

LISA KERESZI

MOURNING



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INTRODUCTION BY MARVIN HEIFERMAN

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SOME THING TO WATCH OVER HIM *(excerpt)*

Marvin Heiferman

Neither the sun nor death can be looked at with a steady eye.

—François de La Rochefoucauld (1613—1680)

Whose job is it to protect the dead?

Deities and their subordinates? Ancient Egypt’s jackal-headed Anubis? Greek mythology’s Hades, strict god of the underworld? Yama, the Hindu god of death who directs souls, based upon their deeds and karma, to a next destination? The Aztec god Mictlantecuhтли? Yéwa, a spirit associated with graveyards, beauty and dreams in West African and diasporic cultures? Azrael, an angel of death in Islamic and Christian cultures? Maybe, and as more recent and secular respondents suggest, the responsibility belongs to the spirit of the first person interred in each cemetery.

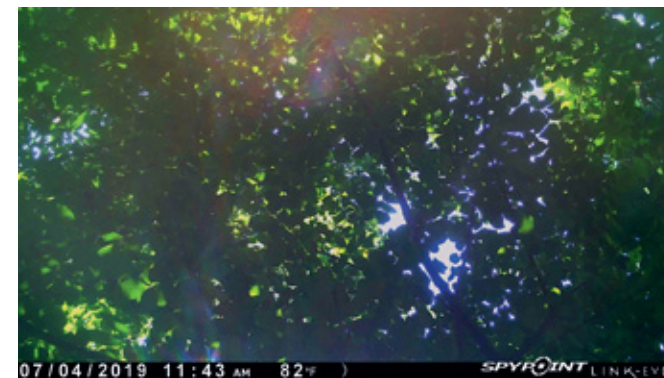
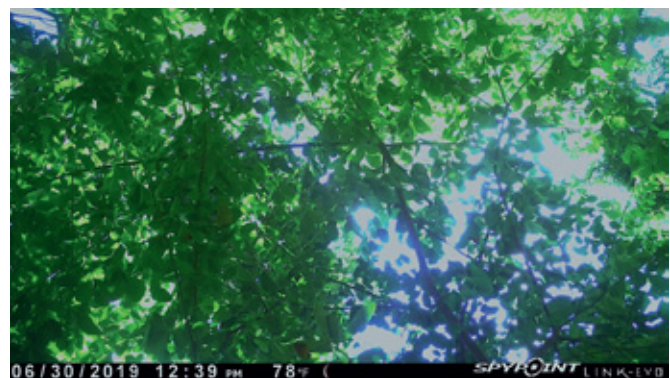
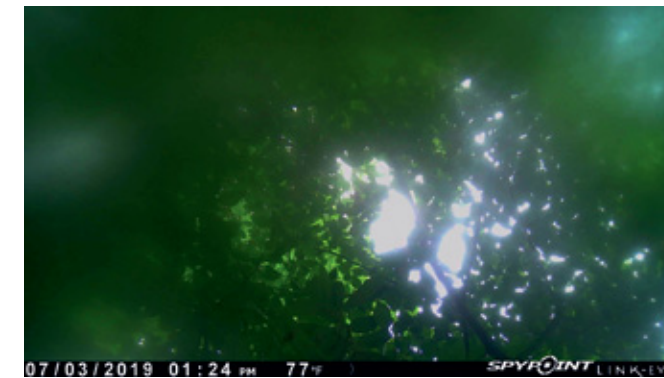
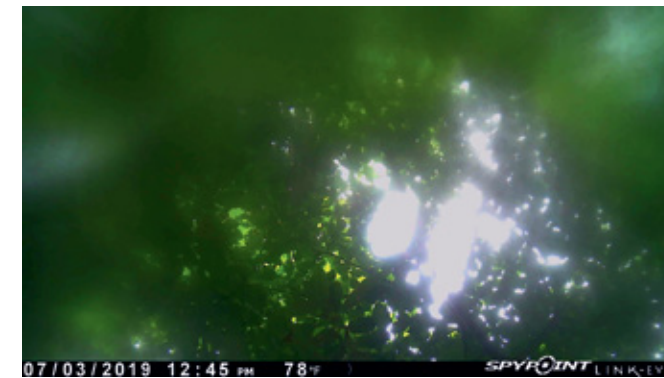
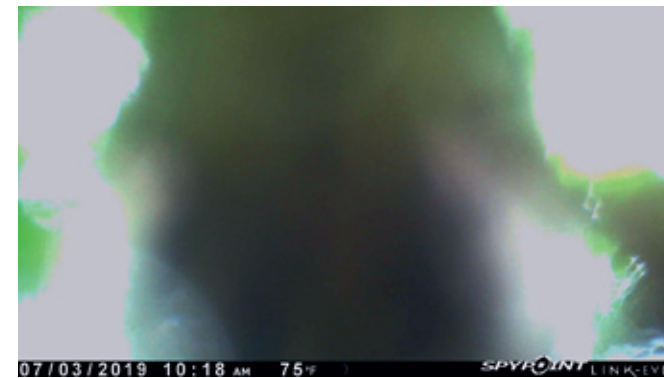
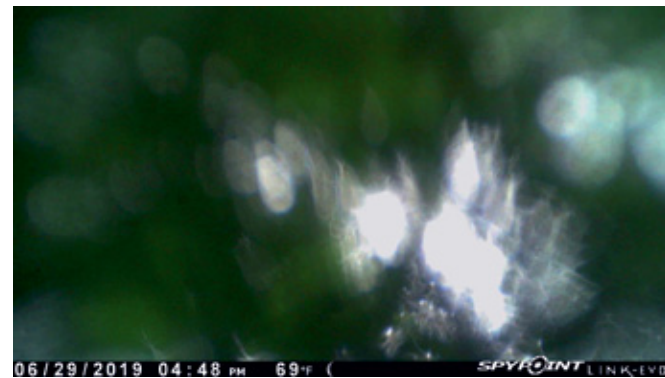
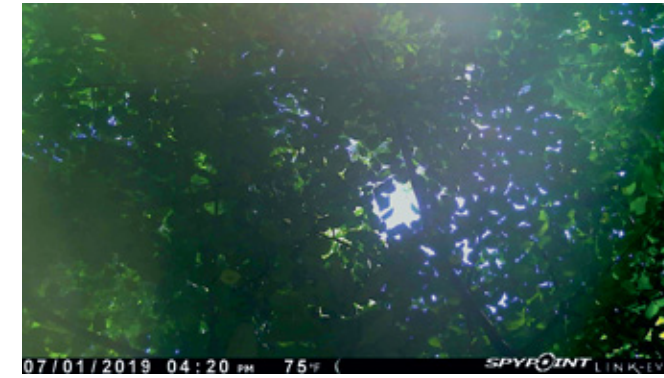
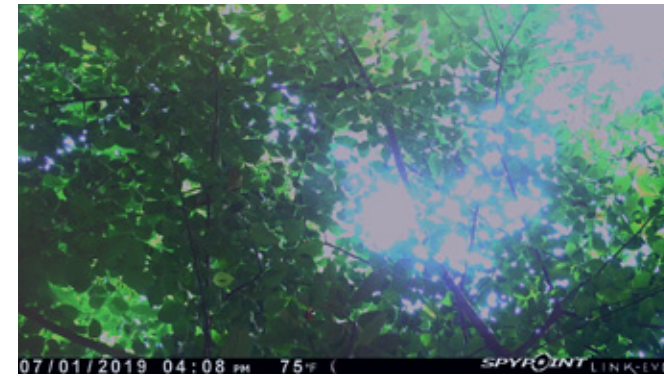
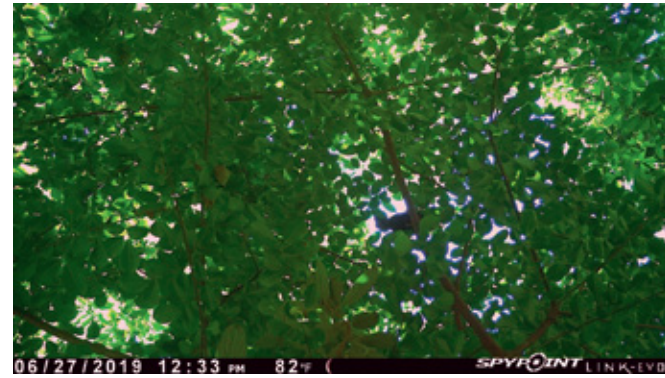
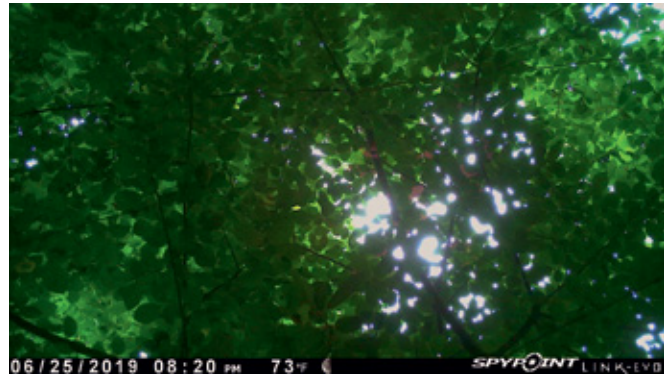
What happens, though, when that task is left to the living, still moving through life, who’ve yet—as the euphemism goes—to “pass away”? How do we mortal mourners keep our own lives on track as we fulfill obligations to the dead, who can no longer take care of themselves? There is so much to do: burying or burning, lamenting, comforting and being comforted, remembering, commemorating. There’s the black hole of loss one teeters at the edge of, and the ongoing challenges of weathering grief’s inevitable wake of unruly emotions. There’s the suddenly-turned-nostalgic personal effects and frustrating administrative tasks one has no choice but to attend to. Dutifully, we-the-living plow ahead, needing things to settle down for us, as well as

for the dead. But should things not work out quite that way, as pictures in this book remind us, outsourcing is worth considering.

In Eastlawn Cemetery, in Milmont Park, Pennsylvania, in the closing weeks of 2018, one particular sleep-in-heavenly-peace scenario was disrupted when a hefty slab of black granite—the gravestone memorializing Joseph Charles Kereszi, Jr., who died earlier in the year—keeled over backwards under mysterious circumstances. No one was around to hear or see or fess up to what transpired. That explains why, when Lisa Kereszi learned her father’s headstone (which features a photo of him in his Cadillac, taken by her, etched prominently into its shiny surface) had been tipped over, whodunit suppositions sprang to mind.

Was the stone knocked over, in the weeks after Halloween, by pranksters delivering literal kicks and getting figurative ones by “defying” death? If neither racial nor anti-Semitic animus (all-too-common drivers of graveyard vandalism) were the likely motivators, what other hate-fueled scenarios might have been acted out? Was a deer to blame? A faulty monument installation? No one could say. So, some weeks after the stone was righted, a medium known for evidence collection was called into service. When graves are vandalized, when the deceased and their survivors are disrespected, it’s up to the distressed, sad, maybe overwhelmed, maybe guilty, maybe angry, left-behind living to restore the integrity of a supposedly inviolable place. If photography couldn’t retroactively solve the prior crime, perhaps it could be counted upon to shed some light, should something similar happen in the future. That’s why the prophylactic, forensic images in this book were made.







LISA KERESZI (b. 1973, Chester, Pennsylvania; lives in Branford, Connecticut) received her BA from Bard College in 1995, and her MFA from Yale University in 2000. She is the author of four previous monographs: *Fantasies* (Damiani, 2008); *Fun and Games* (Nazraeli, 2009), *Joe's Junk Yard* (Damiani, 2012), and *The More I Learn About Women*, (J&L Books, 2014).

Kereszi's work has been exhibited at numerous institutions, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the New Museum, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and the International Center of Photography, among others. Her photographs are in many private and public collections, including the Berkeley Art Museum; Museum of Fine Arts Houston; New York Historical Society; Whitney Museum of American Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; and Yale University Art Gallery.

She is the recipient of a 2023 Tiffany Foundation Fellowship, a MacDowell Fellow, and was awarded the Baum Award for Best Emerging American Photographer in 2005.

Kereszi was the Director of Undergraduate Studies at the Yale School of Art from 2013–2023, and was appointed Assistant Director of Graduate Studies in Photography in 2023.

She is represented by Yancey Richardson Gallery. www.lisakereszi.com

MARVIN HEIFERMAN (b. Brooklyn, 1948; lives in New York) is an independent curator and writer, organizing projects about photography and visual culture for institutions including Museum of Modern Art, Smithsonian Institution, International Center of Photography, Whitney Museum of American Art, Carnegie Museum of Art, and the New Museum.

Earlier in his career, as a gallerist and artist representative, Heiferman worked closely with many defining artists and photographers of the twentieth century, including Robert Adams, Eve Arnold, Lewis Baltz, Nan Goldin, Peter Hujar, and Richard Prince, among others.

Heiferman has written for numerous museums, galleries, publications, catalogs, blogs, and magazines, and is the author, editor, and packager of over two dozen books on photography and visual culture, including *Photography Changes Everything* (Aperture, 2012). Entries to "Why We Look," Heiferman's ongoing social media projects, are posted daily.



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