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# Dead in Life: Narratives About Circumstances Prior to Suicide in Rural Western Spain

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**Abstract:** Background: In rural contexts, meanings of suicide are part of the intimate heritage of those closest to the suicidal person. They are also constructed through a social process. Over time, the community creates meanings, shares notions, and experiences common emotions. In this process, the boundaries between the life and death of the suicidal person are blurred. Methods: An ethnographic study was carried out with more than six months of fieldwork in a rural locality of Extremadura, Spain. This research included narratives that delved into the historical memory of suicides from 1922 to 2023. Results: In the narratives, the following categories emerged in the consideration of the suicidal person at the moment of death: trance as a transition/connection towards death, the appearance of being detached from life, the possibility of resurrection, and the premonitory appearance. These categories were interrelated and shared close symbolic meanings. Conclusions: The nature of the results and their contrast with diverse theories and experiences show that the earthly and otherworldly planes are intertwined. This allows us to affirm that, in the narratives about suicides, individuals perceive themselves as simultaneously alive and dead at the moment of taking their own lives.

**Keywords:** suicide; death; duality; community narratives; ethnography

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## 1. Introduction

Suicide has been a classic object of study in the humanities and social sciences for centuries. Disciplines such as philosophy, law, sociology, theology, and anthropology have tried to understand suicide as a social and cultural phenomenon (Picazo Zappino 2017; Gil Gimeno 2009; Andrés 2015). The classic studies that deal centrally—or, at least, relevantly—with suicide from an anthropological perspective have followed one another from the late 19th century until the 1980s of the 20th century, with a preferential gaze towards the exotic, highlighting the difficulties of fitting into the prevailing sociological and psychological models due to Durkheimian influence. Under the auspices of this viewpoint, the works of Steinmetz (1894), Malinowski (1926), Verrier (1943), Bohannan (1960), Firth (1961), and Berndt (1962) stand out. In the last decades of the 20th century, anthropology has begun to study the phenomenon of suicide in Western societies more and more intensely without forgetting other parts of the planet, but this time, with renewed perspectives such as the decolonial gaze. At this time, the number of works of extraordinary quality and rigor was enormous, with a high scientific output from the Social Sciences, but the

studies by Counts (1991), Littlewood (2002), Dabbagh (2005), and Staples (2012) are worth mentioning (Staples and Widger 2012). For the Spanish case, the main reference work is the ethnography La Muerte y Otros Mundos. Enfermedad, Suicidio, Muerte y Más Allá Entre Los Vaqueiros de Alzada, whose author is the anthropologist Cátedra Tomás (1988), which is particularly relevant to the present work due to its development in a rural setting.

Ethnographic approaches to the phenomenon of consummated suicide, beyond the analogies that can be established with the experiences of survivors or the tracing of the biographies of the suicides, as well as the farewell messages and stories that occasionally leave testimony of their universe of emotions, demand an approach to the narratives with which the image of the suicide and the act itself are reconfigured. As there is no possibility of dialoguing with the person who has died by suicide, the most powerful way of approaching the phenomenon is through the narratives of others. Due to this issue, the framework of the present research is situated in a constructivist perspective that also understands that the images of suicide are not constituted exclusively in the inner processes of the mourners, but are constructed in a social process where the community assembles meanings, shares notions, and experiences emotions from the common (Neimeyer et al. 2014). Therefore, it is important to consider the rural context in which this research is conducted, where social relationships among individuals are closer and more intense, and the landscape of shared emotions is more complex. In this environment, suicide is configured as a social event, as it is experienced by numerous neighbors who are closely acquainted with the person who has committed suicide and their family members. Thus, the suicides in the locality are interpreted intersubjectively by the rest of the community and, in many cases, also experienced through the cultural dynamics of the locality (Pipyrou 2014; Cátedra Tomás 1988). Likewise, the remembering process experienced by the informants of the present research not only implies a process of individual memory rescue but also a reconstruction in social terms, where memories are formed and interpreted in a social context, influenced by the interactions and experiences shared with others (Candau 2002; Connerton 1999). In this sense, the ethnographic method has revealed itself to be optimal in unveiling the meanings of the relational framework between individual experiences, cultural codes, and social structures, which the community uses to give meaning to suicide (Staples and Widger 2012).

It was in the course of the fieldwork that, given the large number of testimonies describing, with a particular density, encounters with suicides moments before taking one's own life or stories alluding to this issue, which had been passed down through the generations, the central hypothesis of this study was put forward. Synthetically, it indicates that from the moment the suicidal person makes the final decision to take their own life until they do so, they embody a duality: they are still alive but, at the same time, they are considered dead. This is the main contribution of this research: the confluence of life/death states in the body of the suicide in the moments preceding the act—a topic that has been scarcely explored in the ethnographic literature and constitutes an original contribution that is expected to stimulate academic debate. This identification, as described by informants, where the suicidal person can be both alive and dead at the same time, is not only in physiological terms but also through narratives imbued with accounts where the supernatural becomes present. As occurs in narratives about illness, in those that deal with suicide, the irruption of the mysterious in the story leads to complex and multiple representations of the supernatural (Good 2003). In addition, the recreation of the figure of the suicide is pulled by narrative forces in opposite directions, where the emotional and the rational, objectivity and subjectivity, and the past and the future operate simultaneously (Pipyrou 2014). Narratives in which the speakers are also situated in social, cultural, historical, and moral habitats make the plots' meaning more complex (Cohen 2000; Pipyrou

2014). These testimonies are crossed by feelings of pain, guilt, and hopelessness or by cultural dynamics such as stigma, where the metaphor occupies a preeminent place in the conceptualization of suicide outside the dominant language of psychology or psychiatry (Costa and White 2024). All this generates a panorama of dense narratives about the moment of suicide and the configuration of the suicide as a hybrid figure between the earthly and the otherworldly plane.

The limited scientific literature on the subject of the duality of suicide at the moment of taking one's own life concretely has stimulated a dialogue with cultural representations of death in multiple fields. Nevertheless, there are phenomena with a similar character, such as the so-called "apparitions of the living", where the moment in which the person committing suicide ends their life evokes the idea of a "critical instant" in which the figure appearing is about to die (Price 1995). However, for an in-depth description of the hypothesis about the duality of the suicidal person at the moment of death, it is necessary to contrast it with other phenomena where the borders between life and death are blurred, and hybrid beings that can simultaneously inhabit both planes are formed (Stern 2008; Guilley 2007; Hodge 2018).

## 2. Materials and Methods

The materials and methods described are part of an investigation of memory and suicide, the magnitude of which is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, the complete methodology is presented to contextualize the results, even though they represent only a limited part of the overall study.

### *2.1. Study Design and Setting*

The ethnographic method was used for the study, as it provides a deep insight into social and cultural phenomena and is optimal for an in-depth understanding of complex scenarios where social structures, cultural norms, and personal experiences are intertwined (Hammersley and Atkinson 1994; Geertz 1973). Due to its inductive character, a flexible research design was developed, allowing the incorporation of findings not initially foreseen and which emerged during the fieldwork, from which new lines of study emerged (Pérez Serrano 1994; Corbetta 2007).

The fieldwork was carried out in two stages: between 24 July 2023 and 28 January 2024, in addition to a brief presence between 3 July and 10 August 2024. The research was performed in a town of approximately 2000 inhabitants in the province of Cáceres, belonging to the autonomous community of Extremadura (Spain), in the Southwest of the Iberian Peninsula.

In this context, the suicide figures relevant to this research are situated. In Extremadura, between 2012 and 2022, the annual number of cases has consistently exceeded 50, reaching peak figures in 2020 and 2022 with 92 and 91 suicides, respectively (López Ramos et al. 2023). These figures place Extremadura at a suicide rate of 9.01 per 100,000 inhabitants, slightly above the national average of 8.85 (Observatorio del Suicidio en España 2023).

Concerning the study locality, a total of 24 suicides were recorded from May 1922 to October 2023, highlighting the 7 that occurred from 2020 to the present; in particular, 17 of the deaths were male, while 7 were female. It should be noted that the figure before 2020 was more balanced, with 7 women and 10 men, but since that year, all suicides have been male, increasing the gender gap. In terms of age, most suicides were recorded between the ages of 40 and 79, with the highest number of suicides occurring in the age bracket from 60 to 69. As for the methods used, there were ten submersions in a well, seven hangings, three precipitations from a height, two lethal intoxications, one death by firearm, and one by knife.

The fact that the research was conducted in a rural setting plays a crucial role, as there are sociocultural dynamics that directly affect the risk factors for suicide. Among these, we highlight the following: rural-to-urban migration and the breakdown of family ties, leading to loneliness and social isolation; the stigma associated with seeking psychological help; the precariousness of employment and the economic situation in rural Spain; limited access to healthcare services; social pressure caused by gender expectations; and easier access to lethal means for suicide (Blázquez-Fernández et al. 2017; Suso-Ribera et al. 2018; Scheyett et al. 2024; Cátedra Tomás 1988). Moreover, the intersubjective experience of grief over suicide within the community is more intense due to the density of relationships in smaller localities. This affects the quantity and quality of narratives about suicide, resulting in numerous testimonies for each suicide case that occurs in the research locality (Martínez et al. 2018).

### 2.2. Participants and Participant Recruitment Procedure

A non-probabilistic purposive sample was used to contact the informants (Green 2001), and the first contact for the interviews was made through the local priest. This is a figure with a great social ascendancy in the municipality and extensive networks of contacts. Once trust was generated in the community concerning the research objectives, the channels of contact were diversified, including the neighborhood and professional networks in the locality. This implied a greater diversity of religious sentiments among the informants, although it should be noted that the presence of the Catholic religion is very prominent in the locality, and this has an impact on the interpretations of suicide in the community and, in particular, on the main topic of this article.

This work resulted in 56 semi-structured interviews with a heterogeneous group of informants composed of 38 women and 18 men, with an average age of 53 years, the youngest being 21 and the oldest being 96. The relationships of proximity to the suicide cases and the attempt to have a diverse perspective on the phenomenon in the locality structured the different units of observation from which the informants came: (a) unit of intimacy (domestic group/friendship/close neighborhood relationships) (23 interviewees); (b) parish community (7 i.); (c) neighborhood (daily relationships) (9 i.); (d) youth spaces (7 i.); (e) workspaces (professionals related to health or social intervention) (8 i.); (d) informants outside the observation unit (2 i.).

### 2.3. Ethical Considerations

All interviewees signed an informed consent form designed according to the ethical criteria of the American Anthropological Association and the deontological guidelines of the Spanish Anthropological Association (American Anthropological Association 2012; Asociación de Antropología del Estado Español 2014; Estalella 2022). This document communicated the objective of the study and the purpose of the participation of the interviewees in the study. They were also informed that the study was not for profit, that the results obtained would be used only for scientific purposes and could be published, and that they had the right to withdraw their consent at any time. In addition, particular emphasis was placed on the confidentiality of the data, with a system of dissociation of personal data using an alphanumeric procedure for identifying interviewees. The data and the custody of the documents obtained in the research are subject to current legislation on data protection (Gobierno de España 2018; Parlamento Europeo; Consejo de la Unión Europea 2016).

### 2.4. Instruments, Data Collection Process, Data Management, and Analyses

This research employs key ethnographic methods: field diaries, observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversation recordings, and document analysis. Intensive

fieldwork was documented in a six-notebook field diary, capturing contextual information, observations, and reflexive notes. Observation was continuous, focusing on specific settings such as churches, funerals, cemeteries, bars, and neighborhood gatherings. Interviews were conducted in the parish house and interviewees' homes, structured into flexible conversation blocks tailored to informants' profiles. The topics included suicide motives, methods, rituals, and memory, with new questions emerging as the research progressed. Numerous informal conversations occurred as community trust grew, making suicide a regular discussion topic while maintaining anonymity and discretion. Document analysis provided limited relevant information, though parish archives helped identify and date several orally transmitted suicide cases.

Regarding the data analysis, it should be noted that the interviews were transcribed, reviewed by the research team members, and examined with the ATLAS.ti software (Scientific Software Development GmbH, v.8.4.24.0 for Windows), as well as the rest of the empirical materials that were the object of collective reflection. The analysis was conducted using Grounded Theory, which facilitated the identification of emergent patterns that were configured in the categories that supported the main hypothesis (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 2004).

## 3. Results

The analysis of the empirical material, composed of 64 testimonies, allowed for the identification of four main categories in the narratives analyzed where the ideas of life and death are simultaneously conjugated in the body of the suicide: (1) trance as transit/connection towards/death, (2) the appearance unlinked to life, (3) the possibility of resurrection, and (4) the premonitory apparition. In turn, these are interrelated through shared meanings and close symbolic ties. These categories comprise subcategories identified in each section for a better understanding of the text and are illustrated with some verbatim references that exemplify their content.

### *3.1. Trance as a Transit/Connection to/with Death*

The idea that the suicidal body is subject to a sort of trance at the moment of voluntary loss of life, that there is a force that they do not control and that impels them to suicide, and that this also disconnects them from their physical body or places them in a transitional stage between the plane of life and death is recurrent in the testimonies of encounters with suicides or those that narrate the last moments. Ten testimonies are available that are enlightening in this sense.

#### 3.1.1. Bodies Snatched from Life by an External Force

Four testimonies mentioned that the force that led to the trance that made the suicidal person lose their will and that dragged them to death would have an external origin, alluding to supernatural or extracorporeal forces.

In the case of informants with deep religious convictions, the allusion to this external force pointed directly to the figure of the devil.

About the suicide of Rufino Pérez in the early 1950s:

> "It was in a matanza[1], in winter, and many people saw it, my aunts, later they told me about it, I was very young, and they tell me that I was present, and so it would be [...] but what I am going to say, this little man was very nervous, or so people say, that he was smoking, walking up and down, when suddenly they saw him leaving as if he had been snatched away, gone, people called out to him and he didn't answer [... and they left him because he could go to do his needs [...] I think that when you leave like that and then throw yourself into a well, it is not something crazy because crazy people do not commit suicide; it

> is something of the devil, and if you are a believer, you know that he is there and does with you what he wants, and this man, who knows why he was taken". [Carmela, 79 years]

When the narrative did not have a religious component, the testimonies usually mentioned that the body of the suicide was "dragged", that it "walked as if snatched" and moved by "a force" to which no concrete identity was given.

#### 3.1.2. Loss of Will for Reasons of an Internal Nature

The discourse of the informants also indicates that the loss of will at the moment of suicide, which is configured as a sort of transit towards death, may have its origin in some type of internal illness, such as moments of insanity.

Rafael Contreras, 71 years old, referred to suicides: "It's one thing to think about it a lot, and spend half his life mumbling that, if I kill myself, I won't kill myself, but at the moment of truth to take your life you have to take a "remalazo[2]" [. . .] that's what makes you lose your mind, a "remalazo" clouds your reason and you shoot yourself, or throw yourself into the well or whatever comes to your mind at that moment".

Using terminology that is deeply rooted in popular definitions of mental health problems, the term "nervios" (nervous/nerves) is commonly employed.

> "She suffered "nervios" because you think that that day, one of those "nervios" was like a hot iron that burned inside her, and it was enough that a bad thought crossed her mind to make her lose consciousness and feel like a flash that dragged her into taking her own life. So they say that she was walking as if pushed, as if by force until she threw herself into the Pozo de las Bóvedas (Well of the Vaults), but that is why no one saw her". [Juana, 74 years]

Another testimony equated somnambulism with a condition that overrides the will and drives the body to suicide and with a potent image where the dream also suggests a state similar to death through a phantasmagoric image.

> "That is the case of Ramón's mother, who suffered from somnambulism; she used to wake up and walk like a ghost when we were kids. They used to scare us that she would appear to us; she was wearing a nightgown, and her face was white. I didn't see her, but she wandered around even if they closed the door [...]. Well, one of those times, because of her illness, she went to throw herself into the well, not that she tripped and fell, but she even sat on the curb intending to throw herself in [...]". [Adoración, 73 years old]

A total of six testimonies are included in this subcategory.

### *3.2. The Appearance Detached from Life*

In the testimonies, images that disassociate the suicidal person's appearance with the traits that link them to life strongly emerge, thus placing them in an interpretative plane with a double nature, that of death because of their appearance but alive because they have not consummated the suicide.

#### 3.2.1. Bodies Without Soul: Absent Looks, Empty Bodies

Numerous testimonies, up to 10, of people who directly or through the experiences of others referred to a resemblance of suicidal persons who were going to die with ultraterrestrial beings through metaphors that disassociated them from the earthly plane by stripping them of that which can give them life, such as the soul or the look.

Several of the most significant examples referred to the emptiness of the body of the suicidal person with whom they had an encounter.

For example, Amelia, 48 years old, referred to her father's account of his encounter with the suicidal Mariana Ordóñez in the early 1970s: "She was a body, but not a person [...], but an empty body, as well as a spirit".

In addition, Dominga, 71 years old, remembered what a neighbor said about the suicidal Calixta Ramos, who took her own life in the 1980s: "She was at the door of her house embroidering, and there some neighbors stopped to talk when this woman was absent, as if lifeless like an empty shell [...] there she told them she was going upstairs to make food and you know what came next".

Other informants mentioned the dead condition of the suicidal person at the moment prior to taking their own life and noted their absence of a soul.

Referring to Juana Galdós, who took her own life in the 1990s:

> "My grandmother passed her on her way out of the house and was struck by the fact that she didn't stop to say good morning, she said she was looking straight ahead, but as if she was lost as if she had no soul, very strange". [Vanessa, 24 years old]

In addition, there are testimonies where the absence of a soul is also expressly conjugated with the absence of life.

Alluding to the suicide of Raimundo Lopez (late 70's), 71-year-old Juan Miguel says: "I passed him, yes, I passed him the afternoon before he hanged himself, and I don't remember if I greeted him, what I do remember is that this man was shuffling his feet, lifeless, as if without a soul, like a living dead".

Likewise, the gaze as an indicator of life becomes critical in the testimonies that state that its absence gives the suicidal person the condition of being dead.

> "Because it was New Year's Eve, we worked only until mid-afternoon, then they sent me home, and when I said goodbye, his gaze (that of Toribio Roncero, suicide in the 80s) was empty; it was not absent because from absence one returns, it was the gaze of a dead man. I left with a bad body, and when I found out, I said, there he is, the poor guy had already thought about it so much that he knew he was dead". [Gloria, 60 years old]

#### 3.2.2. Living Spirits

The attribution of qualities of ghostly beings or spirits is common in the narratives about encounters with suicides. The possession of these attributes somehow places the suicidal person in both planes (life/death) because, although the informants point out that their encounter is with a living person, the latter manifests qualities of an ultraterrestrial being. In this sense, we have the following testimony that seems to indicate that the suicidal woman levitated, a quality traditionally attributed to spirits or ghosts that can rise from the ground, which gives them an appearance of bodily "lightness".

Referring to Mariana Ordoñez,

> "[...] we were a group of men going to the Cruce de Las Canteras, where they were picking us up to go to work, and we ran into Sabino's daughter. That was not normal because if she went to some work there, it was the outskirts, which is the countryside, and she had not missed anything there. We called her, but nothing, but she was very light, you could see her, and it seemed that she was floating, like a spirit. Believe me when I tell you, that woman was so light that she didn't seem to touch the ground with her feet. Of course, later at night, I found out what had happened, and I even thought we could have crossed paths with her spirit. Still, it couldn't be because we saw her before reaching the well [...] And a few of us saw this, and I can tell you who we were in the group, [...]

we talked about it at the time, but I didn't remember until you asked about this story". [Fulgencio, 72 years]

Another testimony attributed to the suicidal person a sort of "intangibility" or "immateriality" that allowed them to appear and disappear as if they were to unfold in different planes of existence, as a spirit can do with apparitions.

Jacinta, 68 years old, narrated her encounter with the suicidal Juana Galdós as follows:

"[. . .] yes, yes, I came across her, I was surprised to see her so far from her house and at an unusual hour, that's why she caught my attention [...] the thing is that right away I noticed her, she was also very characteristic because she was in mourning for her own. I saw her there, by the little cross, and I was going to ask her what she was doing in this part of town. But here comes what I want to tell you: that I saw her, and I stopped seeing her for a moment, not because of me, but because she disappeared, and when I wanted to realize it, she had already passed me from where she was and was following her path, which of course was to the well. And so I wasn't going to say anything to her. I always say that it was as if time had frozen when she passed by me, as if she didn't want to talk to me, and it froze me. I even felt cold; as they say, it happens when a dead person appears to you".

Similarly, 72-year-old Fulgencio referred to Raimundo Lopez:

"And now I tell you that I ran into the husband of Coral Jiménez, and he disappeared like a ghost [...] I ran into him the day before, after dark, and what I was telling you, he disappeared like a ghost because he was walking up the street. I was going to stop him to ask him how he was and the normal thing in these cases, and before he reached me, he disappeared, as if he avoided me so as not to run into me and give explanations [...]. He couldn't go down any street because in that part of the city, you can't, and at that time of day (late at night), which would be winter, he wasn't going to go into anyone's house. The next morning, he was found hanged in his house".

On the other hand, in a conversation referring to the suicide of Julián Romero in 2023, he was described as being dressed as a dead person would be dressed for his burial, the usual attire of the "souls in pain" and other types of apparitions according to the oral tradition. In this case, the encounter with the suicide takes place in a particular circumstance: the suicidal person attended the ecclesiastical funeral and the burial of his best friend—although he did not enter the cemetery, remaining at the entrance of the enclosure—and took his own life in the following hours. This circumstance made it possible that many neighbors coincided with the suicide, and numerous testimonies were derived from it. As for the clothing, the following was indicated:

"That day, Julián looked handsome, but more than normal for a funeral, because for a funeral you wear a shirt and a sweater, but here he was wearing a suit of pants, jacket, and shoes, like for a wedding. Of course, without a tie. I thought, to myself, that it was because of Alonso Cano's funeral, that because of the relationship they had, that they were cousins, or uncle and nephew, but much more, they were, as they say, flesh and blood, so he was dressed like that out of respect, for the family and for the dead, but no, he had made himself handsome because he was already wearing the mortaja[3] (shroud) so that they would find him dressed as the deceased". [Manuel, 51 years old]

A total of four testimonies were collected in this subcategory.

#### 3.2.3. Silence of the Dead

The absolute silence associated with the lack of life or the eternal rest of the dead emerged in six testimonies, likening the suicidal person to a dead person.

In the case of Julián Romero, several witnesses tried to talk to him both at the ecclesiastical funeral and at the burial of his friend, and he shunned any conversation. A silence that, although it seems that it was something natural in him because he was not very talkative, in this case, was excessive because it was absolute.

Explicit reference was even made to the link between death and silence.

> "My brother-in-law told me that he crossed paths with Nicasio Gómez (suicide in 2022) and asked him about the dogs or a mare, I don't know, and that he didn't answer him and passed him by. My brother-in-law, who didn't think it was normal, told him what was wrong with him, that he was as quiet as a dead man, and just look if it was like that; a few hours later, he hanged himself in his house". [Dolores, 67 years old]

A total of 20 testimonies were obtained within the category of appearance detached from life.

### *3.3. The Possibility of Resurrection*

A recurring theme in the narratives about the moment of suicide is the possibility that during the trance that drags the suicidal person to take their own life, they regain consciousness and renounce to consummate the suicidal act. This hypothetical process is sometimes interpreted as a sort of resurrection, a return to life from a place already considered lost.

The abundance of testimonies in this sense (for a total of 31) could be due, in good part, to a very extended popular belief that affirms that there is a possibility of reverting the consummation of the suicide if the suicidal person has an encounter with someone who directly speaks to them and that those words manage to remove them from the trance that moves them to take their life or, in the case of the suicides by submersion in a well, that the water acts as an element that returns them to the plane of reality, which is, in definitive, the one of life. These interpretations were endorsed by the opinion that two doctors who practiced for decades in the locality, Mr. Nicolás Atienza and Mr. Agustín Guerrero, had on the subject, and they pointed out the veracity of these hypotheses. In the testimonies of the informants, particularly those with more advanced ages, the reference to these doctors will be configured as an argument of authority.

#### 3.3.1. Water and the Return to Life

The symbolic potential of water as an element to return to life from that transit to death where the suicidal person seems to have abandoned the vital plane is manifested in the cases of submersion in a well. The idea that sustains the argument is that if the suicidal person has contact with water before being submerged in it, they will return to the vital plane, abandoning the consummation of the suicide, a motive that we find in about 20 testimonies. This is expressed on numerous occasions with the simile of the resurrection, that is to say, of the return to life, which implies a state of death.

A good part of the allusions to water in this sense will refer to the aforementioned local doctors.

> "So, I heard Mr. Nicolás say that if Mariana had sat down on the curbstone instead of jumping all at once and the water had brushed her feet, she would have risen at that moment and would not have jumped into the well. And the same, I think, would have been true for Casimiro or Juana". [Juliana, 60 years old]

In addition, there is a particularly interesting testimony in the same respect, that of the son of a person who is considered a survivor of suicide because the water brought him back to consciousness; this idea is expressed in terms of "coming back to life".

> "My mother suffered from sleepwalking for many years, and the point is that she was walking around the house and sometime she was found in the street [. . .] There they found her screaming in the curbstone, and of course the neighbors and everybody came to the screaming, because according to the story, she was screaming and crying like crazy without getting down from the curbstone. And you know why that was?. It was because she knew that she had been born again. She cried because she felt a relief, because when you wake up from a bad dream you feel a relief, but she felt that life was coming back, something bigger, so she burst into tears. [. . .]". [Ramón, 77 years]

#### 3.3.2. Resurrection Words

The testimonies that mention the fact that a few words can remove the suicidal person from that kind of trance that drags them to the consummation of the act of death are numerous, a total of eleven, although fewer than those that refer to the power of water.

In general, they allude to establishing clear communication with the suicidal person as a way of "waking him/her up" and returning them to the plane of reality.

> "[. . .] and Mr. Agustín, the doctor, also said that if someone had taken Mariana and talked to her face to face, looking her in the eyes, not just from a distance, but face to face, like you and me now, or let's say, shaking her by the shoulders, she would wake up and would have regained consciousness. And I tell you, with her children, that woman would not consciously throw herself into the well". [Rafael, 71 years old]

Of these testimonies referring to oral communication, there are two in particular that allude to the use of religious terminology for such communication to be effective.

Thus, for example, we find testimonies such as that of Dolores, 67 years old:

> "[...] that is what they say, but as far as I have heard, it is not enough just to talk to the person (who wants to commit suicide), but you have to hold him, hold him, hug him, but do not let him escape, and you have to recite a prayer. I don't know the prayer, but it rings a bell [...] you have to bear in mind that when you rescue a suicidal person, it is as if you take the devil out of his arms, so not just any word will do, it has to be from God".

### *3.4. Premonitory Apparitions*

Certain testimonies emphasize a premonitory appearance of the suicidal person's death, whose objective would be the farewell or the request for help to loved ones. The narratives about this are not very abundant; they are limited to three testimonies, but their density concerning the objective of the present article gives them the relevance of the first order. This is because, in all of them, it is pointed out that the contact with the relative or loved one occurs in the moments before the suicide due to the coincidence of the hours, reinforcing the idea that, at the moment immediately before taking their own life, the suicidal person already has a condition such as the one that allows the dead to relate to the living in an immaterial/spiritual way.

#### 3.4.1. The Image of the Suicide as a Farewell

In one case, the appearance of the suicide took corporeal form, although within the material in-definition of revealing themselves in dreams or as a spirit, where the body is an intangible, barely an image that fades away to convey a message of farewell.

Referring to her brother Julián:

> "Only my husband knows this [...] that I saw him at the moment he killed himself because he appeared to me. It is because of what the forensic experts said later that it was at that time, and then I thought about it a lot. It was before eating, the donkey's nap, as they say, which I take when I have the house ready. I had the blinds drawn, and the room was dark, but I opened my eyes, and there he was, quiet; he was looking at me, quiet; he said nothing; he was just there, next to a door. I didn't give it any importance because it seemed like a dream [...]. But of course, he came to say goodbye, I think, and I have talked about this with my husband, who came to tell me that he was going to do it, but not so that I would stop him, but so that I could rest assured that it was not my fault". [Rosario, 76 years old]

#### 3.4.2. Spiritual Communication Through Sensations

The other two testimonies show the possibility that the suicidal person communicated through a sensation experienced in the body of the person contacted. In the first of these cases, the sensation is not defined in the physical realm but in the realm of emotions, a kind of anguish that provokes the rupture of the dream and a hunch that is interpreted as a message of help.

> "That same night, I woke up with a feeling that I can't explain well; it would be like anxiety or anguish. I looked at the clock, and it was about one o'clock (1:00 a.m.); I don't know how to explain it to you, but I swear I thought about him (referring to Fernando's suicide in 2021) that something had happened to him, that he had fallen, or he was suffocating because he lacked oxygen, or something, I don't know, it came to my mind, and I should have called him and if it was him calling me with his thoughts? And if I had called him, he mightn't have done it". [Caridad, caregiver/friend, 39 years old]

In the other testimony, the communication has the format of the "spectral cold" that usually occurs in apparitions of spirits. This sensation of lowering the temperature is inter-pretended, a posteriori, by the person communicated as the presence of the suicidal person to say goodbye.

> "I was in the kitchen, and at that hour (11:00 a.m.) I had a cold, not a shiver of being sick in my body, but in the house, I felt cold, as a current came in with cold air that I shivered, and my skin got goosebumps. I went out to close the window and felt his presence. It is difficult to explain, but I felt his presence there [...] I always thought this was his farewell when he came to say goodbye. I will wait for you in heaven, God willing; I love you very much, my life". [Luana, wife, 74 years old, referring to her husband's suicide in 2020]

These analytical categories are not watertight compartments but fluidly interrelate in the narrative of the informants, sharing meanings and complementing each other when constructing images, metaphors, and stories about the suicidal person at the moment of consummating their death. Thus, the idea of the dead/alive condition of the suicide is manifested in the four main categories: (Section 3.1) trance as transit/connection to/with death; (Section 3.2) the appearance of being detached from life; (Section 3.3) the possibility of resurrection; and (Section 3.4) the premonitory apparition. Of these, the first one, where

the body of the suicidal person would be in a situation of trance/transition towards death either by external or internal causes, is a condition for the rest of the categories to occur, since it is the idea that the suicidal person is no longer only in the plane of the living and, therefore, can (a) appear as an ultraterrestrial being (Section 3.2), (b) resurrect (Section 3.3), and (c) make premonitory apparitions (Section 3.4).

At the same time, the images of (Section 3.2.1) soulless bodies and (Section 3.2.2) spirits in life appear in the stories and are moved by (Section 3.1.1) external or (Section 3.1.2) internal forces that override the will and are the ones that make the bodies susceptible of being (Section 3.3) resurrected (either through (Section 3.3.1) water or (Section 3.3.2) oral communication). Likewise, only the vital disconnection that operates in (Section 3.1) is a condition of possibility for the suicide to be able to manifest itself as a (Section 3.4) premonitory apparition in the modalities explained in the testimonies ((Section 3.4.1) image and (Section 3.4.2) sensation), as it is able to affirm the same for the bodies to have the possibility of resurrection (Section 3.3). For this last one, it is possible to indicate that some accounts point directly to the somnambulism associated with internal suffering that annuls the will of the suicide (Section 3.1.2) with the possibility of being resurrected with contact with the water (Section 3.3.1).

Regarding the immateriality of the bodies, we find narratives that emphasize the characteristics of ultraterrestrial beings, such as levitation or the capacity to "freeze" time. However, these are still located in bodies on the plane of the vital under the subcategory of living spirits (Section 3.2.2). These attributes linked to death adopt a more accentuated expression in the narratives of premonitory apparitions (Section 3.4), where there is not a physical encounter with the suicide but a spiritual manifestation (Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2).

It is worth mentioning that the meaning of oral communication in the context of the moment of suicide manifests the central duality of the life/death hypothesis of the person who is going to take their own life. As two facets of the same phenomenon, but in opposite expressions, the absence of oral manifestations, understood as the silence of the dead (Section 3.2.3), would represent death. On the other hand, the possibility that verbal language in an encounter with the suicidal person could resurrect them would be an element that recovers the part of life that remains in their body (Section 3.2.2).

In short, these close and fluid relationships, where images and metaphors share meanings, provide coherence and narrative consistency to the story about the life/death duality in the body of the suicidal person at the time of taking their own life.

## 4. Discussion

The life/death duality embodied in the suicidal person during the moments prior to taking their own life is not a topic that has been widely addressed in the ethnographic literature, nor has it been dealt with extensively in other areas of knowledge, such as philosophy, psychology, or psychiatry. Thus, the discussion is carried out in approximate terms, broadening the interpretative focus and inserting the results into academic debates and cultural dynamics where the boundaries between death and life are blurred, causing images of individuals with a hybrid condition where existence can occur in earthly and transcendent planes simultaneously to emerge, where the living can adopt forms and behaviors of spectral beings that, a priori, should be dead. As occurs with the appearance of the mysterious in the narratives of illness, the narrative game is traversed by unknowable dimensions, as well as by trauma or desire (in the case of suicide, mainly to make up for the guilt of not having avoided it), and this configures representations that entail complexity and multiplicity (Good 2003).

Representations of this nature, where the planes of death and life are fluidly combined, barely survive in popular traditions on the verge of extinction (Ariés 2023), are maintained

with unequal success on the margins of the mass media (Halsey 2020), and are part of powerful imaginaries in literary and cinematographic horror cultures (Carcavilla Puey 2014; Betham Michael-Fox 2019; Guilley 2007). Thus, the object of the hypothesis put forward—namely, the dual living/dead condition of the suicidal person—is nourished by these perspectives. However, it should be noted that, in the context of the fieldwork carried out and in the profiles that have manifested themselves in this sense, mostly over 60 years of age, there is a relevant weight of images of the supernatural rooted in the more traditional imaginary of specters, spirits, or possessions, with an eminent cultural component of Catholic fundament. However, this does not disregard other influences from contemporary audiovisual narratives, such as the archetypal images of the zombie or the person in a state of possession or trance.

It should also be noted that the categories that articulate the results are not watertight compartments but interrelate in the narrative of the informants in a fluid way, sharing meanings and complementing each other when constructing images, metaphors, and stories about the suicidal person at the moment of consummating his or her death. In this sense, the situation of trance/transition towards death, whether due to external or internal causes, is a condition for the rest of the categories, since it is the idea that the suicidal person is no longer only in the plane of the living and can, therefore, (a) appear as an ultraterrestrial being (Section 3.2), (b) resurrect (Section 3.3), or (c) make premonitory apparitions (Section 3.4).

In a broader cultural meaning, trance, as a technique and as a mechanism of mediation between earthly and spiritual planes, and its various conceptualizations have been a classic theme in ethnographical studies (Horta 2022). However, the idea underlying the metaphor of trance in the narratives studied points more to the idea that it can be considered a form of death or a path towards it. A disconnection from the physical body and reality is considered a transit towards death and has been narrated in near-death experiences where the dying person experiences this vital disconnection before physical and psychological death (Apud-Peláez 2017; Gonçalves Campolina 2024).

When the cause of such a trance has an external reason to the suicide itself, the narratives bifurcate into those that suggest that the body, in a trance, is moved by a kind of energy or force of undefined origin on the one hand and those that directly refer to the figure of the demon within the interpretation of Catholic doctrine on the other. The former is framed within the difficulties of defining and pointing to the origin of what is mysterious and inscrutable, and the denominations are limited to imprecise terms (Good 2003). In the latter, the role of the instigator of suicide attributed to the devil in Catholicism (Pérez Jiménez 2013; Csordas 2020; Andrés 2015) is the one that propitiates the loss of will and its trance-like state, as a transit towards death, even more so when the demon itself evokes a sort of dual relationship where it operates with both the living and the dead (Csordas 2020).

In the case of the narratives that consider that the state of loss of consciousness is due to some internal ailment, the interpretative mechanisms of popular medicine are at work. Undefined allusions to possible dissociative disorders or a kind of mental illness associated with suicide are recurrent in popular narratives (Cátedra Tomás 1988). In this sense, some accounts frame suicidal behavior as a so-called "*nervios*" (nervous/nerves) condition, a broad term to refer to mental health conditions ranging from anxiety to depression, stress, insomnia, and other disorders of a similar nature (Guío Cerezo 1991; Baer et al. 2006; Cátedra Tomás 1988). The exacerbation of those "nervios" is what leads to a trance, to the loss of will, which, in turn, leads to suicide. The formula to describe that moment refers to an instant of loss of control that drives the individual to take their own life, with terms such as "flash" or "remalazo". We find this last idea, but under the nomenclature "ramo" or "remate", in the chapter on suicide in the classic study on death among the *vaqueiros de*

*alzada* by Cátedra Tomás (1988). Within the framework of these conditions, in which trance as a path to death is the substance, there is a powerful image that recurred in some stories: that of somnambulism. All of them allude to the case of a suicide survivor and refer to this disorder as a disease. Although sleepwalking in adults is a potentially serious condition that can lead to self-injury or violent behavior (Lopez et al. 2013), here, the reference is more to the association with the living dead who have lost their will and move as if in a sort of dream, with involuntary movements, self-injury, or violent behaviors (Carcavilla Puey 2013) which, in turn, would be linked to a strong symbolism of the dream as dying, which is widely rooted in the popular imaginary (Dai 2022; Ferrer 2003). All of this would configure the image of the potential suicidal sleepwalker as a living dead.

The appearance of being detached from life is constructed as a category where the informants describe elements in the suicidal person that disconnect them from life. This is expressed in a double sense by stripping the suicidal person of that which would endow them with life, such as the soul or the look, or by describing behaviors and appearances typical of supernatural beings or the dead. However, in both cases, as the suicide has not been consummated, these would be embodied in a living body, reflecting the double condition raised in this work.

The idea of the soul as a synonym of human life, with solid roots not only in the Judeo-Christian culture but also in numerous religious and thought currents with a practically universal character, has as a counterpart that the non-existence of the soul is the end of being; it strips it of what makes it human (Kazakov et al. 2023). Thus, some descriptions in the testimonies referred to the lack of soul and another element that is considered linked to it under the idea that the "eyes are the window or mirror of the soul": the gaze (Martínez Conde and Macknik 2010). Allusions that suicides had "empty, lost or absent looks" denote the absence of soul and, therefore, of life. Eye contact as a mechanism for recognizing the other, forming bonds, and negotiating relationships (Uono and Hietanen 2015; Martínez Conde and Macknik 2010) fades before a suicidal person who lacks the gaze of the living, which is interpreted as an indicator of death.

Furthering the idea of the gaze, but already on the level of the analogies of suicide with spectral beings by their appearance, Guilley (2007) described ghosts, undead, and other unearthly entities with lifeless looks: "glazed and fixed eyes", "eyes that do not move", "evil and eyeless face", "occluded milky-white gaze", "lost looks", and "invisible eyes". Other spirit characteristics with which suicides are defined before death are widely reflected in ghost lore, such as levitation (Graus 2014; Hübner 2020) or ethereal corporeality (McGill 2020).

Regarding the immateriality of the bodies, we find narratives that emphasize the characteristics of ultraterrestrial beings, such as levitation or the capacity to "freeze" time, but these are still located in bodies that are on the plane of the vital under the subcategory of living spirits (Section 3.2.2). These attributes linked to death take on a more accentuated expression in the narratives of premonitory apparitions (Section 3.4), where there is also no physical encounter with the suicide but a spiritual manifestation (Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). These manifestations of intangibility assimilate the suicidal behavior of a spectral apparition being able to transport themselves without physical restrictions or to vanish at will (Holloway and Kneale 2008; Guilley 2007). Along with these elements proper to the dead conformed into supernatural beings, others are proper to the person who has lost their life without having to transcend to an ultraterrestrial plane—for example, the idea that the suicidal person wears a shroud at the moment of suicide. Although, secularly, the shroud is a linen covering the corpse (Noriega Armenta 2012), the transformations that have taken place in the Spanish funerary culture over the last few years (Zambrano González 2016) have contributed to the identification of the shroud with the funeral costume. In fact,

in the locality itself, there is evidence that the elegant funeral costumes of the wealthier classes are also called shrouds, at least since the second decade of the 20th century (Marcos Arévalo 1997). Another comparison of the suicidal person at the moment of taking their own life with a dead person comes from the silent attitude. It is worth mentioning that the meaning of oral communication in the context of the moment of suicide manifests the central duality of the life/death hypothesis of the person who is going to take his or her own life. As two facets of the same phenomenon, but in opposite expressions, the absence of oral manifestations, understood as the silence of the dead (Section 3.2.3), would represent death, while the possibility that verbal language in an encounter with the suicidal person could resurrect him/her would be an element that would recover the part of life that still remains in the body of the suicidal person (Section 3.2.2). In this sense, it must be emphasized that verbal communication as a sign of life and its absence as a sign of death (Carrassi 2023; van Elferen and Raeymaekers 2015) are deeply rooted in popular culture, which translates into commonly used expressions where analogies are drawn between absolute silence and the semantic field of death—to be silent or silent like a dead person, a tomb, or a mummy (Mellado 2011).

A frequent theme in the narratives studied is the idea of resurrection, which places the suicidal person on the plane of the dead, even if they have not yet taken their own life, because to return to life, they must first have lost it. The images of (Section 3.2.1) soulless bodies and (Section 3.2.2) spirits in life appear in the relating moved by (Section 3.1.1) external or (Section 3.1.2) internal forces that override the will and are the ones that make the bodies susceptible to being (Section 3.3) resurrected (either by means of (Section 3.3.1) water or (Section 3.3.2) oral communication). Likewise, only the vital disconnection that operates in Section 3.1 is a condition of possibility for the suicide to be able to manifest itself as a (Section 3.4) premonitory apparition—in the modalities explained in the testimonies, (Section 3.4.1) image and (Section 3.4.2) sensation—as this is able to affirm the same for the bodies to have the possibility of resurrection (Section 3.3). With respect to this last one, it is possible to indicate that some accounts point directly to the somnambulism associated with an internal suffering that annuls the will of the suicidal person (Section 3.1.2) with the possibility of being resurrected through contact with the water (Section 3.3.1).

The return to life is a theme that is widely present in Catholic religious culture (Morales 2021) and in popular culture through images of people who were resurrected at their funerals because they were considered dead when, in fact, they were in a cataleptic state and, in the worst cases, buried alive (Guarner et al. 2020). In the particular case of the narratives in question, resurrection is given as a potential, as a possibility of returning from that incomplete death in which the suicidal person finds themselves before taking their own life. In only one case, the resurrection process culminated with a survivor, the mother of one of the informants.

This return to life can take place through two procedures: contact with water or verbal communication with the suicidal person. In Western culture, water is considered the genesis of life, a primordial element in the creation of life (Marcos Arévalo 2011). This places this element in a powerful symbolic plane related to healing and the recovery of life (Cátedra Tomás 2009; Bastos 2011). Likewise, in the Christian tradition, water plays a fundamental role in baptism, configured as a metaphor for the end of life as a non-Christian and the resurrection of the individual within the Christian community (Chamberlain 2012; Morales 2021). The symbolic efficacy of words has been extensively studied in anthropology (Calame Griaule 1982; Tambiah 1968). Its healing and, therefore, life-restoring power in the form of incantations (Laín Entralgo 1958), the sacred formulas used in exorcisms that return those who are possessed to the world of the living (Kallendorf 2005; Congregación para el culto divino y la disciplina de los sacramentos 1999; Lisón Tolosana 1990), or its role

in the Holy Scriptures where the resurrection takes place through an appeal to the dead, as in the cases of Lazarus or the son of the widow of Nain (Barrientos 2013; Bover Oliver 1954), constitute an interpretative framework that allows us to know the ways for the word to recover the suicidal person from the trance that leads to death: the interpellation or the sacred formula.

It is in the premonitory apparitions that the spectral character of the suicidal person at the moment of ending their life—and, therefore, of the world of the dead—becomes particularly evident. The testimonies coming from the fieldwork are not very numerous. However, the existing ones condense an enormous potential referred to the hypothesis of life/death incarnated in the body of the suicide. In this sense, a key point that makes the testimonies coincide with other so-called "apparitions of the living" is the idea of the "critical instant": the appearance of the person still alive occurs when they are about to die or in a critical situation, such as an accident (Price 1995). Other elements, such as personal closeness, should also be highlighted. Direct relatives or caregivers allude to this type of encounter and suggest that these phenomena emerge in the narratives framed in a deep emotional connection (Mazzarino-Willett 2010; Muthumana et al. 2010). These experiences contain a highly significant potential for those who live them. This manifests itself in two antagonistic ways. On one hand, a source of emotional distress (Exline and Wilt 2023; Hecker et al. 2016) is where the suicidal person communicates to announce their intention or expose their anguish. On the other hand, the apparition is a kind of farewell that comforts those who experience it (Pait et al. 2023; Exline and Wilt 2023; Parra 2013).

The form that these premonitory apparitions take also establishes a close link with cultural traditions about specters and other beings with supernatural abilities. In this sense, we find intangible, although visible, manifestations of what is classically considered a spirit or specter. However, there is a substantial difference in that a living body is still located in another space. These are the "disembodied doubles" or "subtle bodies" that would be part of a sort of bilocation prior to death (Alvarado 2005; Price 1995). When the presence is not visual, it can be given through sensations. In terms of spiritual beings, there are classic references to temperature drops or air flows (Guilley 2007), as reflected in some of the testimonies collected. The idea of "feeling the presence" also abounds in the tradition somewhat indeterminately or refers to feeling observed (Woollacott et al. 2022; Guilley 2007). In addition, although no such testimonies were recorded in the fieldwork, there are auditory and olfactory perceptions of this type of phenomenon (Woollacott et al. 2022).

These hybrid narrative fields where life and death coexist in the same bodies are not exclusive to the phenomenon presented in this study. They share the flexibilization of the fundamental life/death binary with other cultural facts. There are dead people who are fed like the living (Brito Benítez and Chung 2015; Hüwelmeier 2021; Lorente Fernández 2020), clinical cases of brain death that challenge the hegemony of medical thinking (O'Dell 2020; Stern 2008), dead photographed as if they were alive (Iorio et al. 2021), and others to walk with (Tsintjilonis 2007); the idea of the living dead is widely spread in traditional narratives with a practically universal character (Guilley 2007), and this indeterminately fluid relationship between life and death is found in many other manifestations that have been addressed in anthropology and cultural studies. In all of them, the conceptual boundaries between life and death are blurred and suggest existential implications with a depth of the first order.

## 5. Limitations

Several limitations must be considered when interpreting the results.

Firstly, it should be noted that, although there was some diversity in religious positions among the interviewees, most of the narratives referring to the dual condition of the suicidal

individual in the moments before their death came from people who identified as Catholic, and many of these belonged to a parish community. Additionally, in general terms, in the locality where the research was conducted, the Catholic Church is a major social actor with a substantial influence on social and cultural dynamics. Thus, the presence of the supernatural in the narratives was imbued with interpretations from Catholicism, setting a limit to a more universalist interpretation of the research results.

Furthermore, most of the informants who referred to the dual condition of the person about to commit suicide in their narratives were over 60 years old. This age group in the locality generally has a strong attachment to traditions, which also influences their interpretations of spectral phenomena or otherworldly planes related to death.

Caution must also be exercised when interpreting the narratives due to the "memory bias". Many of the stories referred to past decades and, so, the reflections and interpretations of the informants about what happened were conditioned by the selection of memories and the reinterpretations influenced by experiences that occurred after the event.

Finally, the scarcity of anthropological literature on the idea of the dual condition of the suicidal individual and even on the emergence of the supernatural in suicides has necessitated a discussion where the studies used come from diverse fields, such as cultural or religious studies or those of traditions of the Iberian Peninsula.

## 6. Conclusions

The consideration of a dual nature of the suicidal person, where life and death are simultaneously embodied in an individual during the moment of ending their life, is significantly evidenced in the community narratives on suicide in the rural locality where the fieldwork was carried out.

This affirmation, which is contained in the initial working hypothesis, on one hand, is based on the nature of the categories that highlight the relationship of the suicidal person with death—even before having consummated the suicidal act—in the testimonies. This can be by revealing their situation of transit towards death in the form of a trance; by establishing analogies between the suicidal person and the dead—in their supernatural form or not—both through attributes and behaviors, as well as the appearance of the projected images; by harboring the potentiality of a possible resurrection; or by manifesting themselves as es-spiritual entities without having lost their life yet.

On the other hand, the conclusion is also supported by the fluid dialogue of the results with cultural phenomena that allow us to identify the dual nature of death and life in the suicidal person. To this end, the testimonies that testify to this duality are contrasted with symbolic constructions where the boundaries between death and life are blurred. To this end, reference is made to popular elements of folklore and traditions, religious doctrines, paranormal narratives in the mass media, the most widely known literary and cinematographic narratives, or cultural expressions, such as rituals and other practices with a high symbolic content, where the planes of death and life coexist in the same individuals.

This original contribution to cultural studies of suicide provides an epistemological window through which to explore territories of deep existential meaning. For example, it may help to develop more sensitive and effective approaches to suicide prevention and to working with survivors and loved ones. This is because interventions can be more personalized and culturally tailored, given that they would contemplate cultural conceptions of the duality of life and death in the suicidal person, an issue that, so far, has not been much explored.

Likewise, from a novel interpretative perspective, future research can approach the hybrid identity of suicide, the social consideration of suicide, the deep meanings of life and death in a community, or the sense of the mysterious in the plane of real life. To this end,

research horizons that expand the work focusing on the circumstances preceding suicide and the consideration of the suicidal person in that context are proposed. This expansion can be directed towards investigations in other cultural contexts where the dynamics among rural and urban areas, religion, beliefs in the supernatural, and demographic profiles differ substantially from the community where the research was conducted. Contrasting the results can shed light on the cultural mechanisms that operate in the dual considerations of suicidal individuals.

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## Notes

[1] Matanza is the usual term for pig slaughter. The pig slaughter in Extremadura is a winter tradition carried out between November and March, primarily aimed at family consumption and food preservation. The process includes the slaughter of the pig, butchering, and the preparation of sausages such as chorizos and blood sausages, as well as the salting and curing of hams and shoulders (Calderón Torres et al. 2010).

[2] The Real Academia Española de la Lengua (2024)-Royal Spanish Academy of Language- defines ramalazo as a "short and sudden access of madness, pain or other states". It should be noted that the term used by the informant is "remalazo", indicating that this is the variant of the word used in the locality.

[3] Traditionally, the mortaja (shroud) is a special sheet or garment with which the corpse is wrapped and with which it is placed in the coffin and buried (Noriega Armenta 2012), but with the loss of this custom, it has become popular to use this to refer to the garments with which the deceased will be buried.

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