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Spaces of the Dead in Modernity

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I want to begin with two obscure men writing in obscure periodicals of the early 1840s on the subject of cemeteries. Neither man is very interested in questions of public health, which have figured so prominently in modern historical treatments of the origin of cemeteries. Nor is either man explicitly interested in what we might call attitudes toward death, whose history we purport to trace. In fact, I am dubious that there is such a thing as "an attitude toward death" in the sense in which historians write about "the Victorian attitude toward death": that is, as some general posture toward an event about which views, feelings, attitudes are—if they are to mean anything—intimate, specific, and of a moment.

"Then there is the civilizing love of death," writes the poet William Empson in his 'Ignorance of Death,' "by which/Even music and painting tell you what else to love. Buddhists and Christians contrive to agree about death/making death their ideal basis for different ideas. It is the trigger to the literary man's biggest gun." But in the end, Empson says, it is a subject

I feel blank upon

And think that though important, and proper for anyone to bring up,

It is one that most people should be prepared to be blank upon.

One can, however, have views about the meaning of places for putting the dead to rest, as did both of the obscure writers to whom I now turn. The first, William Mudford, writes in the January1841 Bentley's Miscellany about his visit to the first English cemetery, Kensal Green, which had been founded by a joint stock company in 1833. He says that he was reluctant to accompany the friend who asked him to go. His posture is conservative. His friend invited him, he wrote, "so that I might be converted, and give up certain notions I entertained touching the rather cockneyish sentimentalities which we now hear about pretty, ornamental, nay even beautiful places for the dead. Death and pettiness! Beauty and the grave! What ill-assorted images… What a violation of all

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those tender recollections of the departed, whose well springs are gloom, and silence, and solitude." But he agrees to go because he had never been to a cemetery before; he had never visited Père La Chaise when in Paris. (Kensal Green, in short, is a novel sort of place for the world metropolis.) He admires his friend and he "knew that there must be something in these fashionable collection of graves and gravestones."

Needless to say, Mudford is not impressed. He mocks the fact that to get to Kensal Green he took Heiron's cemetery Omnibus from Edgeware Road which runs at 10, 3, 5 and 9 every day. He arrived and found the place beautiful; he passed through the gates with his mind prepared for amusement, the same feeling he would have felt entering the Zoological Garden. Yes, the flowers and landscaping are beautiful, but they had mostly been planted by the cemetery company and thus had none of the emotional resonances they would have had if they had been planted by those who loved the bodies buried here. He does not like the sense that he is meant to feel pleasure in these gardens; he does not like the hundreds and thousands of names that dot the landscape written on a "fantastic variety of forms." Every name a stranger both the visitor and to each other, this is a public ground and the wide public makes use of it. And most of all he does like the absence of historical associations that he finds in the parish churchyard. In other words, he does not like the civilization that the cemetery represents. Only the catacombs seem to have what to him are the appropriate associations with death.

A few months later in the August 1842 issue of Ainsworth Magazine, a second obscure writer, Laman Blanchard, an editor and sometime secretary of the Zoological Society, writes about his visit to Kensal Green. Blanchard's account is in many ways more conventional than Mudford's—the noise, desecration and nasty smells of the city churchyard contrasted to the sweet smells, the quiet isolation, of the new "Asylums for the Dead." (That in itself is a telling metaphor in a world in which all sorts of people were being segregated in asylums.) Sorrows are soothed, anguish and terror softened by the well-kept garden. This is the sort of landscape before which one can calmly contemplate even one's own death. But for my purposes it is Blanchard's opening sentence that suggests the stakes in the division of opinion I have illustrated: "Change [the capital C is made into an illustration of the gateway of a neoclassical cemetery gate through which a funeral procession is about to pass]—so busy in this eventful century with Life—is busier yet with Death. There is no late step in the progress of opinion or the habits of society so broad as the distinction between the city Churchyard and the suburban cemetery. Nor is it possible for change to take

a healthier or wiser direction." In city churchyards, in the mingled heaps, the bones of one's forefathers, "the pure and exquisite sentiment that should embalm the memory of the dead is stifled." And, of course, conversely, in sweet-smelling parks their memory is preserved.

As these passages from Mudford and Blanchard suggest, this paper is about the origin and meaning of the new spaces in which we put the dead, it is about the history of the cemetery. I want to suggest that the secular, explicitly landscaped, memorial park—the cemetery, as opposed to the churchyard or other sacred or customary space—is so precisely the invention of a critical period in the history of our times (i.e., the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century) that thinking about its origins and meaning might allow us to understand what, if anything, is distinctively modern about death, and particularly about putting the dead to rest, in modernity.

The New Cities of the Dead

Even if—as I suggested earlier—there is little to be said about death, what we do with the dead is less shrouded in silence. We know that unlike the poor, the dead are not always with us. In fact, beginning in 1804, they began to move decisively away from the living into cities of their own: out of churchyards and other religious spaces in which their bodies had been jumbled together in close proximity to each other and to the day-to-day comings and goings of the living, and into geographically distant—and for the middle class far more private—representations of where they had once dwelt. The dead moved onto/into their freehold properties in the necropolis. Père la Chaise is not literally the first cemetery built by Europeans; Park Street in Calcutta opened in 1767 and was soon filled with tombs that looked like they might have come from roads leading out of a Roman city but in fact were on the edge of Sir Elijah Impey's deer park. Certainly other colonial cemeteries take precedence, as do of course the Islamic cemeteries, especially those of Constantinople, which Mary Wortley Montagu and William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge and a host of others so admired. But these antecedents should not distract us from the fact that Père la Chaise was, and was understood at the time to be, a radical innovation in the spatial geography of the dead in relation to the living and of dead bodies in relation to each other. It very quickly became the symbol of—almost a name for—a kind of burial place that triumphed wherever the bourgeoisie triumphed or hoped to triumph.

Like the poor, however, the status of the dead as a community unto themselves or as part of the larger community is always fluid, and was especially so in the decades around 1800. The reformation in the Protestant

world had severed the direct ties of the dead to the living; and even where the concept of purgatory persisted, the souls who waited there received far less attention by the end of the eighteenth century than they had earlier. In the nineteenth century the world of the dead was once again displaced. The novel space of the cemetery allowed a certain class of the living to imagine a new world order of the dead, one in which lineage gave way to history and in which there were no "strangers"—as there were in the churchyard—because anyone with means and talent could gain entry on the same standing as anyone else; one in which the historical specificity of a place and the autarchy of the parish gave way to self-consciously planned landscapes—picturesque, natural, fanciful or dull—which could be anywhere and mean anything and belong to anyone. The Emperor of Brazil wanted a Père la Chaise near his capital, and the Merchant Adventurer's Company wanted one in Glasgow. It would, however, be nonsensical to speak of exporting Stoke Poges, the parish churchyard that Thomas Gray supposedly imagined as the site of his most famous elegy and the most reprinted poem of the late eighteenth century; similarly, the Cemetery of the Innocents in Paris has meaning only in Paris. Their essence lay in being where they were, and had been, since far enough back to become a hallowed and meaningful part of a landscape. In the cemetery, customary rights to communal use of certain ground or to areas of the church in which landed property held an easement gave way to freehold property that anyone could buy in scores of locations. The cemetery is a world in which commercially available art produced a bricolage that could signify as much or as little as its purchasers wanted, arranged like a museum in some order or no apparent one, unfettered by tradition or the restraints of a common history or culture. The monuments in a church succeed one another as styles succeeded each other over centuries.

Briefly put, I want to suggest that the cemetery reveals—and is the result of—two distinct but intimately related features of imagining death and the community of the dead in modernity. The first feature has to do specifically with the dead body. Increasingly absorbed into the language of medicine, hygiene, and chemistry, metaphysically meaningless, it became unbearably repulsive in its purely and essentially material decay. William Hale, archdeacon of London in the 1840s and 1850s may well have been self-interested in his opposition to the cemetery, but he was right that the motives of its proponents had, as he said, "their origin in a philosophical [and I might add visceral] distaste for the emblems and the reality of death." And as the decaying dead body became an object of scientific attention, it became also a source of acute anxiety and distaste--an anxiety that, I want to suggest, was displaced onto the monument and onto custom-built places of memory. Père

la Chaise, as the leading English designer of cemeteries put it, was "dedicated to the genius of memory," a place where, like the ancients, we moderns can contemplate death "never polluted with the idea of a charnel house… nor the revolting emblems of mortality." Memory cleanses.

The second feature I want to note in regard to the spaces of the dead in modernity has to do with community. The bourgeoisie, who are the self-conscious creators and the exclusive—or in any case exclusively visible—inhabitants of the cemetery, imagine therein a new world of their creation: a new community of the dead, represented in the clean, sweet-smelling, wholly novel, real and symbolic geography of the cemetery, which in turn gives a certain weight, solidity, and credence to a new community of the living.

The community of which I speak can be glimpsed in the observations of a visitor to San Francisco in 1855, who described the cemetery that had been built on sixteen acres of what had three years earlier been the "sad and desolate" scrub land of Yerba Buena. In that three years, people had built all sorts of monuments in the space of the cemetery, so that now everything appeared, he says, in "the best Parisian style" an imitation of "the sepulchers of Père la Chaise." But even more to the point is this visitor's comment that although "the places of their births [he is speaking of the dead] were so diverse…now they sleep side by side…American and European, Asiatic and African are now he same filthy substance." That social distinctions are erased among corpses is, of course, a very old trope. But the reference here is not to the leveling in death of those seemingly fixed, ancient hierarchies that ordered the world of the living, but rather to the leveling of the distinctions that western bourgeois society had created to define itself in relation to the rest of the world: what was leveled was white pride in not having the blood of "yellow, red, and black races," and the pride of the "man of progress" over the "slavish native of warm climates." The world of commerce, empire, and slavery are manifest on the shores of the Pacific Ocean both in the fine Parisian styles and in contemplating the "filthy substance" that is cleansed by chaste monuments. Whatever else this may mean, it seems to speak of a new democracy of the dead in a space far away from the living.

Hygenics and the Effacement of Bodily Corruption

The problem of filth and of smell lies at the core of what the modern cemetery represents. The language of "public health" is the language of that new, secular conception of the dead body that is so chastely effaced—not represented—in a Père la Chaise or a Highgate (north

London) or a Mt. Auburn (suburban Boston). But it would be to miss the critical cultural meaning of these new spaces if we were to tell the history of the cemetery as the relatively simple story of heroic, prescient doctors, enlightenment philosophers, and bureaucrats who recognized the danger to the health of the living of the corrupting flesh in their midst and who agitated successfully to have it cast out. I need to make a case against such a functionalist account in order to emphasize the culturally more intricate role that public health and a scientific materialist world view did play in creating new spaces for the dead. If dirt is "matter out of place" as Mary Douglas famously defined it, the question before us is why the dead body came to be understood as "out of place" where it had been put since at least the sixth century and why specifically the cemetery, of all possible solutions to the problem of disposing of corrupting human flesh, became the solution to making the dead clean again. It is not writ in heaven that, as happened in London in 1852, the Commissioners of Sewers should have replaced the Church as the legally recognized administrators of as the city’s burials. In short, I want to treat scientific thought about the dead body in the enlightenment tradition in the way anthropologists look at the clean and the not-clean in other cultures.

The problem of an overpopulation of corpses that so exercised eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reformers is certainly not new; what is new is how they understood this overpopulation. It would, in fact, be difficult to know what "crowding" meant in the old regime of burial in which one place served generations of the dead for centuries, if not millennia. The vestry of St. Botolph Bishopgate noted in 1621 that the churchyard was "buried so full," there was scarcely room for a child; ever-lengthening burial registers apparently do not reflect the problem. The Cimetière des Innocents absorbed some two million Parisians in an area of 60 x 120 meters during the seven centuries before its closure in 1780; that is, it contained roughly 300 bodies per square meter. Clearly the ground had long been "full" by any modern standard well before reformers turned their attention to the problem. When George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, was buried in the Friend’s plot of Bunhill Fields (not a parish churchyard, of course, but almost its equivalent for dissenters) Robert Burrow remarked that the plot was large but "quite full": 1,100 bodies, dead from the plague or martyrdom in prison were already there. Ten thousand more burials followed Fox’s over the course of the next century.

The prosperous or socially ambitious middling sorts who, from the seventeenth century on, chose burial within the church itself scarcely enjoyed more space, privacy, or rest. Ground beneath the edifice filled up fast. When

Pypys in 1664 sought internment in the middle aisle of St. Bride's for his brother, the sexton promised—after accepting a 6d tip—that he would "jostle them [other bodies] but [would] make room for him." There were more than a hundred burials commemorated in the floor of the south quire aisle alone of Bristol Cathedral, and many others would not have had memorials. With the exception of family vaults—almost all belonging to landed families—the ground under the pavement of the church building was no more the property of one generation of occupants than was the churchyard.

The compacting, composting, jostling and intermingling of corpses and coffins in various states of repair was a permanent condition, an inevitable consequence of two doctrines: the first that of "ubi decimus persolvebat vivus, sepeliatur mortuus" (literally the right to be buried where one had paid tithes, but generally the common-law right to be buried where one had lived); and second, implied by the first, the doctrine that the ground of the churchyard was, as Lord Stowell put it in the celebrated eighteenth-century case of Gilbert v. Buzzard, "the common property of the living, and of generations yet unborn, and subject only to temporary appropriation." Thus, no body could claim any space forever; and, Stowell continued, "the time must come when his [the corpse's] posthumous remains must mingle with and compose a part of the soil in which they were deposited remains."

Eighteenth-century population growth and urbanization certainly put more pressure on the system, but crowding was in the nature of burial. Archaeologists estimate that the average English churchyard, in use for a millennium or so, might contain the remains of some ten thousand bodies. This explains the usual elevation of the ground above the level of the church floor and the lumpiness that is so striking in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century representations. In fact, these bumps are only the most recent, unleveled addition. From very near the beginning, gravediggers intercut, hacked through, turned over, tossed out earlier tenants to make room for new ones, and every hundred years or so they apparently leveled the ground and started again. The lumps we can still see today escaped still another round of recycling when the bodies stopped coming; today, survivors from another age, they sit atop a layered jumble—a stratigraphy of bones—that extends at least a couple of meters, perhaps more, above the subsoil. St. Giles in London was rebuilt because "filth and various adventitious matter" had already by 1730 raised the churchyard "eight feet above the buildings floor," and John Evelyn when he visited Norwich in 1671 observed that churches "seemed to be built in pits" because the "congestion of bodies" had so raised the ground around them. (Readers of Goethe's

Elective Affinities will remember that one of Charlotte's landscaping innovations in the churchyard was that graves were to be leveled, as they are in the modern cemetery, and the ground kept smooth for resowing—cf. Part 2, chap. 1). Crowded burial grounds and their attendant odors, then, were not a discovery of the enlightenment.

Hence the question is the one that Alain Corbin raised about smell; in this case, why corruption should have become pollution, and why the "exhalations arising from the putrefaction of dead bodies"—their odor—should have come to be regarded as so particularly noisome. As Archdeacon Hale argued in 1854, his churchyard of St. Giles Cripplegate was essentially made of the compost of seven hundred years of burial and smelled, at the surface and in samples taken from six feet down, like compost, like ammonia. "The earth," he says, "had the qualities which are attendant upon every heap of the farmer's treasure upon every highly cultivated field." How can the physiologist say, as ammonia evaporates: "avoid this place because it is dangerous to health."

The key claim of the proponents of cemeteries was less that the crowding per se had become unbearable—although this issue did play a big part in English discussions during the late 1830s and 1840s—but rather that the public health dangers of rotting human flesh were now too evident to be ignored. That miasma causes diseases was widely accepted; that decomposing, putrefying flesh gives off unmistakable odors is beyond dispute. Hence, the case was made that anything smelling so vile—or what they by that point took to be vile—simply had to be pathogenic: decomposing flesh killed and thus needed to be removed in the interests of the living. This argument was not altogether implausible. Miasma have been thought to cause diseases at least since Hippocrates; one need only consider the correlation between fetid swamps and various malarial fevers. And death itself, in all its corrupting power, was thought to have spread as a kind of miasma from Adam's sin (as Jack Levison has noted). Finally, eighteenth-century physicians were greatly interested in the dangers of effluvia from live diseased bodies. But the insistence—in a rhetoric full of excremental illusions and the goriest possible chemical and olfactory detail—that corpses are especially dangerous was more novel.

Putrefaction had once been understood differently. Some dead flesh had the odor of saintliness, in contrast to the odor of ordinary bodies; or corporeal corruption with all its attending unpleasantness represented an earthly state to be followed by a sweeter life eternal with a new incorruptible body; or the smell was simply endured as part of the order of things. More than facts or purported

new knowledge is needed to explain why the grotesque pleasure in decay which characterized, for example, memento mori painting or the eschatological traditions about which Caroline Bynum has recently written, was abandoned for a new sensibility in which rotting flesh pointed not to the next life or to something transcendental but to a shortened life here on earth. In other words, what is needed is an understanding of how the corpse had become secular.

In fact, dead bodies do not cause disease and, more to the point, contemporaries knew it. Edwin Chadwick got a chilling letter, the sort one would not want to get just before going to press from an expert in one's field, on the eve of the publication of his famous and inflammatory 1843 report on internment in towns and cities. The letter was a comment from his colleague and Benthamite fellow traveler Southwood Smith on a draft version of the report, and it was not encouraging: "The foundation of the whole subject," Smith writes, "is that animal matter in a state of decomposition is injurious to health… Now it appears to me that the Evidence of that fundamental truth in your report is neither so strong, so succinct nor so varied as it might be." The report, he says, is not what is "necessary to produce a powerful impression on the public mind," and he recommends "greatly [the word is underlined in the letter] strengthening the evidence."

There was little poor Chadwick could do at that point. But he might have known. When the reforming medical journal The Lancet discussed the question in the 1840s, various correspondents pointed out that the eighteenth-century evidence that was being adduced for the danger of bodies, even when supplemented by such massive compilations of horrors as Dr. George Walker's 258-page-long Gatherings from Graveyards, Particularly London (1839), did not make the case. One physician, for example, pointed out how many dissections they all had done without getting ill. And it did not go un-noticed that the very same doctors and public health advocates who were so eager to move dead bodies out of churchyards had also been the great advocates of the Anatomy Acts, which made the unclaimed bodies of the poor available for sustained medical use. The epidemiology that purported to show the dangers of intramural interment was also weak, entirely anecdotal, and easily parried by equally ad hoc counter-evidence. As Matthieu Orfila, the distinguished professor of jurisprudential medicine at the Sorbonne, pointed out in 1800, the evidence that dead bodies were particularly dangerous was either apocryphal or exaggerated or irrelevant: purported injuries were not due to "putrid exhalations." He reports—as do the pathologists I have consulted—that he and his assistants have done many exhumations and autopsies, taken no special precautions and have not taken ill.

And little wonder. Dead bodies are probably less dangerous than infected live ones. A more technical look at this question will make clear that the doctors and their allies who argued so passionately for removing the dead from the midst of the living were driven by something beyond the then-available science. One of the most frequently cited of all cases—in England, Italy, the United States—right up through the 1840s was first reported in 1771 by a Montpelerian physician named Haguenot. He had had little success combating the universally accepted custom of burying the dead amongst the living in and around churches, he says, and so he wished to report the following observations in the hope of changing public opinion. Called to the Church of Notre Dame, he noted a putrid odor as he approached the crypt; it became more intense as the "cave" was opened. He put a burning taper into the depths and it was extinguished, "as if it were plunged in water." Dogs, cats, and birds that were lowered into the cave died, within two minutes for the most robust of the beasts—the cat—and within seconds for the most delicate—the bird. Bottles lowered into the cave collected a gas which still had an effect but not as strongly as it did in situ. He concludes that the "mephitis" in the "cave commune" was dangerous not only because the air had lost its elasticity or because of the lack of air but peculiarly because of "the corrosive exhalations of cadavers."

This last move is telling. Bernadino Ramazzini, the founding father of organic pathology, was certainly no great friend of unpleasant smells: inhaling foul air, he says, "is to contaminate the animal spirits." And he was very much part of the eighteenth century movement to claim such unpleasantness as the exclusive preserve of physicians: "nothing should be too filthy or horrible for the physician to inspect." But Ramazzini clearly sees the problem of workers in the fosse commune as having a lot in common with those of workers in other enclosed space: slaves in antiquity, for example, were consigned to work in caverns—mines, sewers and burial pits; tanners, oil pressers, cat gut string makers, gravediggers and midwives who breath in the effluvia of various uterine fluxes are discussed in succession. The problem here is smell and enclosed spaces, not particularly the smell of decaying human flesh.

In another context all of this is sorted out more clearly. James Curry, RMS of Edinburgh, argues persuasively that there is indeed a common problem in mines, sewers, pump-wells, the holds of ships, and burial vaults: the absence of freely circulating air. He points out that the fumes from charcoal burning, fermentation, and other chemical processes also produce something that makes air unhealthy: carbonic aid (H2CO3). Decaying bodies, in short, are not the problem, and others who write on the

subject of death from bad air from a different perspective— rescuing the apparently dead from their stupors—have no particular interest in decaying flesh.

So why was the argument about public health so successful in the effort to segregate dead bodies from the living? Each national or even local case has its particular history. The creation of Père la Chaise, for example, was the culmination of a long Enlightenment battle against clerical control of the spaces of death, and the neoclassical and/or romantic aesthetics of the new cemetery was the result of considerable debate during various phases of the Revolution. In England, major cemeteries were in place well before the public health campaign began in the late 1830s, although the sweet memorial spaces of a Highgate or a Kensal Green or a Glasgow Necropolis were the choice by the middle classes for private memory and against community of the lumpy churchyard or crowded public crypt. Portuguese liberals faced the most significant popular protests of the nineteenth century in their efforts to close churchyards and place dead bodies under the authority of doctors.

But at a more abstract level I want to suggest that a new group of people managed to capture smell for its world view. Vicq d'Azir, one of the leading French proponents of cemeteries and a widely translated authority, gives it away: in the old, superstitious days, he says, we carried "our beliefs so far as to persuade ourselves that the emanations from the bodies of the saints were capable of warming the hearts of the faithful and encouraging in them impressions favorable to zeal and piety." It was against this "superstition," he says, that the Enlightenment fought. And once Enlightenment views were triumphant, the relation of the living to the dead would change: now carefully hidden, the body would appear, he hoped, only in its representation, in new memorial practices linked specifically to the disappeared body. Vicq suggests cenotaphs, mausolea, tombs, epitaphs--either empty where the bodies used to be, if necessary, or far better, in new memorial parks.

Public health thus does lie at the heart of the new regime of the hidden dead body, but indirectly. Aries is, I think right, although in a different context, when he suggests that doctors in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century frightened themselves with death. And so did Archdeacon Hale when he conjoins "the modern Hygienest advocating the entire separation of the mansions of the dead from the houses of the living for the sake of public health," with the modern Epicurean who holds the same view because "nothing is so painful to him as the thought or sight of death." Stripped of "superstition," revealed in all (and only) its natural boldness, death put doctors and the enlightened public in

retreat in the face of its now exclusively materialist realities. Death, in other words, loses its lineage, its metaphysical centrality. The discourse and agitation of public health is more a symptom than a cause of the displacement of the dead into new spaces.

Building the Community of the Dead

I have so far sketched in a cultural interpretation of one path– the public health route—to the cemetery—and have only gestured toward the other trajectory: the active imagining by an ascendant class of a new community of the dead. I want now to give some content to that idea and to the process by which it happened. It is not quite right, as Gray wrote in the most popular poem of the second half of the eighteenth century, that "The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep/Each in his narrow cell for ever laid." In fact, as I have suggested, bodies were jostled quite a bit, and few enjoyed a narrow cell to be occupied forever. But it is the case that Gray’s Elegy spoke of an ideal—a "congregation of the dead," as the clergyman James Hervey wrote—a historically rooted community of the dead belonging alike to a particular place. It was an ideal which held enormous appeal on the eve of its destruction.

Some of course had never belonged to the community, the most prominent group being, , Jews but also included "strangers" to the parish (i.e., those with no customary claim to being buried there—vagrants, prostitutes). But the impetus for the systematic breakup of parochial burial came from elsewhere. It came from the Puritans in New England, who at first buried their dead outside nucleated villages in nondescript places as an aggressive rejection of Anglican custom. The halfway covenant brought the dead back to a center as a sort of ideal community in a world that was now more fragmented both religiously and economically. That is, a gemeinschaft of the dead substituted for a less than perfect gemeinschaft of the living. Baptists and Quakers continued to be buried at the periphery.

Back in England, small dissenting groups sometimes had separate burial grounds, although they usually put their dead to rest in the parish churchyard. There were also moments of overt aristocratic rejection of the old system, among them Lord Carlisle’s mausoleum—the first in Europe since Roman antiquity—at Castle Howard. And there was empire: the extraordinary seventeenth-century freestanding tombs of the great east India merchants of Surat. The Latin inscriptions and European pseudo heraldry on these essentially Saracenic buildings set amidst tropical foliage produced the sort of weird bricolage that would so attract and repulse visitors to the nineteenth-century cemetery. This seventeenth-century

colonial burial ground was followed in the 1760s by Park Street Calcutta and many more colonial burial grounds, almost all in the grandest neoclassical style. In fact, the dead of empire with no particular parish attachments were among the earliest inhabitants of the new cemeteries. For example, Kensal Green became the final resting place of Major John William Pew of the Madras Army; of Lady Bonham, wife of the commander in chief of Hong Kong; of Major General Casement of the Bengal Army, and of various East India Merchants. Clearly, the old community of the dead was breaking down, and the cemetery became a radically new sort of space in which it was possible to imagine a new community.

In the church and churchyard, "custom" dictated that bodies be buried with their heads to the west and their feet to the east, more or less in alignment with the liturgically prescribed orientation of the church. The church, in turn, had some longstanding relation to its built environment:.perhaps it stood on the site of a holy well, or of the chapel of a Saxon manor, or of an earlier burial mound, or at a medieval cross roads. Thus, churchyard burial grounds were historically rooted, and they were located in the midst of daily life. Cemeteries, on the other hand, were located where land was cheap, which placed them at a distance from commerce and from better-paying occupancy. They were nowhere in particular; and within them, graves were aligned in no particular direction. Their placement was in conformity to the dictates of landscape architecture. The Merchant Adventurers, for example, had profited in various ways from the land that became the Glasgow Necropolis—some of it had been leased for farming, some used as a quarry. Then, in 1828, it was decided that a cemetery would be just the thing: "it afforded a much wanted accommodation to the higher classes, and would at the same time convert an unproductive property into a general and lucrative source of profit…" A good real estate deal. Liverpool's first cemetery was also in a quarry, a big advantage since it allowed for tombs in the style of the patriarchs. (Highgate had to build this feature.) Woking was on a railway line; so were Camberwell and Rockwood in Sydney.

The most remarkable change wrought in the cultural geography of burial was the new segregation of the dead. Cemeteries, more successfully than the home ever was for women, succeeded in being a true "separate sphere." Not for the dead the "tumult of a populous city…their business with this world is ended….The price of corn, the state of the money market, or the rising or falling of the funds are matters which ought to be discussed far away from those we followed." Not in front of the servants. No wonder that William Hazlitt understood the fear of death as being the fear of no longer mattering in the world of

affairs and, projecting back, of never having mattered at all. "People walk along the streets the day of our deaths just as they did before, and the crowd is not diminished. While we were living, the world seemed in manner to exist only for us…But our hearts cease to beat, and it goes on as usual, and thinks no more of us than it did in our lifetime." This is not the awesome death that so disturbed Dr. Johnson; it is death as being forgotten. Memory is its antidote, and the cemetery made possible an undreamed-of elaboration of personal commemoration and contemplation which were possible in the densely populated churches and churchyards of the old order only for a very small elite. I do not want to attribute this profound development in how we remember the dead to the lifting of material constraints alone. But I believe the late seventeenth-century architect and playwright Sir John Vanbrugh was right when he argued that the cemeteries he proposed to replace churchyards would permit "noble mausoleum erected over the dead," while those now in aisles and under pews in parish churches had at best "little tawny monuments of marble stuck against walls and pillars." Or, probably none at all.

Burial in the parish churchyard and church was explicitly for parishioners. Yet matters were never as tidy as principle might suggest; others could and did, for a higher fee, buy the privilege of parish burial. There were no public burial places in the old regime—except for, arguably, Bunhill Fields, perhaps Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, but the exception proves the rule. The nineteenth-century cemetery was in its essence public, and its glory was that anyone could be there: "Russ sleeping next to Spaniard, Protestant next to Catholic, the Jew next to the Turk," claims the Glasgow Necropolis, echoing Père la Chaise. Anyone who could afford a place could be there, and the first burial there was in fact a Jew.

The poor, of course, were not as prominently buried in the churchyard as were the powerful, and rights to especially prominent places belonged in various complicated ways to local landed classes. And, of course, as the middling sorts during the course of the seventeenth century started to bury their dead in the floors of the church, the poor were further isolated outdoors. But they had to be there for the churchyard to be what it was; the sensibility that so attracted readers of Gray's "Elegy" depended on it. In cemeteries, the poor were hidden and would have been expendable were it not that they were needed to make the enterprise pay. The dirty secret is that, in fact, the new cemeteries could survive economically only through egregious cheating on the one-grave-one-body program of the public health reformers. Whether in the fosse commune of the French cemetery or in the British shaft graves that with careful

planning could hold thirty or forty bodies, the poor subsidized the middle classes. Unlike the churchyard imagined by Gray, the nineteenth-century cemetery could only be "read" by and was readable for the middle classes alone.

The peculiar aesthetic incoherence of the new cemeteries produced unease in viewers as diverse as the radical liberal political economist Harriet Martineau, and the high-church Tory S. A. Pugin. Martineau found it strange that the Egyptian gate of Boston's cemetery, Mt. Auburn, with its winged globe and serpent, should have on it a quotation from Ecclesiastes—"then shall the dust return to earth"—which belies both the Egyptian theme and the "death as sleep in nature" motif that dominates the cemetery. She is equally puzzled that the Trier-born, Boston-buried phrenologist Johann Gaspar Spurzheim rests under a tomb that is a facsimile of the tomb of L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, Roman consul in 298 BCE. It is not easy, she says, "to conceive how anything appropriate to Scipio would suit Spurzheim." The answer turns out to be purely circumstantial and shallow but also wonderfully liberating. The marble arrived just when Spurzheim died, and the committee appointed to honor him saved time by purchasing it.

Pugin, for his part, is angry at the "grossest absurdities" perpetrated by new cemetery companies. He scoffs at the superabundance of inverted torches, cinerary urns—but of course no ashes—and other pagan symbols. The entrance gate, he notes, is usually Egyptian—a kind of orientalist fantasy, in Pugin's view, that falsely associates discoveries along the Nile with the catacombs that the company sells. The gate is topped by Grecian capitals along with a frieze giving the cemetery's name; Osiris bears a gas lamp and various "hawk-headed divinities look on. Hieroglyphics on a cast-iron gate mean nothing"; "they would puzzle the most learned to decipher." And so would the aesthetics of the cemetery more generally. Different styles of monuments—you can buy whatever style you want—abut one another. There is, in principle, no symbolic order, nor historical order. Yet the cemetery also is a space in which one could mourn and remember in whatever fashion one could afford, in the company of a veritable museum of styles and even of bodies: Abelard and Heloise and Molière were moved to Père la Chaise; John Knox stood guard over the Glasgow Necropolis.

Uneasy Rest in the Modern Cemetery

As I reach this endpoint in my account of the spaces of the dead in modernity, it may seem that I have gone a very long way around to rediscover the bourgeoisie: all that is solid melts into air, old verities torn asunder. Certainly one does not need an anthropology or an

archaeology or a cultural geography of death—as one might need in studying the ancient Greeks or Egyptians—to understand the nature of the new civilization that became ascendant in the nineteenth century. But what I have tried to suggest is that there is something uneasy-making about the bourgeois way of putting the dead to rest: a strong reaction to the decay accompanying death, a reaction displaced onto public health and chemistry and memory; a profound dispersal of the places of the dead; a bricolage of memorial styles; a fabulous elaboration of the cult of death at the same time that it is represented as being "only sleep."

It always takes a lot of cultural work to put the dead to rest, but this work takes on peculiarly modern forms after the rejection of a widely accepted transcendental account of death itself. It seemed to Enlightenment figures and to those who followed in their tradition that substituting History—progress, health, moral and material advance—for religion and superstition would make that cultural work easier. But as my discussion of the new cities of the dead in modernity has shown, it did not turn out that way.

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