

**Key words: The history of photography; Memory; Audio-visual Reconstruction; El Bierzo; The Castilla y Leon Film Library; Valentín Carrera**

“A Photographic Thesaurus of El Bierzo. Photographic Memory and Audio-visual Reconstruction”, by Valentín Carrera González, is the title of a thesis dealing with the way a people’s historic memory can be reclaimed using old photographs.

Both the monographic and contemporary research was conducted in conjunction with the Castilla y Leon Film Library in Salamanca. The fieldwork was carried out in the El Bierzo region in the Province of Leon between 1990 and 1997 and led to the discovery of 1,600 previously unknown photographs which were duly catalogued and added as an appendix to the thesis and deposited in the film library. Some of the photographs in the library’s stocks have already been published in the two books entitled ‘Album of El Bierzo’ and ‘Album of Bembibre’ and were also used in the documentary ‘The Memory of El Bierzo’.

After a briefly going over the history of photography in Castilla y Leon and in El Bierzo, the first part of this thesis is given over to cataloguing and indexing the photographic documents involved (drawing up indices for the photographs, collections, postcards, according to their description, the materials, placenames, chronological order, etc.) as well as proposing a model for carrying out systematic research in order to draw up a complete inventory of a given area with the aim of saving old, as yet unknown photographs which may well be in danger of being lost and to hand them over, complete with the relevant details, to a public film library.

The second part goes on to explore the possibilities of creating new visual materials using old photographic documents using the process of “Audio-visual Reconstruction” which incorporates advanced digital technology, by placing the

documents in question in their historical context and proposing new readings and new questions for these old images.

Other chapters deal with additional aspects such as intellectual property regulations (concerning authors' rights over their photographic work as well as other photographs and audio-visual materials) and the protection which such documents are entitled to as a part of our historic and documentary heritage.

The thesis concludes by proposing a model for Audio-visual Reconstruction specifically designed to help recover historical memory both as a mark of individual and collective identity as well as a means of defence in the face of disasters and historical amnesia.