucked in perfect strips at the sides. The room has no colour. Neither light nor darkness comes in from the crack in through the curtain covering the window. It is hard to tell what time of day it is, though I know it is past la media noche; past midnight. The room is pale and grainy; out of focus, like eyes forced to open at night. I wonder what it would be like if I turn on the light. What would be altered? Would there have been shadows, a play of light and dark? Would I be able to glimpse his ghost?

There is a deliberate absence of light and life in the frame. It is a photograph of un muerto, a dead man. The man, my father, is not sleeping, yet the photograph does not allow you to believe anything else. It was taken the moment after his last breath, and is a personal record to help me remember this moment; this image of him here, a person that I knew, would be subject to all the workings of time and memory. I take the photograph to preserve his image, so that it will not fade, so that he, mi padre, would not be forgotten.

My father died in the early hours of the morning and this was his last night spent in his bedroom of su casa, his home, my childhood home. Looking at him neatly tucked up in bed, I know he will not wake up in the morning, get out of bed, put on his slippers (his papucs) and shuffle with his short steps to the kitchen to turn on the kettle to make a cup of tea with honey and exactly 13 drops of lemon as he liked. He will not open his eyes and blink wildly around the room like he did in his last morphine-infused days, when the room suddenly became too dark for him; the days when he gradually lost his vision as his eyes refused to blink anymore before they stopped working altogether.

I find this image of him while looking through old photographs I keep and store on my phone. It is just one image in a collection of similar photos that have recorded his death. The death photographs are highly personal—of moments I have taken and kept but not shared with anyone. Seeing him “captured” like that, the lasting image of him dying/dead in bed, is my personal punctum; his death photograph able to provoke in me an incredible mixture of feelings and emotions—of loss and grief and pain, but most overwhelmingly, of sadness.

My father’s death was not unexpected, but finding the photograph again is (I do not remember having taken the photograph, nor storing it on my phone). But now, every time I even think of it I am able to “see” it (something is triggered in me) and I am immediately transported back to that day, that room, where I am sitting beside him once more, holding his hand, talking to him in Spanish, re-living his Death.

This little photograph is my memento mori; reminding me that “I-was-there” in that room with my father in his final moments¹. The photo carries his story within its frame and beyond it, the story of his continued remembrance.

Last Writes

When I first began writing about my father’s life, he was chronically ill but still alive. With his permission, I re-traced and recorded his life from his boyhood village in north-eastern Hungary to Budapest, his escape into Austria after the failed Revolution in 1956, to time spent in a refugee camp and his two journeys to then unknown countries (Argentina and Australia). Shortly after commencing, my father died. I was left with no father and no links to the past. I also had no story. Forced to confront the shock of his death and the impact of his loss on my family, I was drawn to the topic of death photographs. The topic in fact became the subject for the first chapter of my thesis but also my own writing, embodying the Proustian idea of *la recherche* or “to search again” for the person who had recently died. Learning to deal with the personal trauma of loss while writing about my father’s death through the study of death photographs provided a path into research, but more importantly, it triggered creative works, including the beginnings of a novel.

The creative component was an integral part of my thesis and comprised of two distinct narrative forms: non-fiction interleaves situated within the critical research chapters which also served as a bridge, linking key themes of research into the fictional chapters from my novel, *Our Fathers*. Two of the non-fiction interpieces included here, *El Día del Muerto/Day of the Dead* and *Esperando para la Danza de la Muerte/Waiting for the Dance of Death* bookmark

this essay, and contain narrative features of memoir and creative recollections of memory. These pieces, which I consider to be works of *memento mori*, are a direct result of photo-elicitation (of death photographs), recorded testimony, bilingual communications (of my familial languages of Spanish/Hungarian into English), of private personal reflections, and reworked fragmentary notes and observations into longer passages of writing, yet still maintaining the integrity of fragmentation, to capture the sense of triggered memories or moments of time which have been “exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected disputed—and last not least, written down” (Assman qtd. in Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory”, 110).

Memento Mori

Within my work, images or photographs depicting the dead, the recently deceased or reminders of the deceased, are referred to as *memento mori*. By definition, *memento mori* are visuals or images and symbolic reminders of our own death. The term in fact comes from Latin and serves as a “warning or reminder of the inevitability of death”, but includes several other connotations as well. Aside from being an actual or figurative object such as a “skull” (Oxford N.p.) or skeleton, in art it serves to remind us, as viewers, of our own impending mortality. One of its most famous and continued depictions features in Mexican *memento mori* art (renowned for its stylistic illustrations of skulls and skeletons) where death is in fact nationally celebrated in the “Day of the Dead” or *El Día de los Muertos* festival². It is from this festival that my first creative, non-fiction piece drew its title, to highlight my cultural and linguistic connection to the language (my mother tongue) and the event of death (a Spanish-speaking priest came to give my father his last rites), but more importantly to emphasise my own personal interpretation through narrative of mortality, and the importance of recording and commemorating death.

Yet the term *memento mori* has also been used to describe a particular type of photograph, otherwise known as “the post-mortem portrait” or “the death photograph”. Historically, and in many Western cultures, this was a

commemorative photograph taken of the deceased and given to the family as a keepsake, to remember the person who had died:

Representations of mortality have a long history in western art, encompassing the traditions of *momento mori* and *vanitas*, deathbed scenes and post-mortem portraits ... With the invention of photography, post-mortem portraiture in the late nineteenth century came to be dominated ... by professional photographers (15)

... The practice was essentially private; the photographs were probably kept within families and eventually destroyed when changes in attitude to death, dying and their visual representations rendered them ‘morbid’. (Ennis 2007, 17)³.

According to Australian photography curator, historian and writer, Helen Ennis, in her essay *Reveries: Photography & Mortality* (2007) in which she curates a collection of contemporary death photographs in Australia, Ennis states that the act of photographing the dead is a ritualistic part of life—that “when it comes to death, photography isn’t necessarily a separate activity carried out in isolation from everything else—it can be part of a whole range of life practices, of ritual” (5). There is both a questioning of its practice and an underlying desire in Ennis’s essay to recognise the purpose of death photography within our culture and its ritualisation. Her investigation into ritual and the practice of *memento mori* highlights the cultural and deeply personal narratives that death photographs “[bring] out” (Barthes 1982, 57), while at the same time help to reassert their place in history and the importance of their viewing in the contemporary Australian context.

Death photographs or *memento mori*, in fact played a specific and significant role in the early nineteenth century, particularly for the Western family and greater community. Often, post-mortem photographs bearing images of the dead were displayed “just like other family portraits” (Norfleet 1993, 95) in a place where family and friends would gather, usually in the home or the sitting room for the specific act of remembrance and commemoration. Regarding these pictures and the communal aspect associated with *memento mori*, American

historian, academic, and photographer, Michael Lesy, in his slide show *Wisconsin Death Trip* (2014) discusses the purpose of looking at death photographs, which predominantly featured children:

Undertakers would make funereal tokens back [in the 1890's] as they called it, which could then be photographed by Charles Van Shaick, the photographer. It's my understanding that these pictures would then be printed, be kept next to the family bible, the family album, so you could if you had visitors, sit down and, you know, go through stuff and talk about it, reminisce, you know. And people kept all sort of things that might seem a little strange to us but people kept them so people could remember people.

In his book of the same title, *Wisconsin Death Trip* (1973), Lesy draws inspiration from the found historical photographs of 1890-1910 by photographer, Van Shaick, and uses selected images to recreate narratives about the images and people within them in their historical setting. Of his own work Lesy professes that he “uses photographs as if they were event, and the words of newspapers, novels, madhouse records, and recollections as if, taken all together, they were the carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen molecules of a single, solitary minute of time and air”. The result is a narrative voice which “recreate[s] and re-vision[s] a past time so separate from the present” (1973, n.p.) yet still very much connected to the universal act of death.

The specific time and place Lesy refers to in his work was a period in history “between 1890 and 1910” in a “rural county” impacted by “years of severe recession and economic hardship” (Sontag 72). For those people living at that moment in time, death was not considered a taboo subject either, in fact it was regarded as “the ultimate act of nature—beyond human control and ever present”. Death in the family and the community were common everyday occurrences too, and especially prevalent was infant mortality, which “was so high that babies were sometimes not given names until they were a year old ... [their] deaths ... often unrecorded” (Norfleet, 11). It was both accepted and understood that the youngest child in the family might die before their older

siblings as a result of sickness or disease, or similarly for a parent to pass away as a result of poverty, childbirth, war, mental illness or other untreated causes. Social historian, photographer, and curator of photography, Barbara Norfleet in fact states that there was an inherent value and communal role to taking such photographs:

[They] played an important role in helping people come to terms with the devastating rupture caused by the early deaths of loved ones. Post-mortem images of children were used to console, to share the death with others, and to help preserve memories of the child ... Photographs meant that you could somehow keep the dead child with you (12).

Aside from being symbolic gestures, these photographs of the dead served as important historical mementos; though regarded as personal keepsakes or documents, they recorded a specific event and moment in time:

... none of the pictures were snapshots, and ... their deepest purpose was more religious than secular ... in the 1890s, [it] was not so much a form of applied technology as ... a semimagical act that symbolically dealt with time and mortality ... (Lesy 1973, n.p.).

In fact, post-mortem portraits in the nineteenth century “follow[ed] strict, formulaic codes of representation—idealising the dead as ‘sleeping beauties’ ... [to] be instantly apprehended and understood” (Ennis, *Reveries*, 17). These portraits served as “a surrogate possession of a cherished person” (Sontag 1977, 155) and a site for reflection and remembrance. When compared to contemporary Australian society’s “death denying” attitude (Ennis, *Reveries*, 14), these photographs and the practice of looking at and interacting with the dead, provided a source of comfort that openly allowed people a space to mourn, grieve, but recall and cope with death. This is a point that will be illustrated in the next section through the example of Barthes and his research about his late mother in the Winter Garden Photograph.

The Winter Garden Photograph

In Roland Barthes' work *Camera Lucida* there is a photograph of his (late) mother as a child, which he titles the "Winter Garden Photograph". In his book about photography, this picture is the only one Barthes refuses to show his viewers/readers stating "at most it would interest your stadium: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound" (1982, 73). The Winter Garden Photograph is both the *memento mori* and what I term the personal *punctum* for the writer, in that though the photograph does not explicitly show a dead person, it serves as a physical reminder to the viewer (Barthes) of the person (his mother) who has just died. Barthes first mentions the photograph and *punctum* in his personal diary, published under the title *Mourning Diary* (2010). *Camera Lucida* proffers the term *punctum* in relation to the Winter Garden photograph as a site that "pierces" and "wound[s]" the viewer (27). For him, this becomes a recurrent source of his personal pain, suffering, and "grief":

Here again is the Winter Garden Photograph. I am alone with it, in front of it ... I suffer, motionless ... I cannot *transform* my grief, I cannot let my gaze drift; no culture will help me utter this suffering which I experience entirely on the level of the image's finitude ... my Photograph is without culture when it is painful, nothing in it can transform grief into mourning ... I may well worship an Image, a Painting, a Statue, but a photograph? I cannot place it in a ritual (on my desk, in an album) unless, somehow, I avoid looking at it (or avoid its looking at me) (Barthes 1982, 90).

In the excerpt, Barthes expresses how, despite being repeatedly wounded by the image and filled with memories of his mother as a result of the Winter Garden Photograph, he is continually drawn to it through grief. I argue that because of his personal connection to both the subject and the event (death), the photo becomes not only an image, but also a personal *punctum* and a site to question mortality. In order to write about this contested personal site Barthes must go through the practice of photo-elicitation.

According to theorist Douglas Harper's definition, photo elicitation is a process

which occurs when an image can:

... evoke information, feelings, and memories that are due to the photographs particular form of representation based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview. The difference between interviews using images and text and interviews using words alone lies in the ways we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation ... [photographic] images [have the ability to] evoke deeper elements of human consciousness (2002, 13).

The Winter Garden Photograph carries a very personal meaning for Barthes. Because of its nature (as *memento mori* and a reminder of his mother and her death) and its relationship with the viewer (Barthes/son), the photograph is able to evoke specific intimate memories and provoke a deeper enquiry of its representation. In the *Mourning Diary*, and similarly in *Camera Lucida*, on examination of the Winter Garden Photograph, Barthes enters into dialogue with this image: one of questioning and response not unlike Harper's process of photo elicitation. In *Camera Lucida*, however, Barthes goes further and analyses the picture to get at the "essence" of what is being represented. Barthes's motive is a point that writer and curator of photography, Geoffrey Batchen, also questions in his chapter, "Camera Lucida. Another Little History of Photography":

How, for example, do you separate a photograph from what it's of or from the unfolding context of its reception? How do you invent a voice (or voices) for this history that can speak to photography's emotional effects as well as its physical and formal characteristics and economic ramifications? (2009, 259)

For Barthes, finding what lies not just within but beyond the Winter Garden Photograph, ultimately means finding his mother again. His questioning and re-search for her leads him to unprovoked narrative or elicited memories and in order to understand these, he seeks answers beyond the square or photographic image.

This idea of photo-elicitation and the potential narrative residing at the *punctum* within an image (of the dead), is exemplified in *Camera Lucida* with Barthes's viewing of the photograph titled "Ernest" taken in 1929, by Hungarian photographer, Andre Kertész. While looking at the image Barthes asks himself about the possibilities of both the image and the schoolboy in it: "Is it possible that Ernest is still alive today: But where? How? What a novel!" (1982, 83). Here, there is creative narrative potential to be explored at the "site" of the photograph. As a writer involved in such a photo-elicitation process, Barthes demonstrates that by questioning and responding to an image, the subject has the ability to grow beyond the photograph's square, to perhaps become as Barthes suggests a much greater narrative or "a novel". In fact Kertész's photo of "Ernest" triggered a scene for my main character ("the boy", a fictional character based on my own father) for my novel; drawing on recollections of my own father's fragmented memories I was able to recreate events which took place in a classroom, in post-war Hungary.

Memento illam vixisse: Remember that she lived⁴

On a personal level, Barthes's interaction with the photograph of the recently deceased (his mother), demonstrates how a photo is able to become a "site" for him to return to, to help him deal with his grief. By expressing his thoughts and memories, his narrative process of photo-elicitation enabled him to understand the very intimate process of death and loss. As Jacques Derrida states, "grief necessitates an interiorisation ... of those who are dead" (quoted in Jacobson, 154). For a writer similarly dealing with the death of her own father, finding a site within a photograph which allows for remembrance, interiorisation, but also elicitation is significant for not just the evocation of memories of the person and the moment of death, but also in enabling the transformation of those narratives into non-fiction and creative work.

Barthes's interaction and writings about his mother's death, and her depiction in a photograph in his works *Mourning Diary* and *Camera Lucida*, reveal a very personal process and show how he dealt with death to allow grief and pain to

enter into his work in order to transform it into the subject for his investigation and writing. For Barthes, discovering the *punctum* resulted in also understanding the pain or "the wound" that resides within the personal death photograph he was researching. As Lisa Jacobson states in her research on trauma and writing: "one thing I have found to be certain: namely, that one cannot live or write without the prospect of wounding" (2009, 210). For writers, interaction or photo-elicitation at the site of the wound, namely with a death photograph has the ability to provoke poignant personal memories and "resurrect" the dead, but as a result of the personal *punctum*, it also allows the subject to become alive through questioning, remembrance, and reflective narrative which will be demonstrated in the final section.

The Beginning of Absence

In Ennis's essay, she includes a series of photographic works by Ruth Maddison titled "The Beginning of Absence 1996" which features a series of still-life objects Maddison photographed around the family home while waiting for her mother to die. In the following excerpt, Maddison reflects about her actions and state of mind during this period of time spent waiting:

My father is in hospital again. My mother too. I stay at their house and wander from room to room. The house has no sentimental value for me. I never lived here. But empty chairs, the bed, the pile of books waiting to be returned to the library, the Tattsлото tickets—heartbreakers ... One day I do my parents ironing. A strange intimacy—stained clothes, crusty handkerchiefs ... I feel the beginning of absence (Maddison qtd. in Ennis 2007, 224).

Though her images do not explicitly show the dead or dying, Maddison's photographs nevertheless evoke this idea and therefore must be considered *memento mori*. What the images highlight is the absence of life through snapshots of objects and still life: an empty armchair, the back of her father's head, his hand lightly resting on his cheek, a pile of handkerchiefs neatly ironed into squares, the top one showing an embroidered "S" in neat blue thread (who

is “S”?), an empty sofa, a living room in the middle of the day with no people in it, a pair of light brown lace-up shoes waiting to be filled, her father’s face in profile, an empty study, an unclear shot of flowers, a double bed that hasn’t been slept in—the bed too neatly made. The series ends with a photographic “ghost”—a blurred image of light taken in an empty hallway, an obvious symbolic mark signifying death. Though the photographs appear to be ordinary images of her parent’s home (as a viewer I was in a similar position at home, waiting for my own father to die), they invoke something much deeper in the viewer—a sense of too much time, of things too clean and tidy. Spaces that should be filled are left empty. The family home appears vacant yet waiting. In these particular death images Maddison captures personal inanimate objects, rooms and people in a state of suspension that yet are able to narrate a delicate balance between life and death.

As Susan Sontag states, “A photograph is both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence” (1977, 16) and in her photographs of what is there, Maddison’s images are highlighting the obvious, to what poet Dennis Haskell refers to in his poem “Still Life, 2001” as the “unsayable”, where the visual becomes a representation of what or in this case, who is not there.

... to remove the presence
of absence? Nothing
will be able, until
the unsaid
becomes the unsayable ... (2006, 19)

Maddison introduces “The Beginning of Absence 1996” with a short narrative of her mother in hospital. From the ensuing images she communicates her personal *punctum* through her images. Through a series of personal polaroid-like snapshots, she allows us as viewers to go beneath each photograph’s surface and enter the site of her private wound. The personal *punctum* here is the unspoken narrative presented in her intimate photographs which explain her mother’s “material absence” and the implied understanding that she will

not be returning home.

It is never it that we see, as Barthes pronounced. That is, it is never the actual materiality of the flat paper that we notice, but what is recorded on the paper. Photography is always about the material absence, even as we feel psychologically or emotionally pressed into an intimate face-to-face experience (Sanders 42).

Like Barthes’ refusal to share the Winter Garden Photograph, there is no image of Maddison’s dying mother yet these photographs of the still-life-in-waiting convey her material and maternal absence present in every corner of the house. What is captured and translated through her photographs is “the passage of life via [the] image making ... processes” (Ruth Maddison, 2006). The result of what is narrated by “The Beginning of Absence 1996” is what she, the observer and daughter, has noticed and experienced at the moments leading up to and at death. For Maddison, the act of photographing became not only a source of comfort, but a ritual, where she was able to visually narrate the events, so that *she* the daughter could remember.

In viewing Maddison’s images, I am similarly transported back to my own father’s death. Each image is able to trigger in me my own mental snapshot of time to the days leading up to his death where the objects in my mother’s house became still, when the world was punctuated by the sound of the ventilator forcing life into his lungs. The final piece *Esperando para la Danza de la Muerte/Waiting for the Dance of Death* was written after examining these images, and the result is the narrative that emerged—fragments of recall and memory through photo-elicitation where I experience again “that-has-been” (Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 80) captured moment of a time spent listening to death’s song playing at my door.

Esperando para la Danza de la Muerte – Waiting for the Dance of Death

The day before my father died, I sat in the outside chair and cried for a long time alone on the verandah. On hearing my voice, our old neighbour came to sit outside

too. She knew I was there. She knew what was happening to my father and our familia and her silent presence was her way of keeping vigil, of keeping me company, on the day of his death. I don't know why I was so upset. For the past two weeks, I had been at his bedside watching him, helping him, slowly die. The doctors had assured me before his release from the hospital that he would live a couple of months, maybe even up to a year. Not one of them had mentioned anything about dying or death. Not one of them had explained to me the truth of what was actually happening, or how to prepare myself when that time came. Perhaps they did, but I simply couldn't remember. And now that it was almost here, I just wasn't ready.

Sitting in that chair, all I could hear was the artificial click-clicking sounds of the oxygen machine. A machine that was forcing air in and out of his lungs, making him breathe. My father was hanging onto life by an artificial thread. I sat there listening to that slow mechanical music; it was the last thing left tying him to life. It was the last single thread tying him to me and it was dissolving as his breathing became louder and more laboured.

I looked over at his empty chair, his brown papucs were still there as he left them. His Hungarian newspaper the Magyar Élet sat folded under the cushion, his Hungarian library book lay on the side table, the page carefully marked with an old Gold Lotto form. These objects were all sitting there as if waiting for his life to resume. But as the slow rhythmic sound of the machine in synch with his failing breath grew louder I knew that wasn't to happen. Death was coming, and there was no turning back.

Notes

1. This is in direct reference to Roland Barthes where in *Camera Lucida* he refers to the importance of photographs as validating history or moments in time (84).

2. The Mexican "Day of the Dead Festival", *el Día de Muertos* in Spanish, is held on 1st and 2nd November, and is a way of honouring dead family members

and recognising mortality and death. It is a time when "the dead return to their former homes on earth for a while to eat, to drink, to sing, to be entertained, and to visit loved ones. The dead return home as they have for millennia and the living throw open their doors to them" (1). The festival originates from rituals practised by the country's pre-Hispanic population, which is led by the "Lady of the Dead," (the goddess Mictecacihuatl), but "has [since] melded with the Catholic fiesta to create a unique ... event ...with double meanings" (132). The celebration differs from each locality, with some families building *ofrendas* or personal altars in their homes, which are adorned with photographs (of the dead), food, candles, and special flowers for the day such as *flor de muertos* or *veruche* (53), cockscomb or marigolds (Haley and Fukuda 2004, 55). In my own writing, "*El Día del Muerto/The Day of the Dead*", and the first chapter of my novel "Shoes", elements of the festival's ritualization and celebration and my own cultural background with reference to this, have been incorporated.

3. Helen Ennis refers to *memento mori* as *momento mori*. By definition, a memento "is an object or an item that serves to remind one of a person, past event ... keepsake; souvenir or anything that serves as a reminder or warning". It is also the name of one the prayers "in the canon of the [Roman Catholic] Mass, one for persons living and the other for persons dead". However, the word *memento*, "is sometimes spelt as *momento*, perhaps by association with *moment*". The word *memento* is actually related to "remember". One of its earliest meanings "was something that serves to warn". The word *momento* (spelt with an "o" with reference to Ennis's usage), "is considered by many to be a misspelling, but it occurs so frequently in edited writing that some regard it as a variant" of the term (Dictionary.com).

4. In Latin this reads, "Remember that she lived" (Hill and Wang 2010, 113); it also refers to an entry Roland Barthes wrote about his mother in the *Mourning Diary*.

Bibliography

- Barthes, Roland. 1982. *Camera Lucida*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang.
- 2010. *Mourning Diary*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Batchen, Geoffrey, ed. 2009. *Photography Degree Zero—Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press.
- 2009. "Camera Lucida. Another Little History of Photography." In *Photography Degree Zero*, edited by Geoffrey Batchen. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 2001. "Roland Barthes." In *The Work of Mourning*, edited by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naus. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dictionary.com, "memento". Viewed 11 March 2014 <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/memento?s=ts>
- Ennis, Helen. 2007. *Reveries: photography & mortality*. Canberra: Australia National Portrait Gallery.
- Haley, Shawn and Fukuda, Curt. 2004. *The Day of the Dead*. Bergham Books: New York.
- Harper, Douglas. 2002. "Talking about pictures: a case for photo elicitation." *Visual Studies*, 17(1): 13-26.
- Haskell, Dennis. 2006. *All the Time in the World*. Cambridge: SALT.
- Hirsch, Marianne. 2008. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29(1): 103-128.
- Jacobson, Lisa. 2009. *The Sunlit Zone: Verse Novel and Essays*. Ph.D. La Trobe University, Melbourne.
- Lesy, Michael. 1973. *Wisconsin Death Trip*. USA: Allan Lane.
- Maddison, Ruth. 2006. "Ruth Maddison." *Australianphotographers.org*. Viewed 10 March 2014. <http://www.australianphotographers.org/artists/ruth-maddison>
- 2007. "The beginning of absence 1996." In *Reveries: Photography & Mortality*, Helen Ennis, 224-235. Canberra: Australia National Portrait Gallery.
- OED Online, *Oxford English Dictionary*. "memento mori." Viewed 12 March 2014, <http://www.oed.com.ezp.lib.eunimelb.edu.au/view/Entry/233960>
- Norfleet, Barbara. P. 1993. *Looking at Death*. Massachusetts: Imago Mundi.
- Sanders, Karin. 2009. *Bodies in the Bog: The Archaeological Imagination*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Sontag, Susan. 1977. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- "Wisconsin Death Trip (audio slide show and interview with Michael Lesy)". *Virginia Foundation for the Humanities*. Viewed 11 March 2014. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voKxD07PgE>