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The Spectacles of Mourning

PROCESSES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN PORTUGAL FROM THE 14TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY

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To my late mother, Florinda,

whom I have continued to mourn incessantly since 2012.

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Abstract

The dissertation "The Spectacles of Mourning: Processes of Continuity and Change in Portugal from the 14th to the 20th Century" analyses the transformation of mourning visual culture and social bodies in Portugal, comparing effigies from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with post-mortem photographs from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. The study seeks to understand how mourning visual culture stages, theatricalises, and objectifies grief within Portuguese society, both materially and socially, while exploring secondary issues such as the concept of dignity and the staging of mourning, reflections on values and social norms, the role of emotions, and the relationship between photography and sculpture in the funerary context.

KEYWORDS: visual culture; grief; Portugal; fourteenth century; nineteenth century; medieval effigy; post-mortem photography; theatricality; history of emotions; social norms; living images; Victorianisms.

Foreword

The subject of grief and mourning has a semi-autobiographical aspect in this dissertation, as it has been an integral part of my life since my pre-adolescent years. This personal history has served as a foundation for my scholarly interest in mortality and lamentation within the investigative framework. The passing of our peers and the inevitability of death is a challenging and complex matter to manoeuvre through. It is a fundamental truth that one must deliberate such interrogations, as these reflections and concerns are part of much of the human experience and are a particularly existential theme of the Western philosophical tradition (Dollimore, 1998, p. 60). Indeed, following different arguments, philosophers such as Epictetus, Seneca, Spinoza, Lessing, Montaigne, Kant, Feuerbach, and Marx, among many others, have attempted to extricate life from death (Catroga, 1999).

This dissertation considers grief as a multidimensional experience encompassing both emotional and social aspects. It is not just a reaction to personal loss but also a cultural and performative ritual. Transversely, through scrutiny of theoretical perspectives by E. H. Gombrich, Jérôme Baschet, and Erwin Panofsky, but mainly through Hans Belting's *Anthropology of Images,* this dissertation views images as active agents within social settings. I will employ Belting's (2011) methodology to analyse and determine these representations of mourning as more than what they depict: they actively engage with societal expectations, emotions, and rituals related to death. This perspective informs the following analysis, directing the interpretation of medieval

effigies and post-mortem photographs as vessels of collective memory and emotional significance within Portugal's grief visual culture.

Since the contemplation of one's demise is far from an atypical occurrence, and as every individual will eventually reflect on death at some point, understanding grief and mourning has become essential to unveiling much of civil society in each period in the context of the history of emotions. However, death can be a taboo subject in much of the Western world. Most scholars agree that "never before has there been so little preparation for death" (Catroga, 1999, p. 9), with Portugal not exempted from its institutionalisation and privatisation (Lopes, 2017). [1]

In the last decades, academia has made concerted efforts to address this research gap, with an ever-increasing number of publications on this subject. This trend is not limited to Portugal, where multiple historians have set the example, but is also seen in neighbouring countries. Hence, the foundational publications that informed the search for the medieval Portuguese funerary universe consists of authors such as Alicia Miguélez Cavero, Carla Varela Fernandes, Fernando Catroga, José Custódio Silva Vieira, José Mattoso, Júlia Vareda, Juliana Schmitt, Maria José Goulão, Maria de Lurdes Rosa, Mário Jorge Barroca, Marta Miriam Ramos Dias and Paulo Pereira. For the nineteenth and twentieth century funerary practices and photography, the primary essays have been authored by Leonor Sá, Maria Antónia Lopes, Maria Antonieta

[1] All translations of non-English sources in this dissertation were done by the author unless otherwise stated.

Lopes Vilão Vaz de Morais, Maria Inês Afonso Lopes, Lubianca Montagner Weber, Nuno Borges de Araújo, and Rita Mega.

Across the international context, the trend has remained consistent. Studies that span across centuries have been developed by authors such as Audrey Linkman, Beth Ann Guynn, John Plunkett, John S. Stephenson, José Borrás Llop, Laurel Hilliker, Maurice Godelier, Michaela Schäuble, Nancy M. West, Nicola Bown, Olga Pérez Monzón, Philippe Ariès, Sophie Schell and Susan E. Cook, and will be cited in order to comprehend both the overarching concepts and the national informational absences.

Nonetheless, aside from the studies by M. A. Lopes (2019) and, as asserted by A. M. P. Lopes (2017), there has been a lack of focus on the visual culture of mourning regarding the nineteenth century, although various studies exist concerning medieval rituals and approaches towards death in Portugal. This factual evidence is demonstrated in the selected bibliography, spotlighting the challenges in identifying studies that specifically addressed nineteenth-century Portuguese grief. The research revealed a notable absence of these assessments in Portugal, which has spurred the present dissertation.

It is also worth mentioning that when discussing bereavement in Portuguese visual culture, the enduring presence of Catholicism cannot be overlooked as it has profoundly influenced lamentation ceremonies and depictions. As of 2021, 80.2% of the Portuguese population has considered themselves Catholic (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021). Despite its substantial presence, little is known about its visual culture

and evolution. Given Portugal's Christian and Catholic heritage and its consequent historical association with mourning imagery and discourse, I aim to present it as a compelling and fruitful study area for the visual culture of grief.

Spanning from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century medieval effigies to nineteenth- and twentieth-century post-mortem photographs, the established purpose is to construct a shared history of social attitudes and emotions towards grief and its relation to visual culture. Rather than seeking to comprehensively analyse all aspects of death and rituals, it proposes an original investigation that reveals continuities and changes in Portuguese mourning visual culture, creating research lines between these two distinct periods and mediums, alongside an intersectional dynamic that enriches the field of Medieval Studies through an interdisciplinary lens. Furthermore, laying the foundations for the Portuguese case enables a comparison with the evolution of visual culture in other countries, fostering international knowledge exchange and collaboration with other research entities in the field.

It is acknowledged that this is a quite bold and ambitious endeavour, as there are numerous hypotheses to investigate, including enquiries about the message's sender, the content of communication, and its recipient. Given the extensive possible interrogations surrounding grief and its visual representation are vast and diverse, this dissertation found it imperative to focus on one main question. Consequently, questions such as those included in *Appendix A* will be omitted to enhance clarity, for this preliminary research must prioritise the foundational aspect of emphasising the role

of the transmitter. Similarly to Aby Warburg's concept of *Pathosformel* (formula of pathos), this investigation centres around the intensity of emotions and how they encode visual forms transmitted across time. For this reason, the focus is on the person(s) who is/are expressing and staging grief.

It is vital to recognise that the research entails specific requirements concerning the typology of artefacts to be analysed. The nature of the investigation and its content, mainly post-mortem photographs, may be disconcerting to some readers. From an ethical, moral, and transparency standpoint, which are essential keystones of academic research, it is paramount to adequately address concerns about dignity and regard for the deceased when investigating post-mortem photographs.

Fundamental to this investigation is a commitment to preserve the memory and image of the subject; as such, it is essential to emphasise that no disrespect is intended. People, even if anonymous due to the passage of time, are not to be exploited as apparatuses for argumentative or voyeuristic purposes; rather, their memory serves as static gesticulations that grant us the opportunity to explore and search for cultural implications and perceptions surrounding death.

Several ethical guidelines have been followed to ensure that the utmost consideration is taken when discussing effigy tombs or photographs. All sensational and trivial approaches are to be dismissed while keeping the discourse respectful by not making unsupported assumptions by providing context, offering interpretations that acknowledge the subjects' dignity, and considering their lives and the circumstances

of their memories and mourning. In an attempt to breakdown these issues thoroughly, the study stems from the desire to participate in an accessible debate and articulates a plea for a straightforward methodology.

While the custom of capturing photographs of deceased loved ones may trigger sentiments of disapproval or even aversion within modern Western sensibilities, post-mortem photography was previously a common custom for an extended period of time in Catholic Europe. Despite being considered socially distasteful and morbid, the ritual is probably still practiced today (Burch, 2009), not just in Portugal, but in other countries, demonstrating an enduring phenomenon.[2]

Furthermore, a thorough examination and survey of Portuguese post-mortem photography has not been conducted hitherto, which highlights the significance of this research, which can meaningfully assist in examining the evolution of stances and emotions towards death within Portuguese Catholic visual culture. Although there are studies examining Portuguese photography and Portuguese grief within a modern framework, none have specifically considered photography as a medium for expressing or documenting Portuguese grief. These studies, while informative in some ways, fail to acknowledge photography as a material object of interest when exploring visual culture. This significant informational gap demonstrates, above all else, the limited awareness of these items and their relationship to grief.

[2] With the growing prevalence of camera usage, particularly due to the widespread adoption of mobile phones, the resurgence of post-mortem photography is now more feasible than ever. See: Burch (2009).

Mourning is inherently theatrical, not in a deceptive manner, but as a meticulously orchestrated ritual. For instance, professional mourners in medieval funeral processions exhibited displays of sorrow—beating their chests, wailing, and reciting elegies—an act mirrored in the intentional arrangement of post-mortem images, where the body was sometimes positioned with props to appear either lifelike or angelic. Both examples demonstrate how mourning transformed into a performative, ritualised interaction with death. On another note, it should be clear that when using the terminology of the theatrical universe, this is not to say that the emotions of the *corpus* mentioned above are simulated or artificial.

Under the pretence of visual mourning culture, theatricality transcends conventional performance and involves a systematic, ritualised social interaction with mortality. Medieval tomb effigies and nineteenth-century post-mortem photographs both engage in this process, presenting the deceased inside a context that conveys grief to an audience—be it a religious community, a noble household, or a bereaving family. These images are not passive representations; they actively shape, lead, and mediate the feelings of the bereaved. Currently, the disquieting aspect of post-mortem photography lies not in its purpose but in its altered visibility—whereas death in the Middle Ages was a communal event, contemporary grief has become progressively private.

Although both mediums are deeply ingrained in an axis of class, influence, and memory, this dissertation will demonstrate that post-mortem portraits and medieval

effigy tombs are simultaneously products of feeling and emotion.[3] Hence, the analysis will search for a clear desire for vivid enactment, interpretation, and portrayal of grief by individuals and groups within their immediate moment.

Additionally, in exploring Portuguese mourning rites, this study focuses on a narrow scope of time, space, and class, cognisant that the demand for concision inevitably omits broader circumstances. Historically, post-mortem photography and medieval effigies were initially reserved for the wealthy. The camera was the newest and one of the most expensive technological inventions (despite being more democratised by the 1900s), and, similarly, the gothic effigy was usually for prosperity, royalty, and episcopacy. The enormous societal repercussions of such differences will be further investigated in the next chapter, Dignity in Mourning. Moreover, I encourage the reader to explore the wider interactions and character of colonial impacts and its photography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, alongside the concept of the European Southwestern periphery.[4] This is a significant and ongoing academic endeavour, and although not explicitly covered here, it is suitable for understanding the broader context of visual cultural traditions during this era.[5]

[3] Like previous studies, sentiment and emotion are taken as distinct concepts, the latter being an instrument of sociability (Rosenwein, 2010). This idea will be further investigated in the following chapters.

[4] Further reading of the impact of photography within the African territories formerly under Portuguese colonial rule, see: Ramos, Afonso Dias and Vicente, F. L. (2023).

[5] On Iberian Modernisms and the concept of periphery, please see: Cunha Leal & Pinto dos Santos (2023). On the portrayal of the ideological idyllic concerning race politics and the acknowledgment of difference in the nineteenth century Victorianisms, please consult Arscott & Pettitt (2024).

Introduction

The following chapter delves into the theoretical foundations for exploring the evolution of the visual mourning culture in Portugal across two different mediums, addressing topics regarding methodology and case studies. Spanning from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century medieval effigies to nineteenth- and twentieth-century post-mortem photography, I begin to trace what might be the history of social attitudes and emotions towards grief and its relation to visual culture in Portugal.

I. Research Questions

To clarify the purpose of surveying these mediums and eras, one can first observe that medieval effigies and post-mortem photographs share recurring imagistic motifs, including depictions of corpses, theatrical settings, and botanical elements. This initial indicator of an apparent pattern around grief suggests a strong correlation that is more substantial than a mere causal relationship between the two forms of remembrance.

In Belting's (2011) terms, images historically address the "contradiction between presence and absence" that is inherent in the experience of death (p. 84), describing this function of images as central to the "anthropology of the image" whereby images act not merely as symbols, but as embodied presences that allow the living to confront mortality and create a semblance of continuity with the deceased (Belting, 2011, p. 85). Thus, I frame the medieval tomb effigies and post-mortem photographs as

anthropological per Belting's concept of "living images", suggesting that visual representations are not passive but interact dynamically with viewers, evoking a sense of presence even in absence. This idea will be central to my analysis of both medieval effigies and post-mortem photographs "living images" that encapsulate human attempts to cope with death and to find solace in the face of life's transience. Such living images suggest intentional continuity in the narrative of lamentation and remembrance. Given these pressing questions, one should not disregard the curious juxtaposition and opposition between medieval effigies and post-mortem photographs within Portuguese society. What processes of continuity and change can be identified between the two approaches? What do these visual elements reveal about the evolving mentalities of both medieval and modern societies?

As such, a preliminary catalogue of effigies and photographs was made to test the viability of the central argument. It quickly became clear that there was enough evidence to support both the existence and comparison between the two of them. To organise the visual data, the initial inquiry evaluated was based on established iconographic conventions, drawing from the concepts outlined in Hall & Clark (1974), Chevalier & Gheerbrant (1993) and Adams et al. (2016).

Following this preselection, this dissertation seeks to provide context for these questions and, overall, to propose that medieval effigies were, in and of themselves, a primordial example of post-mortem portraiture in Portugal, serving as a manifestation of societal attitudes towards death and emotion. By breaking down the apparent

theatricality and funerary staging manifested in both, this research aims to contribute to and generate knowledge on the history of emotions and mentalities in Portugal.

From these introductory questions, the main question presented itself from early research: How does the visual culture of mourning within Portuguese society stages, dramatises, and objectifies mourning rituals materially and socially? This question can be answered by addressing secondary questions that include, but are not limited to, the concept of dignity and staging of mourning and its importance in Portuguese funerary visual culture; the discussion of how the visual culture of mourning reflects social values and norms in Portugal across different historical periods; the exploration of the role of emotions in the construction of the visual culture; and the investigation of the relationship between the medium of photography and sculpture in the funerary context.

II. Methodology

The present research methodology takes a systematic and critical approach inspired by the principles of a scientific method, which includes qualitative and quantitative statistics and is refined for historical and artistic research. In attempting to answer the main question, these steps have to be filtered mainly for their historical, cultural, and geographical relevance, centring on contexts that align with the periods and regions of interest.

Hans Belting's *Anthropology of Images* serves as a critical theoretical foundation, particularly for his views on the relationship between images and death. As Belting (2011) states, "the analogy between image and death…is as old as image-making itself" and remains central to humanity's understanding of visual expressions of mortality (p. 84). This enduring connection between image and death is rooted in the "contradiction between presence and absence" that death creates—a contradiction that images attempt to resolve by providing a symbolic body for the deceased (Belting, 2011, p. 84).

Using such a framework, I interpret medieval tomb effigies and post-mortem photographs as more than just memorial artefacts; they are cultural "embodiments" that offer the deceased symbolic immortality, connecting them with the living's social memory. It concurs with Belting's observation that "the dead have always been absent in person, and their unbearable absence… was made good by the presence of images" (Belting, 2011, p. 85). Through these visual forms, societies create "a symbolic body in which they [the deceased] are resocialised while their mortal body dissolves into nothing" (Belting, 2011, p. 85). Belting (2011) also mentions that historical movements often rejected visual portrayals of the deceased, favouring "mental images" as "living images".

Therefore, one can view physical images as vital to their definitive role in public and personal grief. By recognising these images as "living" cultural constructs, I am able to examine artefacts that evoke sensitive emotions and memories. Finally,

Belting's theory helps us understand these images as mediums that embody the dead, anchoring them in physical space while acknowledging how grief and memory shape collective identity.

After the dissertation's theoretical basis was established, the first step in the methodological process involved the selection of primary and secondary sources that were then catalogued to guarantee accuracy in cross-referencing, citations, and analysis. With this in mind, the criteria included some pivotal tasks such as defining the timeframe, case studies, and regions of interest.

Due to the multidisciplinary approach, death and grief are in themselves the subjects of various disciplines and fields—thus, covering these topics implies going beyond history of art. This process was rendered more extensive because of the necessity of undergoing the same scrutiny for each historical period by establishing solid theoretical foundational theories from art history paired with anthropological perspectives to contextualise the cultural performance surrounding death. In summary, organising the data is essential for managing the scope of this research. This demands the consultation of more sources than what might be expected, restricting these foundations both geographically and temporally. This research also incorporated a critical perspective on the biases that might be present in historical documentation, particularly the defiance of normative principles and class representations in mourning art.

The timeframe was established through the aforementioned preliminary inquiries into potential case studies, which revealed that these two periods were particularly

marked by pertinent mourning pieces to be studied. At the same time, these time brackets were defined by their common technological, political, and religious developments, which simultaneously revealed an increased focus on death and grief.

The time bracket for the medieval period was framed around the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries because in Portugal, specifically from there onwards, the theme of death became especially significant as doubts about the soul's fate grew, and the final moment tended to become more dramatised, primarily due to the Mendicant Orders' teachings (Barroca, 1997, p. 658.). As outlined in O'Neill (1993), in the densely populated final centuries of the Middle Ages, four contagious diseases—plague, influenza, leprosy, and tuberculosis—exerted significant social, intellectual, economic, and demographic influences. Likewise, as mentioned by Miguélez Cavero (2015, p. 57), the medieval kingdom of Portugal exhibited a reality closely aligned with that of other Iberian regions regarding the liturgical customs surrounding the veneration of the dead and expressions of lament.

In the same light, Kunitz (1993) has also stated that most of these diseases became endemic by the nineteenth century, such as "tuberculosis, typhoid, scarlet fever, measles, as well as various forms of pneumonia, enteric infections and, in children, the so-called pneumonia-diarrhoea complex" (p. 289). In addition, he mentions how West (1996) described one of the mediums, photography, as having emerged during a time of widespread disease outbreaks, scientific breakthroughs, and the gradual decline of traditional religious beliefs. In this context, many individuals who were

deeply aware of their mortality turned to photography as a means of resisting death. By capturing portraits, especially through daguerreotypes, people were able to preserve their physical presence in a static, immortalised form, offering a sense of permanence in an otherwise transient world (Cook, 2020).

Despite the high death rates experienced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there were significant mechanical developments such as Gutenberg's printing press, paper production, and innovations in navigation. During the nineteenth century, the technological developments were also especially pronounced, particularly in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, with substantial changes in medicine, transportation, and communication. These milestones influenced both the experiences of death and societal responses to grief. While medical technologies provide new prospects for preserving life, they also raise ethical dilemmas. Additionally, diseases continued to impact society, especially in areas where industrial progress had not fully addressed the public health disparities. Thus, both centuries were characterised by persistent disease alongside ongoing technological developments. The relationship between these factors shaped not only the experience of death but also the evolving rituals and cultural practices of mourning, making these periods particularly rich in exploring how societies navigate loss and grief amidst hardship and changes in progress.

Geographically, the methodology sources information from Spain, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. Spain acts as an essential reference point given its common history with Portugal, as the differences between the two countries have not surpassed

their similarities and primarily revolve around specific questions of "degree, form, or chronology rather than to historical experiences" (de la Cueva, 2021, p. 730).

As reported by de la Cueva (2021), both nations relied heavily on Catholicism as a unifying force in state formation, reinforcing religious homogeneity through decrees such as the persecution campaigns of Jews and Muslims. This tendency endured until the nineteenth century, when "the unanimity around Catholicism was seriously threatened for the first time" due to the "liberal revolutions in a context of rapid social change and an increasingly conflictual relationship between liberalism and the Church" (de la Cueva, 2021, p. 732). Likewise, during the late nineteenth century, Judaism became more accepted in Portugal once again, as evidenced by the ultimately successful attempt to build the first synagogue in Lisbon since the fifteenth century.[6]

On the other hand, the inclusion of sources from Britain was culturally motivated by the popularity of medieval idyllic and post-mortem portraits during Victorianism. This juxtaposition and plausibility of secular visual cultural influence in Iberia are also significant, as liberal revolutions might have challenged the Catholic hegemony in Portugal and Spain. Chapter *Mourning Visual Culture: Sculpture and Photography* explores this intercultural hypothesis.

Having defined the bibliography and sources, and a preliminary list of case studies, it was time to select choose which of them were to be included in this dissertation. This meant checking for materialistic and symbolic values through *in situ* research.

[6] For more information on this particular synagogue, see: Silveira & Gomes (2001).

By examining possible visual representations, inscriptions, and positioning within their physical contexts, this analysis drew comparisons between Portuguese and British bereavement practices (for the nineteenth century), allowing for a more in-depth understanding of regional influences on the material culture of grief.[7] For instance, images and texts from archival sources have been systematically categorised, revealing underlying patterns in the representation of religious motifs and evolving visual languages of grief. The analysis of these case studies included cross-referencing data and testing death as a spectacle in Portugal as the main hypothesis by applying the structured and methodical process previously described. The extent of the suppositions and additional information on these case studies are included in the following chapters.

Methodological challenges were predictable, given the complex emotional weight of the subject. Handling themes of death and grief requires a sensitive and mindful approach to the ethical implications of interpreting human remains and funerary rituals. For this reason, the methodology remained flexible, allowing adjustments as new sources and interpretations emerged, striving for a balance between historical rigour and the intricacies inherent in this research.

[7] As is known, the close relationship between Portugal and the United Kingdom harks back to the fourteenth century with the Treaty of Windsor (1383). Furthermore, as Libelle of Englyshe Polycye (1436) shows, there is evidence of how Britain's relationship with Portugal was perceived as a beneficial "friendship": "The marchaundy also of Portyngale, to dyverse londes torneth into sale, Portyngalers wyth us have trought on hande, Whose marchaundy cometh muche into Englande, They bene oure frendes wyth there commoditez, And wee Englysshe passen into there countrees" (Warner, 1926).

In times like these, and due to the original nature of the investigation, the methodology also includes taking an opposing viewpoint for the sake of argument, considering the apprehensions that could originate from the variety of rituals and items existing in medieval and modern periods. Some counter-observations could be that these artefacts are not as enlightening as others, that post-mortem images were not popular or even present within the Iberian Peninsula, or that these mediums are too different to be compared. I believe this perspective is unsupported, as there are no sources to indicate that these artefacts lack the capacity to be compared or to demonstrate that these mediums differ significantly. This source gap might exist because they have never been compared or studied; consequently, there is limited counter-information on this topic. These counterarguments were and will be systematically addressed using historical evidence to support the study of these mediums.

For example, investigating the tomb effigy known as *gisant* exemplifies how Portuguese medieval sculptures metamorphosed substantially over time, mirroring the ever-changing transformative panorama of mentalities.[8] Initially, burial sites from the fifth to eighth centuries exhibited a variety of grave typologies, distinguished by differences in configuration and construction details (Arezes, 2019). Often, they represented a synthesis of influences from indigenous peninsular traditions, Roman

[8] In the words of Marcoux (2016, 2021) a *gisant* is a sculpted, recumbent effigy that gives the observer a haptic and embodied presence of the deceased by replacing the corpse with a corporal and perennial double. Inheriting some of their appearance from reliquaries and utilising the tactile experiences that sculpture provides, the *gisant* served as a kind of *simulacrum* that made the viewer feel as though the deceased was among them.

paganism, and Christianity, resulting from a process of sedimentation. Some graves were created through the use and repurposing of materials; others were constructed from slabs quarried from local resources, while some consisted of simple ditches or excavated pits (Arezes, 2019). By the thirteenth century, a significant number of artistic artefacts, for various reasons, vanished without a trace (Vieira da Silva, 2005). However, by the fourteenth century, uncertainties regarding the fate of the soul rendered the dramatisation of final moments increasingly significant, leading to more frequent depictions of death (Candeias, 2020). The same can be said about the post-mortem photograph. The chapter *Mourning Visual Culture: Sculpture and Photography* will address more crossovers and juxtapositions.

This approach emphasises the importance of filling knowledge gaps in academia and challenging existing assumptions. Clarifying guidelines and the theoretical bracket for this research is then meant to diminish these apprehensions.

III. Case Studies

The selection of case studies prioritised access to funerary monuments and items from the fourteenth to twentieth centuries, as previously defined by the methodology. The case studies' informational density ranged between substantial (known author, date, inscription (if present), and person(s) portrayed) and scarce; however, qualitatively, all present well-preserved and adequately documented visual data, such as the frequency and distribution of specific symbols, and sufficiently relevant evidence of

social attitudes' possibility of establishing a historical context. In this section, I will explain the selection of these specific bereavement items and briefly overview the iconography in each case study. I will focus on distinct or especially pertinent elements, while a more comprehensive cross-case analysis will be reserved for further comparison.

1. Gomes Martins Silvestre's Tomb

Figure 1 — Tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre, ca. fourteenth century. Church of *Nossa Senhora da Lagoa*, Reguengos de Monsaraz (Alentejo, Portugal). The authorship is still debated. [Photo by the author].

The tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre, located in *Nossa Senhora da Lagoa* in Monsaraz, Portugal, serves as a particularly distinctive example of the Portuguese funerary tradition. The sepulchre displaying Gomes Martins in repose is depicted as lying with his head on cushions and dressed in long robes. According to Reis (2017), this effort likely

reflects Gomes Martins' actual appearance at the time of his death, or an idealised representation of how he wished to be remembered, as the portrayal shows an aged face with long hair, an expansive forehead, a prominent nose, and closed eyes that convey serenity.

The attributions regarding the sculptor and workshop have been an academic topic of debate by scholars over the past decade, with Reis (2015) believing that it belongs to Master Pêro's workshop, a renowned Portuguese medieval sculptor.[9] In the words of Candeias (2020), who wrote the latest academic article dedicated to this sepulchre, there is not enough evidence to claim this workshop as the authors, as in his opinion the tomb's "relatively low sculptural quality" contrasts with the "exceptional craftsmanship" typically associated with Mestre Pêro (p. 8). While I agree that further questioning is warranted, and while additional knowledge would be valuable, this study found no conclusive evidence to support a definitive attribution. Therefore, I believe that making further assumptions without new evidence risks reducing the discussion to a materialistic and aesthetic evaluation of the artefact, which does not meaningfully contribute to understanding its impact on remembrance.

Nevertheless, the deceased is dressed in noble garb with a sword and hunting motifs, features typical of a high social standing in the fourteenth century. This combination of features emphasises how Gomes Martins, although not certainly attested to

[9] It has been suggested that the tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre may have been created by Master Pêro, the artist behind the tomb of Queen Santa Isabel (C. V. Fernandes, 2000), based on his known presence in Évora during the 1330s and 1340s (Reis, 2015).

as a member of the nobility, used his tomb to reflect the visual vocabulary of the noble class, signifying his pretensions or possible promotions within that social stratum. This fourteenth-century *moimento* is unique in Portugal because of the depiction of a merchant, a member of the bourgeoisie, rather than a noble or royal figure, which emphasises the social aspirations of wealthy non-nobles who sought to emulate noble funerary customs (Miguélez Cavero, 2015, pp. 56-58).[10] This distinctive use of iconography also demonstrates a shift in medieval Portuguese society, where members of the emerging bourgeoisie began to adopt the artistic language of the nobility, illustrating evolving attitudes towards class, identity, and memorialisation in Iberian funerary practices (Miguélez Cavero, 2015).

In this regard, the reason for considering it an extraordinary case study is that stands out within the Portuguese tomb corpus, as noted by Barroca (1997, p. 675) for being "the last monument bearing a Scene of Lamentation" known in Portugal. It remains unique for its representation of a complete funeral procession as a rarely depicted lamentation scene, where people express grief through acts akin to pulling hair and scratching their faces; inclusively, Vieira da Silva (2005) claims it to be the only tomb surviving among all Portuguese medieval tombs with this sort of depiction.

The iconographical programme illustrates mourners reflected by three primary figures in poses: the central figure, holding a hand to the cheek, may symbolise

[10] The Portuguese word *moimento* refers to monuments that specifically are funerary and memorial in nature, as in the Latin word *monimentum*.

internalisation of grief or sorrow; another figure grasps his beard, a gesture associated with reflection; while a third figure crosses their hands over the chest, conveying a resigned, contemplative grief (Miguélez Cavero, 2015a).

Figure 2 — Tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre, ca. fourteenth century. Detail of mourners and their gesticulations. Church of *Nossa Senhora da Lagoa,* Reguengos de Monsaraz. [Photo by the author].

It is still unclear whether these dramatic figures were family members, people close to Gomes Martins, or hired *carpideiras* (professional criers), a practice rooted in the Mediterranean basin, where the ritual has been continuously documented from antiquity to the present.[11] From Greek prothesis in Mycenaean funerary rites, depicted

[11] *Carpideiras*/*pranteadeiras*, or *plañideras* (in Spanish), are a pagan custom of hiring professional mourners (wailers) to attend to the deceased and accompany them to the grave persisted during the Middle Ages, despite all the prohibitions from the Church and civil authorities (Oliveira Marques, 1974). Please refer to footnote 52 on page 98.

in Late Bronze Age sarcophagi and geometric vessels (Burkert, 1987), to the *prefiche* of Southern Italy, whose choreographed lamentations were studied by Ernesto De Martino, which is a constant in the relationship between personal grief and performance, exploring the space between the living and the dead. The scratching of their faces, the tearing of hair, and the rhythmic cadence of wailing are not only visceral expressions but also codified techniques of grief transmission. They have a repertoire of suffering that, as Michaela Schäuble (2021) observes, has survived across centuries through repetition, re-enactment, and mediation from oral tradition to filmic performative representation. In Portugal, once again, they assume the role of dramatised grieving figures, as stated by Reis (2017):

> (...) We question the hypothesis that the described iconography might not refer to the deceased's own family members, as Oliveira Marques observes: "Relatives of the deceased, friends, and other guests acted as voluntary *carpideiras*. They wept and lamented loudly, chanting traditional dirges that expressed the pain of irreparable loss. They tore out their hair and beard, covered their heads with dirt or ash, and so on (p. 113)[12]

It is also worth noting that this iconographic programme is only present on one side of the tomb. It is my proposition that most likely, this suggests that from its original

[12] [In this instance, the direct quote was translated by author].

conception, the tomb was meant to be against the church's wall, purposefully or accidentally placing the viewer in a contemplative frame of such a scene, in contrast to the dynamic interaction of these figures. Furthermore, there is a suggestively pagan falconry/hunting scene at the foot of the tomb, "equestrian in nature, typically associated with the nobility of the fourteenth century".[13]

Figure 3 — Tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre, ca. fourteenth century. Detail of Falconry Scene. Church of *Nossa Senhora da Lagoa,* Reguengos de Monsaraz (Alentejo, Portugal). [Photo by author].

Vieira da Silva (2005) views the theme as perhaps a "diffuse approximation" to pagan eternal hunts that were the reserved reward for aristocrats in the afterlife (p. 70). He goes on to explain that the hunt, a symbol of medieval nobility, accurately represents

[13] Just above this scene, at the feet of Gomes Martins, there is a now headless creature that was most likely a dog. This assumption is supported by the fact that dogs were commonly depicted in many medieval tombs of the highest-ranking nobility, such as the tomb of Lopes Fernando Pacheco of the same century in Lisbon's Cathedral, and the other elements in the tomb, like the sword, that appropriated visual codes from nobility.

the key virtues of a knight: bravery, decisiveness, and heroism, along with cleverness when confronted with danger. Vieira da Silva (2005) explains that this particular and rare iconography has additional value, as it appears to be of Portuguese creation, found only within Portugal and Galicia.

Consequently, Gomes Martins's tomb is selected because this case not only reflects the personal legacies of the deceased but also expresses the dynamics between secular and religious images and the interdependence of text and image in late medieval visual culture. This relationship will be explored in greater depth but is already intimated in the epigraph: "AQ(u)I JAZ GOMEZ MARTI(n)Z, VAS(s)ALO DELREI FILHO DE MARTIN SILVESTRE O QUAL GOMEZ MARTI(n)Z" (Here lies Gomez Martins, vassal of the king, son of Martin Silvestre, who was Gomez Martins).[14]

Just as medieval images were constructed and understood through an exegetical interpretation of the text as both a foundation and key — as with visual depictions of biblical script—the epigraph subtly reinforces Gomes Martins's wish for a knightly identity, an aid for power, and accentuates his loyalty to the king and his lineage by mentioning his patronymic.

It is an example of the type of testimony medieval tomb effigies moulded to personify individual identity, social values, and remembrance of the dead through textual and visual narratives. This tension played out until the significance of public

[14] *In situ* observation and cross-referenced with Barroca (1997).

practices shifts towards individualism and visual memorialisation in Portuguese funerary visual culture.

2. Fernão Teles de Meneses's Tomb

Figure 4 – Tomb of D. Fernão Teles de Meneses, c. fifteenth century. Church of the Mosteiro de São Marcos, Coimbra. Attributed to Diogo Pires-o-Velho's workshop. This tomb exemplifies the apex of Gothic funerary sculpture in Portugal. [Photo by the author].

The tomb of Fernão Teles de Meneses (ca. 1431–1477), the fourth Lord of Unhão, Gestaçô, Cepães, Meinedo, and Ribeira de Soaz (Moreno, 1980), is a lesser known but not the least important funerary effort.[15] Located in the Monastery of São Marcos in Coimbra, the pantheon of the Silva family, the limestone tomb, postdates that of Gomes Martins Silvestre by approximately a century. Goulão (1995) suggests that the tomb may date back to the final decade of the fifteenth century.

As documented by Carvalho (1922), Fernão Teles de Meneses distinguished himself as a nobleman and knight, having served in battles in Castile and North Africa. He was the head steward and governor of princess D. Leonor, later queen of Portugal. During his life, he supported the cause of Infante D. Pedro and participated in wars against Castile (Moreno, 1980).

Unlike the tomb of Martins Silvestre, which stands in the sixteenth-century Church of *Nossa Senhora da Lagoa* that replaced the original "gothic temple that was contaminated by the plague" (Gordalina & João, 2005), Fernão Teles de Meneses's tomb, despite some major structural changes due to a fire in the church premises during the nineteenth-century (Alçada et al., 1998), is inserted purposefully within its familial resting place.[16] It belongs to a more complex memorial programme, as Fernão is buried in the central nave, next to his mother, D. Beatriz de Meneses, who is buried by

[15] Not to be confused with the sixteenth-century Fernão Teles de Meneses, the seventh Lord of Unhão, with the honorific name "Governor of India". See: Veiga (2011).

[16] The name is both spelled as "Fernão Telles de Menezes" or "Fernando de Meneses". See: Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra (n.d),Gaio, F. (1938, 1941). More rarely, it is written as "Fernão Silva de Meneses". See: Moreno (1980).

the main altar (Alçada et al., 1998); by his father, Aires Gomes da Silva, who was transferred to the monastery after his death; and by his wife, D. Maria de Vilhena (Carvalho, 1922).[17]

The foundation of the Monastery of São Marcos comes from what I believe to be a long tradition of social grievance rituals, as it is related to João Gomes da Silva (ca. 1360–1431), who, by his will of January 5, 1441, wished to create a chapel at the monastic hermitage of São Marcos, embedding it within his assets, and instituted a daily mass for his soul in the original site dedicated to São Marcos (Carvalho, 1922; Rosa, 1995). After his death (ca. 1444–1445), his son Aires Gomes da Silva, Fernão's father, inherited these assets and took over the administration of the chapel (Carvalho, 1922).

Aires Gomes da Silva married D. Beatriz de Meneses, Fernão's mother, who lost family assets after her husband's defeat in the Battle of Alfarrobeira (1449).[18] However, King Afonso V confirmed the donation of the family's possessions in 1450, ensuring her possession of the hermitage of São Marcos.

In 1477, on April first, at age forty-six and a half (Carvalho, 1922), Fernão Teles de Meneses tragically died in battle while attempting to intervene in a popular dispute,

[17] At this time, in Portugal, there was no official language agreement. For this reason, D. Brites de Meneses, or D. Beatriz de Meneses, are different spellings from the same name, belonging to the same person. Not to be confused with D. Beatriz de Meneses, second duchess of Loulé.

[18] King Afonso V confiscated the assets of Aires (also spelled Ayres) Gomes da Silva due to his allegiance to the defeated Infante D. Pedro. In 1451, the king restored these assets to Fernão's mother, D. Beatriz (also spelled Brites) de Meneses (c. 1405–1466), the queen's lady-in-waiting. She later donated her lands in São Marcos to the monks of Mato and Penha Longa, enabling them to establish the monastery, which became the burial site of the Teles/Silva family (Carvalhal, (2016), Alçada et al., (1998); Rosa, (1995).

"after being hit in the head by a rock in Álcacer do Sal" (Moreno, 1980, p. 1052). His epitaph reads: "Here lies the body of the very honoured and nobleman and Knight Fernão Telles de Meneses, son of Ayres Gomes da Silva and Dona Brites de Meneses, steward and governor of the highly esteemed Lady Dona Leonor, who was then Princess and is now Queen of Portugal. He lived 46 years and passed away in the year 1470 on the 1st of April".[19] D. Maria de Vilhena, wife of Fernão Teles de Meneses, built her tomb during her lifetime and ordered that her remains be placed next to her husband. She also instituted daily masses at the Monastery of São Marcos for herself and her husband (Carvalho, 1922).

A brief review of the significant visual features of this tomb, apart from its dramatic dimension, Proença (2021) addresses the face manifested in the centre of the lower frieze of the sepulchre, stating that the imagery likely reflects Fernão's role in early Portuguese exploration, which they deem as "a human of African visage". It is known that Teles de Meneses battled alongside serving the king and Infante Fernando at al-Qsar as-Seghir (1458), Tangiers (1463), and Asilah (1471) (Carvalhal, 2016; Moreno, 1980). Nonetheless, I contend that this individual certainly represents the broader knightly setting of expansionary episodes, presumably attempting to convey the

[19] "Aqui repousa o corpo do muy honrado, e muy nobre fidalgo, e Cavalleiro Fernaõ Telles de Meneses, filho d'Ayres Gomes da Silva, e de D. Brites de Meneses, Mordomo mor, e Governador da mui sclarecida Senhora D. Leonor entonces Princeza, a agora Raynha de Portugal, o qual assim em Africa, como em Castela, p.r terra, e p.r mar taes serviços, e feitos na paz, e na guerra fez q houve a morte inveja de seu fallecim.to pois no milhor da vida o levou. Viveo 46 annos e meio, e falleceo na Era de 1470 em o 1º d'Abril". *In situ* observation and cross referenced with Carvalho (1922, p. 57).

valour associated with exploring the unknown, particularly in Northern Africa. Additionally, the tomb is adorned with a heraldic coat of arms and vegetational and floral motifs. One of these motifs, as hypothesised by Proença (2021), Goulão (1995, 1998), and P. Pereira (2004), is a *green man* or a *wild man of the woods* within the lower frieze of the tomb.

Figure 5 – Central lower frieze detail of the tomb of D. Fernão Teles de Meneses, c. fifteenth century. [Photo by the author].

As stated by Proença (2021), the surrounding composition is enriched by the presence of serpentine creatures emerging from the mouths of monstrous beings, with pointed ears and sharp teeth, springing forth from the lower angles of the three heraldic shields on the tomb, enveloped in an "abundant, undulating vegetal motif"," where

artichokes—symbols of regeneration—appear (pp. 127–128). Despite its location on sanctuary grounds, the tomb's lack of specific religious imagery besides the praying position of its hands is odd at best. The two male figures do not appear to be traditionally depicted angles for this time, as they lack wings or clothing that would suggest otherwise. This makes it a relevant case study for the interception between religious and secular elements, shown by motifs of foliage inherited from antiquity.

3. Carte-de-Visite of a Post-mortem Boy

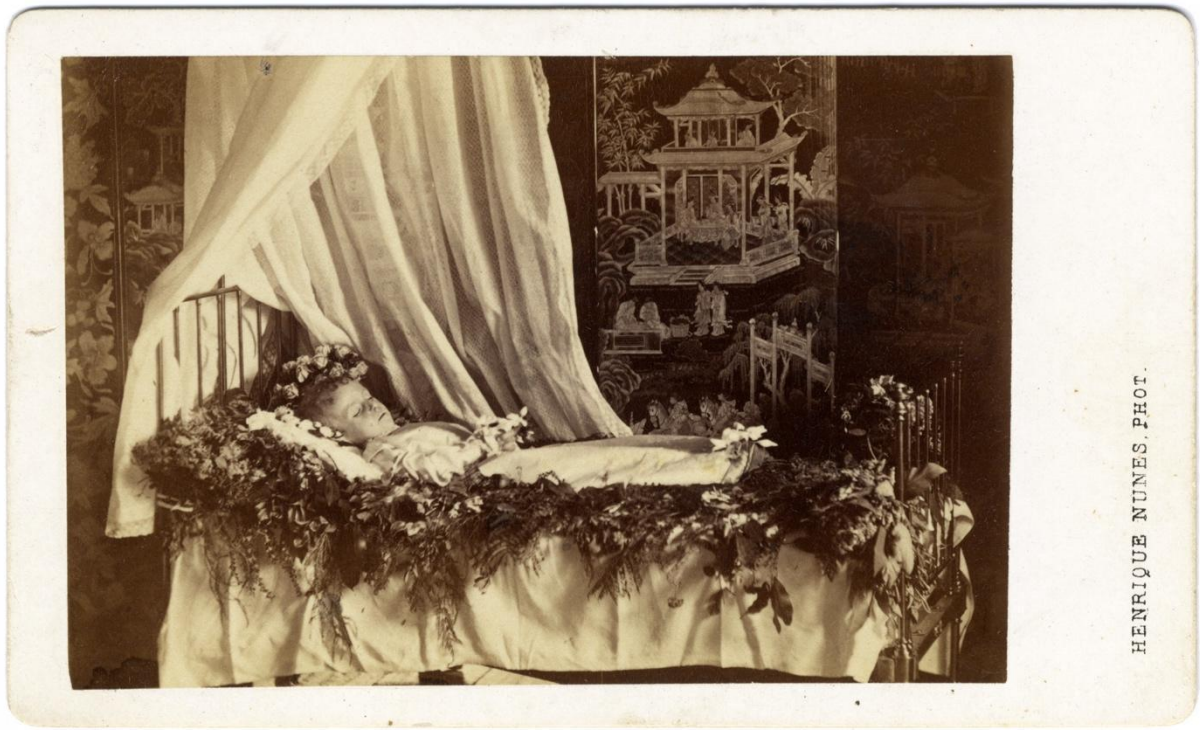

Figure 6 – Henrique Nunes Phot. (Lisboa), *Retrato de menino falecido no seu caixão*, ca. 1870s. [Carte-de-Visite]. Courtesy of the private collection of Borges de Araújo (2018, pp. 800-821).

The subsequent case study significantly differs from a conventional photographic print or glass negative, as it pertains is to a transient carte-de-visite. In this instance, **Figure 6** exemplifies this common nineteenth-century form of a small photograph

consisting of a miniature portrait photograph pasted onto a slightly larger piece of card. As reiterated by Plunkett (2008), the carte-de-visite was one of the most popular photographic formats of the nineteenth century, as it caught on in "1858 France and quickly spread to the rest of Europe" (p. 276). This particular dissemination of photography was, as Plunkett (2008) noted:

(...) Important in conditioning its appeal and ensuring its assimilation into everyday life. Small, ephemeral commodities that were widely available, easy to hold, easy to pass around, easy to look over by the dozen within a drawing room (...). They were literally "touchy-feely" artefacts; not to be looked at with deferential awe or revered from a distance but catalogued and collected, gossiped and commented upon (pp. 276-277).

Given the nature of the medium, it is curious to think that such a moment, the death of one's child, would be inserted within a medium that, above anything else, means to be viewed, touched, and distributed with ease. This meant that for enhanced knowledge of post-mortem photography in Portugal, these small photo cards were a priority to find and include in case studies. Another reason is directly related to the integration of this portrayal of death within the visual public sphere, which attempts to preserve the memory of the deceased, particularly a child. As found in records from the V&A Collection, these images were popular in Victorian England

due to the high mortality rates among children and the decreasing costs of photography, making them a substantial input for "historical imaging" (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2015).

The use of *chinoiserie* in this post-mortem photograph is particularly intriguing. The screen displays a typical visual motif of nineteenth-century, depicting what seems to be Chinese figures dressed in traditional attire beneath the sweeping lines of a pagoda or pavilion roof. As per Ferreira (2009), despite Portugal's knowledge and access to Asian goods since the sixteenth century, the country showed little enthusiasm for *chinoiserie* as "it didn't rely on it to satisfy its fascination with the exotic". This is, in my opinion, a stark contrast to Victorian Britain, which was also a big user of *chinoiserie* and instead embraced exoticism and *mediterraneanisms*.[20] Nonetheless, the use of a *chinoiserie* screen offers a potential locational clue but ultimately remains inconclusive.[21]

However, it seems to express a wish to reflect either the sanctity or innocence of the deceased, together with the social status. As posited by Chen (2013), Chinese

[20] According to Ferreira (2009), Portuguese "explorations" played a key role in reigniting Europe's interest in Asia by introducing a wealth of information and products. In England, as stated by Chen (2013), this cultural phenomenon is presented as more complex than Edward Said's views on Orientalism suggest, indicating that chinoiserie permeated English aesthetic institutions with various artistic movements, including the Gothic and Romanticism that are approached in this study. See: Said (1979).

[21] According to Van Der Reyden (1988), the importation of east-Asian screens, both Japanese and Chinese, to major European cities (they were displayed at the 1867 International Exhibition for Industry and Art in Paris) seems to have catalysed the adaptation of the concept by westerners. Numerous major European artists collected screens, and many others were so inspired by the form as to emulate it. The introduction of screens to Europeans was particularly well-timed, as it corresponded to a period of revived interest in decorative arts incorporated into interior architectural designs. Chinoiseries were common in domestic settings, and photographic studios could incorporate similar props to evoke interior styles of the time.

commodities were not merely considered exotic objects but carried significant cultural meanings, symbolising antiquity and centralised state power. Whether this *chinoiserie* was at home or in the photographic studio, we know it is Portuguese in origin, as evidenced by the inscription "Henrique Nunes Photo".

In this account, Baptista (2010) suggests that Henrique Nunes established himself in Porto in December 1863, taking over the studio of Freitas Fortuna at 152 Rua das Flores, where he already held the title of the Photographer of the Royal House. In February 1865, he moved to the studio of Miguel Novaes at 233 Rua do Bonjardim, where he remained until the late 1860s. He worked alongside Novaes for some time but eventually relocated to Lisbon, where he continued his career.

In February 1868, he founded Casa Fillon, a photographic studio in Lisbon, employing Casimir Lefévre as an operator in the early 1870s. The studio remained active until 1881, when Nunes introduced photographic printing using electric lights. Casa Fillon was mentioned by the *Almanaque da Agência Primitiva de Anúncios* in 1873 (Baptista, 2010).

This case study is significant for its format, a tactile and public medium, while integrating post-mortem imagery. Its relevance lies in how it shaped sorrow, especially in Portugal, where high child mortality and declining photography costs made such images more common. The attribution to Henrique Nunes, a well-documented Portuguese photographer, further underscores the role of professional studios in producing and disseminating nineteenth-century post-mortem photography.

4. Portrait of a Post-mortem Woman

Figure 7 — Casa Fotografia Alvão (ca. 1920–50). *Retrato de mulher post-mortem*. [Photograph: Glass Plate Negative black and white, gelatine silver print, 13x18cm]. Centro Português de Fotografia – Digitarq. https://digitarq.cpf.arquivos.pt/details?id=1182913.

In contrast to many medieval tomb effigies, which featured inscriptions of names, dates, and epigraphs that validated the social identity of the deceased, many post-mortem photographs lack identification, rendering their subjects anonymous. This anonymity raises essential questions: what is the journey of grief when detached from personal identity? Tomb effigies aimed to immortalise individuals within common memory, but post-mortem photos served a more personal, ephemeral purpose—existing in private albums, traded among individuals, and finally fading into obscurity. For this reason, this case involves an unknown woman and an unknown date. This is the case for most post-mortem Portuguese photographs, which reveals the second

most common informational gap I have found while investigating this topic: the issue of anonymity. What can be gathered from unidentified pieces?

It is essential to take account that many medieval tombs also currently remain unidentified due to loss of components or having been relocated. The process of decontextualisation, of one nature or another, inevitably leads to anonymity. However, the well-preserved medieval tomb is frequently recognisable and enables the identification of the deceased and even his social, political, and economic status via inscriptions on the effigy, which is not always applicable to the post-mortem picture. Medieval tombs and images function as historical documents, scripting not only the identity of the deceased but also epigraphically offering an understanding of death, memory, and social hierarchy. These inscriptions often provide a direct link to the deceased's role within society, whether through their title, lineage, or occupation, allowing us to firmly place them within a historical and cultural context.

Embodying the mystery that surrounds this custom, considering the photographic studio that took it, *Casa Photographia Alvão*, it is known its medium, made not only by the available information given by *Centro Português de Fotografia do Porto* (CPF hereafter) but also by exclusion and analysis of the glass plate. I will investigate other clues that can be gathered for further analysis, such as lightning, composition, positioning, and props. This is the challenge presented in the example.[22]

[22] The Portuguese Centre of Photography (Centro Português de Fotografia; CPF) is a cultural and public archival institution in Porto dedicated to the preservation and study of photography. In addition to exhibitions, the

Figure 8 – Another type of photographic work from the Casa Alvão Photographic Studio (n.d.), featuring an unidentified group. Acquired for the purposes of this thesis and currently part of the author's private collection. The estimated date of the photograph is circa the first decade of the twentieth century.

centre also provides a library and archive with an extensive collection of photographic works, equipment and documents.

By accessing the original glass and looking at **Figure 7,** one can conclude that the information given by CPF is accurate. The absence of an emulsion in the upper-left corner running down towards the bottom left could suggest a colloidal-based emulsion, but that would be very unusual, given the archival date.

As established in a private conversation with the archival and conservation and restoration units at CPF in June 2024, most of the items from Casa Alvão included an inscription with the order number. One usually has more information about the photograph in this manner. The archive staff then provides a list stating more about the said order, specifically, who ordered it, when, and why. This is not the case with this picture, as one can tell from its absence.

However, this is not enough reason to exclude this example from the first half twentieth century, as it represents the vast majority of archival post-mortem photography in Portugal: scarce. The anonymity of many post-mortem photographs might complicate the understanding of individual identity within the context of collective memory. However, the absence of a specific identification also raises important questions about how personal grief is recorded and experienced in a culture where the individual is subsumed into a more private emotional cluster of loss.

This monochromatic post-mortem picture of a deceased individual in repose and surrounded by lush flora, is illuminated by soft natural light can be visually interpreted as Heaven.[23] The body, partially concealed by an arrangement of ferns and

[23] Refer to page 110, caption of figure 20.

other vegetation, rests on what appears to be a funeral bier or bed, positioned near a window with sheer curtains that allow diffused light to illuminate the space. A plethora of candles seem to flicker in the background, accentuating a ceremonial atmosphere. The profusion of flora, as discussed in the chapter *Mourning Visual Culture*, signifies a connection to mourning rituals and the symbolic association between death, nature, and rebirth. The composition, with the cadaver prominently placed in an almost wild environment, evokes a sense of dramatic, almost sacred silence.

Mourning Visual Culture: Sculpture and Photography

It is crucial to consider the relationship between funerary sculptures and photography as subjects worthy of comparative analysis. Tombs are considered the earliest sculptural structures created by humans and are one of the most ambitious, costly, and magnificent creations (Barker, 2016). By concealing the deceased and evoking their presence through them, tombs express one of the art's fulcrum functions: to render the invisible visible (Barker, 2016). By the nineteenth century, there was already an established interchange between how sculpture and photography could—and inevitably did—influence one another, a dialogue which would later be catalysed by Erwin Panofsky's *Tomb Sculpture* (1964) and his analysis of sculpture's symbolic functions within the funerary space.

In Portugal, the relationship between sculpture and photography is likewise comparable. This dissertation argues that even early funerary sculptures exhibit qualities that can be interpreted as "photographic-like" long before the invention of the camera. Similarly, post-mortem photographs also possess "sculpture-like" qualities. Nevertheless, it is essential to define these concepts before delving further into this concept. What exactly does it mean for a sculpture to have photographic attributes, and what does it mean for a photograph to be sculptural?

Photographic-like qualities include realism, detail, and imitation of life. Medieval tombs often aimed for lifelike representation, using detailed carving to mimic the textures of fabric, skin, or armour, creating a parallel in how photographs capture

intricate visual details of the subject, and were designed to simulate the deceased in a peaceful, eternal rest—much like how photographs freeze a moment. This study is not the first to use these concepts interchangeably. Pérez Monzón (2011, p. 216), when addressing how death was commemorated in the late medieval period and its funerary tombs, refers to them as *"negativos fotográficos*" (photographic negatives).

Similarly, early photography, especially post-mortem, was intended to evoke permanence and tangibility. Although sculpture at this time was considered a slow form of art with a particular intention, photography, in its earliest development, shared the same intention and attention to detail, particularly because of the long light exposure times of earlier cameras. Post-mortem photography often stages the deceased in life-like poses, akin to sculptural effigies, as the lighting and depth in photography can provide an almost sculptural presence. Overall, in terms of permanency, just as a tomb effort is designed for perpetuity, photographs provide a permanent record of a transient moment. Temporarily, funeral rites and attire were captured in post-mortem photographs of fleeting ceremonies.

Both mediums capture a serene meditation of the deceased, the act of lying down to sleep, and the visual motif of death, as sleep forms a continuous narrative in Western funerary visual representation, spanning from medieval tomb effigies to nineteenth-century iconography. Traditionally, death was not perceived as a radical transformation but as a transition into a diminished, restful state. As Homer, Virgil, and Ovid describe, the afterlife was a "dwelling of sleep", a place where the dead resided

in shadows, deprived of sensation (Ariès, 1977). Early Christianity reinforced this imagery by portraying death as dormancy, a waiting period before resurrection. The funerary lexicon further codified this belief: medieval inscriptions often referred to the deceased as *pausantes* (those who sleep), while the sacrament of the dying was called *dormientium exitium* (the sacrament of those who sleep) (Ariès, 1977).[24]

The motif of death as sleep, evident in tomb effigies and post-mortem pictures, served as both theological reassurance and an aesthetic artifice. Medieval tomb inscriptions explicitly connected rest to resurrection, reassuring the living with the assurance of eternal awakening. In contrast, nineteenth-century post-mortem images utilised this imagery partly due to practical limitations—the deceased were more easily positioned supine—while also reinforcing cultural connections between quiet, slumber, and the afterlife. This repose was not an absence but a state of latent potentiality, reflected in the botanical elements that frequently accompany such representations.

In addition, vegetal motifs in each funerary context seem to indicate bridge mortality with regeneration, reinforcing the idea that death is not an end but a transition towards renewal. Chevalier & Gheerbrant (1993) give an example of botanical imagery associated with revitalisation, from the Tree of Life to the bloom of seasonal flowers that expresses the organic cycle of decay and rebirth. In medieval and early modern

[24] As referenced by Ariès (1977), the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (where martyrs reawakened after centuries) coined this persistent motif of death as a prolonged slumber, only to be broken by divine intervention.

European traditions, gardens of paradise were often depicted as verdant floral sanctuaries where the dead found eternal rest. As observed by Ariès (1977), medieval prayers envisioned paradise as a garden of "holy" flowers, as the liturgical texts of late antiquity reinforced this imagery, describing heaven as *refrigerium*—a place of cool, green serenity where souls rested in divine refreshment.

By the nineteenth century, this botanical vocabulary continued to influence mourning practices, as cemeteries were designed as landscaped gardens, integrating the symbolism of natural cycles with the concept of tranquil repose. In post-mortem photography, the presence of flowers and botanical elements adjacent to the deceased's body can also be confirmed. The persistence of death as a sleep motif, interwoven with floral crowns and botanical elements, harmonises mortality with the assurance of renewal, depicting the location not as an end but as a manifestation of both presence and absence.

Hans Belting's *Image, Medium, Body* (2005) allows for a nuanced interpretation of both the tomb effigy and the post-mortem photograph in their role in mourning and collective memory. According to Belting, images serve not only as representations but also as a medium that actively engages with the human body, and their power is grounded in the physical and psychological relationship between the viewer and the image.

In this sense, the case studies in this dissertation illustrate the medium as embodying the connection between the deceased's physical presence and symbolic

immortality. Photographic stillness in the representation of the tomb, or the sculptural grandness of the photograph that evokes the physical likeness of the deceased, does not merely function as a static memorial. Instead, they participate in a ritualistic practice of memory and mourning, where the viewer's interaction with the image strengthens the bond between the living and deceased, preserving the individual's identity in the collective consciousness.

Belting's theory on the relationship between image, medium, and body can be used to argue that these mediums function not only as images, but also to connect the deceased's body with the viewer's body. This interaction acts as a conduit for grief and memory, offering a space where the viewer can physically and mentally engage with the notion of immortality and mourning.

For example, the anatomical details—such as the representation of the deceased's features and the positioning of their body—may be understood through Belting's framework as a way to "rebody" the deceased, allowing the viewer to experience the presence of the departed within the tomb. This type of memorialisation creates a continuous cycle of memory, where the image of the body becomes more than just a depiction and identifies a clear desire for vivid enactment, interpretation, and portrayal of grief by and for individuals and groups within their immediate moment and for the moments they will not witness in posterity.

This is because evidence shows that although Portugal had funerary chambers going back to the Palaeolithic periods and even by the High Middle Ages, there were

scattered burials "not only near chapels but in other places, for example, in passages where there were no religious buildings" (Almeida, 1986, p. 161). While one can still find very plain tombs by the twelfth century, this period laid the foundations for the dense and exuberant funerary art addressed in the present study, where burial inside the church became imperative, and the tombs were naturally needed (Almeida, 1986).

However, modern (and contemporary) Portuguese cemeteries are themselves a creation of nineteenth-century sanitation policies and exemplify the need for tumular sculpture from 1850 to 1880, owing to the extinction of religious orders that inevitably turned the care of the dead into a secular and individual practice (Vareda, 2001). Today, one sees the conjoined use of photography and sculpture in order to remember the deceased.

Figure 9 – An overview of Monsaraz Cemetery. Multiple stone and marble tombs with small photographic portraitures. [Photo by the author].

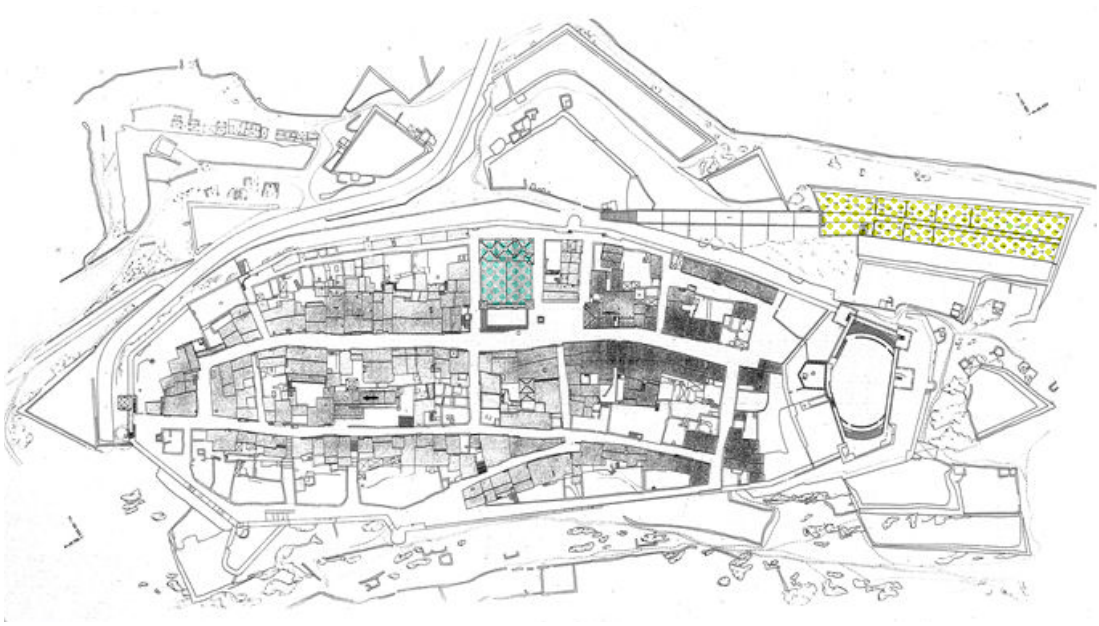

Figure 10 – Monsaraz's aerial plant, with the relevant location of the cemetery and of the church. Adapted from "Núcleo urbano da vila de Monsaraz" by SIPA – Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitetónico (http://www.monumentos.gov.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=6512). Modified from the original.

Consider, for example, the Monsaraz cemetery in Alentejo (highlighted in green). According to my adaptation of the aerial plant provided by SIPA, it is within the same urban nucleus of Monsaraz village and the same location as the tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre (highlighted in blue). I find it to be of great interest for this argument, as it apprehends a sharp connection between how the medium interacts in the funerary context. Here, the transition from medieval effigy to post-mortem photography to the use of both mediums is immediately present. As evidenced by this image, sculptural work still takes place, although it no longer needs to represent the social and

physical body. Therefore, it is represented in the format of the photographic portraits of the deceased.

Furthermore, the liturgical aspect of funerary sculpture now manifests itself in the form of crosses, Virgin Marys, and gravestones with varying degrees of religious iconographic detail. In other words, the liturgical focus no longer centres on the sculpted body as it did in medieval effigies. In turn, these contemporary markers show the ever-changing nature of Christian and Catholic funerary rituals: many gravestones still provide a platform for flowers, rosaries, candles, or other mourning items—elements that perpetuate and reinforce visual codes across time.

IV. Overlooking Nineteenth-Century Funerary Sculpture

Considering the presence of funerary sculpture in nineteenth-century Portuguese cemeteries, what justifies this study's emphasis on post-mortem photography as a more immediate successor to medieval effigies?

I must address the lack of an in-depth analysis of nineteenth-century funerary sculptures, which, like post-mortem imagery, undoubtedly persisted throughout the period. Upon considering the Portuguese cemetery landscape of the nineteenth century, such as Prazeres, Alto de São João, and The British Cemetery in Lisbon, one observes that tomb sculpture varied in approach and intricate symbolism. Cemeteries constructed from 1850 to 1925 served as epicentres for diverse interpretations of death and mourning: “The symbols carved in stone reflect the aesthetic compass, cultural

focus, formal amalgamations, the morbid character, and the sentimental thought that were hallmarks of the time" (Vareda, 2001, p. 6).

While nineteenth-century funerary sculpture in Portugal exhibits remarkable variety and symbolic richness, often reflecting Romantic ideals of sentimentality and an elevated, even heroic, portrayal of the deceased, it rarely fulfils the direct, personal role once played by medieval effigies. For this reason, and for the scope of this dissertation, I have opted to exclude cemeterial sculpture for an in-depth analysis, as by the 1800s there was a noticeable shift towards prioritising architecture over sculpture in romantic cemeteries (Queiroz, 2010). I posit that this, in turn, results in a decline in post-mortem corporeal depictions through the sculpture.

Instead of starkly displaying death and life's finitude, Romantic posthumous sculptures predominantly presented individuals in a reassuring light, reflecting their persona and aspirations allegorically. This concern for dignified and everlasting memory led to a cultural tendency to obscure and embellish death rather than confront it directly. The monumental and collective nature of these sculptures, arranging abstract idealism over personal devotion, distances them from the immediate emotional *rendezvous* seen in both medieval effigies and post-mortem photography. In this sense, the relationship between photography and sculpture demonstrates that photography can itself be seen as sculptural, establishing a stronger visual culture within the Portuguese Catholic context and suggesting that posthumous photography more directly replaces the funerary *gisant*.

For this reason, I have yet to find a nineteenth-century funerary sculpture that resembles a medieval effigy's role.[25] Post-mortem photography, more than contemporaneous sculpture, carries the same symbolic and social meanings as medieval effigy, primarily because it preserves the deceased's physical likeness, resonating with the era's emphasis on personal memory and individuality.

The shift is deliberate and intimately connected, including the secularisation of burial grounds and an increased emphasis on personal remembrance. In contrast, post-mortem photography, with its capacity to preserve a recognisable likeness of the deceased, more closely replicates the medieval effigy's intimate "living image".

Likewise, comparisons between mediums from the same period are common in scholarly work. Many individual publications address the Romantic cemetery space and medieval rituals in Portugal; none of them have specifically addressed visual culture. For that reason, post-mortem photography remains underexplored. By capturing the deceased's face in a tangible medium, post-mortem photography provides an immediate emotional bridge between the living and the dead, much like effigies once in medieval churches. For this reason, while Romantic funerary sculpture remains a significant artistic and cultural phenomenon, it is post-mortem photography that most effectively carries forward the effigy's essential function of offering a direct

[25] The only exception is the effigy of Maria Luísa Raposo (26 September 1850 – 19 May 1852), described by Queiroz (2010) as substandard work allocated to a Lisbon workshop, commissioned by António Nunes Vieira Raposo, father of the child.

encounter with the departed, as previously defined, and a "social body" recast in modern technological mechanics.

VI. The Post-mortem Photograph

As is commonly acknowledged, the nineteenth century saw the creation of a vast array of secular and religious mourning relics. These items were common in Victorian England, where the population is notably recognised for embracing not only posthumous photography but also many other mourning customs, so much so that this led to some objects unrelated to grief, such as the controversial *lachrymatories*, blurring the lines between history and fable.[26] Additionally, one can find evidence of crafted hairpieces made from the locks of usually already deceased loved ones, known as *"hair work"* or *"hair jewellery", "lovers' eyes",* death face masks, and mourning rings, among others. In contrast, Portugal exhibits minimal evidence for these specific Victorian mourning items.[27] Aside from a wide range of bereavement attires, Portugal particularly focused on the ritualistic component of death, and as a result, ceremonial goods became significantly more popular. This does not imply that such a typology of items did not exist, as summarised by the well-known mortuary face mask

[26] Evidence suggests that these decorative glass bottles were not used for collecting tears—instead, they likely were perfume bottles. Recent work covering 1800s perfume and glassware is scarce. See: Hern, (2023), Vatomsky (2017), Walker (1987)and Grootenboer (2006).

[27] By *Victorian(s)*/*Victorianism*(s), I refer to more than just Queen Victoria's reign. As the sovereign's name was widely used throughout the nineteenth century, its customary use has long defined this word as something that suggests British tastes, morality, and manners from the period. The same approach to the word is employed herein to uniformise with previous Portuguese studies, such as that of Weber Montagner (2022).

of the Portuguese sculptor Soares dos Reis made by his father, Teixeira Lopes (1889).[28] However, this study excludes these relics due to their rarity and the absence of the correspondence that I argue is established and represented by post-mortem medium. Furthermore, the sixteen images obtained during the research part of this study imply that photographic representations of the deceased were a more common component of Portuguese grieving than previously imagined.

As such, I believe that one of the visual culture mediums addressed, the post-mortem depiction (and carte-de-visite), is crucial as a gateway for the investigation of more nineteenth-century mourning practices, correspondence exploration, and their relationship with effigies.[29] By reinforcing a sense of presence through a visual record, post-mortem photography not only personalises grief but also maintains the continued presence of the deceased within the social fabric. This practice, much like medieval effigies, ensures that death does not equate to erasure but rather a transformation of physical presence into a lasting cultural artefact. The first juxtaposition of both these epochs poses itself immediately, as it is very well known how much the Victorians took on a secular interest in medieval art and its architecture (Pemble, 1988).

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[28] Teixeira Lopes, J. J. (1889). *Máscara Funerária de Soares dos Reis* [Death Mask]. Seen and consulted on *Depositorium 2* [Exhibition] (2021–2022). Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, Porto, Portugal. https://www.up.pt/casacomum/eventos/depositorium-2-exposicao/

[29] As documented by Borges de Araújo (2017), the widespread use of cartes-de-visite from the early 1860s to the first decade of the twentieth century in Portugal led to the specific practice of using these images to immortalise a deceased family member. Before this, and once again alluding to Borges de Araújo, sources also contain references to production of the daguerreotype and paper portraits for jewellery application.

Consistent with Guynn (2008), this practice was frequent during the pinnacle of Victorian preoccupation with mortality. Linkman (2006) suggests that the custom of post-mortem depiction was inherited from the tradition of posthumous portraiture dating back to the fifteenth century, naturally progressing with the advent of photography as it became widespread across different social classes. Additionally, despite Linkman (2011) stating that few specimens in post-mortem photographs have contextual historical information, most academic literature points towards Western Europe as the zenith of this practice.

As reported by Ortiz (2019) there were a significant number of relationships among European royal families, and their interactions likely provided ample opportunities for the dissemination of various cultural traditions and their exchanges. When discussing the Spanish mourning attire of the nineteenth century, Ortiz theorised, "it is interesting to note how the relationships between European royal families are constant, leading to a significant permeability of customs, considering that Queen Victoria's granddaughter, Victoria Eugenie of Battenberg (1887–1969), would become the future wife of Alfonso XIII (...)" (2019, pp. 20-21).

Therefore, the case of Britain is most pertinent since post-mortem photography was particularly popular in London (Weber Montagner, 2022), and it most likely established some cultural interchange with Portugal and Spain. One of the few scholars who have delved into this matter, Weber Montagner (2022), also noted that despite the significant influence of the United Kingdom on customs at the time, a post-

mortem picture was also present in Portugal, as demonstrated by the photographs in their research collection. Academics who have proposed that this practice was not publicly announced in Portugal (Borges de Araújo, 2017), still acknowledge that most photographers likely portrayed the deceased, whether in the studio or at the deceased's family home. However, few studies have been conducted on this occurrence.

Notwithstanding, given the widespread tradition resulting from a natural progression from painting, pinpointing the exact origin of this specific category of photography is a laborious and arguably pointless task. I suggest the focus instead of analysing the significance of the Portuguese social body, rendering its origin a somewhat secondary topic. Nonetheless, it is argued that it was influenced by many of their European counterparts, with the British most likely influencing the *specific* practice of post-mortem photography throughout Europe. It should be noted that my goal is not to argue that the Portuguese adopted all foreign mourning practices—an assertion that would be challenging due to its rigorous adherence to Catholicism, even with some symptoms of laicism, idealism, and positivism—, nor to suggest that Britain was the sole influence.[30] On the contrary, according to the available historical data, most photographers and studios in Portugal by 1862 were owned by French or Italian photographers (Vicente, 1984).

[30] Vareda (2001) states that in mid-nineteenth-century Portugal, "the rise of secularism was significantly shaped by the influence of German idealism, introduced by the English who had settled during the war, and by positivism, which was embraced by supporters of the French Revolution".

Additionally, this dissertation challenges only the notion that there are no formal connections to Victorianism(s) or adherence to the ritual since it is not presently well documented and is still under-researched. It is posited how the post-mortem *did* exist in Portugal, as I contextualise both British and French influences as more direct propellers of this practice in Portugal.

Based on this premise, it is pertinent to add that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wealthy Victorians and Edwardians travelled more frequently. As a result, Pemble (1988) states, journeys to the Mediterranean became integral to both British lifestyle and their approach to death. In death, this travel to warmer climates was "the only serious hope of recovery (…) [was] in transferring the [consumption] patient to a Southern climate for the winter month" (p. 88). This is corroborated by research on publications and issues of the time that simultaneously places the nineteenth-century Portuguese periodical press in close temporal proximity to the commencement of the Victorian era and its travels, one starting in 1834 and the other in 1837, as Portuguese writers frequently commented on their voyages and expenditures (Castanheira, 2015).

Therefore, while Portugal is said to not have been a popular destination for Victorians—as it does not officially constitute part of the Mediterranean Sea geographically, although situated within its basin—their presence in places like Sintra and Porto during the apex of Portuguese Romanticism is notable. Correspondingly, it is

important to emphasise that during the nineteenth century, Portugal was also described as an "informal colony" of the United Kingdom.

In *They Went to Portugal*, originally published in 1946, Macaulay (1946/1985) provides evidence by writing about her experience in Portugal and the distinctly self-contained and enduring nature of the British presence. For example, in the preface, she remarks that the British—especially those involved in the port wine trade "swelled in the eighteenth century into a magnificent aristocracy of commerce, the most robustly British colony ever to settle abroad" (p. 14). The vivid excerpt indicates that despite Portugal not being a formal part of the Mediterranean in the strictest geographical sense, the British community maintained its institutions, customs, and social life, almost as if it were a colony in its own right. Throughout the book, Macaulay elaborates on details of how British travellers and settlers in places such as Sintra and Porto conducted themselves with a degree of separateness from the local Portuguese culture, with the establishment of independent trading houses (factories), consular services, and social networks that persisted over generations. These factors collectively support the interpretation that nineteenth-century Portugal functioned as an unofficial colony in the United Kingdom.

From the Monserrate Palace to Macaulay's and Lord Byron's manuscripts, which survived the test of time, Britain can be said to have been widely present in daily life in Lisbon. In fact, in 1981, a diary entry published by The British Historical Society of Portugal encapsulated this reasoning. This entry, like many others, not only

highlights the presence of British visitors in Portugal but also reflects the intertwined landscape of both nations during this period:

> In 1885, a group of young people spent the summer in Sintra and left a diary. (...) The manuscript might be edited to give a picture of social life in Sintra in what was the high Victorian noon of the last century. (...) The interest lies in the local scenes and people (...) always echoing English voices (Reynolds & Kingsbury, 1981, p. 1).

Furthermore, in death, the British seemed to maintain complex dynamics close to the Portuguese. Until the third decade of the nineteenth century, as analysed by do Espírito Santo (2020), Great Britain interred a large share of its dead in churchyards or church courtyards as an Anglican-only practice. However, separate burial grounds for dissidents and nonconformists segregated people of different religions; in the Iberian Peninsula, the Catholic Church also manifested this post-mortem division and segregation (Oliveira, 2007). In all cases, the respective religion buried their wealthy people within their temples, placing other devotees outside. Furthermore, the Catholic belief in resurrection connects the body with the soul, making materiality such as the flesh as "bread" and the blood as "wine"—just as nutrition is crucial in life, the body is vital in death (do Espírito Santo, 2020). The deceased body's attachment and burial represent these beliefs. Anglicanism, which evolved from the English

Reformation and the same Rome schism, followed an alternative but not totally dissimilar route, as the renunciation of the concept in Purgatory appears to have resulted in a notable detachment from the veneration of the deceased and the preservation of cemetery grounds (Oliveira, 2007, p. 106). As posited by Oliveira (2007, pp. 117–118), if it is indeed true that a distinct conceptual divide exists between the cemetery lands of Catholic and Protestant origins, significant developments are also evident within these areas.

At this time, Portugal still seems to share somewhat the same attitude to mourning as England. This is the case of the British Cemetery and documents such as a letter to the Marquis of Aguiar on the Mourning Order at the Court Decreed by the Prince Regent of Great Britain for the passing of the Portuguese queen Dona Maria I. From my transcription, one could gather the following relevant content:

> As soon as the regent prince of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland received the royal letter of participation in the death of Her Majesty, the most faithful lady, Queen Maria I, whom God called to His holy peace, he ordered, as I was told and as it was known to me, the immediate Court Mourning; due to a function that His Royal Highness had granted to His Britannic Majesty, the queen who was already announced; with the reason of the marriage and His Royal Highness's union with Princess Mary and the Duke of Gloucester [illegible], the

> mourning was deferred to the 25th of the same month, according to custom (...).[31] In the Royal Chapel of Portugal at this Court, a service and funeral rite for Her Majesty Queen Maria I was held on the 12th of July, with the due funeral pomp, attended by all the Portuguese present in this Capital, who also observed the mourning that was to be expected from their duty and loyalty.[32]

As many have also observed, Morais (2013) underlined France as having emerged as a Western intellectual centre: "enriched by the legacy and presence of its philosophers, playwrights, and scientists like Descartes, Pascal, Molière, Diderot, expanding a broad and innovative movement of ideas, principles, social habits, and fashions" (p. 34). Amid this cultural *milieu*, the experiments of Nicéphore Niépce, continued by Daguerre—two pioneers of photography—resulted in the daguerreotype in 1839.

It is known that the "first reports of the discovery of the technique of fixing images obtained with camera obscura arrived in Portugal in 1839 through periodicals

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[31] In this section, the writer refers to the marriage between Prince William Frederick, Duke of Gloucester and Edinburgh, with his first cousin, Princess Mary, Duchess of Gloucester and Edinburgh (Weir, 2008). It seems as if the British court delayed the mourning for Queen Maria I of Portugal to accommodate their marriage.

[32] Original: "Logo que o principe regente do Reino Unido da Grande Bretanha e Irlanda recebeo a carta [regia] de partecipação falecimento de sua magestade fidelíssima, a senhora D. Maria I., que Dios chamou á sua sancta blanca, ordenou, como me disse e me constou, o Lucto de Corte immediato; em rasaõ de huma função que sua Alteza Real dava a sua Magestade Britannica, a rainha que se achava já annunciada; com o motivo do cazamento e sua Magestade Alteraza Real da Princeza Maria com o Duque de Gloucester [ilegível] o dito lucto foi differido para o dia 25 do mesmo mês, na forma do costume (...).Na Real Capella de Portugal nesta Corte, se ouve no dia 12 de Iulho, hum Offiçio e exéquias por sua Magestade Senhora Dona Maria Primeira, com a devida pompa fúnebre, a que assistiram todos os Portuguezes que se achavam nesta Capital, os quais tem [também] tomado o Lucto que era de esperar do seu dever e Lealdade" (Portugal, 1816, MSS. 76, N°1, Doc 99, f. 1-3.) [Transcription by the author.].

imported from France and the United Kingdom, with the earliest recorded photograph taken in Portugal dating from 1841—a daguerreotype portrait taken by the English painter, William Barclay" (Borges de Araújo, 2008, p. 1151).

The daguerreotype quickly gained popularity and was widely used in Portugal in 1855. The exact emergence of post-mortem photography in Portugal is unknown, but based on the study's samples, it is possible that it started slightly later than in England, where it was widespread. As such, this study considers the post-mortem artefact as an important vehicle for such a premise. This delay can be attributed to Portugal's continued use of the laborious process, which had already been abandoned by its European counterparts (Vicente, 1984). One of the possible reasons for such a delay might likely be due to Portugal's "peripheral location and lack of adequate communication channels with the rest of Europe", as "the country was often delayed in response to events beyond its borders" (p. 34), as theorised by Morais (2013), when writing about nineteenth-century Portuguese clothing.

In a closer examination of the Portuguese cult of the dead that would directly influence its post-mortem portraiture in the 1800s, evidence suggests that secularism, Romanticism, and Catholicism functioned as a *spectrum* on which societal bereavement expressions projected themselves. As underscored by Vareda (2001), there was a new paradoxical attitude towards mortality, where there was a desire to remember the deceased as a presence through commemorative acts underpinned by fear of death.

One of the first challenges that academics face when approaching these pictures is their veracity. Many mid-to-late eighteenth-century picture portraits are very frigid and static because of the long light exposure required in early photography to avoid getting a blurry portrait. This might lead to some misconceptions about categorising specific pictures as post-mortem when, in fact, they are likely not. Without contextual evidence, as provided by archives and other historical sources, it is difficult to prove that this is an accurate post-mortem photograph, narrowing the scope of my research. Beyond the examples discussed here, numerous similar images remain outside scholarly reach, often appearing only in antique markets or private collections.

Again, the likelihood of it being a rare practice is very low. First, I must consider a rationale similar to preservation bias. For example, surviving examples are those that were probably viewed and shared the least. This, along with class issues, might also explain the lack of ethnic and racial representation in the examples I could find. It also shows a tendency towards further individualisation in the mourning process.

Despite continued practice, there appears to be a decreased level of tolerance for capturing and consuming this type of imagery. This shift is likely due to changes in the depiction and processing of death and mourning (Hilliker, 2006). As Linkman (2006) previously stated, post-mortem photographs are infrequently encountered in albums that survived, although evidence suggests that post-mortem portraits may have been disseminated among acquaintances and relatives in a manner analogous to other carte-de-visite or cabinet portrait photographs. Furthermore, in addressing

the scarcity of these pictures in Australian family albums, while other family pictures survived in great quantities, Bown (2009) states that post-mortem portraiture was very rare compared to the popularity of the practice in Europe and America. However, Bown (2009), claims that while images of deceased individuals continue to exist, it is possible that evolving societal perspectives on mortality and associated customs have resulted in numerous cherished photographs being discarded and eliminated by subsequent generations.

In Iberia, there appears to be similar secrecy or erasure of the ritual. While open-casket home vigils decreased post-Vatican II, some "post-mortem" manifestations endured. For example, in the mid-twentieth century, Galician photographers like Virgilio Vieitez captured *duelo familiar* (family mourning), illustrating the persistence of beliefs and emotions across generations (Llop, 2010).

These were some of the few examples I could collect that have been confirmed on such occasions. Hence, I hypothesise that, in turn, the post-mortem photograph assumed the function of the sculptural, collectively symbolic, and social volume of the individual in its place, perpetuating the pedagogy of images within communal lamentation. Unlike England, where death became commodified through memorial objects, Portugal emphasised ceremonial performance and social grief, with post-mortem photography bridging tradition and modernity. Portugal's delayed adoption of post-mortem photography, unlike its rapid dissemination elsewhere, reflects an adaptation of new practices to an entrenched belief system in which the image of the

deceased reaffirmed their continued presence. The late incorporation reflects a country that, despite modernity, maintained Eucharistic centrality in its relationship with death.

Dignity In Mourning

Not everyone was considered worthy of grief and mourning in the high Middle Ages and late modern period in Portugal. This section explores who was deemed deserving of commemorative practices and the societal implications of those exclusions, questioning what it means to be considered "worthy" of grief and how this reflects the values and hierarchies of the established time frame.

Judith Butler (2009/2016) previously addressed the Western representation of death in the media, questioning whose lives are considered worthy of grievance and whose deaths are rendered invisible in conflicts. This disparity, according to Butler, is still evident today in the visual representation of mourning in media. While the deaths of prominent figures are commemorated through public rituals and evocative imagery, the deaths of others, such as refugees or individuals from impoverished backgrounds, are frequently reduced to statistics.

Countless individuals have been systematically erased from the narrative of grief and excluded from commemoration due to *stratum*, race, age, or religion. In addition to focusing on the examples provided that embody tangible images or objects, it is essential to acknowledge individuals who have never seen an expression or dramatisation of their grief. This consideration indicates the eras being compared and the societal attitudes that rendered their narratives silent, thereby guiding my attempt to comprehend the mechanisms that underlie the denial of dignity in mourning and the broader cultural and social structures that shaped these norms. By taking into

account the act of mourning in Portugal, I aspire to question this paradigm by recognising these anonymous lives and addressing them in a subversive manner.

VII. The Marginalised in Late Medieval Grief

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, monks, secular priests, and members of the new Mendicant Order established themselves as the rightful overseers of death, serving as essential intermediates between the living and the deceased and as custodians of the transition (Godelier, 2014, 2014, p. 128). Burial practices often sometimes involved nameless or unmarked burials, particularly for common individuals, since "no recognised or family-claimed graves exist; only a communal burial site, perpetually disturbed and intermittently marked by crosses (Godelier, 2014, pp. 129–130).

I believe that the practice of initial anonymity for ordinary individuals in death was prevalent and did not directly imply a lack of reverence for the deceased. Rather, it illustrated the community's importance in grieving and profound belief in the afterlife: "For the bishop of Hippo, the true Christian must not worry about bodies, but only about the soul, for whose salvation it is appropriate to pray" (Godelier, 2014, p. 129–130).[33] The concept of the cemetery arose as a central element for communities delineated by walls that signified their religious identity (Godelier, 2014, p. 130).

[33] Bishop of Hippo is synonymous with Saint Augustine.

However, as stated by Ariès (1977), for centuries the decrees of the councils consistently differentiated the church itself from the consecrated area surrounding it. Although the councils mandated burial adjacent *to* the church, they repeatedly enforced the prohibition against interment *within* the church, allowing only a few exceptions for priests, bishops, monks, and certain privileged laypersons—exceptions that swiftly became the norm.

Effigies only became more common in the twelfth century, as they emphasised individual identity and eternal memory within Christian theology. These monumental tombs began to emerge as a form of burial for the elites, influenced by the evolution of religious and social practices. It was during this timeframe that Mattoso (1996) noted a shift towards religious intolerance in Christian kingdoms that became more pronounced during this period. As is the case with certain clerics, the very occupation of the Iberian Peninsula by the Muslims was seen due to their sins, and, for this reason, this loss was interpreted as a foreshadowing of the end of times.

As religion served as Iberia's moral compass, the medieval assessment of groups of people by their religion and burial mourning favouritism was not a case of chance but rather purposeful discrimination between the people. While current research suggests a "tolerance and coexistence between Muslims and the population of Al-Andalus (...) as the Christians embraced several of the characteristics, customs, and traditions of the Muslims" (Al-Khalafat, 2023, p. 31), this did not imply that burial practices, or even social hierarchies, were the same and fair for all individuals.

At this time, discrimination in the Middle Ages often functioned through mechanisms of broad categorisation that flattened diverse identities into singular and often reductive discourses. Heng (2018) proves this by addressing the term "Saracens", which became an ethnographic flattening term of the Muslim populations in Latin Europe. Other distinctions of this nature were primarily based on social traits like language, religion, and habits around eating and hygiene, although physical features and ancestry sometimes also played a role (Patton, 2019). Therefore, I assert this perspective will elucidate subsequent medieval tendencies regarding the under-representation of marginalised groups in the funerary practices of Portuguese mourning culture.[34]

Nonetheless, either by virtue of historiographical racial erasure or by the timeline defined in the methodology, the archival documents and evidence seem to suggest that status and religion provided a greater guarantee of a properly marked burial in the fourteenth century. More specifically, it seems that disease and *stratum* played a larger role than any other cultural data when it came to dignity in burials.

For example, as researched by Campos (2023), who studied mourning practices in three parishes of Coimbra, evidence indicates that these practices were mainly accessible to affluent parishioners and particularly to rising bourgeoisie, which included

[34] Saracens was, as noted, the term employed from the late eleventh and twelfth century onward that consolidated diverse people and populations into a singular demographic entity characterised by the adherence to the Islam. However, as Islamic historiography has proven, Muslims did not group all Europeans under a single collective rubric (Heng, 2018, pp. 110–180).

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merchants and local government officials. Although these findings do not reflect the entire medieval Portuguese population, their legacies with the church—through chapels, anniversaries, and liturgical rituals—and the emergence of specialised chaplains in the fourteenth century and the accompanying records provide a relevant glimpse into the social fabric of that era.

In light of the considerations, the previously mentioned religious criteria of people and unification of Crusades' efforts culminated in the apex of the Inquisition and the 1492–1496 expulsions of Jews from Al-Andalus (Baker, 2015). The period reflects a deliberate effort to impose religious homogeneity, contrasting with earlier plausible pluralistic norms of its society. Consequently, from the late fifteenth century onwards, Portugal became a singular case in many aspects of colonialism and slavery. Indeed, although the use of the word "race" does not directly inform the timeline of the racial phenomena itself, the common belief is that medieval Iberia is where the word "race" first emerged (Heng, 2018). Funeral rites underwent a notable transformation, becoming increasingly personalised. Greater use of wills marked them, liturgical commemorations after death, and heightened focus on individual responsibility (Dias, 2014a). However, these were mainly dedicated to aristocracy, monarchy, and merchants and did not include the legacy of enslaved individuals in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Evidence appears to show that *status* and religion provided a higher guarantee of a correctly documented burial in the fourteenth century, either due to

historiographical racial erasure or due to the methodology's predetermined timetable. More precisely, I deliberate that it appears that sickness and stratum had a greater impact on burial dignity than any other cultural data. However, this does not imply that social discrimination in death was a fifteenth-century innovation. As mentioned, graves belonging to the elite were also found in prior centuries, establishing a process of continuity in which privilege determined the visibility of the deceased.

To further understand dignity in mourning during the fifteenth century, one must further contextualise the age of Portuguese overseas expansion that started around 1415 with the invasion of Ceuta.[35] As a preliminary point, the deconstruction of the historical term *Discoveries/Descobrimentos* is vital, as its celebratory connotation obscures the exploitative realities of colonial expansion, including violence, slavery, and cultural erasure (João & White, 2002). During the late nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, especially during the nationalist appropriations of Estado Novo, history was reframed to legitimise imperialism, revealing the enduring ideological consequences of this legacy and concept (João & White, 2002).[36]

Underscoring the importance of comparing the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, Sapega (2008) suggests that the nineteenth century renewed emphasis on the historical achievements of the expansionist project is no coincidence, as this period in Western Europe was defined by the "invention of tradition" (p. 20).

[35] See: Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (PT/TT/CRN/14, c. 1450, f. 9).

[36] Estado Novo was the name given to the Portuguese fascist dictatorship in the twentieth century.

For this reason, enslaved people, mainly of African descent, were often excluded from Christian and Catholic burial rites and treated as disposable. The absence of grieving reveals how racial dynamics influenced mourning practices in medieval Portugal, with enslaved individuals systematically denied dignity during death. Royal interventions further illustrate the disregard for the dignity of enslaved individuals, as, by 1515, a reference to *Poço dos Negros* appeared in several historical documents: a big pit where owners could bury their dead slaves (Casimiro et al., 2020).

To this day, the street where this happened is still named "Rua Poço dos Negros" or "Negro Pit Street". These pits were not intended as a gesture of respect but as a practical measure to prevent public health crises caused by decomposing bodies uncovered in urban areas. The "utilitarian" approach accentuates the extent to which enslaved individuals were dehumanised and denied the rituals and spaces of mourning that would have otherwise reinforced a sense of community and memory. As their bodies were discarded in waste pits—as seen in Lixeira de Valle da Gafaria in Lagos, where 155 individuals were buried in a refuse dump rather than a consecrated space (Neves et al., 2011), this treatment reflected the deeply entrenched social hierarchies of the time, where enslaved individuals were marginalised not only in life but also in death.[37]

[37] The term "Lixeira" translates to "dumping ground" in Portuguese. The research conducted by Neves et al. (2011) examines the vast urban trash deposit in Lagos, where skeletal remains of enslaved individuals of African descent were found after they had been discarded during the fifteenth (and sixteenth) centuries, preserving the physical memory of the first slaves captured on the African coast and brought to Portugal in 1444.

The physical placement of their remains alongside urban waste prove their perceived lack of value to society, starkly contrasting with the elaborate funerary monuments of the elite. Consequently, in the words of Casimiro et al. (2020), although since the fifteenth century, these people have been grouped under homogeneous designations such as enslaved people, "*Negros*", and "*Pretos*", which came from various locations, including not just Africa, where they were captured and sold, "but also the Americas and even Portugal, where they were born as second or third-generation slaves" (p. 83). Similarly, viewing them as a homogeneous group throughout their lives is problematic, even more so when they are stripped of their dignity and any other identifiers in death.

This discriminatory treatment extended beyond the physical handling of their remains to the material culture and identity of enslaved Africans in Lisbon, as suggested by the archaeological findings of "African" pots (Casimiro et al., 2020).[38] While the dehumanisation of death sought to erase their individuality, objects like these pots reveal how enslaved individuals maintained elements of their cultural identity, allowing them to be remembered as acts of resistance and memory preservation.

At the centre of the lower frieze of Fernão Teles de Meneses tomb is what Proença, (2021) interprets as "a human of African visage". The individual likely portrays the

[38] I oppose this oversimplification and geographical synthesis, as Africa is a large continent with multiple cultures. Notwithstanding, it is still unknown where and to whom these pots belong. Little is known besides the confirmation that they were non-European ceramics from enslaved people in that historical period. Therefore, I use the same terminology as Casimiro et al. (2020) did in their study.

context of expansion episodes, primarily in Northern Africa. This is exemplified by the archetypal wild man of the woods, which symbolises the intrigue surrounding the interaction of diverse iterations of the human species (Proença, 2021). For this reason, the tomb contributes to a narrative of power and dominance over African territories and populations, representing not only the buried individual but, more importantly, the society he symbolises, framing their purported "discovery" as a matter of "responsibility" (Pereira, 2005), contrary to the embellishments of sculpture, the Portuguese Expansions had numerous adverse consequences in colonised Africa. Simultaneously, there exists a discernible parallel narrative that glorifies the perceived intimacy and more harmonious connections these communities maintained with Nature, potentially indicative of a healthier relationship with death (Goulão, 1988; Proença, 2021).

In contrast, the Portuguese elite, irrespective of gender or age, had access to intricate funerary monuments and memorial practices, showcasing the intersection of race and class in the denial of dignity to the enslaved populace. The establishment of individual graves, in contrast to communal burial sites, indicates the growing significance of identity in death, reflecting the previously mentioned trend towards

secularisation and individualism (Vareda, 2001). This evolution in burial customs signifies a propensity to honour the deceased as unique individuals within collective memory.

VIII. Portraits and Anti-Portraits in Post-mortem Photography

As understood in this essay, a *true* post-mortem—the one that functions in the same way as the medieval effigy—goes beyond simply capturing images of a deceased individual or the events surrounding their passing. Candid pictures of a loved one's wake or burial did not fall within the scope of post-mortem photography for this reason. While both scenarios may report the deceased, the distinction lies in the intention behind the capture. For this motive, I define post-mortem photography only if I can establish a clear social purpose and memorial direction, separating it from its documental nature and other forms of archival photography. The focus here is to distinguish between theatrical and remembrance post-mortem photography from more complex types of post-mortem photographs, such as the aftermath of tragic events such as murders, suicides, revolutions, war, or natural disasters. [39]

While discussing nineteenth-century judiciary photography, F. L. Vicente (2018) summarised how I will address the differences between the two typologies of post-mortem photography. As stated by the author, "There is something profoundly

[39] Further read: Sá (2018).

distinct in these portraits [forensic and medical] that disrupts all the conventions that decades of photographic studio work" as "truth ends up replacing artifice" (pp. 18-19). In other words, one captures the final step of a bereavement ritual, a carefully staged moment, a personal and familial keepsake, and the other is a piece of hard evidence and documental in nature.

While medical and forensic photography is a relatively neglected yet significant area of study in Portugal, I aim to elucidate why it raises distinct enquiries compared to traditional portraiture. Though this study does not categorise them as equivalent forms of post-mortem portraiture, it is noteworthy that numerous individuals depicted under these circumstances failed to retain their memory; rather, they were deprived of their identity through the perceived "*objectivity*" afforded by the camera.

As Crary (1990) argued, tools of vision and the pursuit of "objectivity" in imagery must be understood as symptoms of modernity, not its origin. Supporting this view, Galison and Dalton (2007) add: "Photography did not create this drive to mechanical objectivity; rather, photography joined this upheaval in the ethics and epistemology of the image" (p. 161). The nineteenth-century obsession with the pursuit of objectivity is in fact just one epistemological approach to apprehending reality. Like all philosophical abstractions, it is more a historical marker and symptom than an ultimate truth. Galison and Dalton (2007) assert that the histories of objectivity and science are distinct. Although the scientific domain currently cannot be envisioned without the notion of objectivity, in the nineteenth century, objectivity—predominantly

mechanical—coexisted with various other dialectics of truth, many of which were regarded as subjective.

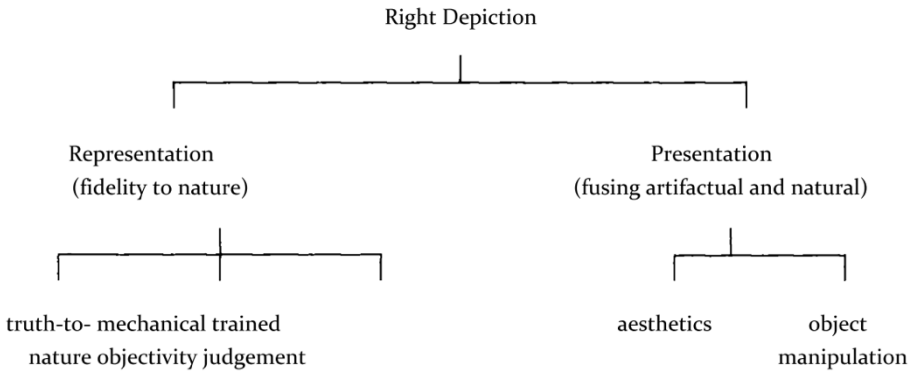

Figure 11 - Representation and Presentation. Reproduced from *Objectivity* (p. 413), by P. Galison and L. Daston (2007), Zone Books.

Figure 12 and 13 – These photographs, available in the Photographic Archive of Lisbon, contain the descriptors "Corpse of another individual who participated in the regicide" and "Corpse of Manuel dos Reis da Silva Buiça, one of the regicides". © Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, [*Cadáver de Manuel dos Reis da Silva Buiça, um dos regicidas,* by *Lima, Alberto Carlos*, archive code: LIM001262; *[Cadáver de outro elemento que participou no regicídio], Novais, António*, archive code: ANV000731.

This dissertation defines grief as a multidimensional experience that encompasses both emotional and social aspects. It is not just a reaction to personal loss, but also a cultural and performative ritual. These coexist because, confirming Kantian transcendental philosophy (Karskens, 1992), between the objective and the subjective lies the universal versus the particular, not in the division between the external world and the mind (Galison & Dalton, 2007). Thus, objectivity can be defined as the pursuit of complete suppression of the subject in the act of observing photographs. These devaluing factors are more readily associated with the subject and prioritise formal characteristics (Galison & Dalton, 2007).

I do not propose that the camera intrinsically embodies "objectivity", as it frequently produces the contrary effect. Numerous individuals, devoid of families to commission photographs or commemorate them, required agency in their representation. They were deprived of the dignity associated with ceremonial photography and were instead depicted as felons or transgressors. Instead of capturing their identity, they are reduced to their crimes and accusations, as shown in Figure 12 and 13. As Sophie Schell (2023, p. 58) observed, whilst commenting on medieval effigies: "What we do not see in these images is a corpse. Instead, we see the community actions and structures that occur because of a corpse".

IX. The Role of Age in Mourning

An intriguing discovery within the research conducted in the framework of this dissertation was the disparity in age representation in the preliminary examination of post-mortem and medieval effigies. Notably, the majority of post-mortem photographs located in archives depict children and infants, whereas medieval tombs predominantly feature adults, with limited exceptions.[40] Based on the attachments provided in **Appendix B,** from the overall sixteen post-mortem pictures found during the research, 68.75% were of children.

Figure 14 — A. D'Azevedo & Cª. (1904). *Retrato de bebé (post-mortem)* [Cartes-Des-Visites]. Arquivo Fotográfico da Câmara Municipal de Évora. https://arqm.cm-evora.pt/index.php/pt-afcme-jps-998-7.

[40] As described by Figueiredo (2008), in Lisbon's cathedral, within the Saint Anne chapel, lies a small tomb believed to belong to a royal family princess, as suggested by the Portuguese coat of arms adorning the sarcophagus. The effigy depicts the figure holding a Book of Hours, with her head resting on two cushions and two lap dogs at her feet. The tomb is supported by stone pedestals, one of which retains an original lion carving.

The majority of post-mortem depictions of children, particularly in historical contexts, can be understood within the framework of high infant mortality rates. As stated by M. A. Lopes (2002), infant and child mortality rates during the nineteenth century were alarmingly high. This was primarily due to factors such as poor living conditions, insufficient medical knowledge, frequent diseases, inadequate nutrition, and dangerous practices, such as early weaning, improper hygiene, and unsafe childbirth methods (M. A. Lopes, 2002).

Given the susceptibility of children during this era, premature mortality was prevalent and frequently regarded as unavoidable; between 1874 and 1878, 60% of interments in the Alto de São João Cemetery in Lisbon were community graves, with 93% of those being children under the age of 7 (M. A. Lopes, 2019).[41]

In response, families sought to immortalise their deceased children in portraiture, including post-mortem photography, as a way to cope with the immense grief of losing them at such a young age. The portrayal of children after death, therefore, not only reflected the widespread tragedy of early mortality, but also symbolised an attempt to preserve their memory in an era where such deaths were all too frequent and socially acknowledged as part of life. The emotional and symbolic value of these posthumous images provide families with a means of holding on to their children,

[41] According to M. A. Lopes, (2019), in Lisbon's Prazeres cemetery the proportion was significantly lower at 30%, with children constituting 48% of these interments. In rural areas, while the impoverished frequently had to forgo coffins, communal graves were typically rare. Bodies were interred in individual graves following their transportation to the cemetery in coffins supplied by a parish or charitable group.

even in death, as a way of asserting their presence and importance despite their short lives. As researched by Llop (2010), in Spain, the initial evolution of painted portraiture in familial and private contexts was absent, necessitating a wait until the nineteenth century for the advent of post-mortem portraits of children, by which time painting was already contending with photographic imagery. Post-mortem photography predominantly features full-body portraits of individual subjects rather than groups. Infrequently, the camera intrudes upon children's wakes—even when photographers depart from their studios to operate in private residences—or documents funeral and interment ceremonies.

As concluded by José María Borrás Llop, post-mortem portraits frequently included elements from Catholic liturgy, such as white garments and floral crowns, symbolising innocence and the child's ascension to heaven. These practices conformed to the *ritual romano* (1614), which mandated celebratory rites for *párvulos*, encompassing white vestments and jubilant bell tolls.[42] The motif implied that deceased children become interceding angels in heaven, as the vigil for the children was a syncretic rite that coupled grief with rejoicing. Families and communities sung soothing *coplas*, envisioning angels ascending to heaven, signifying the figurative acceptance of death as spiritual transcendence, exemplifying Iberia's syncretic fusion of Roman Catholicism while teaching folk customs.[43]

[42] *Párvulos*; i.e., children under seven.

[43] *Coplas* are a form of traditional Spanish poetry.

As seen in more modern funerary practices, flowers and wreaths became increasingly important as part of the beautification of death, particularly as society moved into the twentieth century. These floral elements were used to surround the deceased's body, along with other mementoes, shifting the focus from the deceased body itself to the overall funerary scene (Hilliker, 2006).

Currently, this type of camerawork is relevant. Not only because of their past but also because evidence suggests that, unlike other practices, this is still an active bereavement process, especially in infancy, such as the example of organisations like NILMDTS, which is a North American institution that offers photography as a tool for grief, as did many others beforehand.

As a non-profit organisation founded in 2005, NILMDTS is dedicated to providing remembrance photography for parents experiencing the loss of a baby through professional volunteer photographers. The organisation has since expanded worldwide, reaching families in 40 countries and working alongside medical professionals to ensure compassionate support. They offer free, delicately retouched black-and-white portraits, capturing the brief but meaningful moments families share with their children.[44]

Historically essential, infant post-mortem photography retains significant emotional and symbolic importance. Motivated by elevated child mortality rates and the lack of visual documentation, it continues to serve as a method for confronting and

[44] Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep. See: West (2016).

processing loss in a time when infant death, although less common, still represents an unimaginable sorrow. Emerging organisations, such as NILMDTS, illustrate the evolution of this tradition to align with modern Western sensibilities, converting a once sombre keepsake into an empathetic act of contemplation. The photographic preservation of lost children persists in establishing the presence of the absent rather than disintegrating into oblivion.

Cultural & Normative Principles

In this section, I explore mourning practices, such as the roles of nineteenth-century post-mortem photography, and fourteenth to fifteenth-century medieval tomb effigies, through the dual lens of religious and cultural normativity. These aspects are important for understanding grief as an emotional cluster. Not only regarding visual culture, but also in answering aspects of the thesis' foundational theory on the *spectacularisation* of mourning, making grief a performance both for the self and for society.

Building on the work of Barbara Rosenwein and David Freedberg, I argue that personal grief is mediated and articulated through culturally shared norms and embodied responses that engage both the individual and collective. As much of this study's methodology baselines in both temporal and geographical comparisons, the specific grieving ritualisations of Catholic Iberia are to be contrasted with a more secular approach as well. Hence, I intend to deconstruct this discourse, as Catholic perspectives continue to serve as the normative principle today in Portugal, enabling an unusual but nonetheless few innovative factors of this research. Examining the ritualised emotions and societal views on death over two timelines, noting the intriguing medieval fascination of the nineteenth century, prevalent not only in Britain but also among the Portuguese Visual Culture and the rest of Europe.[45]

[45] The inventorial research and catalogue of Cravinho, G. (1979) shows, for example, the use of Coimbra's medieval iconography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Portugal.

To better understand ritualistic gestures and emotions, such as the depiction of some iconographic and non-verbal postural expressions, it is essential to define what constitutes "emotions" and "gestures"." By examining mourning rituals, funeral processions, and collective grief, and comparing these with analogous practices in other contexts for each period, one can deconstruct and reflect on the emotional norms of their time while researching how mourning became both a personal and performative articulation of loss.

For this matter, as Rosenwein (2010) argued, emotions are not simply universal biological phenomena, as some scholars previously thought, such as Ekman's and Friesen's model of six universal emotions.[46] Instead, they are deeply embedded in social contexts and evolve through Rosenwein's terms, *emotional communities.* These communities—whether families, institutions, or broader societal groups—define what emotions are valued or discouraged, how they are expressed, and what roles they take in maintaining social bonds and cultural systems. Complementary to Rosenwein's theory, Freedberg's (2017) research on empathy offers another compelling perspective, as his conclusions suggest the role of embodied simulation in emotional responses to visual *stimuli* in art.

[46] The models based on a range of five to seven emotion—as considered by Ekman & Friesen (1971); Ekman, (1992);and Izard (1971)—are, as posited by Coppini et al. (2023), plausibly a case of alexithymia that undermines and restricts emotional expression to only basic emotions, rendering it too rigid to account for the diverse emotions we encounter in daily life. For this reason, this study adopts a similar viewpoint as Coppini et al. (2023).

I suggest that this directly correlates with the theoretical work of Hans Belting on the role of living images, as Freedberg argues that empathy often precedes conscious cognition, relying on automatic bodily engagement with movements and emotions depicted in visual representations. This idea, supported by neuroscientific findings, such as mirror neurone activation, suggests that humans experience a form of "feeling with" others through visceral, precognitive processes. Numerous of these precognitive processes, mainly the mirror neurone system (MNS), are due to the findings of Gallese et al. (1992), who have located, in the premotor and posterior parietal cortices, a discharge that occurs when someone does a particular action but also when someone observes the same action in another individual.

As a result, guiding these findings to the present paper and corroborating the conclusions of Miguélez Cavero (2016), the phenomenon insinuates that whenever observing what happens to others, one not only comprehends their experiences but also often empathically shares their states. Furthermore, research on the mirror neuron system supports the idea that even the observation of static images of actions activates the brain, implying that viewing pictures and works of art provokes bodily responses in the beholder. This further influences my theory that both medieval and modern case studies create immediate emotional communities through their crystallised gestures and postures.

What focus would drive towards a history of emotions, and how can one answer that agenda? Contrary to earlier scholars who have approached this topic, I will not

provide a list of what actual emotions might be. Very little of life can be explained via a list or catalogue, let alone the vast realm of human sensibility. Indeed, doing so risks what O'Connor (2024) coined as *grief universalism* and challenges previous linear models like the Kubler-Ross stages.[47] Instead, like Rosenwein's theoretical framework, I propose to look at emotions through case studies. It is not through a descriptive lens but a spectrum that is shaped and performed per group norms and expectations, as evidence suggests that emotions differ across time and place, influenced by societal structures, religion, and power dynamics, as well as whether their expressions reinforce or disrupt social cohesion, depending on whether they align with communal expectations.

The intersection of Rosenwein, O'Connor's, and Freedberg's theories enriches the understanding of mourning practices as both deeply personal and inherently communal. While Rosenwein provides a conceptual framework for analysing grief's cultural and normative dimensions, Freedberg grounds these practices in the physicality of emotional experience. Simultaneously, O'Connor (2024) warns about the concept of "continued bonds", suggesting that grief involves maintaining a relationship with the deceased rather than seeking "closure", while alerting that not all of these

[47] Grief Universalism is the notion, per O'Connor (2024), that grief is uniformly experienced across cultures, typically framed within models like the "stages of grief". Grief rituals and emotional responses differ widely among societies, embodying distinct "emotional communities" as noted by Barbara Rosenwein. By endorsing a universal approach, grief universalism may invalidate non-Western or context-specific mourning practices, diminishing emotional richness to a narrow, ethnocentric view and marginalising cultural diversity while ignoring individual grieving variations.

continued bonds are positive — communities and individuals can also form negative continued bonds with the deceased.[48] This aligns with cultural practices, such as preserving mementoes or commissioning tomb art to sustain all types of emotional ties, even those focused on the display of stratum and grandeur.

Many tombs dating from antiquity to the early Middle Ages were not forgotten and exposed to the elements; rather, they were continuously reused and interpreted over time. Moreover, considering the common practice of reusing tomb pieces and elements in early medieval Portugal and deciphering the continuous reuse of late antiquity or early Middle Ages tombs, this idea of continued bonds seems to be present in the work of P. A. Fernandes (2015), who studied the Sines Archaeological Inventory's sculptures and found significant reuse. For instance, a decorative slab initially sculpted with an eagle capturing a rabbit was later adapted as structural support. In funerary contexts, the reuse of *impost blocks* and sculpted fragments with classical mouldings on their reverse side suggests that they were initially Roman architectural materials incorporated into medieval funerary complexes.[49] Fundamentally, many early medieval funerary tombs were reintegrated into new practices and rituals, either by being adapted and incorporated into new burial sites, writing and editing new

[48] Moreover, I encourage readers to look up the questionnaire conducted by Semedo (2017), who distinguishes adaptive from maladaptive continued bonds, showing that secure maintenance of these bonds correlates with healthy adjustment, while dysfunctional bonds relate to avoidance and pathological grief. This supports the claim that maintaining emotional ties after a loss can be an adaptive, integrative part of the grieving process rather than solely a negative or disruptive phenomenon.

[49] An impost block is a horizontal structure at the base of an arch.

or existing inscription work, or even re-signified according to the needs of the ever-changing nature of social and religious values. It shows a *continuum* across memory and mourning practices by demonstrating how the past remains active and alive and is constantly renegotiated by posterior generations.

Consequently, since the latest research tends to share this standpoint, the only way to interpret emotion in visual culture is to analyse each case individually, guaranteeing some level of context to conclude what these expressions might mean. For this reason, I will consider mourners to be emotional communities that shift with time, although they remain tangible and alive through the static aspect of their gestures' representation in funerary art. In other words, I argue that the death of a person, together with Catholicism's liturgy, can form an emotional community, as people are united by the way they practice grief.

Furthermore, based on Freedberg's embodied responses to visual *stimuli*, this emotional community is not only formed upon the creation of the funerary medium, but also each time a person from the same religious frame is exposed to it. Hence, other aspects of the representation of emotion and the question regarding gestures must be addressed. By applying these findings to the case study outlined in this paper, there is a clearer pathway to understanding medieval and modern mourners while contemplating scenes carved on tombs and codified photographs.

X. Emotions and Gestures in Medieval Mourning

The idea of continued bonds is also particularly relevant when considering medieval effigies as they are frequently repurposed or altered by later generations. It was fairly common for family members or community leaders to add new markers, inscriptions, or stonework to signify ongoing connections with the deceased. The non-linear nature of grief means that tombs function not only as places of remembrance but also as active sites for continued emotional connection with the departed. Such acts of reuse and adaptation illustrate how these bonds, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, are maintained through these living images, fostering a relationship that extends beyond an individual's physical death.

This contextualisation often reflects shifting power dynamics or changing devotional practices, creating a dialogue between the original intent of the tomb and its later reinterpretations. I consider this to support the tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre (Figure 1) as an example of this, since it was carried over from the original Gothic Temple Church to—although many times reformed since the sixteenth century—the present *Nossa Senhora da Lagoa* church.

Moreover, Miguélez Cavero (2015b) noticed a clear distinction in how gestures are perceived, differentiating between positive gestures associated with virtue, social roles, and salvation, whereas negative gesticulation is linked to vice and mocker, which also deepens the theory on the relationship between negative or positive continued bonds and living images. These gestures, as depicted in the tomb of D. Fernão

Teles de Meneses (**Figure 18** and **19**), can be interpreted as symbols of moral and spiritual conditions. For instance, folded hands or submissive gestures may embody ideals of piety or humility in death, reinforcing the deceased's desire for salvation (Miguélez Cavero 2015b, p. 153).

As a knight, achieving a "morte santa" was an uphill task because of the violent nature of his life, for it is known that the knights who die in battle often did not have the ideal, peaceful preparation for this catholic way of death.[50] Nevertheless, the deaths of those knights who died heroically or in defence of the virtues of courage and loyalty could be celebrated; their souls could be remembered by elaborate funerary monuments and prayers for the dead, which were part of the values of chivalry.

Furthermore, gestures such as pointing or touching serve to guide viewers' understanding of depicted scenes, especially in funerary settings, where gestures by the deceased or accompanying figures (for example, pointing upwards or embracing a cross) are meant to lead viewers towards interpretations of ascension, intercession, or eternal rest (Miguélez Cavero, 2011, p. 61). In the case of the tomb of Gomes Martins, one can notice such manifestations in the details shown in **Figures 15**, **16**, and **17**. In this instance, the hands holding a sword immediately tell us of his knightly status, but more curiously, the way the hands are sculpted is more informative.

[50] Ariès, also cited by Dias (2015, p. 117), states that the dying person would take certain precautions when they felt death approaching: "common, normal death does not strike treacherously, even if it is accidental as a result of an injury, or even if it is the effect of an emotion too great".

Figure 15, 16, and 17– Details of the tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre, c. fourteenth century. Church of Nossa Senhora da Lagoa, Monsaraz. [Photo by the author].

Placed on the lower side of the body, the hands look relaxed, with the right hand laying completely flat and the other suggesting a loose grasp of the sword. Accompanying the unflustered facial expression, it is not implausible to suggest that it could

indicate humility in death; it might not be portrayed as a symbol of power but of a good death.[51]

The ideas surrounding a good death are one of what one could call a normative code in the Catholic effigies of the nobility and chivalrous. This idea continues on the front side of the coffin, focusing on the individual carrying a cross, which is a typical gesture in funerary depictions, as pointed out by Miguélez Cavero. However, this figure is part of the representation of funerary procession, which I have previously established as a plausible emotional community, either by family, acquaintances, or professionally hired *wailers*.[52] It is interesting to note, then, that the same effigy that is accompanied by a possible wish of a good death also denotes the forbid gestures of wailing and even hunting scenes on its frontispiece.

Intriguingly, efforts by the Catholic Church and secular authorities—both municipal and royal—sought to curtail or at least moderate elaborate mourning rituals in which exaggerated displays of grief played a central role in the Iberian Peninsula (Miguélez Cavero, 2015a). Evidence shows that these various attempts at moderation and prohibition of *carpideiras* by the Catholic Church show how widespread this costume

[51] In medieval Portugal, a "good death" involves preparing one's soul and body for the afterlife, as noted by Fernandes (2011). Her research concludes that good deaths align with Christian teachings and societal ideals. often involving sacraments, repentance, and the presence of family and clergy who pray for the soul's journey to heaven. Reflecting on King Dinis's tomb, Fernandes also shows how funerary monuments communicated ideals of piety, legacy, and divine grace. These tombs served as status markers and spiritual tools to facilitate prayers for the deceased, ensuring their "good death" led to a favourable afterlife. See: C. V. Fernandes et al., (2023).

[52] Although the Catholic tradition in Portugal refers to this practice as *carpideiras*—from *carpir*, i.e., *to cry*—(refer to footnote 11 on page 29), the phenomenon is much older and transcultural. Other regions of the world might use other terms such as *pleurants,* criers, weepers, wailers, moirologists—in Greece, as per Orbey (2021)—and professional mourners.

was and how secular it was viewed, as crying for a deceased one implied not believing in *Jerusalém Celeste*.[53] Indeed, in 1385, the Lisbon council decreed that wailing and mourning over the dead was forbidden, claiming that it was "a custom inherited from the pagans, a form of idolatry, and is against the commandments of God" (A. H. Oliveira Marques, 1974, pp. 213-214). Therefore, these *exaggerated* gestures emblematic of the dual nature of mourning in medieval funerary art, combining intense emotional expressions with religious authority.

Although I cannot conclusively excise exaggerated displays of emotion from the dimension of theatricality, it undoubtedly demonstrates remarkable secularism, especially the unique depiction of a hunt in the foot-end panel. This depiction underscores the merging of sacred and secular elements and the aspirational nature of funerary monuments that were created to pursue social prestige in death (Reis, 2017).

Additionally, the evidence found by Gallese et al. showed that viewers feel empathy for pain when observing images of a distressed body. I consider this to be the reason why the wailers of the funerary procession depicted in Gomes Martins Silvestre's **(Figure 1)** tomb activate similar brain centres as when they experienced their pain, as evidenced by previous research on mirror neurons.

[53] New Jerusalem (or Jerusalém Celeste) functions as *an imago-mentis* in the Apocalypse of Saint John (P. Pereira, 2004), embodying a theological utopia beyond its physical form. As a ritualistic image, New Jerusalem is both a symbolic and interpretative construct, continuously reactivated in religious thought and practice.

Moreover, fitting Cavero's (2016) investigation of a similar iconographical programme in León's cathedral, it is very likely that medieval spectators would not only empathise with the physical suffering of the depicted figures in violent scenarios but also share feelings of sorrow and grief. Consequently, their brains were activated in response to both internal and external pain, which included mourning for the deceased and physical distress associated with self-inflicted and violent attitudes. I believe that these criteria for interpretation also apply to the depiction of the funerary procession in Gomes Martins Silvestre, as illustrated in **Figure 2**, as this particular *cortejo* is followed by wailing expressions, scratched jaws, and a dimensional action of self-flagellating movements.[54]

It is worth noting that they also provide information on ritualisation and static representation of gestures in grief. As inherently dynamic, hand gesticulations and facial expressions are converted into static postures when depicted in two-dimensional effigies. This aspect has also been theorised by Gombrich (1966), who argues that artistic depictions often simplify real-life gestures into symbolic, universally understood postures. Gombrich (1966) posits, for example, the evolution of praying hands, as seen in **Figures 18** and **19**, a gesture that went from a feudal expression of submission to a symbol of religious piety. In funerary art, this confirms that seemingly static gestures, whether in modern or medieval epochs, are more likely to represent deeper

[54] *Cortejo* is Portuguese and Spanish for "procession" Like the French *cortège* or the Italian *corteggio,* these inflections of the word mean more typically funerary processions.

ritual relationships, such as the folded hands symbolising the individual's surrender to a divine judgement (p. 397).

Figure 18 and 19 - -Details of the tomb of D. Fernão Teles de Meneses, ca. fifteenth century. Church of the Mosteiro de São Marcos, Coimbra. [Photo by Author].

In medieval visual culture, these gestures—negative or positive—are steadily translated into postures that are stationary. While the gestures are used to convey the deceased's virtues, status, and emotional resonance with the living, the pose of hands clasped in prayer, the serene facial expressions, or even the recumbent posture are crafted to evoke piety and reflection, aligning with Rosenwein's emotional communities by reinforcing shared norms around grief and its commemoration. The effigies bid empathy from the viewer, who, through visual and emotional engagement, participates empathically in the collective memory of the deceased.

XI. The Nineteenth-Century and the Transformation of Mourning Norms

Nineteenth-century Portuguese post-mortem photography reflects a paradoxical approach to preserving both an individualistic and secular emotional community. In this subchapter, I posit that post-mortem photography, as well as funerary portraiture trends of the nineteenth century, was inspired by the stillness and grandeur of medieval effigy imagery, as they still embodied the interplay of personal grief and collective memory. These forms of visual culture and living images continue to embody the interplay between personal grief and collective memory, albeit in transformed contexts.

Unlike tomb effigies—sculpted to convey specific gestures of serenity, piety, grief, or supplication—post-mortem photographs often present the deceased devoid of additional figures with dramatic gestures. While some European examples reveal that photographic subjects' bodies propped up and cosmetically retouched up to mimic life, this does not appear to be the norm in the selected Portuguese *praxis*. Instead, the deceased are often depicted with an almost stonelike stillness, akin to the medieval tomb, often opting to portray death as long sleep. For this reason, the reserved emotive language contrasts with the elaborate symbolism of medieval tomb effigies, while preserving many traces of what once a very public and intense display of emotion. Henceforward, this absence of gesture and communal grief is not only a by-product of the photographic medium, but also an influence of the Victorian and Romanticist *ethos* of individualised mourning and internalised grief. The romantic

sensibility in Portugal—evident in nineteenth-century visual culture—valued introspection and private dimensions of grief, while retaining its deep visual presence. Nevertheless, it denotes the intersection between religious reform, Catholicism, Romanticism, and Medievalism, including Pre-Raphaelitism, which embraced the reinterpreted medieval images and religious symbolism in its revival.

The final session of the Council of Trent marked a turning point in the Catholic Church's approach to the visual representations of grief. An ultimate attempt to control and unify representations of grieving and living images, this council was a direct reaction to Protestantism, which culminated in December 1563. As advanced by Freedberg (2021), the Council of Trent sought to reaffirm the legitimacy of religious imagery in response to the Protestant iconoclasm and criticism. The decree upheld traditional views, stating that images should remain in churches, as their veneration honoured the original and strictly communicational archetypes they represented: instrumental for instructing and confirming faith through depictions of redemption, liturgy, scripture, and preaching. For this reason, "misusing" images for superstitions, financial exploitation, and lascivious depictions were strictly prohibited, with episcopacies now obligated to approve new images, portrayals of miracles, and relics.

Inevitably, once prominently visible, grief and suffering gradually lost their religious pictorial presence as legislation and ecclesiastical efforts aimed at reducing or even eliminating practices linked to pagan traditions. The Catholic Church's doctrinal control over the pictorial and emotional space of grief gradually diminished the

visibility of religious mourning rituals, often calling for the extinguishment of such practices. By the end of the *long nineteenth century,* expressive gestures and communal dimensions of grief prominent in medieval sources were constrained. However, as the present study shows, evidence suggests that they persisted, although in a more contained and secular fashion.

In the medieval centuries addressed in Portugal, mourning was a collective experience embodied by an emotional community, resulting in tomb effigies, such as the Gomes Martins Silvestre or D. Fernão Teles de Meneses. In modernity, while mourning practices were more visible than ever before, such as post-mortem photography in the carte-de-visite format or public displays like funeral processions, the size and scope of the emotional community were not as expansive or communal. In other words, the social body might have consumed grief's visual culture in larger quantities, but the individual grief did not form public emotional communities. Instead, as the democratisation of memorialisation and access to acts of remembrance became more public, paradoxically, the shared emotional experience contracted in scale with emotional groups adapting to more intimate settings.

I consider the conservative approach to gestures in nineteenth- and twentieth century post-mortem photography to draw inspiration from medieval tombs. These phenomena extended to Portugal and overlapped with Protestant contexts such as Great Britain, where Victorian Medievalism also influenced visual culture. Anglo-Saxon studies, as noted by Parker & Wagner (2020), recognise Victorian Medievalism as a

pivotal point in visual art's history.[55] Of course, Victorian Britain's case stems from incredibly prolific output stemming from its industrial and imperial circumstances, whereas Portuguese Ultra-Romanticism was deeply rooted in national rebirth and post-revolutionary aspirations. However, the comparison between funerary visual traditions revealed several shared interests in medievalism, naturalism, and individual emotion.[56]

As Brites & Barbosa-Ribeiro (2019) observed, numerous researchers saw Romanticism emerging as a critique of modernity in the nineteenth century and sought to transcend reason in favour of "inner truths", accentuating individual interpretation and private emotion. This shift rejected Enlightenment ideals and norms in favour of exploring marginalised aspects of human experience, including death. In this context, death became deeply emotional, with mourning reflecting the loss of loved ones rather than the fear of one's mortality. These visual traditions adopted postures frozen in medieval imagery, while reflecting their contemporary sensibilities.

[55] As evidenced by Parker & Wagner (2020), during the Victorian era, there was already a recognition of the influence that both medievalism and classicism had, as the term was first introduced in 1844 to describe how medieval culture impacted modern society. Additionally, romantic medievalism is best "defined by the activities of collectors, poets, novelists, and artists in the era that *gave rise* to Victorian medievalism proper" (Parker & Wagner, 2020, p. 6). Romanticism and Ultra-Romanticism trends in Portugal naturally played out a bit later than the Victorian era, hence occurring simultaneously.

[56] The term "Medievalism" does not hint at an accurate representation of the Middle Ages. Instead, what we see in visual culture of the nineteenth century is an idyllic, *romanticised* (literally, as a product of the Romantic period) depiction of the Middle Ages. For this reason, while the tomb might be a place of exaggerated gestures, its legacy in the reproduction of Portuguese and British post-mortem photographs does not translate through the same "medieval" plastic expressions. Refer to: Parker & Wagner (2020).

The pre-Raphaelites, influenced by figures like John Ruskin and William Morris, exemplify this Romantic interaction with fascination with the medieval. Indeed, conferring to Lepine (2020), "Pre-Raphaelites and medievalism were synonymous and practically interchangeable terms in the Victorian art world" (p. 490). Morris considered the subjects of art and society to be inseparable, and as such, art became a vessel for reimagining the medieval past:

> Therefore, the art of the Middle Ages climbed gradually to the top of the hill, doubtless not without carrying the seeds of the disease that was to end it, threatening great change, which no doubt no one heeded at the time. Nor was it there much to wonder about their blindness. Still for centuries, to come their art was full of life and splendour, and when at last its death drew near, men could see in it nothing but the hope of a new life (Morris, 1881/1999, p. 83).

Lepine (2020) explains that the pre-Raphaelites and their circle integrated elements of lore and literature with technological innovations. As shown in **Figure 20**, "their work was painted directly from close observation of the natural world and reinvented subjects from history and modern life" (p. 490). They employed innovations in paint manufacturing and worked with photographers, blending Victorian technologies

with medieval symbolism and narrative techniques.[57] The results, conferring to Lepine (2020), are a meticulous attention to detail seen in Millais's early works, as "detail could also be gained through exploring photography's crystalline capture of nature, architecture, and the human body" (p. 492).

On this basis, Bullen (1998) points out that throughout its various phases, the debate concerning pre-Raphaelitism revolved around the representation of the human body. Between 1850 and 1880, the pre-Raphaelite body became a source of public and private pleasure, perplexity, and unease. Undeniably, as posited further by Sawhney (2006), one of the earliest departures of the Pre-Raphaelites from contemporary artistic conventions, was their portrayal of human anatomy. The lifelike accuracy of their characters features the Pre-Raphaelites' preference for vivid empirical representation, giving importance to painting actual human models with precision.

In light of this, and upon contemplating **Figures 7, 15, 18, 20,** and **21,** I consider that the medieval tomb and the post-mortem photograph share the same visual focal point of the Pre-Raphaelites—the physical body. As stated by Martinez (2013), death does not exist except through its representation, the form that social-emotional clusters assign to it, and the ways they respond upon its confrontation. Upon someone's demise, the focus shifts to the corporeal body and feelings, not death itself, but with their associated emotions. For this reason, all photographic and pictorial

[57] Lepine (2020) further notes that some pre-Raphaelites, such as Burne-Jones in the 1880s, often constructed detailed models of medieval armour for his depictions of mythological and heroic knights.

representations of death are fictional, as every image possesses artistic autonomy, distancing itself from the depicted figure.

Similar to Morris's foundational writings on the pre-Raphaelites, Almeida Garrett and other Portuguese writers of the late nineteenth century sought to revive medieval themes.[58] Garrett's and other writers' revival of *romanceiros* during the Romantic period mirrors, for example, William Morris's and John Ruskin's belief in the medieval as a source of artistic beauty and emotional truth.[59] Morris hoped for a resurgence of medieval aesthetics, which he believed embodied a deeper connection with human emotions. Similarly, Garrett's literary work sought to revive medieval themes to evoke collective emotion and national identity, underscoring Romantic fascination with the Middle Ages as a means of reconnecting with a more sincere, emotionally rich form of expression.[60]

This convergence is evident in the interplay between photography and painting. Nineteenth-century photographers often sought *painterly effects* in their work, while

[58] The early twentieth century in Portugal also had a special focus on death and dying. According to Rebelo et al. (2022), in the early twentieth century, Aquilino Ribeiro — among others—, was a prolific writer whose themes often centred on his delight in life combined with an awareness of decay and death.

[59] The term *romanceiro* encompasses the body of traditional popular ballads or poems of medieval origin, transmitted orally, which Romanticism revived and elevated to the status of a literary tradition parallel to the neoclassical tradition of written, scholarly transmission. Inspired by the folkloric research of Walter Scott (1771–1831), Thomas Percy (1729–1811), and John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854), whom he encountered during his exiles in France and England, Almeida Garrett (1799–1854) played a pivotal role in this endeavour. See: Boto (2011).

[60] As described by Barbas (1994), Garrett turns to Gil Vicente, the "father of Portuguese theatre", to write the drama with which he aims to (re)establish a truly national play, just as he sought inspiration from troubadour romances and poets to revive poetry. He delves into the origins of the language and its earliest expressions to regenerate Portuguese culture, putting into practice the broader Romantic aspiration of reclaiming medieval writing (p. 66).

painters emulated the "*objective*" and naturalist qualities of the camera.[61] For this reason, the figures illustrate the recurring eternal rest pictorial narrative adopted by post-mortem portraits, changing the modern tradition of the posthumous portrait. According to Ariès (1977/1981), "the idea of death as a state of dormancy has resisted centuries of suppression by the literati" (p. 24), as the concept of sleep is the most ancient, shared, and consistent representation of afterlife. Describing the relationship between death and image, Barthes (1980/2000) states:

> Death must be somewhere in a society; if it is no longer (or less intensely) in religion, it must be elsewhere; perhaps in this image, which produces death while trying to preserve life. Contemporary with the withdrawal of rites, photography may correspond to the intrusion of a symbolic death outside of religion, outside of ritual, or a kind of abrupt dive into literal death (p. 92).

[61] "Photographers experimented with old and new printing methods (...). Watercolour and other textured papers were used, and negatives and prints were manipulated by hand, allowing for more variation as well as more painterly effects" (Simmons, 2008, p. 34)

Figure 20 — Left: The Artist Attending the Mourning of a Young Girl by John Everett Millais (ca. 1847). As a member of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, Millais also explores themes of grief and mourning. Right: Detail of **Figure 7.** The painting by John Everett Millais depicts his commissioned post-mortem portrait; the window in the top right corner, positioned behind the girl's head, plainly implies her celestial destination (Bown (2009), similarly to the case study in **Figure 7.**

Figure 21— Mártir Cristão by Joaquim Vitorino Ribeiro (1879). Exhibited at the 1880 Paris Salon, this painting is in the permanent collection of Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, Porto, Portugal.

For this reason, the gestural restraint observed in the portrayal in post-mortem photography and pre-Raphaelite paintings reflect the emotional community's shared

focus on the symbolic representation of literal death, rather than the depiction of its emotive impact on the performer and spectator. This "death as sleep" motif aligns with a broader tendency in nineteenth-century visual culture to overemphasise mortality, transforming it into a subject of reflection. Once again, the *living images* drawn by Freedberg suggest that these artworks transcend mere representation: they become emotionally resonant and culturally contemplative.

XII. Traceable Gestures in Post-mortem Photography

Figure 22 – *Detail of the Glass Negative Original of* **Figure 7 —** Casa Fotografia Alvão (ca. 1920-50). Retrato de mulher post-mortem. [Photograph: Glass Plate Negative black and white, gelatine silver print, 13×18 cm]. Centro Português de Fotografia — Digitarq. https://digitarq.cpf.arquivos.pt/details?id=1182913

The few gestures that might be present are rendered almost invisible, and the projected gesticulations one sees in the post-mortem photograph can only be analysed by handling the picture itself. In the absence of more obvious movements, such as the funerary procession in Gomes Martins Silvestre or the opening of the dossal in the tomb of D. Fernão Teles de Meneses, the handling of these nineteenth-century objects can better inform this research. As previously stated, artefacts of the same typology as the carte-de-visite of a post-mortem boy **(Figure 6)** have been described as "touchy-feely" artefacts, not to be looked at with deferential awe (...) but catalogued and collected, gossiped and commented" (Plunkett, 2008, pp. 276-277).

When examining the handling of the pictures in their original format — in this case, the glass negative in **Figure 22** — it does not inform us much about how they were consumed. This is not unusual, as the photographer or the photographic house was commonly the only one who touched the negative glass original. Additionally, the glass plate appeared to be catalogued as a typical colloidal silver emulsion, making it unlikely that the absent emulsion area on its right side was due to poor or excessive handling or mourning over the image.

However, it is worth noting that the image seems to contain traces of a possible masking technique in a pink hue. Using watercolour or another pigment-based technique, possibly diluting a red dye, to create masked areas around the face and other areas of the image, particularly in a classicist triangular composition, might further suggest a deliberate attempt to alter or darken the final print, as shown in **Figure 22**.

This technique may have been employed to soften the appearance of the deceased's face, thereby evoking a less stark and more contemplative memory of the individual. Using watercolour or other medium on glass negatives is not unheard of and is often employed to adjust tonal balance or to conceal imperfections: "Red colourants, frequently *new coccinea* dye, (...) with a brush, were commonly used to repair tears and other gaps or holes on the gelatine surface that might occur accidentally, improper handling or manufacturing process. They could also be used, like makeup, to correct contrast or brightness" (C. Pereira et al., 2017, p. 105). Within the context of post-mortem photography, such alterations could be intended to further "sanctify" the deceased's visage. While the pink hue inevitably remains speculative without testing, its presence could align with the broader cultural practices of visually moderating an image's appearance for sentimental or privacy purposes.

The Spectacles of Mourning

Throughout this study, the notion of theatricality emerged as a recurring lens through which mourning practices and artefacts were examined. This leads up to a central question: do all expressions of mourning inherently entail theatricality, or is this characteristic reserved for certain manifestations? What can be considered a *spectacle*? Is this a relevant issue?

Derived from Latin *spectare*, meaning *to watch* or *to observe,* the study adopts the term *spectacle* to refer to visible and often communal manifestations of mourning. Whether embodied in the physical presence of tomb effigies or the intimate yet shared medium of post-mortem photography, this exhibition is understood as a constructed display that summarises contemplation and engagement with grief, memory, and figurative immortality. Gombrich has previously given his thoughts on the topic of the theatrical aspect of ritualised gestures, claiming that:

> Aesthetic problems of this kind are usually treated by critics as categories of sincere versus theatrical expressions. I am not sure that this was the case. Both the rhetorical and the anti-rhetorical, the ritualistic and the anti-ritualistic, are, in a sense, conventions. Indeed, what else could they be, if they were to serve communication between human beings? (Gombrich, 1966, pp. 76-77).

Agreeing with this perspective, at least on the affirmation that human communication often relies on shared symbolic structures, I argue that it is essential to differentiate between conventional expressions that merely facilitate daily communication and those that actively engage with the human condition, particularly through the contemplation of mortality through the body.

Drawing from Merleau-Ponty (2012), Butler argues that the body is not only a historical construct, but also a dynamic set of possibilities that are constantly being actualised (Butler, 1988). Merleau-Ponty suggests that the body's meaning emerges through historically mediated and tangible expression. According to Butler (1988, p. 521), perceiving the body as a set of possibilities implies two key points: (a) its appearance in the world is not determined by some intrinsic, immutable essence and (b) its tangible expression encompasses the actualisation and specification of historical possibilities. This process is shaped by historical conventions that embody an agency that dictates the manifestation these possibilities. Therefore, the body is not merely a static material entity, but a materiality imbued with meaning, articulated through a fundamentally performative process. This performativity underscores that embodying existence is not a static condition but a continual enactment of materialising possibilities that differ across time and context, setting individuals from their peers, predecessors, and successors.

Furthermore, theatricality in mourning rituals can be considered a sensory and emotional phenomenon that transcends symbolic representation and engages the

audience through visceral and embodied experiences. As Sugiera (2002) explains, theatricality often bypasses abstract sign systems and instead acts directly on "body memory" eliciting immediate emotional responses (p. 227). Additionally, Sugiera (2002) reiterates how *theatricality* exists in a spectrum of coding and openness, a characteristic reflected in mourning rituals that merge highly symbolic, such as post-mortem photographs, with more interpretative and experiential elements, such as the sensory atmosphere evoked by medieval tombs.

By taking them as *living images,* I examine mourning artefacts as communicative tools and agents that trigger corresponding emotional communities. Through *visual stimuli* and unlike everyday human interactions, these artefacts seem to achieve this through the transcendence of conventional symbolism and aesthetic ideas; they possess an inherent drama that compels viewers to confront their mortality and the ephemeral nature of existence. Within the spectacle lies the relevance of the "living images" and their capacity to engage their audience visually, emotionally, socially, and culturally. As it bridges the personal and collective in its emotional impact, the theatrics go beyond just aesthetic signalling; they warrant an emotional response. These performances, as embodied acts of remembrance, not only reinforced communal bonds, but also created a dynamic interaction between materiality and emotion, allowing the deceased to remain a vivid presence within collective memory.

The dramaturgical dimension of mourning is not merely a visual or performative element but also a strategic, cultural mechanism of communication. The effigy tombs

and post-mortem photographs can be considered not only "dramatic" but also embedded in social functions. In this case, theatricality becomes a tool to enforce memory, communal identity, and even spiritual processes. They transform the act of mourning into a collective, performative experience in which the deceased continues to have an active presence.

XIII. Communal Spectacle

There appears to be academic consensus regarding theatricality in one of the examined epochs. From the examination conducted in the previous chapter, all evidence indicates that medieval grief is expressed through a play of emotion that was carefully choreographed by and for the public. However, to identify whether medieval grief is a spectacle, one must consider what constitutes Christian eschatological thought, and the relationship between image and text.

Medieval mourning practices were deeply shaped by the interplay between theological ideals and cultural singularities in their expressions of grief, often resulting in tension between doctrines and secular rituals. Belting & Jephcott (1994) explain how medieval imagery, integral to liturgical practices, served as a bridge between memory and presence, using visual language to reinforce Christian eschatology and complement texts to serve as powerful tools of indoctrination (p. 225–233, 410). Indeed, in the account of Belting & Jephcott (1994), the role of images was to serve as "books of the illiterate" designed to tell the story of salvation and align devotional practices with

theological tenets (p. 303). Yet, as Pérez Monzón (2011) observed, the farewell ceremonies for the dead often embraced dramatisation and theatricalisation of grief that seemed at odds with Christian eschatological thought.

These ceremonies, distinguished by their dramatic and performative nature, exemplified the societal necessity for public mourning and unearthing an emotional dimension that, while complementing, occasionally diverged from theological ideals.

Furthermore, one of the main arguments towards the theatricality of mourning comes from analysing what is known about fourteenth- and fifteenth-century funeral processions. Through the analysis documented by other Portuguese medievalists and case studies, we can conclude that funerary processions were elaborate spectacles involving not only clergy and family members but also professional mourners who publicly demonstrated grief through dramatic gestures, songs, and lamentations. These processions encircled churches, as recorded in ancient historical customs, creating a public display of collective mourning (Oliveira Marques, 1974).

In his book on Romantic cemeteries and the civil cult of the dead in Portugal, Fernando Catroga (1999) articulates the imprint of dramatism when applied to modern death:

> Simultaneously simulating life and dissimulating the ontological proof of death — the corpse — arose the scenography appropriate to the growth of the

> liturgical production and reproduction of (...): the memory of individuals and groups (p. 7).

Like post-mortem photographs, "the body of the deceased was the epicentre of the procession" (Dias, 2014a, p. 216), as a theatrical atmosphere was created to stimulate the senses and induce a trance-like state in the *cortejo*. The slow, deliberate movements of the participants, arrangement of the cortège, and use of symbolic objects create a visual and physical narrative of loss. Freedberg's discussion is particularly relevant here, as the procession's choreography evokes empathy through rhythm and solemnity, compelling participants and onlookers to engage with it emotionally and physically. As detailed in Dias (2014a), this narrative might have been created through the ringing of bells, murmured prayers, incense, hunting sounds, barking dogs, and marching horses, and for knights, *le correr de las armes*.

As Francesca Español (2007) indicated, *le correr de las armes*, known as *"quebrantamiento de escudos" or "arraste de banderas*" is a unique funeral rite for the medieval Hispanic military elite. This ritual involved the procession of the deceased's weapons and banners to the church, a duty performed by knights from the Crown of Aragon. It featured the "breaking of shields" and was mainly conducted on horseback. Exclusively for the military class, this ritual was absent from the funerals of bishops, queens, or noblewomen, specifically reserved for those of higher social status who engaged in warfare and commanded armies.

Figure 23 – *Detail of* ***Figure 1*** *– Coat of Arms in the Tomb of Gomes Martins Silvestre.* [Photo by the author].

Within the Iberian Peninsula, this iconographical theme is especially prevalent in Castilla and León (Español, 2007). However, some scholars have questioned whether similar examples have persisted in Portugal. Indeed, details of the funerary procession of Gomes Martins Silvestre **(Figure 23),** the coat of arms, is subject to this hypothesis by Reis (2015). In his opinion, the testament of Alfonso Martinez de Oliveira (1302), as cited by Español (2007), proves that the same type of funeral rites was practiced in the thirteenth to fourteenth-century Portuguese Kingdom:

> I also ordered that my horses be covered in mourning, with their shields hanging from the saddles, painted with my coat of arms, and that they be taken from my house to the church ahead of my body, as is customary in the funerals of knights and high-ranking men in Portugal.[62]

It is notable that the shield is most commonly depicted in an inverted position, referred to as "*a la funerala*" or "*en señal de duelo*" (Español, 2007, p. 872). Evidently, in **Figure 23,** this is not the case for the tomb of Martins Silvestre, as the coat of arms is described by Barroca (1997) as being portrayed *au ballon.*[63] For these reasons, Reis seems to reject the idea that this was the case of breaking the shields and taking a symbolic and iconographical analysis of the three keys depicted in the tomb. Candeias (2020), who posteriorly investigated this occurrence, argues that the hypotheses drawn by Reis (2015) "prove to be partially vague and exaggerated, lacking the scientific and documentary evidence necessary to ensure their validity" (p. 11).

Similar to Candeias (2020), I hesitate to accept the existence of such attributed symbolism in Martins Silvestre's coat of arms. Furthermore, in this study, this specific symbolism seems irrelevant. While understanding and interpreting its signs would

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[62] Original text: "Item mando que lieven mis caballos cobiertos de luto con sus escudos colgando de las sillas, pintadas en ellas las mis armas, et lievenlos de mi casa fasta la iglesia delante del mío cuerpo, ansi como es costumbre en los enterramentos de los caballeros et de los altos omes en Portugal" (Fernández de Pulgar, 1679/1980, p. 379).

[63] *Au ballon* or *au wallon,* means hung by the left superior angle. Reis (2015) also mentions that the Coat of Arms usually accompanied the procession and was later placed in the chosen church as the final resting place of the body, many of which survived until the nineteenth century.

be intriguing, it does not meaningfully contribute to addressing a spectacle or determining the depiction of the breaking of the shield.

Nonetheless, the placement and use of a coat of arms has a prominent role in the primary inquiry, as it might suggest an added layer of dramatism to this tomb. According to one of the many efforts in the nineteenth century to understand and catalogue the Middle Ages, Nisbet (1816) characterises these shields, depicted in the pendant style, tilted and suspended by a corner, as prevalent in tournaments, where participants displayed them for identification near the jousting arenas.[64]

Regardless of Gomes Martins's social stratum, heightened dramatism arose from a clear desire to enact and emulate novelty in depicting the coat of arms in his funerary procession. The dynamic representation of the tilted coat of arms, whether within an iconographical programme of breaking the shields or simply as a noble coat of arms being carried to its final resting place, may suggest an ongoing effort to crystallise vigorous movements, real or fictional, in stone. As such, gestures appear to be portrayed in a genuine attempt at employing scenography and "photographic" portrayal of this medieval mourning ritual.

The spectacle of grief often extends beyond the funeral. The performative aspects of grief were also evident in the visible markers of mourning, as medieval people expressed sorrow through dramatic changes in appearance. This was achieved by

[64] This style often tilted left (*couché sinister*) was used between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries (Nisbet, 1816). Sovereigns did not use pendant shields, as they did not formally compete in tournaments.

wearing specific mourning clothes made of coarse materials, such as burel or *estamenha*, deliberately dishevelling their hair, growing or cutting beards, and wearing clothes inside out when lacking proper mourning attire (Oliveira Marques, 1974). Interestingly, the dramaturgical aspects of mourning were closely tied to social status; the more dramatic and expressive the demonstrations of grief, the more important the deceased was considered to have been in life. As Oliveira Marques documents:

> In addition to weeping and lamentations, singing and dancing also marked the funerals. Graves were visited periodically, mournful refrains were sung over them, and dances were performed around them. Every year, on the anniversary of Constable Nun' Álvares' death, a true pilgrimage was held at his tomb, where Christian piety and devotion to the 'saint' coexisted with pagan rituals of song and dance (Oliveira Marques, 1974, p. 215).

For these reasons, the visual culture of grief, codified in funerary sculpture, further emphasises the dramatic aspect of medieval expression. This is visible in the tomb of D. Fernão Teles de Meneses, where one can see a dramatic canopy opening in Figure 24, revealing the body of the knight. The intricate drapery encasing the scene denotes a contrived religious sanctuary, while the depiction of two extra

individuals, as Goulão (1988) posits, indicates that they are both *wild men* clutching the curtains of the dossal at its apex. [65]

Figure 24 — Detail of **Figure 4 –** Tomb of D. Fernão Teles de Meneses, ca. fifteenth century. Church of the São Marcos Monastery, Coimbra, Portugal. [Photo by the author].

Rosa (1995) illustrates how the Teles de Meneses family actively transformed grief into an institutionalised and theatricalised practice of remembrance through the establishment of an estate. The tragic death of Fernão Teles de Meneses triggered an urgent need to preserve his memory, leading his widow, D. Maria de Vilhena, to implement a series of strategies that formalised mourning into a structured and coercive

[65] Another potential interpretation, albeit more speculative, could likewise be framed in terms of an *elevatio animae.* As presented in Dias (2014b), the *elevatio animae* "symbolises the instant when the soul migrates to Paradise. The most common representation of this moment depicts the soul as a naked child, wrapped in a cloth, being pulled upward by two angels" (pp. 127–140).

legacy. Beyond securing the family's wealth, the estate became a legal and social mechanism that ensured that Fernão's name endured across generations. Heirs were required to adopt the surname "Teles" and disputes over inheritance were framed as dishonouring his memory, reinforcing the idea that mourning was not just personal but also a duty to the community. This performative grief extends to the materiality of the tomb at São Marcos de Tentúgal.

The intricate funerary monument expressively represented Fernão's heritage with heraldic emblems, botanical themes, and personalities, linking his memory to renewal, imperial might, and aristocratic identity. The family's dedication to integrating memories and power into tangible structures illustrates the performative nature of mourning, wherein loss is both felt and carefully orchestrated. Through the estate, burial, and related rites, the Teles de Meneses family guaranteed that Fernão's influence persisted in determining lineage, inheritance, and social status, illustrating how noble grief could be converted into a display of lasting power. The visual principle that a figure's prominence correlates with the exaggeration of gesture further demonstrates the communicative nature of medieval imagery.

XIV. Towards a Private Spectacle

While death was once communal and sensationalised in elaborate rituals, modern mourning has shifted towards private, individualised expressions, with grief being more concealed and less publicly present. Conversely, as observed by M. A. Lopes

(2019), beliefs about death, funeral practices, and the afterlife metamorphosed significantly throughout the nineteenth century. Early in the century, M. A. Lopes (2019) explained that Portugal faced significant instability: the war with Spain in 1801, Napoleonic invasions (1807–1811), relocation of the royal family to Brazil (1807–1821), constitutional and counterrevolutions, and a civil war (1832–1834). Stability only came after 1851, following decades of uprisings and civil war (1846–1847). In the latter half of the century, as Portugal's population and wealth grew, positivist, republican, and secular ideologies began to influence views on death, reflecting broader cultural shifts.

Furthermore, M. A. Lopes (2019) states how Ariès' (1977) contribution to death in the Western World also applies to grief in Portugal. During the Early Modern Period, the fear of Hell led to a focus on the salvation of souls, a mindset called *la mort de moi* ("my death"). Romanticism later shifted its attention to *la mort de toi* ("your death"), emphasising grief for loved ones over personal posthumous fate. This transition was mainly observed among educated and secularised elites. In Portugal, traditional Catholic concerns about spiritual salvation persist among the general population. Mid-century wills from Coimbra and Porto's bourgeoisie continued to practice suffrages for the soul, while funeral rituals upheld by brotherhoods and religious institutions reflected their anxieties about the afterlife.

For this reason, not all dimensions of mourning were entirely private, at least not over the entire century. Vareda (2001) presents an alternative perspective regarding

bereavement in the modern era, asserting that funeral processions were public events and collective mobilisations. Furthermore, Llop (2010) delineates and corroborates these funeral processions by addressing adult mourners who conducted similar parades in Spanish communities during 1907. These mourners participated in the wakes of children under seven, chanting verses that heralded the arrival of a new angel. In certain villages, following a child's burial, a procession convenes in the town square to dance in solidarity with the bereaved family.

Furthermore, as expressed by Llop (2010), the Church and observers from liberal professions condemned these customs, as previous medieval decrees had done. Once again, these customs were challenged in the nineteenth century; in certain areas, the mourners persisted into the early twentieth century despite some scholars noting their marked decline (Llop, 2010). In Portugal, findings from M. A. Lopes (2019) revealed that funerals were typically held the day after death, following an overnight vigil for the deceased. When the funeral procession departed from the house, a strict decorum was observed, sharply contrasting the more expressive and theatrical displays common among the lower classes.

While aristocratic and bourgeois families progressively adopted a more subdued approach to mourning, they compensated for this restraint by exhibiting lavish funeral ceremonies (M. A. Lopes, 2019). By the late nineteenth century, ornate funerals featured horse-drawn carriages draped completely in black cloth, with the coffin typically positioned across the carriage. However, the century also signified the gradual

secularisation of death in Portugal, as new rituals emerged to align with modern viewpoints. Given the reduced familial clusters of emotional communities, I deduce that both expressive and discrete emotions can manifest in a more intimate environment.

Hilliker (2006) claims that in the nineteenth century individuals were more intimately acquainted with the concept of mortality, serving as primary caregivers for patients during the "process of dying". Family members provided active daily caregiving for the terminally ill within the confines of their homes, possessed a clear understanding of what to anticipate regarding terminal illnesses and the death process, thus beginning their grieving before the actual passing. Friends and relatives assumed responsibility for the deceased's body, alongside the organization of funeral services, burial procedures, and the ongoing support of grieving family members. When it comes to Portuguese post-mortem photography, and as this study has found, dramatism of death seems evident–in this case, directed and produced by and for the intimate family of the deceased—especially in the case of children. I believe that relatives and friends, by exercising control over the representation of the deceased, partook in a spectacle that embodied the social role of death within familial and local backgrounds. Such is the case in **Figure 25**, which features a rare caption in the back of a post-mortem carte-de-visite of an infant and translates as follows: "Balbina and Dionisio offer the [illegible] Joanna a portrait of their dear and beloved [sic] daughter, who died on the 20th of May 1904, as a token of esteem. Lisbon, 19-7-1904".

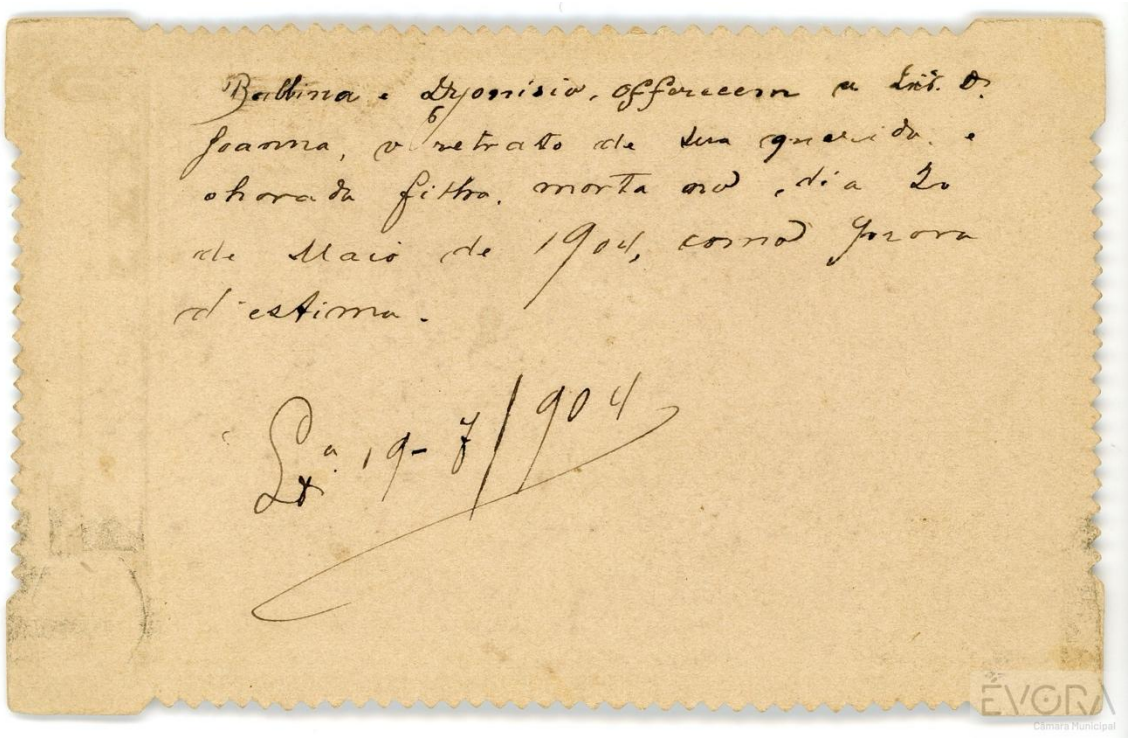

Figure 25 – A. D'Azevedo & C[a]. (1904). *Retrato de bebé (post-mortem)* [Cartes-Des-Visites]. Arquivo Fotográfico da Câmara Municipal de Évora. https://arqm.cm-evora.pt/index.php/pt-afcme-jps-998-7-7v. Verso reads: "Balbina e Dionisio offerecem a [ilegível] Joanna o retrato da sua querida e hamada [sic] filha, morta no dia 20 de Maio de 1904 como prova de estima. Lx[a] 19-7-1904".

Nevertheless, the act of capturing a post-mortem photograph, while domestic in nature, was embedded in broader social customs related to death. This type of presentation of death in mass visual culture was rendered in a manner that tried to appear socially acceptable, dignified, and aligned with cultural expectations, thus transforming the private act of mourning into a regulated public display.

In the case of the carte-de-visite depicted in **Figure 21,** the medium itself was notably public, and the image. However, its interaction stemmed from significantly constrained emotional communities, thereby holding an emotional impact for those closely associated with the deceased. Although the photographs were initially

intended for private observers, they nonetheless required a visual illustration of death, which fundamentally possessed the performative quality of instructing dignity and empathy. The meticulous staging and showcasing of the deceased in a dressed and decorated manner, as seen in **Figures 6** and **7,** constitutes a spectacle, regardless of its originally intended, limited audience.

The setting depicted in **Figure 7** is characterised by lush vegetation and elegant drapery, framing the deceased within a verdant and sanctuary-like environment. The interpretation of foliage in funerary imagery is always somewhat speculative, as it is a visual residue of pagan traditions dating back to the Romans. There is no available information regarding the individual or foliage, although a contemporary publication, Braga (1885) suggests that floral and vegetative elements in funerary art carry symbolic meanings related to it.[66] For example, in Portuguese cultural traditions, trees planted on graves symbolise an immortalised soul. It is believed that these trees may grow spontaneously from the deceased's body, thereby signifying life and rebirth.

This notion creates a profound contrast with death while simultaneously mitigating its inherent harshness, as light streaming through windows generates an ethereal atmosphere. This arrangement encourages viewers to engage with grief as a

[66] I suggest that the lack of informative descriptors in the recovered examples of post-mortem photography, in contrast with the rich epigraphic quality of Portuguese medieval tombs, might indicate a further preference for a private setting. Since they were not meant to be consumed by a large social body, people who viewed these artefacts might have already known or be close to the deceased, possibly making their identification for posteriority redundant. Further investigation must be conducted to establish this definitively.

cultivated and communal experience, thereby reinforcing the concept of dignified passing. Similarly, the setting in **Figure 6** illustrates a child in a serene pose surrounded by floral arrangements and a scrupulously patterned background.

What appears to be an East Asian-inspired screen positioned behind the child introduces the Romantic fascination with the "exotic"; demonstrating an attempt to elevate the overall *tableau*.[67] Flowers, serving as a universal symbol of purity, function both as tributes and mechanisms for depicting the child as pure, as an *Anjo/Angel*.[68]

As stated by Llop (2010), religious symbolism deeply rooted in Catholic rituals often emerges, particularly in the portrayal of innocence and purity in deceased children. This symbolism is most evident in white garments and flowers, although it does not dominate every image. Religious symbols in these photographs emphasise the end of earthly life, transcended by the promise of heavenly salvation. The floral crown serves as both a Christian emblem of redemption and a poignant acknowledgement of death. Over nearly a century, images of deceased children of both sexes showed that they reclined with their heads crowned in flowers, placed on cushions, mattresses, or richly adorned biers. Simpler settings, such as white-sheeted tables were more common in humble families.

[67] As Van Der Reyden expounded (1988), by the nineteenth century the increasing popularity of screens resulted in the widespread production of homemade folding screens. These screens, particularly those crafted at home, seem to exhibit greater similarities with Chinese screens, regarding their use of framing, vertical compositions, and distinct panels, than with the more sophisticated paper-hinged Japanese screens.

[68] Original Spanish text reads "*Angelito*" (little angel).

Ultimately, these photographs convey the desire to preserve innocence and cherish memories, showcasing grief as a profoundly performative and visually compelling act. According to Hilliker (2006), these images of death have now migrated over to new public spaces — appearing in newspapers and mass-circulation medium — and the symbolic power of death imagery appears to have diminished, with death becoming more abstract and less integrated into daily life. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, Stephenson et. al. mentions a trend towards an "avoided death":

> The lack of open observance of mourning and the individualisation of grief have aided in banishing references to death from everyday living. No longer are those who are grieving easily identified. Any public display of strong feelings are considered inappropriate today, further excluding death from our awareness. The relegating of death to institutions has removed death from the home and hidden behind institutional walls. As death has become more secularised, it has become more de-ritualised. The symbols of death are no longer as prevalent as they once were when they stood as constant reminders of the omnipresence of death (Stephenson, 1985, p. 52).

According to Ariès (1977), Westerners now live a time when death is experienced clandestinely. As mortality rates have decreased, the shock of losing loved ones has increased, turning death into a taboo subject. People now die in hospitals, nursing homes, and spaces once associated with social and familial degradation. Society

abandoned the dying and removed rituals around death, which was a deeply dramatic moment of clarity. Death occurs in isolation and is surrounded by machines and indifferent health professionals. This fear prevents us from witnessing the agony of others. These reflections lead us beyond the nineteenth-century rituals of death —such as family vigils, the Viaticum, Extreme Unction, confessions, and funeral celebrations— that have nearly all disappeared. These customs, once common in society, reflect the ongoing Catholic belief in the afterlife and show that death was still something to express and display.

Final Considerations

Our life is endless in the way that our visual field is without limit..

— Ludwig Wittgenstein (1902/2021, p. 89)

This study examines the genealogy of visual mourning in Portuguese culture by comparing late medieval funerary effigies to nineteenth century post-mortem photography. This study revealed that grief representations are dynamic "living images" that transform intimate sorrow into a ritualised spectacle. From carved stones to glass-plate photographs and cartes-de-visite, visual culture appears to capture the gestural tension between death and memory.

Intricately carved effigies, such as those in the medieval tombs of Gomes Martins Silvestre and Fernão Teles de Meneses, honoured the departed and asserted social identity. Each gesture conveys religious devotion, continued bonds, and social narrative. These sculptural sites transformed grief into a public performance in which communities confront loss and reaffirm their beliefs. Subsequently, with the emergence of photography, there was a revival of posthumous portraitures. Adopting medieval elements, such as death as sleep, it incorporated elements such as foliage and angels, now with a more secular Victorian impression of the exotic and idyllic. This new medium does not break conventions but evolves grief visual culture but rather expands on them by capturing the deceased's corporeal image and the communal need to process loss, extending performed mourning into modernity.

Despite the substantial foundations established, this investigation faced several challenges, notably in amassing post-mortem photographs, treating anonymous subjects and contexts, and accessing relevant documentation and locations. These challenges indicate the considerable scope for a further study, including gathering additional cases, documents, and testimonies to refine and expand the concepts addressed here.

I found medieval mourning imagery to be more expressive or performative than modern imagery, but not necessarily more emotional. This conclusion is explained by the evident tensions between private grief and societal *decorum*, especially in contemporary Portugal, where the church has historically taken on a restrictive and orthodox role. The research also shows a shift in the age representation of the deceased, with fewer records of infant or child tombs compared to post-mortem photographs—a coincidence that seems to have occurred in Spain as well. To further establish whether this is a widespread occurrence, the next steps in the investigation should include a *long durée* inventory of Iberian rituals. Portugal and Spain depict these gestures similarly, as grieving visual culture elements are identifiable across Iberia, while Britain, a major influence, displays a distinctly early and evident secular mourning culture.

In summary, whether embodied in enduring limestone or transient photographic prints, these living images validate the ongoing changes in bereavement behaviours in Portugal, as they create emotional communities through their crystallised gestures

and postures. As the digital era progresses, further investigation into emerging visual culture will be crucial to understanding grief, as it embodies new illustrations of the resilience of the human spirit and its commitment to transforming personal anguish into a transcendent, cenotaph act.

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Appendix A

1) What is the history and symbolism behind every grieving visual prop? How do they preserve the memory of the deceased and transmit cultural traditions in Portugal?

2) Does Portuguese mourning culture glorify and beautify death, and does it have an impact on how people mourn in society? 2.1) If so, how did this "aesthetisation" progressed through the centuries?

3) What is the role of women's performances in Catholic mourning?

4) How have the mourning processes of the Romani been assimilated or, conversely, outcasted?

5) How does the physical organisation of burial places in Portuguese culture influence the sense of mourning?

6) How are facial emotions in post-mortem pictures and funeral sculptures viewed in the context of Portuguese culture, in terms of grief expressions?

7) How have depictions of sorrow in funerary sculptures and post-mortem photographs helped to shape and preserve national identity in Portugal?

8) How do funerary sculptures and post-mortem photographs depict and develop individual and societal ideas of death and grieving in Portuguese society?

9) Later in the research, a lot of mourning stationary was found in archival institutions, mainly letters with black mourning borders. How does this inform the permeability of mourning visual culture to everyday objects?

10) How can spirit photography be researched to better understand if it occurred in Portugal?

11) How does martyrdom play into the spectacle of mourning?

Appendix B

DATA: POST-MORTEM XIX-XX

IMAGES	NAME	DATE (CIRCA)	DIMMENSIONS AND MEDIUM	FONTE	INFO	REF.
	CADÁVER	187- 1957	Dimensão: 13 × 18 cm Suporte: Negativo de gelatina e prata em vidro	ARQUIVO MUNICIPAL DE LISBOA	INFO N/A	PT/AMLSB/CML
	Cadáver de bebé, em local não identificado, na Ilha da Madeira	1930	Dimensão: 6,3 X 6,1 cm Suporte: Negativo simples, Película. Técnica de captação Gelatina e sais de prata, Monocromático.	ARQUIVO E BIBLIOTECA DA MADEIRA	"O negativo encontrava-se originalmente arquivado numa caixa com a seguinte inscrição: "Trabalho fora", "Sr.F. Dermot Bolger", "Sr.t. Pinto Corrêa", "Mergulhos na Pontinha", "Sr. Jorge, Jaime e Vasconcellos no caniçal"."	PT/ABM/PHF/H-
	CADÁVER DE MARTINA CAROLINA REBOLIS DE BULHÕES MALDONADO	19--	Dimensão: 13 × 18 cm Suporte: Negativo de gelatina e prata em vidro	ARQUIVO MUNICIPAL DE LISBOA	INFO N/A	PT/AMLSB/CML
	CADÁVER DE MULHER NUM CAIXÃO, EM LOCAL NÃO IDENTIFICADO	1936	Dimensão: 9,9 x 14,9 cm Suporte: Negativo de gelatina e prata em vidro	ARQUIVO E BIBLIOTECA DA MADEIRA	*"O negativo encontrava-se originalmente arquivado numa caixa com a seguinte inscrição: "Trabalho Fora, 1936"."*	PT/ABM/PHF/H-
	CAIXÃO COM CRIANÇA DEFUNTO	1900 1920	Dimensão: 13 × 18 cm Suporte: Negativo de gelatina e prata em vidro	CENTRO PORTUGUÊS DE FOTOGRAFIA	*"Esta fotografia faz parte de um conjunto de imagens (018799 a 018841) que tinham não tinham separador ou inscrição de caixa mas dadas as temáticas, nomeadamente a imagem*	PT/CPF/ALV/018

IMAGES	NAME	DATE (CIRCA)	DIMMENSIONS AND MEDIUM	FONTE	INFO	REF.
					desta caixa EST-018832, são dos primeiros anos de atividade da empresa."	
	CAIXÃO COM CRIANCA DEFUNTO	1900 1920	Dimensão: 13 × 18 cm Suporte: Negativo, vidro, p/b, gelatina e sal de prata	CENTRO PORTUGUÊS DE FOTOGRAFIA	*"Esta fotografia faz parte de um conjunto de imagens (018762 a 0187771) que tinham não tinham separador ou inacrição de caixa, mas pelas temáticas, nomeadamente a 018764 serão do início da atividade da casa fotográfica."*	PT/CPF/ALV/018
	CAIXÃO COM CRIANÇA DEFUNTO	1900 1920	Dimensão: 13 × 18 cm Suporte: Negativo, vidro, p/b, gelatina e sal de prata	CENTRO PORTUGUÊS DE FOTOGRAFIA	*"Esta fotografia faz parte de um conjunto de imagens (018762 a 0187771) que tinham não tinham separador ou inacrição de caixa, mas pelas temáticas, nomeadamente a 018764 serão do início da atividade da casa fotográfica."*	PT/CPF/ALV/018
	CAIXÃO COM HOMEM DEFUNTO	1915 1940	Dimensão: 13 × 18 cm Suporte: Negativo, vidro, p/b, gelatina e sal de prata	CENTRO PORTUGUÊS DE FOTOGRAFIA	INFO N/A	PT/CPF/ALV/018
	Documento simples 7 - Retrato de bebé (post-mortem) & Retrato de bebé (post-mortem)	1904	Dimensão: 9 X 12 CM Suporte: Prova de albumina colada sobre cartão	ARQUIVO MUNICIPAL DE ÉVORA	"Carte-visite oferecida à família Passaporte. Inscrição no verso: "Balbina e Dionisio offerecem a [ilegível]	PT/AFCME/AF/J PT/AFCME/AF/J

IMAGES	NAME	DATE (CIRCA)	DIMMENSIONS AND MEDIUM	FONTE	INFO	REF.
	(verso da carte-visite)				Joanna o retrato da sua querida e hamada [sic] filha, morta no dia 20 de Maio de 1904 como prova de estima. Lxª 19-7-1904""	
	RETRATO DE BUSTO MENINO FALECIDO	1870	Cartão de Visita	ARTIGO ACADÉMICO	"Nunes, Henrique (Lisboa) - Retrato de busto de menino falecido, ca. 1870s. Formato cartão de visita. Col. do autor."	BORGES DE AR/ ausência: o retr durante o períoc Francisco (ed.), *Romantismo*. Ac Perpétua'", pp. 8
	RETRATO DE CRIANÇA DEFUNTA	1890 1923	Dimensão: 9 × 12 cm Suporte: Negativo de gelatina e prata em vidro	CENTRO PORTUGUÊS DE FOTOGRAFIA	INFO N/A	PT/CPF/JOC/00
	RETRATO DE CRIANÇA, CADÁVER	1890 192-	Dimensão: 9 × 12 cm Suporte: Negativo de gelatina e prata em vidro	ARQUIVO MUNICIPAL DE LISBOA	INFO N/A	PT/AMLSB/CML
	RETRATO DE MENINO FALECIDO NO SEU CAIXÃO	1870	Cartão de Visita	ARTIGO ACADÉMICO	"Nunes, Henrique (Lisboa) - Retrato de menino falecido no seu caixão, ca. 1870s. Formato cartão de visita. Col. do autor."	BORGES DE AR/ ausência: o retr durante o períoc Francisco (ed.), *Romantismo*. Ac Perpétua'", pp. 8
	RETRATO DE MULHER POST-MORTEM	1920 1950	Dimensão: 13 × 18 cm Suporte: Negativo, vidro, p/b, gelatina e sal de prata	CENTRO PORTUGUÊS DE FOTOGRAFIA	INFO N/A	PT/CPF/ALV/007
	RETRATO DO CADÁVER DE UMA CRIANÇA (CORPO INTEIRO) NUM CAIXÃO	1934	Dimensão: 11,7 x 8,9 cm Suporte: Negativo de gelatina e prata em vidro	ARQUIVO E BIBLIOTECA DA MADEIRA	*"No envelope originário do Photographia-Museu Vicentes: "Um bébé morto / Estragado"."*	PT/ABM/FJB/C/(
	TRANSPORTE DO CADÁVER DE UM BEBÉ	1930	Dimensão: 10 × 15 cm Suporte:	ARQUIVO E BIBLIOTECA DA MADEIRA	*"O negativo encontrava-se originalmente*	PT/ABM/PHF/H-