

ROSE COLOR LIGHT

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ABSTRACT

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Spanning man's socio-cultural evolution across six millennium, human burial has evolved from the core spiritual and ecological belief of pre-dynastic Egyptian culture that the dead nourished the living through agricultural resurgence. From the earliest point in Egyptian history in which economic and political forces began to impress upon the built environment, these forces also began to impress upon the basic spiritual connectedness of life and death. The sacred natural process has eroded to the point that our modern world is so wildly disassociated from death that disposal of modern human remains is largely regarded as inorganic, and the landscapes where we lay our dead are conceptual landfills. Modern culture has been convinced through capitalist greed and political might that the biological return to the earth is unsanitary, and the only proper way to conduct human burial is through impediment of the ecological process, all while maintaining this ritual is antecedent to the modern world and deeply reflective of the spiritual ancient practice. This research and design thesis explores the concept of future urban cemeteries as edible deaths-capes - natural burial cemeteries that function as an edible landscape by using the nutrients from the human decomposition process to nurture the growth of fruits and vegetables - with a reasoning based in the potentially detrimental environmental effects of modern American embalming and burial as born from the ancient Egyptian culture.



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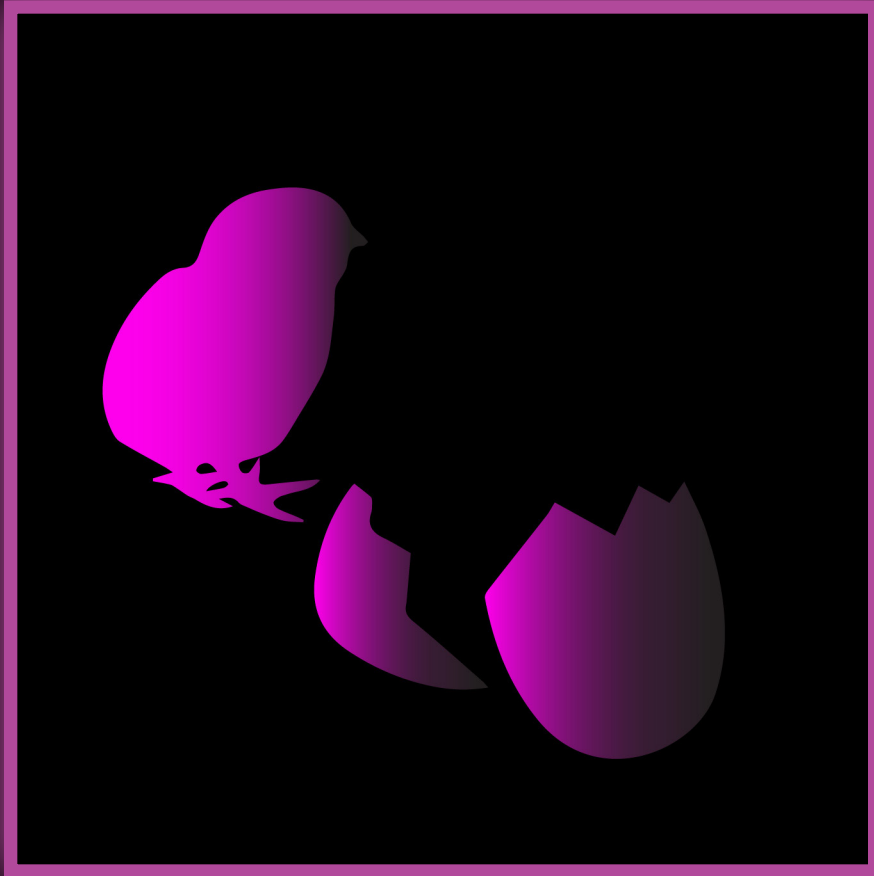
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INTRODUCTION

My curiosity of death began at a young age. I grew up on a farm near Memphis, Tennessee, just a few miles from the banks of the mighty Mississippi River; there, our fields are blanketed with cotton bolls, our pasture is filled with cows, and our yard is littered with chickens. The spring when I was four years old, the chickens began to lay eggs. I was familiar with eggs – scrambled with cheese on a fresh biscuit was a breakfast favorite – but this was the first time I understood where eggs came from. My grandparents told my brother and I that if we left the eggs alone and let the chickens sit on their nests, they would hatch into baby chickens. Every day my brother and I would run out to the chicken coop to check and see if there were any babies. Every day we would walk back into the house disappointed.

Early one morning, the dew still on the ground, my grandfather took us out to the coop to show us two balls of chirping fluff in the nest among the un-hatched eggs. As the days passed, the number of baby chickens quickly grew from two to ten, and for the couple of weeks following, we kept the babies in the chicken coop until they were large enough to roam the yard. This of course was incentive to lock myself into the coop each day and visit with them. I would sit on the ground in the scattered hay to watch the baby chicks run around and chase each other. My brother and I would take turns picking them up and petting their soft yellow down while the mother hens scratched around in the dust. These baby chicks were my friends.

When the chicks were old enough to leave the coop, my brother and I had the job of opening the door each morning to let them run freely. They would spend the days feeding on the chipped corn tossed into the grass, or resting under the shade of the bushes in the flowerbed. As the sun would start to set, we would herd them back into the coop for the night to roost.

One evening, when we went to close up the coop for the night, I noticed a familiar feathery lump in the yard. Still. Unmoving. One of my tiny friends was lying limp in the grass.

I bolted onto the screened-in porch and bounded into the kitchen to tell my grandparents something was wrong. Being that young, I remember the feeling of sheer devastation, crying uncontrollably. I could not understand why he was not moving like the other chicks, what my grandparents meant when they said he had died. And what it meant to die. What did it mean to be dead?

He was gone, never to run around the yard again. And there was no explanation as to why. One of my little friends was gone and never coming back.

My grandparents told me that we needed to bury him, and that I should find a place in the flowerbed to dig a hole. They told me that if I buried him by the buttercups, I would always know where he was and I could visit him whenever I wanted - the buttercups would always be there to remind me of him. I used my plastic sand

shovel and scraped through the top layer of mulch, then used the corner of the shovel to dig through the hard brown dirt to make a shallow hole. My grandfather placed the fragile body in the ground, and I covered it up with the scattered mix dirt and mulch, still sobbing. I did not understand.

For days after burying him, I would walk by the flowers with a casual glance. As the flowers got taller and bloomed, the other baby chicks got bigger and their feathers turned to red. I wondered what was happening under the dirt where he was buried – was he the same size, was he red now too, or was he there at all. A couple of times I took my sand shovel back to the spot and tried to dig him up. I wanted to know. I wanted an answer.

The baby chick dying was my first introduction to loss. As a four year old, it was an unfathomable concept that something I loved could stop running and breathing, be covered in dirt, and only be seen again in the visage of a buttercup.

However, by growing up on a farm, death soon became a concept that was more understandable – death was an unavoidable part of life. When a cow or horse would die, I would go out to the pasture with my grandfather; we would wrap a chain around its neck or leg and drag the body from the front pasture to the back pasture and put it in “dead pile” – an area behind a hill where all the dead animals would be placed. The animals were too big to be buried, so the only option was to place the dead bodies in a heap. As one after another would die, it would become almost ritualistic to drag the fresh corpse to the dead pile and see the stages of decomposition of the other corpses; the cow we put there a couple of weeks earlier would just be scraps of flesh, a hollow ribcage, and chipped bones. On nights after we would take an animal to the dead pile, I would walk into the dewy grass and listen to the coyotes cackling from the back pasture where they were feeding on flesh. Seeing my dog gnawing on a jawbone or leg bone that she pulled from the dead pile was not only common, but also welcome. She was hungry and there was available food. This was life and death on the farm.

One morning when I was nine years old, my mom walked into my room to wake me up. She usually came in with a stern warning to put my feet on the floor and to go take a shower. This morning was different. She came in and woke me up by sitting on my bed. As she looked at me and opened her mouth to speak, she started to cry. Gaspd breaths broke her words as she told me that my great-grandmother passed away in her sleep the night before. Memaw was dead.

I did not go to school that day. Instead, my mother took my brother and I to buy “funeral clothes;” the following day we were to go to Memaw’s visitation. The visitation was where I would be able to see Memaw one more time to tell her goodbye. By this time, I had grown accustomed to seeing animals after they had passed away, but seeing my Memaw dead was unsettling. It felt unnatural.

The drive to the funeral home the evening of the visitation had my stomach in knots. Every curve of the road and turn of the car made my stomach weak as my body rocked and slid on the cracked blue leather of my grandmother's old Cadillac. She soon parked the car and we got out, my family adjusting their clothes and brushing away wrinkles before taking the stairs inside. We gathered in the foyer, standing in front of two glass-paned doors that were sheathed in wispy white curtains. A wooden podium stood beside the door holding a feather capped pen and a white leather-bound book open to the first page. In scrolled letters it read, "In Memoriam of Madeline Thum." One-by-one, my family signed the book. When it was my turn, my grandfather lifted me up as I scrawled my name in the best cursive writing I could muster.

My mother opened one of the doors. The gauzy curtains waved softly as the door swung away from us. We walked in. It was a long room, the walls lined with chairs, and tissue boxes and silk flowers on every table. The air was cold and smelled like lilies. At the end of the room was a casket bathed in rose colored light, surrounded by tall flower arrangements and wreaths. From where I was standing, I could see the tuft of Memaw's fluffy gray hair and the silhouette of her nose peaking over the edge of the casket. I froze. I could not walk any further. I looked up at my grandfather and shook my head before dropping my gaze to the floor and scurrying to a chair. I sat there all night looking at the silhouette of her hair and nose, feeling a mixture of anxiety and curiosity about the possibility of having to see her and say a final goodbye.

As the hours wore on, men in khaki pants and women with teased hair filed past the casket, offering condolences to my grandfather, uncle, and mother; sometimes the muffled words would be followed by light laughter, and sometimes the words would softly trail away into a ghostly sigh. I sat there watching, listening, absorbing – trying to make sense of my great-grandmother's death – of everything that was happening. I wanted to see her one more time, but I also wanted to remember her as I saw her last – sitting in a rocking chair, chuckling and opening up a bag of marshmallow circus peanuts for my brother and I to snack on. Before I could make a solid decision, it was time to go home to my grandparents' house.

At the house, we sat around the kitchen table and ate. There were pies, cakes, baked hams, and fried chicken, all food that friends and neighbors brought to the house. This, I learned that night, is a Southern tradition when someone dies. Every time my mother or grandmother got a different piece of pie, they would lift the pie plate and look on the bottom to see who brought that particular pecan pie or casserole; it is also part of Southern culture to write your name on a piece of masking tape and stick it on any dish you take to someone's house to make certain it is rightfully returned (no less than one week after the funeral).

Conversation varied from reminiscent to mournful as the peas were passed around the table. The clanking of the forks and spoons soon faded, and so did the company; my grandparents went to their bedroom, and my mother tucked my brother and I in to sleep.

I did not sleep much that night. Images of the pink light reflecting off the casket, and wafts of lily stalked my thoughts as night bled into the morning of the funeral. At the funeral, I would have one final opportunity to say goodbye before Memaw was buried.

The morning of the funeral was as unsettling as the night of the visitation. The funeral home looked much different in the light of day; the pink lights were replaced with glowing sunlight, and the flowers and casket were moved from the visitation room to the chapel. Gospel music was piped throughout the funeral home, accompanied by the clicking of high-heeled shoes on the hardwood floor. My mother gathered my brother and I by our hands, led us to the chapel, and told us that we should say a final goodbye before the funeral service began. Hesitantly, I took a few steps closer toward the casket, the tuft of hair and silhouetted nose growing larger and coming into detailed focus. Before I could make it any further, something red dripped on my hand. I was bleeding.

My mother grabbed some tissues from a table, and ushered me back into the foyer. I sat in a chair by the front door of the funeral home, my head back and face toward the ceiling as people walked by, filling the chapel for the service. Each time I lifted the tissues from my nose to check the bleeding, the blood would start to drip again. The clock ticked closer to the start of the funeral. With a creak of a hinge and click of a knob, the doors to the chapel closed, and I sat by myself in the foyer as my great-grandmother's funeral service began.

The booming voice of the pastor replaced the Gospel music that filled the rooms of the funeral home. I listened as he spoke about Memaw's life, her family, and her new journey in heaven. I listened as the choir sang of her in Heaven - *"O, if you could see me now, walking streets of gold. If you could see me now, standing tall and whole."*

I never cried during the service. I stared out the car window during the drive to the cemetery, other cars pulling to the shoulder of the road as the hearse and procession passed. I stood by my family as the pastor said a final prayer at the cemetery. I watched as her casket was lowered into the ground and my mother tossed a rose into the grave.

This was my first funeral. This was the first time I lost a family member I loved. It was the first time I had to think of death as it related to a person I loved, and not one of my farm animals. I was filled with questions, anxieties, and worries. What did it mean to be dead?

Two weeks after Memaw's death, my school friend died in an accident caused by a tornado. One year later, my grandfather died.

One year to the date after his death, my grandmother died.

And then my other great-grandmother died.

My uncle died.

Another uncle died.

And then my paternal grandfather.

Nine loved ones. Nine deaths. Nine visitations. Nine funerals. In nine years.

The ritual of the funeral became a way of life, a flagstone that marked each passing year. The scene of my family gathering around the kitchen table after another visitation to pass the peas was commonplace, expected – but with one less person joining us each time. Though death was more than an annual ritual, it was also a means of living; when I was twelve years old, my father traded his tractor for a hearse and went to work at the local funeral home. This shift began to awaken a divergent interest in death deep within my bones – a dimension of dying previously unknown to me, a dimension rooted in observation and production rather than mourning and worry.

I spent many quiet nights and summer days at the funeral home. Some nights I would do my homework in the break-room, and others I would polish caskets in the showroom. As I aged into high school, I would often be asked to put on a suit and stand at the door to direct families to the appropriate viewing rooms. It was an interesting position to be in – listening, watching, and absorbing how differently people reacted in the face of death.

These were formative years that I spent in the funeral home. I matured from a child to a young man, surrounded by the constant of death. Where I once sat with anxiety in the viewing room of a funeral home, I grew to become a young adult that would hold the arm of a widow as she walked from her car to the grave of her husband, each of her steps new and unfamiliar, but a daily ritual for me. It was in these years, walking in these rituals from the outside, I would begin question life, death, and the afterlife; I would begin to question and eventually denounce my faith; I would begin to question how I understood death to be so simple and pure as a child, yet so ritualized and sterile as an adult; and I would begin to question our overall cultural understanding of death.

When I began graduate school, I would often turn to the darkness of death, the familiar, as a source of inspiration for my work. I would use my experiential knowledge of death as a means of questioning culture and death through my designs. Working in the darkest hour of the night, one project after another, I soon realized that my fixation with death is inextricable from my being. Dying, death, and burial had always been the core around which everything rotated, starting with that baby chicken. And as such, attempting to understand the complexity of death and remembrance has come to define my art, my pursuits as an urban planner and landscape architect, and my daily life. But how exactly are death and urban landscapes linked?

My years of examining ways of death from personal experience – burying my first friend, feeling the anxiety of seeing my loved one in a casket, empathizing with others’ shattering loss, exploring the depths of the Parisian catacombs – all continually reinforced the inherent notion that the felt experience of death is universal. Though, as an academic and designer, I came to realize that ways of death are profoundly different and inseparable from social and cultural dynamics. The singular truth remains that everything, everyone, everywhere ends, but the ways in which we treat the end of life is a reflection of the socio-cultural conditions that ultimately define the built landscapes of remembrance.

With respect to caring for the dead, Sir William Gladstone once wrote, “Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of the people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals (Kerrigan, 1997, p. 44).” The manners by which independent cultures have come to care for the dead and construct landscapes of remembrance are evident across scales of time and place. From the most obvious example of the Pyramids of Egypt, to the cobblestone paths of Pere Lachaise, the spaces in which the dead lie in repose have come to give image to time and place and shape the built environment. Likewise, the ways in which these landscapes were created provides distinct insight into broad cultural regard for the interconnected function of the natural environment and the built environment through burial and monumentality. If we examine how the modern American nation cares for the dead – the ritual of the funeral, the preservation of the body, the presentation of the painted corpse, the procession to the grave, the permanent burial in cemeteries – it is easy to understand that our culture has come to care for human death with a superficial dignity that ignores an inherent place in the cycle of life. The commercialization of death by the American funeral industry is a reflection of a culture that largely disregards human death’s place in the natural order and the health of the environment. But how did this come to be?

The question of how is the beginning of this thesis research methodology. Examination of the current state of the modern funeral industry finds it is built upon the foundational principles of embalming as corporeal preservation, burial and entombment, and monumentality. As such, embalming is the common denominator in examining the historical context of death and burial, distinctly traceable to the origins of the ancient Egyptian society; modern American funeral literature has perpetually stated that the basis for modern embalming is

indeed rooted in the ancient Egyptian precedent of corporeal preservation.

As such, the research begins with an exploration of embalming as invented by the ancient Egyptian culture, starting with the pre-Dynastic Egyptians. Embalming was invented to preserve the soul everlasting from perish in the afterlife through rebirth; prior to embalming, rebirth was embodied in the burial of the corpse to nourish the growth of agricultural crops. With embalming as the fundamental basis in tracing the how from origin to modern-day practice, the research then follows the direct influence of ancient embalming on the built environment and constructed deaths-places of Egypt. In following embalming from advent, the practice is traced from the Dynasties of Egypt, to Roman Egypt, Judea, and the Roman Empire following the Roman Conquest; the dissemination of corporeal preservation throughout the Roman Empire, as learned from the ancient Egyptians, was lasting, imprinting on the socio-cultural conditions and urban form of European cities through the construction of catacombs and urban cemeteries; the effects of catacombs and cemeteries led to burial reform, and subsequent influence on the burial practices on the modern American way of death as a treatment of the corpse and spatial form of the built and natural environments. The confluence of selected historical precedent based upon embalming will tell the story of how the modern system of embalming and burial came to exist, and what the historical context of ancient Egyptian burial practice has to do with an imagined future of contemporary urban deaths-places.

Asking and answering the how is crucial because an examination of past and present social situations, a projection of future cultural conditions, and a developed and informed response to those projections are all at the heart of being a progressive designer and urban planner. Thus, as a landscape designer and urban planner inspired by ways of death, the research question asked to myself is simple: by exploring the history of death and burial within the context of social and cultural conditions, past and present, what is cogent projection for the future life of deaths-places in the contemporary city?

Answering the research question through the presented historical evidence not only tells the story of the history of deaths-places, but lays the foundation for a design critique. Exploration of the traceable history allows for a dissection of a course of events that has shaped parts of the social, cultural, urban, and environmental landscapes, and a comparison of the purist alignment of current practice with ancient principle. Therefore, the subsequent research is a critique of modern American ways of death through the historical lens of corporeal preservation, and the critique will project the future of deaths-places as edible landscapes in the contemporary city through a purist alignment with pre-Dynastic Egyptian history that was the basis for embalming, but has been bastardized through cross-cultural and industrial distillation, and sterilization of the ways of treating death.



EMBALMING IS ANCIENT HISTORY

The earliest known practice of human corporal preservation and entombment can be traced to the dynastic Egyptians, a culture that put remembrance of the deceased at the center of public life. To fully understand the Egyptian celebration of death, it is simply insufficient to explore only the practice of mummification as presented in popular culture; to comprehend the cultural way of life and conception of the afterlife from the beginning of the traceable history, it is necessary to broaden the perspective to include geographic, economic, and political context within the overarching pyramid of understanding.

Ancient Egypt was primarily an insular region, contained by mountains to the south, and barren desert to the east and west. The lands of ancient Egypt were often referred to dually as “red lands,” the inhabitable desert to the east and west that protected the country from military invasions, and “black lands,” which were the banks of the Nile River. The annual flood of the Nile brought fertile, brown silt to the banks of the river and the surrounding land, creating a hospitable region enriched with soil that produced bountiful crops for harvest and trade. This gave rise to cities along the river, and created strong agro-economic region rich in grain, vegetables, livestock, and fishing. It was the rhythm of the Nile flooding that imposed a strict routine on economic production in Egypt for centuries, and with this, a strong sense of continuity became central in the cultural life of the ancient civilization (Kerrigan, 2007).

A common belief in a high ideal gave the pre-dynastic Egyptian people a foundation for understanding the afterlife; in Egyptian mythology, the Duat, Osiris was revered a God of duality, seen by the people as Lord of the Underworld and God of Fertility. It was believed that the land of the dead lay in the west, and that upon death Osiris would draft laborers to plant and harvest crops in the land of the living, which lay along the Nile (Kleiner, 2009). The strong juxtaposition of death with fertility gave the Egyptian people a comparison that was principal in the cultural understanding of the afterlife; when the annual crops were seeded beneath the soil, it provided the people with an uplifting analogy for burial and a strong belief in rebirth, for if something is buried in the earth, it will be reborn to nourish the land, the livestock, and the people. Within pre-dynastic Egyptian culture, life and death were analogous. Thus, when faced with caring for the dead, the people buried the deceased in graves beneath the mud of the Nile secured in the fetal position - seed-like - reinforcing the belief in rebirth as nourishment for the living (Kerrigan, 2007).

The proto-dynastic era, headed by the Naqada ruling culture, saw a rise in socio-cultural innovation and agro-economic power; the independent invention of hieroglyphics, irrigation, sail navigation and military crests were all byproducts of the Naqada rule, positioning Egypt as a preeminent civilization and strong political and military state. The heightened influence of the country also bred the desire for the leaders to be properly remembered beyond the death; the Naqada subsequently built Umm el-Qaab, the first known royal burial ground, constructed in the city of Abydos. In Umm el-Qaab, the Naqada rulers, and later Pharaohs of the First and Second Dynasties, would erect palatial tombs for themselves to spend their days in the afterlife.

The elaborate tombs were constructed of mud-brick, with the multiple chambers connecting rooms of the interior, most often equipped with the necessities the ruler may need in the afterlife (Kleiner, 2009). These necessities often included the sacrificial bodies of ruler's courtiers, lay-workers, and animals who would serve for the ruler in the afterlife; ushabti, or troops of life-size limestone figures, would take the place of sacrifice in later Dynasties. Despite the evolution of opulence in burial of rulers, the core belief in an afterlife among all Egyptian people was never abandoned; the corpses of common people were now buried in coffins facing east to greet the morning sun, with a common inscription reading: "I am the plant of life. I allow the people to live and the Gods to be divine... I live as corn, the life of the living... My love is in the sky, the earth, the water, and the fields (Kerrigan, 2007, p. 45)."

Upon the death of the Pharaoh Djoser (2670 BCE) of the Third Dynasty (2686 – 2613 BCE), the first pyramid was built in Saqqara, a necropolis along the Nile River that faced the capital city of Memphis. Despite the precedence of the funerary complexes of Umm el-Qaab, Pharaoh Djoser and Imhotep, chancellor to the Pharaoh, high priest of the Sun God, and architect of the pyramid, felt it necessary construct something more spectacular than the tombs of yore – a tomb that would serve dually as a monument to the Pharaoh's legacy, and symbol of his power. The large stepped structure carved from limestone resembled a staircase leading into the sky, alluding the steps would be a means of traveling into the afterlife.; the funerary compound itself, a series of underground tunnels, was a replication of previous governmental precincts built of less permanent mud-brick materials. It can be surmised the permanence of limestone as the choice material not only spoke to lasting influence, but also reinforced the idea of eternity.

The evolution of the political system of Egypt from pre-dynastic ruling classes to a solidly unified Pharaonic state saw a subsequent cultural and spiritual shift, with a coalescing of the common belief in a high ideal with the power of the Pharaoh. By the dawn of the Fourth Dynasty (2613 – 2493 BCE), it was a common belief that the Pharaoh was a living representative of the Re, the Sun God, and upon death, transformed to become Osiris, Lord of the Underworld and God of Fertility. The relationship between the Pharaoh and the sun would be reflected in the architecture of later pyramids, with the outer surface of the stones smoothed to take away the angled edges reminiscent of stairs, instead creating straight lines to reflect the rays of the sun. The first of the smooth-surfaced pyramids was constructed when Pharaoh Sneferu filled in the steps of a single pyramid, later constructing two similar pyramids in Dahsur (Kerrigan, 2007). The greatest of the smooth surfaced pyramids, however, was that built by Pharaoh Khufu - the Great Pyramid at Giza. The funerary complex included burial chambers; a mortuary temple, where offerings were made to the Pharaoh; a roofed causeway leading to the mortuary temple; and a valley temple at the edge of the floodplain. The complex was more than a tomb; it was a palace for the afterlife. (Kleiner, 2009).

While the commanding presence of the pyramids spoke to the core belief of eternity within the Egyptian

culture, the differentiation in burial methods from pre-dynastic culture to dynastic culture forced a shift in caring for the dead in the wake of the afterlife; where bodies were once buried in the earth to be eternally reborn, they would now be left unburied in tombs, with the tombs serving as an architectural representation of the afterlife. It was believed that a decaying body in a tomb would beget a decaying soul and would prevent the soul from enduring in the afterlife. In proto-dynastic times, the corpse was placed in the searing desert sand; the dry air, whirling around the body, would dehydrate the corpse, preserving the body before it was placed in the tomb. However, this method proved to be ineffective, as the bodies that were mummified in this manner were found to disintegrate in the tomb years after the fact (Colman, 1997).

The stubborn reluctance of the Pharaohs to forgo grandiose monumentality forced the subsequent innovation of the art of embalming. Embalming was viewed culturally as an artistic skill, passed down from generation-to-generation of practitioners. As there are no known ancient dynastic-era written accounts of the embalming process, the testimony of Herodotus (484–425 BCE), who visited an ailing Egypt during a time when the importance of the Pharaoh was diminishing, is important to a further understanding of how the Egyptian culture approached preservation of the dead. The following accounts of Egyptian embalming are taken from Volume II, Chapters 86 - 90 of the book Herodotus: Histories.

Chapter 86. There are a set of men in Egypt who practice the art of embalming, and make it their proper business. These persons, when a body is brought to them, show the bearers various models of corpses, made in wood, and painted so as to resemble nature. The most perfect is said to be after the manner of him whom I do not think it religious to name in connection with such a matter; the second sort is inferior to the first, and less costly; the third is the cheapest of all. All this, the embalmers explain, and then ask in which way it is wished that the corpse should be prepared. The bearers tell them, and having concluded their bargain, take their departure, while the embalmers, left to themselves, proceed to their task. The mode of embalming, according to the most perfect process, is the following: They take first a crooked piece of iron, and with it draw out the brain through the nostrils, thus getting rid of a portion, while the skull is cleared of the rest by rinsing with drugs; next they make a cut along the flank with a sharp Ethiopian stone, and take out the whole contents of the abdomen, which they then cleanse, washing it thoroughly with palm wine, and again frequently with an infusion of pounded aromatics. After this they fill the cavity with the purest bruised myrrh, with cassia, and every other sort of spicery except frankincense, and sew up the opening. Then the body is placed in natrum for seventy days, and covered entirely over. After the expiration of that space of time, which must not be exceeded, the body is washed, and wrapped round, from head to foot, with bandages of fine linen cloth, smeared over with gum, which is used generally by the Egyptians in the place of glue, and in this state it is given back to the relations, who enclose it in a wooden case which they have had

made for the purpose, shaped into the figure of a man. Then fastening the case, they place it in a sepulchral chamber, upright against the wall. Such is the most costly way of embalming the dead (Herodotus, ed. Flowers & Marincola, 2002).

Chapter 87. If persons wish to avoid expense, and choose the second process, the following is the method pursued: Syringes are filled with oil made from the cedar-tree, which is then, without any incision or disemboweling, injected into the abdomen. The passage by which it might be likely to return is stopped, and the body laid in natrum the prescribed number of days. At the end of the time the cedar-oil is allowed to make its escape; and such is its power that it brings with it the whole stomach and intestines in a liquid state. The natrum meanwhile has dissolved the flesh, and so nothing is left of the dead body but the skin and the bones. It is returned in this condition to the relatives, without any further trouble being bestowed upon it (Herodotus, et al., 2002).

Chapter 88. The third method of embalming, which is practiced in the case of the poorer classes, is to clear out the intestines with a clyster, and let the body lie in natrum the seventy days, after which it is at once given to those who come to fetch it away (Herodotus, et al., 2002).

Chapter 89. The wives of men of rank are not given to be embalmed immediately after death, nor indeed are any of the more beautiful and valued women. It is not till they have been dead three or four days that they are carried to the embalmers. This is done to prevent indignities from being offered them. It is said that once a case of this kind occurred: the man was detected by the information of his fellow-workman (Herodotus, et al., 2002).

Chapter 90. Whensoever any one, Egyptian or foreigner, has lost his life by falling a prey to a crocodile, or by drowning in the river, the law compels the inhabitants of the city near which the body is cast up to have it embalmed, and to bury it in one of the sacred repositories with all possible magnificence. No one may touch the corpse, not even any of the friends or relatives, but only the priests of the Nile, who prepare it for burial with their own hands - regarding it as something more than the mere body of a man - and themselves lay it in the tomb (Herodotus, et al., 2002).

Embalming and mummification in this manner is believed to be the most common, dating to the Third Dynasty, some 2,000 years before the written account by Herodotus (Kerrigan, 2007).

In the age of the New Kingdom (1570 – 1070 BCE), encompassing the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Dynasties, yet another point of evolution occurred in the Egyptian way of death, prompting a reconceptualization of monumentality. Grave-robbing of the pyramids had become a common occurrence, despite the labyrinthian complex that incorporated multiple chambers and passageways as dual symbols of the underworld and security measures to prevent desecration of the monument, theft of the Pharaohs' entombed belongings, or theft of the mummified body Pharaoh himself.

In a departure from ancestral precedent, the Pharaoh Amenhotep II commissioned the construction of a secret tomb built in a valley on the west bank of the Nile River, opposite of the city Thebes, as a response to the proliferation in grave-robbing. The tomb, an underground compound, was similar in architectural form as the pyramids, housing a labyrinth of chambers and passageways that were meant to replicate the underworld. The only difference between the two monument styles was the siting above or below grade. These underground tombs would later come to be the resting place of preceding Pharaohs, most famously Tutankhamun, and the geographical region of their location would later be named the Valley of the Kings. The underground tombs saw the inclusion of a symbol of regeneration specific to the tombs of the New Kingdom, the Osiris Bed: "The idea of regeneration was given physical reality by the 'Osiris Bed,' which was a feature of tombs in the New Kingdom (1550-1070 BCE); one was found with Tutankhamen). A wooden frame, shaped like the figure of a God, it was filled with soil and seed, which germinated after the tomb had been sealed. The 'corn mummy,' as it is also known, was a living, growing emblem of the resurrection for which the Pharaoh hoped; it also represented the rebirth of the God himself (Kerrigan, 2007)." This practice would continue through the end of Egyptian state rule in the Ptolemaic Era under the rule of Queen Cleopatra.

Without eternity embodied in the architectural symbolism of an above-ground monument, it suggests Pharaohs adorned their tombs with the Osiris Bed as a gesture to ensure eternal rebirth in the afterlife through alternative means of symbolism. Examined within the broad context of the evolution of burial, preservation, and entombment, the Osiris Bed is more than an evolved symbol of eternity – it is symbol that represents a significant shift in the core socio-cultural cultural understanding of rebirth and the afterlife as rooted in the Duat, the mythology of Osiris, and the basis of burial the began with the pre-dynastic people of Egypt. The product of the proliferation of Egyptian political power was the evolution in the broad socio-cultural interpretation of rebirth and the afterlife, which interjected a heightened level of grandiosity into the Egyptian way of death. Whereas the pre-dynastic Egyptian culture once revered the dead body as literal seed of life, and believed that a body buried in the soil would bring nourishment to the people and land, the politically and economically evolved dynastic Egyptian culture revered underground monuments that housed the preserved remains of the deceased, with an Osiris bed to simply represent the seed of life.

While the divergence of socio-cultural interpretation and the sophistication of technical innovation advanced over the course of twenty dynasties and thousands of years, the process of evolution is relevant to a cross-cultural understanding of death and burial. The history of the ancient Egyptian way of death illustrates how socio-cultural conditions affect interpretations of the afterlife and ways of death, and lays the foundation for an understanding of the modern American way of death; the historical parallelism is evident when making a comparison between ancient Egyptian body preservation, burial, and adornment of tombs with Osiris Beds and modern American body preservation, burial, and adornment of graves with flowers and tchotchke.

An expanded look at the evolution of ancient Egyptian ways of death is the only place to begin the discussion on how modern culture can evolve in its understanding of death and practice of body preservation and burial. Because the Egyptian culture invented embalming as our world knows it today, it is imperative to rely on this historical context when asking the question of why modern embalming exists in its current state, how we can use the context as a basis of understanding the history of burial as it relates to the invention of the urban cemetery, and what we can do with a universal historical understanding of socio-cultural ways of death to evolve in our own thought processes in order to create edible urban deaths-capes of the Twenty-First Century.





CONQUEST, CATACOMBS, & CEMETERIES

The Roman Conquest of Egypt is central to the cross-cultural procession of funereal custom and imprint on the landscape throughout the continent of Europe, and bridging the precedent practices of the ancient and modern world. Prior to the Roman Conquest, anthropological evidence suggests the ways of death throughout most civilizations of the ancient world evolved in their practices of corpse disposal through three distinct phases: first, earth burial; second, a combination of cremation and burial (or half-cremation); and then third, a return to the earlier practice of earth burial (Puckle 2008). However, when Rome conquered Egypt, the funerary and corporeal practices of the ancient society were introduced to new people and landscapes.

The fall of Ptolemaic Egypt occurred following the battle of Actium in 30 BCE. The Egyptian navy helmed by the Queen Cleopatra and her lover, the Roman Marc Antony, was obliterated by the Roman navy helmed by Octavion. Octavion offered for the Queen to abdicate her throne to her son, Caesarion, who was rumored to be the son of the Roman statesman Julius Caesar. ("Egypt Under Roman Rule," 2016) Instead, Cleopatra committed the act of suicide after finding that Marc Antony had killed himself following defeat at Actium. The death of Cleopatra led to the Roman conquest of Egypt, as Octavion quickly had Caesarion murdered and assumed the role of "Augustus Caesar," and the "first citizen of Rome (Kleiner, 2009)."

In 63 BCE, Jerusalem was conquered by the Roman Empire. Prior to the conquest of Egypt, the Judean people (of modern Palestine) learned and adopted the art of embalming from the Egyptians, and subsequently spread the practice throughout the Roman Empire following the conquest of their own lands and people. Along with ways of death, Egyptian trends of traditional architecture and style were influencing the urban form of Rome, with Egyptian obelisks and sculpture erected in the Roman Forum. Concurrently, Roman style of sculpture and were influencing the Egyptian funerary arts in Roman Egypt; traditional portrait masks found on the sarcophagi of Egyptian mummies were being replaced with Roman painted portraiture. One of the most famed of this painted portraiture is the Mummy portrait of the priest of Serapis from 140 CE. (Kleiner, 2009).

The importance of the Roman Conquest of Egypt – the relationship of the Roman Julius Caesar and Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, the murder of their son Caesarion by Octavion, the Judean dissemination of Egyptian methods of corporeal preservation through the Roman Empire, the mutual effect of Egyptian and Roman styles on art and architectural form – underscores the historical link of the two ancient political states, illustrates the conduit of influence tracing the procession of embalming from one culture to another, and bridges the precedent practices of the ancient with the modern world.

As standard practice prior to and independent of Egyptian influence, Pagan Romans practiced cremation. It was widely believed that incineration of the dead body was most honorable. Though, the Romans also had a fear of ghosts and hauntings, which played a role in the cultural preference for cremation. Burning and destroying the body would also destroy the ghost, and would save the living from being haunted by the dead. The only

pagan Romans that were buried, a distinct dishonor, were suicides, parricides, and murderers. Burial was strictly forbidden within the city periphery of Rome; thus these burials took place outside the city. Despite the unlawfulness of burial, the Catholic Christians of Rome felt cremation was an inappropriate method of disposal and preferred burial (Puckle, 2008). On private property, they constructed catacombs, or underground tombs similar in precedent form of the Egyptian underground tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Though the catacombs and underground tombs shared labyrinthian form, the catacombs held the deceased bodies of all people within the walls of the tunnels and passageways, and the tombs held the mummified remains of Pharaohs in palatial resting chambers (Colman, 1997).

Catholic Christianity was only recognized as a burial society in Rome and was forbidden as an organized religion under Roman law. Christians were the subject of widespread persecution, but despite oppression, the pagans still held the dead in high regard and were respectful of the Christian's chosen method of body disposal and did not disrupt funeral ceremonies or desecrate the catacombs. The pagans refused to allow the burial to occur in light of day, however, and thus the Christian burial often took place in the darkest hour. Burial in the darkest hour, however, provided the Christians with a level of autonomy to fully honor the dead, a freedom that potentially would not have existed with burial during the day (Colman, 1997).

It was a Catholic Christian custom to wash corpse, cover the decedent in linen, sprinkle the corpse with lyme, and place it in a niche in the walls of the catacombs. The opening of the niche was often sealed with a covering of a marble or terracotta slab bearing the name of the deceased. Paintings on walls of the catacombs often illustrated life, rites of the faith, and beliefs of the early followers of Christ - "the inscriptions make known to us their faith - whether we accept it or not - their belief in God, the Holy Spirit, the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, the communion of saints, the veneration of the martyrs, the hierarchy of its various orders, the sacraments, the resurrection, and the life everlasting (Treat, 1926, p.10)." The catacombs were the primary place of Christian interment for approximately three centuries, and at times when persecution was distinctly violent, the catacombs served dually as a sanctuary for the living and a resting place for the dead. Given the pagan fear of ghosts and hauntings attached to burial, Christians would seek refuge in the winding tunnels of the catacombs to ward off the pursuit of pagans (Puckle, 2008).

As more Romans came to self-identify as Catholic Christian, churches grew throughout Rome and Christianity became a more organized and powerful political force. Within the church, demand grew to change funereal practice from hidden burial in catacombs to publicly visible burial in open air landscapes within the city, giving advent to the concept of the urban cemetery. "The word cemetery, where the bodies of the faithful were laid awaiting the resurrection, is of Greek origin and translates to mean a resting or sleeping place (Treat, 1926, p.13)." The increase in power of Christianity led to the attempted destruction of the faith in 303 CE. by the Roman government; the cemeteries and churches were confiscated and burned by the government. After the

restoration of rights to Catholic Christians in 313 CE by the Emperor Constantine, who believed his source of power came from the Christian God, greater importance was placed on reverence for the deceased within the church. Martyrs that died during persecution were finally able to be properly honored after a decade; people gathered in the catacombs and cemeteries on the anniversary of the death of the martyrs, celebrating the day as not one of death, but one of rebirth (Treat, 1926). In 380 CE, the Edict of Thessalonica made Catholic Christianity the state church of the Roman Empire.

A comparison of the significance of death in the early Roman Catholic faith with that of the Egyptian culture sees striking similarities, based both in independent spiritual reverence and osmotic cultural influence. In both cultures, death was largely revered as a spiritual passage connecting the deceased soul with a higher ideal and reinforcing a belief in resurrection in the afterlife. Moreover, the Roman Empire's expansive system of roadways and water channels catalyzed sharing of cross-cultural ideas, as seen in the similar built forms of Egyptian tombs and Roman catacombs. The built network that connected cities throughout the Roman Empire facilitated the proliferate spread of Catholicism to the far-reaching areas of Gallia, Germania, and Britannia (modern-day France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, respectively). The influence of Catholicism in these regions of the Empire saw immediate influence of the Roman Catholic way of life and death on the built forms of the cities throughout, both in areas of the street grid, orientation, catacombs and the cemetery.

The Roman axial street form - the *cardo* running north and south, and the *decumannus* running east and west - was designed for the main streets to cross in the center of the city, ideally the Forum. From the Forum, commerce, the baths, and governmental buildings would extend outward. This central form was duplicated in the cities of the Roman Empire, like Vienna, London, and Granada; the ability for the city to grow outward from the core by virtue of the main axes would later make it possible to sub-divide the city into precincts and neighborhoods. It was in these outer precincts that the Pagan Romans placed the cemeteries where they buried those who committed acts of murder and suicide; though the Roman Catholic catacombs in the city of Rome were abandoned by the Christians near the end of the Ninth Century, the form of the catacombs and cemeteries were used as places of burial in cities of the Roman Empire like Paris (Mumford, 1961).

Following the demise of the Roman Empire in 476 CE (Kleiner, 2009), the influence of the Roman Catholic funeral practice and burial remained imprinted on independent countries through the European nation. In Sixteenth Century Europe death became a public spectacle of grief and theatrics, no doubt a cultural reverberation from the massive number of deaths of the Black Plague in the Fifteenth Century. People in poor physical condition, facing the beckoning hand of death, were routinely visited by family members, friends, and members of the clergy. The dying person was expected to make the necessary preparations for death by willing possessions to the living to be dispersed upon dying. Bells were rung at the time of death; the body of the deceased was typically washed and wrapped in shrouds that were tied at the hands and feet, and prior to burial, the decedent

was laid out in his or her home to be watched by family. This period was known as the wake, as the family would wait for the decedent to awaken before being formally interred. Friends would often visit the bereft family during the wake, drinking alcohol, dancing, eating, and playing rowdy games, all of which would become common cultural practice (Tait, 2002).

Commemoration of the deceased through praise-poetry and personal documents became the preferred method of expressing grief, often recited at the funerals of the deceased before interment. Burial typically occurred within one day of dying, though waiting two-to-four days for the wake period was not uncommon. A period of weeks or months might go into planning the funeral for someone of the wealthiest social class, as the funerals were extremely elaborate and costly. Due to the sometimes months-long delay in funerals, embalming methods were introduced and used in an effort to preserve the body of the deceased before he or she was carried in a procession and buried, often in a church; burial inside the church was regarded with more esteem than a standard burial in the catacombs or cemetery (Tait, 2002).

Those with the financial means to be buried within the church, either in tombs or vaults beneath the church, were often interred in close proximity to religious imagery or Holy members of the clergy that were buried in the church as well. At this point in the history of Christian ways of death, yet another parallel with Egyptian ways of death emerges in the relationship between power and death. The power of the church created an aristocracy in death, a hierarchy in which monetary means and economic status brought one closer to the spiritual in death. These hierarchies were often drawn between the aristocratic class of the city center, and the poorer people in rural areas. In examining the difference between burial of the rich and the poor, diarist John Evelyn wrote:

In the county of Hereford was an old custom of funerals, to hire poor people, who were to take upon them all the sins of the party of the deceased. One of them I remember (he was a long, lean, lamentable, poor rascal) lived in a cottage on Ross highway. The manner was that when the corpse was brought out of the house and laid on the bier, a loaf of bread was brought out, and delivered to the sin-eater over the corpse, as also a mazzard bowl full of beer, which he was to drink up, and sixpence in money, in consideration whereof he took upon him... all the sins of the defunct, and freed him or her from walking after they were dead (Evelyn, 1630, p.272).

While this speaks largely to the variant in urban and rural social class, it also points to evidence of the ever-evolving cultural conceptions of death and the afterlife. In the oft-parallel traditions of the Egyptians and earlier Roman Christians, there was a consistent desire to have a close connection with spirituality in death, regardless of the methods by which that closeness is achieved, or the bastardization of spiritual and religious order that must take place to ensure the rightful passage of this highest in the social order. Regardless of mummification and

embalming, or burial in the catacombs, cemeteries or churches, there were common socio-cultural evolutions in practice and belief that spoke to an innate necessity to be connected to a higher power and to live eternally.



URBAN BLIGHT / RURAL DELIGHT

Rome, Paris, and the Urban Cemetery

Since the Sixteenth Century, corporeal preservation, the funerary rite, and burial has seen its most rapid evolution with regard to spiritual meaning, urban place-making, technical advancement, and social equity. For thousands of years, it was wholly believed that preservation of the body was equivalent to preservation of the soul for rebirth in the afterlife, and burial was seen as a spiritual symbol. However, in the Eighteenth Century, when plagues swept European cities just three centuries after the Black Plague, the Parisian government took regulatory action and was the first city to enact burial reform laws for the sake of large-scale public health – a defiance of the social order in death. The regulations undoubtedly forced socio-cultural shifts in attitude with regard to death, and death's relationship to the urban landscape that are both still present in modern metropolitan areas of the Twenty-First Century.

Prior to the plagues, Parisians followed the precedent of Roman Catholics as prescribed by the previous Roman occupation. When Paris (then Lutetia) was a part of the Roman Empire, the city was settled on the left bank on the River Seine from the Île de la Cité, and bodies were buried outside the southern periphery of the city. Though, after the fall of the Roman Empire in the Fifth Century, the city resettled on the right bank of the River Seine. Rapid urban expansion of the new settlement placed the siting of cemeteries at the center of urban life, antithetical to the Roman precedent of siting cemeteries outside the urban center (Hussey, 2007).

The central city cemetery was the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents, the yard of the eponymous church, from the Twelfth-to-Eighteenth Centuries. The cemetery was centrally situated among apartments and marketplaces, and was the common burial ground for the most common Parisian to the dead from the city morgue. Though, by the mid-to-late of the Eighteenth Century, Saint-Innocents had filled to its holding capacity, part and parcel to the rapid growth of Paris. As a result, burial became more unorganized; in the dark of the night, bodies and body parts were left outside the walls of the cemetery to decay. Charnel houses were constructed along the walls of the cemetery to hold more bodies, but they too filled to capacity (Hussey, 2007). Parisians soon found the quickest way to dispose of the bodies was to simply dig burial pits “of a prodigious size and depth, in which the dead bodies are laid, side-by-side, without any earth being put over them till the ground tier is full; then, and not till then, a small layer of earth covers them, and another layer of dead comes on, till by layer upon layer, and dead upon dead, the hole is filled with a mass of human corruption enough to breed a plague (Colman, 1997, p.103).”

Stories of the dangers of the decomposing bodies grew rampant, and fatal disease broke out in the areas surrounding Saint-Innocents. Merchants located around the cemetery complained of a decrease in commercial activity as a result of the odoriferous cemetery and the horror of scattered body parts throughout the neighborhood. Though, it was only after the soil of a mass grave settled in the 1770s, sending skeletal remains and body parts crashing through the cellars of homes and businesses, that citizens of the city organized efforts

to demand the government cleanup the dead and reform the ways of burial. King Louis XVI ordered the closure of Saint-Innocents, and all city cemeteries, in 1775 (Hussey, 2007).

The subsequent years saw city workers exhume approximately six million corpses from shallow graves in the darkest hours of the night, relocating the skeletons from burial pits to large Thirteenth Century-era subterranean quarries on the left bank of the city in the neighborhood of Montparnasse; these quarries, lined with bones, would become the Catacombs of Paris. Though given the moniker "catacombs," the Parisian catacombs bore no embodied spiritual significance as did the Roman catacombs. The exhumation and relocation process brought an air of curiosity to streets of Paris. In Andrew Hussey's book, *Paris, the Secret History*, he writes:

The early years of the Nineteenth Century, the so-called 'century of light,' were marked by the night-time manoeuvres of corpse carriers, shifting the bones of the dead from one end of the city to another, trailed by a retinue of priests intoning prayers for the dead (Hussey, 2007).

Moreover, an account from the Scientific American Journal in 1852 (Karmelek, 2011) detailing the removal of bodies from Saint-Innocents presents an even more interesting scenario with regard to the excess of fatty deposits, or adipocere, in the soils of the cemeteries.

Human Fat Candles and Soap. When the cemetery of the Innocents of Paris was removed to the outside of the barriers, the buried corpses which had accumulated to the depth of 60 feet, were found, to a great extent, to be converted into fat. The substance of the skin, cellular tissue, and tendons, all the soft parts, and even the bones had completely disappeared, leaving only the fat, which, resisting longest the influence of decay (oxygen), remained in the form of margaric acid. This human fat was employed to the extent of many tons by the soap boilers and tallow candle makers of Paris for the manufacture of soap and candles. The French are a people of fine sentiment, and they certainly carried the quality to a charming point of reflection in receiving light from the candles made out of the bodies of their fathers. We loathe the cannibal, but civilization has features, which if not rendered familiar, would be as repulsive as the practices of the savage (Karmelek, 2011, p.1).

The salvage of decomposition by-product for human use speaks directly to the pre-Dynastic use of decomposition by-product in the nurture of agriculture; the specific re-use of adipocere, the largest by-product of decomposition in this case, is important to underscore in understanding the biological breakdown of the body in cemeteries, and its role in contemporary urban deaths-capes. It is worth noting that upon the complete removal of the Saint-Innocents church and cemetery, the plot of land was replaced with a vegetable market. (Hussey, 2007)

Following the French *coup d'état* by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1799, and his self-proclamation as Emperor in 1804, Bonaparte began enacting regulatory reform within the state of France and the city of Paris through the Napoleonic Civil Code. In an extension of the Code, Bonaparte declared, "Every citizen has the right to be buried, regardless of race or religion ("The Civil Code Index," Title II, Ch. IV);" as such, burial regulations were enacted out of respect for the dead, and an overarching interest in public health and quality of life. With regard to the urban form, it was decreed that burial would be relegated from the inner city to the outer periphery; though a common siting for cemeteries during the Roman Empire given then Roman Form of the city and cultural views of death, the implementation of civil code regulating the siting of cemeteries was the first of its kind (Kissel, 2005).

Consequently, in 1804, the Pere-Lachaise Cemetery was opened for burial outside the periphery of the city of Paris on the hill Mont-Louis (Kissel, 2005). Overseen by Prefect Nicholas Frochot, a political appointee who owned the land designated as the cemetery, he commissioned the neo-classical architect Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart to design the cemetery as a proper place of burial to meet the needs of all citizens of the city. Accordingly, Brongniart planned the cemetery to serve as a marriage between the function of a traditional cemetery and the aesthetics of an English garden. Such was a progressive and unprecedented concept in urban design and landscape architecture that embodied the philosophical undercurrents of the Enlightenment period taking hold in France, as it sought to separate man from the industrial city and reintroduce him to nature.

The intention of Brongniart's design was to create a pastoral space of contemplation that would serve as a retreat from the blight of urban life. Given the horrific manner with which the Parisians had been exposed to death during the life of Cimitière de Saint-Innocents, Brongniart worked with renowned architects and sculptors, such as Chapu, Garnier, and Visconti, to create a place of respite that would be transportive from the surrounding presence of death. The resulting design was a park with tree-lined avenues and cobblestone footpaths, with intermittent tombstones (Kissel, 2005).

While met with initial skepticism, within a span of ten years' time, the Pere-Lachaise became a burial site that balanced the needs of both the common people, and the prestigious. As famous authors and musicians were buried in their respective plots, their graves marked with sculpture or monuments that reflected the Romanticist architectural styles of the time, the cemetery became a place to wander, to explore the graves of people that were universally admired or people that were unknown, while serving as a naturalistic retreat from inner-city Paris. This concept of a plot of land that was to be used dually as a cemetery and public green space gave rise to the modern cemetery as we know it. Moreover, the concept, and regulatory reform that led to its conception, served as the catalyst for the Rural Cemetery Movement that catalyzed to removal of cemeteries from urban centers to rural pastoral areas in both Europe and North America in the early-to-mid Nineteenth Century (Kissel, 2005).

The removal of cemeteries from the urban center to pastoral areas not only brought about a new way of treating death in the urban form, but also a new phenomenon with regard to funerals and transportation in the urban form: the horse-drawn funeral procession. When located within the city or neighborhood, the body was easily transported by hand. In France, for instance, the body was carried from the home to the grave by a “herse,” or harrow, a type of plough used in the fields for breaking up soil before seed is planted (Puckle, 2008). To transport a corpse, the herse was turned upside down and the spires used for tilling soil held lit candles in place. The corpse was placed on the herse and dragged by hand to the cemetery. However, with the implementation of Burial Reform, the subsequent increase in distance that corpse had to travel from death bed to resting place, and a public unwilling to walk to the suburban resting place (Kissel, 2005), there was a newly necessitated need for horse-cart access and roadways leading to the new rural cemeteries from the city (Puckle, 2008).

The United States, Romanticism, and the Rural Cemetery Movement

In the 1820s, the United States saw the first spatial effects of the Rural Cemetery Movement on the urban form. For centuries, America had been subject to European funerary and burial practices, with wakes, a funeral of praise-poetry, and burial anywhere from haphazard masses of shallow graves to open spaces below the floors of the church. These funerary practices were adopted from ancestral roots and cultural influence of England, Ireland, and France. Margaret Coffin writes in her book *Death in Early America* (1963) of a young man who witnessed a secret burial inside a Protestant church:

The body was carried into a dimly lit vault. I was so small and short I could scarcely see anything. But the deep sepulchral voice of Mr. Parker filled me with the most delightful horror. I listened and shivered. At length he uttered the words ‘earth-to-earth’ and Grossman (the sexton) rattled on the coffin a whole shovelful of coarse gravel – ‘ashes-to-ashes’ – another shovel of gravel – ‘dust-to-dust’ – another; it seemed as if shovel and all were cast upon the coffin lid. I never forgot it (Mitford, 1963, p.68).

The commonality of shallow graveyards in the urban areas of New England, filled with thousands of decomposing corpses coupled with burials inside churches, led to a public uprising. Not unlike Paris, many cities in the United States saw immediate burial reform born from the precedent of the Napoleonic Civil Code and the momentum of the Rural Cemetery Movement, which led to the creation of garden cemeteries modeled after the Pere-Lachaise. The most famous of these garden cemeteries is Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts (French, 1974).

The design of the Pere-Lachaise was a naturalistic framework for the design of Mount Auburn based in the socio-cultural contextual needs of the city of Boston. Spearheaded by Dr. Joseph Bigelow, the conceptualization of a garden cemetery came from Bigelow’s interest in the promotion of secular cemeteries to alleviate the unsanitary conditions found in the inner city following the yellow fever epidemic of 1822 (French, 1974). In

1823, John Coffin published his concerns regarding public health and burial in *Dangers and Duties of Sepulture: or Security for the Living with Respect for the Dead*, and urged progressive action by the local government of Boston based on the precedent of New York's inner-city cemeteries on quality of life. He wrote:

What better contrivance to generate yellow fever, for instance, was ever set up than what was permitted to exist unmolested last year in the city of New York?

Take for focus of this infection the grave-yard of Trinity Church, saturated with dissolved semi-liquid human flesh, oozing from every pore, and the incumbent atmosphere filled with noxious effluvia, concurring with the air of the city, contaminated by unexampled quantities of smoking filth, of fermenting, offensive animal and vegetable substances. The event was what might have been predicted; it was indeed foreseen with frightful apprehensions, which were but too fully realized.

There is no rational, no scientific view of the means of preserving health, - none which experience can justify or approve, that does not imperiously call for cleanliness, personal, domestic, and civic.

In opposition to all this, it may be urged that sickness and death have never yet arisen from domestic interments in Boston. But shall we continue to transgress merely because we have not yet suffered for our imprudence? Will not the same cause, when sufficiently concentrated, produce the same disasters here or elsewhere? Or is that succession of events supposed to be connected as causes and effects to be severed, in order to make a way for our escape (Coffin, 1823, p.21).

By 1825, Dr. Bigelow had recruited friends from the community of Cambridge, a suburb of Boston, to consider the siting of a garden cemetery. In 1829, he partnered with the Massachusetts Horticulture Society, given the mutual interest in the improvement of public grounds to promote public health; thus, by 1831, the Mount Auburn Cemetery was open to the public as a park and burial ground (French, 1974).

The 72-acre cemetery site was chosen based on the Romanticized notions of nature embodied in the rolling hills and wooded features of the land. The cemetery boasted lakes, lush foliage, meandering footpaths, and cart-paths to accommodate the funeral procession. Upon entry to the cemetery, the processional and casual visitor was greeted by none other than a grand gate stylized as Egyptian-Revival, given the ancient Egyptian culture's millennium-old influence of cross-cultural ways of death.

The naturalism embodied within Mount Auburn was a product of deliberate design, as it spoke to the contemporary educational and artistic interest in Romanticist aesthetic and philosophy. The roots of Romanticism were grounded in the juxtaposition of the urban landscape and natural landscape. It was believed that the urban bred corruption, social chaos, and aesthetic bareness, while the rural evoked harmony, continuity, and moral improvement (French, 1974). As a result, the passive use of Mount Auburn as a natural landscape was the inspiration of poetry and essays; as an Englishman wrote after touring Mount Auburn, "Cemeteries are all the 'rage'; people lounge in them and use them (as their tastes are inclined) for walking, making love, weeping, sentimentalizing, and everything in short (Colman, 2007, p.110)."

The proliferate interest in Romanticism and idealized natural landscapes catalyzed an American interest in the West; the interest was at the forefront of Manifest Destiny, and the mission of the earliest forefathers to redeem the westward nation as an agrarian society in the face of the urban-industrial east. Romanticism, as embodied in Mount Auburn Cemetery, was the foundation for a growing landscape conscious American culture that would later lead to the preservation of naturalist landscapes, the parks movement, and the creation of National Parks (Bender, 1975).

In examining the historical context of urban cemeteries at a macro-level, it can be deduced that the creation of the Pere-Lachaise was the inception of a universal reconceptualization of death and landscape that is present in cities throughout the world today. Like the Osiris Bed, the Pere-Lachaise is more than an evolved symbol of burial – it is a symbol that represents a significant shift in the core socio-cultural understanding of death as rooted in a *mélange* of cross-cultural spirituality, rational public policy, and Romantic philosophical thought with regard to the place of mankind in nature. The Pere-Lachaise is the first of the modern cemetery, and stands largely as symbol of a citizenry that placed public health above spiritual health; a proactive government that successfully married land use policy with public health; a landscape that embodies reverence for both the living and the dead; and finally, a departure from embalming as a stale symbol of the preservation of the soul, and instead proper burial as a necessity for the preservation of man's quality of life.





DISSOCIATION & COMMERCIALIZATION

Dissociation from Death

The first public record of death advertised as a business venture can be traced to 1768. Blanch White operated a business in New York City that specialized in upholstery and undertaking, advertising in the newspaper, “Funerals furnishe’d with all things necessary and proper Attendance as in England (Mitford, 1968, p.191).” This record is a bit of an anomaly, considering the profession of undertaking did not come into public consciousness until the early Nineteenth Century. However, into the early-to-mid 1800s, the profession grew in tandem with the proliferation of rural cemeteries; undertaking included the “layers of the dead,” cabinet-makers (casket makers), sextons, and liverymen. Each provided services to aid the living in preparing the body for interment (Mitford, 1968).

Given the broad American interest in the Romantic ideal, and declarations of Yosemite Park and Yellowstone Park as preserved National Parks in 1864 and 1872, respectively, the idea of embalming the deceased was a concept of Egyptian antiquity; eternal preservation ran antithetically to the Rural Cemetery Movement and the overarching Romanticist ideals that were driving the agrarian-oriented society. However, during the Civil War (1861–1864), the practice of embalming was adopted as means of sending fallen soldiers back home to their families; “blood, which decomposes rapidly, was replaced with anything that didn’t. Often it was whiskey (Weisman, 2007, p.303).” The purpose of preservation of the soldiers’ bodies, to efficiently transport the decedent home for burial before decomposition, differed greatly with that of the ancient Egyptian culture, which embalmed as a means to preserve the soul.

Though embalming was widely introduced and used throughout the Civil War, it was not embraced by the American public until the 1880s. Undertakers only began to see the value of embalming in large part out of lobbying by casket manufacturers. The casket manufacturers introduced the concept of preservation chemicals as a means of transforming the profession to an industry, though urged the undertakers to sell the practice of embalming publicly as peace of mind for the family in transporting the body to the cemetery, staving off decomposition so the deceased could be viewed for an extended period of time, and preservation of health.

The first school dedicated to corporeal preservation, The Clarke School of Embalming, was founded in 1882 by Joseph H. Clarke, a casket salesman from Cincinnati. The following year, the Rochester School of Embalming was founded by Dr. Auguste Renouard; in 1878, had published *The Undertaker’s Manual*, the first book dedicated to embalming in the United States, which was used as the primary text for study in both embalming schools (Smith, 2010). Each of the schools placed importance on the technique of embalming as honed by practitioners since the Civil War. Though, the pedagogical structure of the programs placed the gravest emphasis on an historical understanding of embalming as rooted in the ancient Egyptian precedent. The practitioners believed that a firm grasp of the historical precedent of ancient embalming equipped the funeral service professional with a body of knowledge to adequately justify the practice of modern embalming in the face of dissent, all

despite the shallow and materialistic reasoning for re-introducing an unnecessary ancient practice to a modern culture. It is no coincidence that the primary manufacturer of embalming fluid in this time was known as “The Egyptian Chemical Company (Smith, 2010).”

Wakes and funerals often took place in the home prior to transport of the body to the cemetery. As a result, if the family chose to have the deceased embalmed, the process would have to take place in the home. A recollection of such house-calls is described by Thomas Kearns, a third-generation embalmer in *Rest In Peace, A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home* (2003):

The body was embalmed on the bed... Just to make things more effective the embalmer would sometimes bring his own folding board. The embalmer had to work very, very neatly embalming in somebody’s bedroom. Opposed to the modern embalming room if you had a problem or accident it would be easy to scrub down a porcelain table. You had to be a neat worker like a surgeon. They didn’t work with a surgical gown. My father embalmed generally in his high button shirt and tie as a gentleman and not as some type of worker... He’d put a wide rubber sheet under the body and over the wooden board he brought along, and embalmed the body... you could lay the body out in the best room they had which was generally the front room in the flat where kids didn’t go unless it was Christmas or their birthday or something like that. It had the best furniture and very often was not used for weeks at a time (Laderman, 2003, p. 17).”

In the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, undertakers and embalmers were offering services in their own parlors; this service, which involved the transport of the decedent from his or her home to the embalmer’s parlor, then subsequent transport to the cemetery for burial, gave advent to the concept of the modern funeral home. In fact, in the late Nineteenth Century, the cities of Chicago and Baltimore built special electric rail funeral trollies, operating on the cities’ railways, to transport the decedent and mourners to the cemeteries outside the city. It was in the 1920s that the motorized hearse was introduced by Crane and Breed, allowing for more expedient transport of the corpse (“Going Out in Style,” 2014). In 1927, the executive secretary of the National Funeral Directors Association communicated the state of the business at the annual convention:

The undertaking parlors of old (in the home of the decedent) have been replaced by the funeral home. The rolling stock of funeral director has been changed from hideous monstrosities to veritable palaces on wheels... The astounding part of this funeral service business is the mushroom growth of funeral directors and funeral homes. In 1890, there were 9,891 funeral directors, while in 1920 there were 24,469. This is in spite of that fact that the death rate per year has dropped from 19.6 per 1,000 population in 1890 to 12.1 per 1,000 population in 1920 (Lamers, 2010, p. 31).

The “mushroom growth” would continue rapidly, and as such, must be viewed through the socio-cultural and socio-economic lens of simultaneous American technological advancement. The beginning of the Nineteenth Century saw a modernization of American ways of life, particularly the advancement of modern medicine and the creation of medical institutions. The presence of medical institutions played a pivotal role in the disassociation of death from the home; those sick or near death were taken from their homes to hospitals for care, and most often died in the hospital. It was from the hospital that the undertaker would retrieve the decedent, eliminating the need to visit the home for preparation or embalming, or even hold the wake and funeral in the home. In fact, in some instances, the city ambulance service was operated by the funeral home and the motorized hearse was used as an ambulance, given the same amount an anthropomorphic space was required for transport; in many cases, should the ill die, the need for the middle-man was eliminated¹. In a sense, this can be attributed to a sterilization of the process of dying. In removing the presence of death from the home, where the corpse was once laid in the front parlor of home, there was a removal of death from the living-human conscience.

The impact of modern medicine on the growth of the funeral industry was only compounded by the introduction of the availability of the individual automobile – in tandem with the motorized hearse – and improvement of public sanitation. The automobile aided in a human disassociation from nature, and thus eroded the Romantic attachment to nature that was once the barrier to embalming. Further, improved public sanitation, by means of domestic indoor plumbing in post-World War suburban homes, sewer and septic systems, and wastewater treatment, brought cleanliness to the forefront of public thought. Cleanliness, after all, was a primary concern for the preservation of public health, as emphasized by Coffin in *Dangers and Duties of Sepulture: or Security for the Living with Respect for the Dead* (1823).

These levels of dissociation created by technological advancements only served to benefit the mushroom economic growth of the funeral industry. Not only could the undertaker use the argument of preservation of public health and sanitation as touchstone for selling the funeral, but given the number of unique services offered under the single roof of the funeral home, the funeral could be sold to the public as need-based, and the disproportionate ratio of undertakers to deaths per 1,000 could be justified in an inflation of cost. The Preferred Funeral Directors International explains the scope-of-services provided to the public by the funeral professional:

1 As a child, I spent time at Curry Funeral Home, where my father worked. Curry Funeral Home was family owned for many years by the Curry Family. One of the many stories that Ms. Kay Curry would tell would be about her father, who operated the ambulance service and hearse service out of the funeral home; when business was slow, but there was an emergency that required an ambulance, Ms. Curry said that her father would joke about “driving them around until they needed a hearse.”

The American public receives the services of employees and proprietor alike, nine and one half days of labor for every funeral handled, they receive the use of automobiles and hearses, a building including a chapel and other rooms that require maintenance, insurance, taxes and licenses, and depreciation, as well as heat in the winter, cooling in the summer, light and water... it would be necessary for one man to work two forty hour weeks to complete a funeral service. This is coupled by an additional forty hours of service required by members of other local allied professions, including the work of the cemeteries newspapers, and of course, the most important of all, the service of your clergyman. These some 120 hours of labor are the basic value on which the cost of funerals rests ("The Undertaker's Racket," 1963).

Though the modernization of American culture was advantageous to the economic growth of the funeral industry, the benefits were inadvertent and were a reflection of socio-cultural advancement; the undertaker simply acted as an opportunist. However, the religious, political, and psychological maneuvering by professionals in the industry were careful capitalist calculations to advance the profession and create a vision of the undertaker in the public eye as a necessity in the promotion of piety and public health in death.

Commercialization and the Funeral Home

Funeral homes were just that – homes. Given the personal nature of the profession, and the history of American funeral services taking place in the home, the funeral home was often a remodeled house that encompassed the emotional familiarity of a "home", and the sterility of a hospital necessary to carry out the embalming process. The advancement of indoor plumbing as a product of modernization made it possible to retrofit houses with sterile embalming and preparation rooms; the plumbing aided in cleaning the body, and septic systems provided a place to hold the drained blood from the corpse.

In many cases, the funeral home incorporated a chapel into the structure in place of transporting the body to a church for the funeral service; if there was no chapel, it was not uncommon for the funeral home to be located adjacent to a church. There was an inherent bond between the church and the funeral home, given what was oft perceived as the entanglement of religion and spirituality with death and the funeral; offering the service of the clergy was a common practice in the funeral business. The bond was only strengthened by the fact that many undertakers raised their families in the funeral home. As such, the clergy often saw the undertaker as a family-oriented, community business person that offered specialized services to members of the church at their most emotionally and spiritually raw times. The undertaker honed this bond, and as a result the funeral home often thrived from the support given to the business by the religious leaders when members of the church passed away.

Moreover, the undertaker leaned on political rhetoric and legal manipulation to enhance the validity of the

profession in the public sphere. With a honed image of professional care, rooted in an expertise gained only from specialized education in technique, history, religion, and public health, undertakers were adept in justifying the necessity of the funeral service industry. Lobbying state governments proved to be successful in protecting the service profession through the formal establishment of licensure and examination boards; “many state laws and legal cases of the period focused on one particularly disturbing fact of death: corpses were dirty and dangerous (Laderman, 2003, p. 70).” In one court ruling detailed in the book, *The Law of Cadavers and of Burial and Burial Places*, author Percival Jackson quotes the ruling:

The care of dead human bodies and the disposition of them by burial or otherwise is so closely related to the health and general welfare of the community that the business of caring for and disposing of such bodies may be regulated by license and special regulations under the general police power of the state (Jackson, 1950, pp.440-441).

Education, licensure, and certification by the state served to protect the profession from any lingering public dissent, and forced even higher pedagogical and professional standards within the industry. Further, with a basis of licensure in the legal perception that corpses were public health hazards, licensure ensured the public perception that the profession upheld the integrity of public health and general quality of life.

With religion and legality by its side, the undertaker began to tout the psychological advantages of embalming and funeral care; undertakers were regularly interjecting psychological factors into the basis of legitimizing the profession. For the funeral director, embalming the body was simply the coup to a showing of the body - a final presentation of the painted and pruned corpse, laid out in the casket for the bereft to view at the wake and funeral. The funeral director touted the viewing as an aid in the grieving process, and as such, embalming and viewing became a cornerstone in development and advertisement of “grief therapy (Mitford, 1963)” as yet another service offered by the funeral director. In a 1950 public relations article produced by the American Institute of Funeral Directors, advice was given to the funeral director with regard to advertisement:

Mortuary advertising, by its very nature, is most effectively done with emotional appeal – the appeal to the heart. Think of yourself – not as selling a funeral service – but as a giver of genuine friendliness and helpfulness. Picture your place of business – not as just a funeral home – but as a place where people come to you for solace in the hour of darkness (Laderman, 2003, p.74).

Subsequently, advertorial pamphlets by the NFDA were produced and given to funeral service professionals to distribute in their local communities, touting the necessity for embalming as “preservation, restoration of life-like appearance, and compliance with sanitary and public health requirements (Laderman, 2003, p.74)” and further described the funeral director as a “philosopher, who, because of his calling, has caught glimpse of the

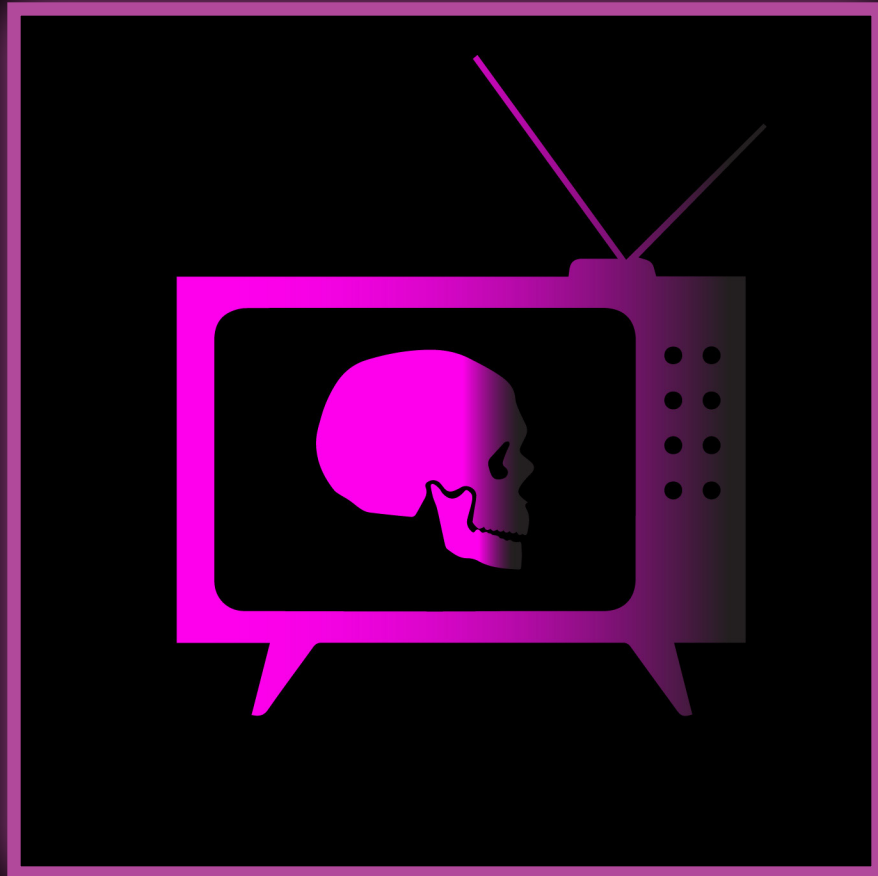
Force which is responsible for existence and the Plan through which it operates. He is never an unbeliever because no man in such intimate contact with the experience of death can be an unbeliever (Laderman, 2003, p.74).”

By the Mid-Century, the funeral service industry had built itself to be a profession that stood firmly on historical tradition to offer services that avowed spiritual, psychological, and public health in the face of death. As Edward Martin stated in his 1947 book, *The Psychology of Funeral Service*:

Our American burial customs were not devised by funeral directors or by anyone else. They grew up over thousands of years, stemming from many different religions, lands, and ages... they are deeply rooted and founded on tradition... Even though some such customs may seem pagan or grotesque to an outsider, let him not forget that these customs afford comfort to those persons who are the most concerned directly with the funeral, the heartbroken family of the deceased. This sentiment as expressed in the reverence shown the dead is the spirit which has brought about present-day American funeral standards (Martin, 1947, p.121)² .

² Note: This quote is frequently used in the writings of those who are offering critique of the funeral industry. It is common to both the writings of Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death* and Gary Laderman's *Rest in Peace*, both used for research in this thesis.





THE ROSE COLORED CHANEL SUIT

Grief Therapy and the Television

The romantic relationship the modern funeral director has with his own abilities is deeply rooted in the well-constructed illusion of the modern funeral service industry, especially embalming, as a necessity for the sake of spiritual, psychological, and public health. Breaking through the rhetorical flourish of illusion is important in an understanding of how the modern funeral service industry and re-acquaintance with embalming has in fact diluted historical precedent to force a relationship with spirituality, construct psychology, and usurp public health for the sake of capitalistic venture.

The funeral director actively asserts that modern embalming was established from ancient Egyptian tradition to preserve the body ever-lasting as a memory for the living. When a comparison is made between ancient and modern reasoning and technique, the assertion is absurd at best. In the United States, the dead is “whisked off to a funeral parlor and is in short order, sprayed, sliced, pierced, pickled, trussed, trimmed, creamed, waxed, painted, rouged and neatly dressed – transformed from a common corpse into a Beautiful Memory Picture (Mitford, 1963, p.43).” This form of embalming, which involves circulating formaldehyde, borax, phenol, alcohol, glycerin and water through the corpse, is said to be established out of the Egyptian precedent; indeed, “the American method of arterial embalming is... more sanitary, more satisfactory and more scientific than that of any other kind. It adds but another laurel to the crown of inventiveness, ingenuity, and scientific research which the world universally accords to us... In fact, there is no profession on record which has made such rapid advancement in this country as embalming (Laderman, 2003, p.14).”

The ingenuity of modern embalming lends itself to the notion that the primary aesthetic achievement of the funeral director is long-term preservation of the deceased. However, the permanence of an embalmed corpse remains one of the greatest consumer myths of the funeral industry. The preservation of the corpse relies directly on the dilution of the embalming chemicals, as well as temperature and humidity of the surrounding environment, both in the preparation room of the funeral home and the final resting place of the body in either the cemetery. The more dilute the embalming fluid, the more natural the skin of the corpse looks; consequently, an embalmer typically uses just enough fluid to ensure the corpse will be preserved through only the funeral service (Mitford, 1963).

Conversely, “to the ancient embalmer permanent preservation was of prime importance and the maintenance of a natural color and textures a matter of minor concern; to us the creation and maintenance of a lifelike naturalness is the major objective and post-burial preservation is incidental. The Egyptian embalmer’s subjects have remained preserved for thousands of years – while the modern embalmer sometimes has to pray for favorable climactic conditions to help him maintain satisfactory preservation for a couple days... If we were to approach the average embalmer and tell him that the body he had just embalmed would have to be kept on display for a month or two during the summer, what would his reaction be? To fall in a dead faint from fright,

no doubt (Mitford, 1963, p.55).”

The perceived impermanence of modern embalming in comparison to ancient embalming has long been a touchstone in the critique of the modern funeral industry that the true purpose of embalming lies not in preservation, but with the facilitation of an open-casket funeral. T.E. Schier, former president of the Settegest-Kopf Funeral Home, suggests that bereaved families purchase finer caskets because they believe the casket and vault will protect the diligent work of the embalmer; consequently, “the price of a funeral is arrived at by marking up the wholesale casket cost anywhere from four hundred to as much as nine hundred percent or higher (Mitford, 1963, p.54).”

Describing the modern funeral business, Clarence G. Strub writes in *The Principles and Practices of Embalming*, “A funeral service is a social function at which the deceased is the guest of honor and the center of attraction... A poorly prepared body in a beautiful casket is just as incongruous as a young lady appearing at a party in a costly gown and with her hair in curlers (Strub, 1967, p.68). In this excerpt, the analogous comparison of a beautiful casket to a costly gown effectively describes the chief motive of the funeral industry – to sell a gloriously well-prepared package to the bereft family. Expounding upon this logic, T.E. Schier explains:

Certainly, the incentive to select quality merchandise would be materially lessened if the body of the deceased were not decontaminated and made presentable... The majority of the American people purchase caskets, not for the limited solace from their beauty prior to the funeral service, or for the impression they create before their friends and associates. Instead, they full-heartedly believe that the casket and the vault give protection to that which has been accomplished by the embalmer (Mitford, 1963, p.54).

Much of the funeral industry relies on the sale of caskets to turn a sizeable profit from the funeral service. In 2014, the median embalming cost was \$695, compared to the median casket cost of \$2,500. Should the family choose to purchase a concrete vault for the casket, there would be an additional median cost of \$1,500; with additional services, the median funeral cost is \$8,500 (“Trends and Statistics”, 2015).

Despite this heavy reliance on the sale of caskets, the efficacy of the caskets has come into question following observation of their states in processes of exhumation. Dr. Jesse Carr, professor of pathology at the University of California-Medical School, writes of the state of an exhumed body and casket: “An exhumed embalmed body is a repugnant, moldy, foul-looking object. It’s not the image of one who has been loved... the body itself may be intact, as far as contours and so on; but the silk lining of the casket is all stained with body fluids, the wood is rotting, and the body is covered with mold... The caskets, even the solid mahogany ones that cost thousands of dollars, just disintegrate (Mitford, 1963, p.58-59).

With regard to embalmed corpses placed in hermetically-sealed metal caskets, as opposed to disintegrative wooden caskets, Dr. Carr continues:

“If you seal up a casket so it is more or less airtight, you seal in anaerobic bacteria, the kind that thrive in an airless atmosphere, you see. These are the putrefactive bacteria, and the results of their growth are pretty horrible. You are a lot better off to be buried in an aerobic atmosphere; otherwise the putrefactive bacteria take over. In fact, you are really better off with a shroud (i.e. no embalming), and no casket at all (Mitford, 1963, p.58-59).”

The evidence of the shortcoming of value of both modern embalming and caskets with regard to eternal preservation and protection is a reflection of the inconsistencies within the funeral industry, and the unstable ground upon which it was founded; “if embalming is taken out of the funeral, then viewing the body will also be lost. If viewing is lost, then the body itself will not be central to the funeral. If the body is taken out of the funeral, then what does the funeral director have to sell (Mitford, 1963, p.64)? Despite these inefficacies and inconsistencies, the funeral service industry readily maintains its core as a needs-based profession is grounded in the objectives of psychological and public health. As formerly reference, the funeral director sells the notion that the bereft will heal from grief and improve psychological health by viewing the embalmed and painted corpse bathed in rose-colored light, though, the psychological health defense of embalming has come into question and been refuted by health professionals outside of the funeral industry. As explained by Professor Edmond H. Volkart of Stanford University:

I know of no evidence to support the view that ‘public’ viewing of an embalmed body is somehow ‘therapeutic’ to the bereaved. Certainly there are no statistics known to me comparing the outcomes of such a process in the United States with outcomes of England where public viewing is seldom done. Indeed, since the public viewing of the corpse is part and parcel of a whole complex of events surrounding funerals, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain either its therapeutic or contra-therapeutic effect. The phrase ‘grief therapy’ is not a common usage in psychiatry, so far as I know. That the loss of any loved object frequently leads to depressions and malfunctioning of the organism is, of course, well known; what is not well known or understood are the conditions under which some kind of intervention should be made, or even the nature of the intervention. My general feeling is that the phenomena of grief and mourning have appeared in human life long before there were ‘experts’ of any kind (psychiatric, clerical, etc.) and somehow most, if not all, of the bereaved managed to survive (Mitford, 1963, p.65).”

Despite push-back from some mental health professionals, the funeral industry has successfully sold grief therapy for more than half of the Twentieth Century, a success due in part to the disassociation of death that occurred with simultaneous technological advancement of the early century. Since the general public removed death from the forefront of public consciousness, the concept of viewing the body to improve psychological health of the living and to heal grief was widely received as viable. As a result, the bereft were willing to pay the exorbitant fees associated with a funeral in order to view the body.

As the *Funeral Direction and Management Manual of 1947* suggests, funeral directors understood this vulnerability as “grief stricken people cannot reason (Laderman, 2003, p.108)” and were encouraged to give way to the demands of the bereft for an extravagant funeral, even if the funeral director knew the funeral would present a financial burden. This susceptibility was explored by Charles McCabe of the *San Francisco Chronicle* when we wrote:

The grief therapist is undoubtedly ashamed of his job, despite the pay, because fondling stiff is not a fashionable thing to do. But the customer... has his share in all this. The grief therapist conducts his business along the time-honored custom of giving the customer what he wants... In the death business, what the customer/client wants is anything but death (McCabe, 1965).

The insinuation of large-scale cultural denial of death is largely reinforced by the disassociation of death that came with the advent of the business of death.

When U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, the American public coalesced in universal grief, and was forced to confront death on a scale that touched all corners of the cultural landscape. The fact most homes had televisions, a recent technological achievement, allowed for public process of grieving. The live-stream news coverage of the President’s assassination, the removal of his casket from Air Force One, and the famous blood-stained pink Chanel suit of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, all served to reinforce the espoused concept of grief therapy; Lady Bird Johnson recalls of Mrs. Kennedy on Air Force One as she stood alongside her husband’s casket:

I went in to see Mrs. Kennedy. Oh, it was a very, very hard thing to do. She said, “Oh what if I had not been there. I am so glad I was there.” And her right glove, that immaculate woman, it was caked with blood, her husband’s blood. She said, “I want them to see what they have done to Jack (“Jackie Stands Silently By,” 2013).”

The visuals associated with the assassination brought cultural death into the home for the first time in nearly a century; each person affected by the death of the President was afforded to opportunity to see his final moments,

his funeral, and confirm the reality of a universal American tragedy. This moment of solidarity was the apex of the American culture's resonance with grief therapy, and immediately following the death of President Kennedy, The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) began to widely tout Dr. Edgar Jackson's grief therapy book *For the Living*. In the book, Jackson professes the important role of psychology in grief therapy. With regard to viewing the body of the deceased, Jackson wrote: "A sorrowing look into the fact of death confirms the trust of what has happened – truth that our minds and hearts desperately wish not to accept. Indeed, this moment often starts the process we call 'wise grief management (Jackson, 1963, p.58)."

The televised broadcast of the President's funeral gave the American public that "sorrowful look into death." Though, as the decade progressed, the nation was confronted with sensationalist news media that televised death in the same manner of President Kennedy on a daily basis. The nation was in a moment of domestic and international turmoil, and each day families were shown footage of the inner-city riots of the Civil Rights Movement; the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Robert Kennedy; and the bodies of slain Vietnam soldiers being wheeled from airplanes were some of the most prominent of the televised tragedies. Individually, these were highly political deaths that touched specific social groups, and collectively they stirred an undoubted undercurrent of cultural anxiety regarding death and one's own mortality. The ricochet of death broadcast to families each night through their televisions did not bring about a socio-cultural coalescing in grief, but it served to catalyze a public discourse on death. Because of the television, death was once again laid out in the front of the living room in the home, and was once again undeniable.

The discourse surrounding televised violence and death not only brought about a socio-cultural dialogue, but interjected popular culture in the dialogue surrounding death. From the television set families gathered around each night for news and entertainment – watching popular shows like *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-1965), *The Munsters* (1964-1966), or *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971) – people were not just discussing death and violence as it was presented as news, but were also increasingly confronted with the morbid as means of entertainment.

In 1968, George Romero released the film *Night of the Living Dead*; in the movie Barbara and Johnny go visit their father's grave in a rural cemetery in Pennsylvania when bizarre events begin to occur. A strange man attacks Barbara, but she escapes him and flees to a farmhouse where she finds a corpse. Monsters confront her, but they are chased away by her other companion Ben. As night falls, they discover that mass murders have taken place across the Eastern seaboard, and the murdered have been reanimated from the dead and are eating the flesh of the living (Romero, 1968). The film was one of the highest grossing of the year, unsurprising – it was released to a public that was questioning death. The film served as a reminder that death lives past the viewing and burial of the corpse – burial innately means that death remains as a physical body in the natural landscape. As media studies historian Jonathan Crane explained of the connection between *Night of the Living Dead* and a cultural dissociation with death and the corpse:

“The most menacing piece of waste, far more threatening than any mere bodily excretion, is the corpse... The corpse must be packed away if we are to survive the psychic damage inflicted by the dead; however, even if the object must be removed, we simply cannot treat the flesh of our loved ones like just any disposable bit of waste. We must reconcile our desire to stow the dead with the equally powerful need to forget the beloved soul that once animated the cold meat... When we take account of our chary connection to the dead, we must consider our relationship to the monster. What is a monster other than a reanimated corpse? We may turn our back on the dear departed and hurry home once the coffin lid is strewn with dirt, but the horror film returns us back to the dead, and forces us to confront that which we had hoped to confine to the quiet grave. (Crane, 1994).”

Like the symbols preceding – the Osiris Bed and the Pere Lachaise – television and film represent a shift in the socio-cultural understanding of death in modern America. Where television began a conversation about death, film brought about a wide-spread cultural re-association with death. *Night of the Living Dead* brought hidden corpses from beneath the soil, confronted the audience, and dared ask the simple question, “What does it really mean to bury the dead in our urban and rural landscapes?”

Physical Corpse / Physical Landscape

Confrontation of what is confined to the grave lends itself to a re-association with death in both the metaphorical and physical senses, warranting an examination of the embalmed corpse and its place in the physical landscape. As previously detailed, the funeral director sells the concept of viewing the corpse before burial as positive “grief therapy,” but further, by embalming the corpse for viewing, the living is contributing to overall public health by mitigating the risks associated with an un-embalmed corpse; “the primary purpose of embalming, all funeral men will tell you, is a sanitary one, the disinfecting of the body so it is no longer a health menace (Mitford, 1963, p.55).”

The funeral industry has woven a tale of embalming and burial, in their modern sterilized and compartmentalized forms, as mutually necessary for the improvement of psychological and public health. But with such abrupt re-association with death caused by television and film, and evidence that suggests that embalming for the sake of viewing the body is not roundly proven to make an impact on the grieving process, the natural question to ask is how the sterilization of death has in fact been of benefit to public and environmental health.

Within an assessment of the detrimental health effects mitigated by the industry, it is necessary to closely examine independent reports conducted in recent years that patently refute the public health concerns that the funeral industry touts as a major reason for the necessity of embalming and burial. In fact, some evidence

suggests there are detrimental environmental effects caused by the industry, due in part to the seepage of formaldehyde from the corpses into the soil, as well as corrosion of metals and processed woods used in the casket's construction.

Following a governmental review of embalming in the state of Arizona, the Auditor General's office issued a report concluding "public health risks associated with the natural disposal of human remains are minimal;" the Canadian Health Minister strengthens this declaration by adding, "Embalming serves no useful purpose in preventing the transmission of communicable diseases" (Mitford, 1963, p.63). Despite these assertions, in the United States, 800,000 gallons of the formaldehyde are buried in the earth as a result of embalming each year. A mere ten acres of cemetery land can contain upward of 1,000 tons of steel, 20,000 tons of concrete, and enough wood to build 40 single family houses (Sherman, 2012).

The chemical formaldehyde is an animal carcinogen, and has been known to cause "squamous cell carcinomas in nasal cavities of laboratory rats and male mice; formaldehyde can exert its mutagenic and carcinogenic effects by both damaging DNA and inhibiting its repair (Chan, Scafe, & Emami, 2014)." The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) "considers formaldehyde to be a probable human carcinogen, cancer-causing agent ("EPA Cancer Classification," 2015)" and has ranked it in EPA Group B1, stating there is limited evidence that the probable carcinogen causes cancer ("EPA Cancer Classification," 2015). However, the EPA does not formally recognize that formaldehyde is found in embalmed human bodies, or cite potential outdoor sources of emission, contrary to the reported volume of 800,000 gallons of formaldehyde being using in embalming annually ("An Update on Formaldehyde," 2015).

Though the EPA does not recognize formaldehyde is found in embalmed corpses, the United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) outlines guidelines to uphold safety and manage risks associated with handling formaldehyde; more than 2 million United States workers, including anatomists, pathologists, and professionals in the funeral industry are exposed to formaldehyde. Per OSHA Regulations, Subpart Toxic and Hazardous Substances (OSHA, 2015):

1910.1048(c)

Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) -

1910.1048(c)(1)

TWA: The employer shall assure that no employee is exposed to an airborne concentration of formaldehyde which exceeds 0.75 parts formaldehyde per million parts of air (0.75 ppm) as an 8-hour TWA.

1910.1048(c)(2)

Short Term Exposure Limit (STEL): The employer shall assure that no employee is exposed to an airborne concentration of formaldehyde which exceeds two parts formaldehyde per million parts of air (2 ppm) as a 15-minute STEL.

1910.1048(e)(1)(i)

The employer shall establish regulated areas where the concentration of airborne formaldehyde exceeds either the TWA or the STEL and post all entrances and access ways with signs bearing the following legend:

DANGER

FORMALDEHYDE

MAY CAUSE CANCER

CAUSES SKIN, EYE, AND RESPIRATORY IRRITATION

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY

1910.1048(j)(4)

Formaldehyde-contaminated waste and debris resulting from leaks or spills shall be placed for disposal in sealed containers bearing a label warning of formaldehyde's presence and of the hazards associated with formaldehyde. The employer shall ensure that the labels are in accordance with paragraph (m) of this section.

The 2009, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) released "Mortality From Lymphohematopoietic Malignancies and Brain Cancer Among Embalmers Exposed to Formaldehyde;" the study background states "excess mortality from lymphohematopoietic malignancies, in particular myeloid leukemia, and brain cancer has been found in surveys of anatomists, pathologists, and funeral industry workers, all of whom may have worked with formaldehyde (Hauptmann, et al. 2009, p.1696)." The study is the first of its kind to draw a correlation between long-term exposure to formaldehyde (<20 years) in the funeral industry and increased mortality from myeloid leukemia, with results that found "embalming was most strongly and statistically significantly associated with risk for myeloid leukemia. Statistically significant trends were observed with number of years of embalming and peak formaldehyde exposure... When myeloid leukemia was excluded from the analysis of lymphohematopoietic malignancies of nonlymphoid origin, embalming was not associated with risk for the remaining diseases (ie, monocytic leukemia, polycythemia vera, or myelofibrosis) (Hauptmann, et al. 2009, p.1702)."

The ultimate conclusion states that "duration of embalming practice and related formaldehyde exposures in the funeral industry were associated with statistically significantly increased risk for mortality from myeloid

leukemia (Hauptmann, et al. 2009, p.1703).” The risks to workers can be extrapolated to indicate public risks should formaldehyde from embalmed corpses leach into groundwater or achieve atmospheric exposure. An earlier report, “Cemeteries and Groundwater: An Examination of the Potential Contamination of Groundwater by Preservatives Containing Formaldehyde,” published in 1992 by the Water Resources Branch of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, found groundwater down gradient from the subject Woodhouse Cemetery contained trace amounts of the formaldehyde. Further, the report found “the concentration of nitrate-nitrogen exceeded the Ontario Drinking Water Objective in groundwater samples collected at Woodhouse Cemetery. The sources of nitrates at this site were not investigated further, and may be the result of nitrate loadings from other practices (Chan, et al., 2014).” Nitrate-nitrogen, while necessary for the healthy plant and animal life, in excess quantities can be hazardous to environmental and human health. Overload volumes in groundwater can lead to algae growth, and through chemical reaction, increase the quantity of ammonia in the atmosphere. If introduced to drinking water, excess nitrogen can turn to nitrite in the human digestive system, targeting hemoglobin of the bloodstream, inhibiting blood from carrying oxygen to body cells. Unlike formaldehyde, the EPA regulates the amount of nitrate-nitrogen in groundwater with 10 mg/L standard as the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for nitrate-nitrogen and 1 mg/L for nitrite-nitrogen for regulated public water systems (“Nitrates and Nitrites in Drinking Water,” 2014).

Formaldehyde, nitrogen, and other groundwater contaminants potentially released from decomposition are not the only worry with modern burial practices; harmful chemicals released from the corrosion of metals and woods on caskets are also cause for environmental and public health concern. In 2012, researchers from the University of South Africa studied the potential mineral contamination of soil from the corrosion of caskets; mineral concentrations from soil samples were collected from the Zandfontein Cemetery in Gauteng, South Africa and compared with samples collected from outside of the cemetery, the possibility of contamination calculating ratio of on-to-off site mineral content. Caskets used for burial in the Zandfontein Cemetery are commonly sourced from manufacturers in the United States, used for burial in the United States, and regulated by Hazard Communication Standards set forth by the United States Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA); chemicals and metals commonly found in the production of caskets, including the paints and varnishes used in treating the woods and metals on the caskets, include titanium, chromium, copper, chromate copper arsenate (CCA), ammonium copper quaternary (ACQ), copper boron azole (CBA), lead, mercury, cadmium, and arsenic (Jonker & Olivier, 2012).

The study conclusion found higher amounts of “cesium, boron, manganese, titanium, cobalt, and nickel with ratios of 8:1 (Jonker & Olivier, 2012, p.3)” were found in the soil taken from within the cemetery compared to that taken from outside the cemetery. The ratio of mineral contamination corresponds with conclusions from the report “Inorganic Soil Contamination from Cemetery Leachate,” conducted in the state of Ohio, which found “data for zinc, copper, iron, lead, cobalt, and arsenic higher in the on-site samples compared to the

background off-site samples;” zinc, coppers, iron, and lead are metals from which most caskets are constructed. The final conclusion from the Zandfontein report found that “mineral composition of soils within the cemetery was significantly higher than those off-site and that the soils in the zones with the highest burial loads were more contaminated than in the less used parts of the cemetery. This indicates that (inorganic) burial loads have a direct impact on soil-mineral content and thus cemeteries can be regarded as anthropogenic sources of contamination (Jonker & Olivier, 2012, p.4).” As anthropogenic sources of contamination, cemeteries factually lend themselves to a definition as landfill, “in that a limited range of organic matter is covered by soil fill (WHO, 1992, p.8).

Modern cemeteries as landfills were studied in the 2011 report “Graveyards – Special Landfills,” which explains as introductory evidence:

Human bodies buried in graveyards may have accumulated substances and artefacts as result of food consumption, inhalation, or therapies (e.g., amalgam tooth fillings, artificial joints, cardiac pacemakers) during their lifetime. In addition, embalming the bodies can be associated with elevated levels of arsenic and formaldehyde. Furthermore, the wood used for coffins is typically treated with preservatives such as polyvinyl chloride, creosote or insecticides.

When corpses and grave contents decompose, decomposition products are released into the environment (e.g. gaseous products; CO, CO₂, CH₄; liquid products, biogenic amines like cadaverine and putrescine; NH₄, NO₃) or accumulate in the grave area. Artefacts like metal coffin fittings might contain heavy metals and the textiles used to clothe and bed the deceased are made of barely degradable polyester and are also treated with chemical moisture binders (Fiedler, 2012, p.92).

The studied cemetery found 27 of 40 graves to contain adipocere formation (Fiedler, 2012). Adipocere is a gray, waxy substance comprised of fatty tissue that is formed through the decomposition of soft tissue that was subject to moisture; as aforementioned, adipocere was used to make candles and soap following the corporeal exhumation of Cimetière de Saint-Innocents in Paris (Karmelek, 2011). Further, the graves contained caskets with “accompanying mattress textiles, clothing, plastic gloves, cardiac pacemakers, artificial joints, and injector needles (Fiedler, 2012, p.96).”

The introduction of corpses and inorganic material substantially disturbs and changes natural soil genesis, with the study stating that the found accumulation of inorganic and non-degradable substances, as well as toxic chemicals like formaldehyde, demonstrates that cemeteries can be perceived as a man-made landfill. The study notes the most relevant problem is with regard to land use and the accumulation of adipocere; a high

accumulation of adipocere renders local municipalities unable to reuse a grave for future burial purposes. However, it was further noted that ecological risk posed by adipocere is minimal, given natural mitigation in the ecological process aerobic environment of planted shrubs and trees degrading the adipocere for regenerative purposes (Fielder, 2012).

The study concluded by making the case for a reduction in the quantity of “potentially toxic and non-degradable substances used to bed and prepare the corpses, and replace them with environmentally fungicides and biological substances – particularly given the fact that the quantity of substances contained in the human body cannot be altered (Fiedler, 2012, p.96).” The conclusion further called for more scientific data collection to support or refute the “general statement that cemeteries pose an ecological risk (Fiedler, 2012, p.96).”

The presented evidence is not an indictment of the modern American funeral industry as an environmental savage. In fact, much of the found data is of no direct relation to the American funeral industry, due in part to the lack of existing data taken from studies conducted within the United States that either absolve or condemn the industry of malfeasance. It is indisputable, though, that circumstantial evidence suggests modern burial and embalming have been deemed to be ineffective with regard the industry-touted benefits of long-term corporeal preservation, grief therapy, and mitigation of public health risks. With complementary evidence pointing to conclusions that modern cemeteries are anthropogenic sources of contamination based on the volume of inorganic material and toxic substance introduced to the soil gradient, it is feasible to question how the modern funeral industry truly benefits the decedent, the bereft, and the overall natural and built environments. If there is a collective examination of the history of human embalming and burial, the answer is simple: it doesn't.

And that can only mean the time has come for another shift in a socio-cultural understanding of death, and an innovative Twenty-First Century reconceptualization of urban deaths-capes.



MAN{KIND}IFEST DESTINY

“I dared to strip man’s nature naked, to follow the evolution of those times and things that have disfigured him; I compared man-made man with natural man, and I discovered that his supposed improvement had generated all of his miseries. (Sheather, 2009, p. 23)”

Spanning man’s socio-cultural evolution across six millennia, human burial has evolved from the core spiritual and ecological belief of pre-dynastic Egyptian culture that the dead nourished the living through agricultural resurgence. From the earliest point in Egyptian history in which economic and political forces began to impress upon the built environment, these forces also began to impress upon the basic spiritual connectedness of life and death. The sacred natural process has eroded to the point that our modern world is so wildly disassociated from death that disposal of modern human remains is largely regarded as inorganic, and the landscapes where we lay our dead are conceptual landfills. Modern culture has been convinced through capitalist greed and political might that the biological return to the earth is unsanitary, and the only proper way to conduct human burial is through impediment of the ecological process, all while maintaining this ritual is antecedent to the modern world and deeply reflective of the spiritual ancient practice. Though, if we dare compare the intention of modern funereal practice with the intention of ancient funereal practice, we will quickly find the stark divergence lies in man’s attempt to innovate new ways of controlling the natural process, and in the process of control, encapsulated a body of toxic waste that has the potential to generate environment misery beyond comprehension.

Published science in condemnation of modern embalming and burial is indeed scarce. Environmental impact studies ranging from South Africa, Canada, Australia, and the United States are certainly helpful in making an argument against modern ways of handling death, though the scarcity of data and incestuous relationships among the studies can be perceived as shortsighted in making an effective case for large-scale burial reform akin to the Napoleonic Code and Rural Cemetery Movement. Despite this scarcity, the studies present evidence that conclude modern embalming and burial is innately harmful to the environment, holding the embodied potential to gravely affect ecological health through toxic chemical leachate into groundwater and mineral contamination of soils.

“In political or industrial opposition to this evidence, it may be urged that environmental sickness has yet arisen from domestic interments in modern America or elsewhere. But shall we continue to transgress merely because we have not yet suffered for our imprudence? Will not the cause, when sufficiently concentrated, produce an environmental disaster here or elsewhere? Or is that succession of events supposed to be connected as causes and effects to be severed, in order to make a way for our next economic innovation within the funeral industry?¹”

¹ The verbiage of this question was phrased using the thesis question and call to action by John Coffin in *Remarks on the Dangers and Duties of Sepulture, Or, Security for Living, with Respect and Repose for the Dead.*

The potential for detrimental environmental impacts can only be mitigated by yet another shift in socio-cultural understanding of death with regard to the intrinsic relationships among modern embalming, human burial, and the built environment. It is necessary that a culture of awareness be constructed to educate of the injurious effects of modern ways of death, and subsequently bring consciousness to a way of natural disposal that is safe and sanitary. Some ecologists and designers believe the most logical response to modern embalming lies in natural burial and The Natural Burial Movement – the promotion of human burial in naturalistic settings, free of embalming agents and caskets to allow decomposition take place naturally. The incorporation of natural burial sites in the urban form lies in a study of the origins of the movement as it began in the United Kingdom, an examination of current sites with regard to municipal code, and an interpretation of the existing code as it might apply to implementation at a larger metropolitan scale.

The Natural Burial Movement began in the United Kingdom, growing from a simple conversational idea by Ken West. West was appointed as Manager and Registrar of Carlisle Bereavement Services in 1983 as a 20-year veteran of cemetery maintenance. Through his conversations with bereft families feeling disenfranchised by the formality of cemeteries, he was led to him to ask the question, “if I could provide some form of tree burial, like a nature reserve... would that be better (Clayden, Green, Hockey, & Powell, 2015, p. 19)?” Thus, the concept of the natural cemetery was born.

In 1993, the first natural cemetery was established as native oak landscape, with a single oak tree marking each grave. As West stated at the time, “we’re going to be prescriptive... if you want to go in the woodland burial, the environment comes first... you cannot have a memorial on the grave. If you are not comfortable with that you must choose another option (Clayden, et al., 2015, p.19).” Though the cemetery initially allowed for interment of embalmed bodies in chipboard caskets, these practices were soon forbidden given the amount of scientific evidence that brought the potential harm of embalming to public consciousness.

Concurrently the 1992 World Health Organization Report “The Impact of Cemeteries on the Environment and Public Health” was released, detailing the findings from a study of corporeal decomposition by-product interaction with groundwater, with a specific focus on the varying soils types, pH balances, and chemical compounds found in saturated and unsaturated soils of cemeteries. The conclusions of the report were explicitly favorable to natural burial, stating of groundwater composition, “The principal mechanism for the transport of decomposition products is percolating water entering the groundwater. Many of the decomposition products (of human corpses) are identical to those naturally in the environment (WHO, 1992, p.5).” The report adds, “Infective viruses have been isolated directly from vegetable crops. Therefore, plants could possibly be used to remove some viruses and bacteria from the soil. The movement of bacteria and viruses is restricted physically

by the root system of the plants. Planting of trees and border plants should be encouraged around cemeteries to help decrease the movement off-site of bacteria and viruses in seepage water and rain water (WHO, 1992, p.9).” A final conclusion found “human corpses may cause groundwater pollution, not because of any specific toxicity they possess, but by (humans purposefully) increasing the concentrations of concentrations of naturally occurring organic and inorganic substances to a level sufficient to render groundwater unusable or unpotable (WHO, 1992, p.8).” The report laid out subsequent recommendations for soil thickness, grave spacing, and grave situation with regard to air and water access for consideration in developing future cemeteries.

Favorable scientific evidence led to the psychotherapist-founded National Death Centre (NDC), the NDC subsidiary Association of Natural Burial Grounds (ANBG), and the rapid proliferation of natural burial grounds throughout the United Kingdom. The social creed of the NDC was “the need for a natural death movement to parallel the natural child-birth movement and to spread the tenets of good hospice care to those dying of all causes (Clayden, et al., 2015, p.26).” The proliferation of natural burial grounds gave life to Natural Burial Movement, which quickly spread from the United Kingdom to the United States. By 2010, there were 207 natural burial grounds in the United Kingdom alone (Clayden, et al., 2015, p.28).

In 1998, Ramsey Creek Preserve in South Carolina opened as the first natural burial ground in the United States. Since, the Natural Burial Movement has spread throughout the United States, leading to the formation of the Green Burial Council (GBC), which has sanctioned 300 natural funeral and cemetery providers throughout the country (Clayden, et al., 2015, p.38). Further, the GBC developed Funeral Home and Cemetery Certification Standards to assess the ecological objectives of each provider. The Cemetery Certification Standards weighs the provider in six categories, including Customer Relations; Burial Practices; Site Planning; Care of Grounds; Operations and Management; and Preservation and Stewardship. Some select standards within each of the categories are the assurance of ecological assessment of baseline cemetery information; plans for dealing with unauthorized grave decoration and landscaping; limiting the size of memorial markers to preserve pastoral views; and operation in conjunction with local municipalities to ensure land use, property easement, and conservation policy (GBC Cemetery Standards, 2015). Zoning and land use for natural cemeteries within the United States lends itself to the pastoral, most located outside of urban centers in rural areas, upholding the historical siting as prescribed by the Rural Cemetery Movement, and the tenets of the Natural Burial Movement and GBC Certification Standards.

Glendale Memorial Nature Preserve, the site of the second natural cemetery in the United States, is the largest in the state of Florida. A preserve of 350 acres, its marketing advertorials boast of it bountiful countryside protected from “encroaching suburban development (Glendale Nature Preserve, 2016).” A landscape of pines and ponds, located within the preserve is the cemetery, a park which “beauty inspires all to ponder how they want their earthly remains to be returned to the nutritive cycles that perpetuate life (Glendale Nature Preserve, 2016).”

The acreage of the preserve is zoned as general agriculture (GA), adjacent to general commercial and institutional. General agriculture is defined in the Walton County zoning ordinance (Walton County Land Development Code, 2015) as:

Purpose. This mixed use district is intended to support rural development characterized by smaller-scale agricultural activities, including timber production and limited supporting commercial activities. Low density residential subdivision development is allowed subject to specific open space/clustering requirements (Walton County Land Development Code, 2015, pp.4-5).

Primary Uses Allowed. (1) Agricultural (2) Silvicultural (3) General Agricultural Residential (4) Functional Agriculture Related Non-Residential (5) Civic Uses (6) Reclaimed Water Disposal Facilities. The additional criteria and approval process subject to the requirements for major development provided in Chapter 11 of this Code (Walton County Land Development Code, 2015, pp.4-5).

The use of cemetery or natural cemetery is not found within the general agriculture description, primary use, or any conditional use descriptions.

A case study of the White Eagle Memorial Preserve of Goldendale, Washington finds similar marketing advertorials, but a difference in zoning and land use. As advertised, the burial grounds span “20 beautiful acres set within 1100 acres of permanently protected oak and ponderosa forest, meadow and steppe on the edge of spectacular Rock Creek Canyon near the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Deer, coyote, cougar, eagles, steelhead in the canyon creek, the occasional bear or lynx . . . all are present here. There are no invasive weeds, no fences, no noise, no sign of humans really other than the little road that takes you to the edge of this nature preserve cemetery. Our mission is to nourish this land while keeping it wild and to provide a natural alternative to the death care industry as it currently exists in America (White Eagle, 2016).” Further, “we are certified by them (Green Burial Council) as a Conservation Burial Ground, the greenest a green cemetery can be! It means that the cemetery land is dedicated in perpetuity as a cemetery for conservation purposes, inviolate: to be kept as wild and natural as possible (White Eagle, 2016).”

The White Eagle Memorial Preserve is zoned as General Rural. General Rural is defined in the Klickitat County zoning ordinance (Klickitat County Zoning Ordinance, 2015) as:

Purpose. The purpose of the General Rural zone is to maintain openness and the rural character

of the countryside, to protect the county's water and other natural resources, and to provide areas which are appropriate for typical rural development of all kinds (Klickitat County Zoning Ordinance, 2015, p.II-7-1).

Principal Uses Permitted Outright. (1) Agriculture; (2) Single-family dwelling, including mobile homes; (3) Agricultural produce stands; (4) Home occupation; (5) Dwellings and other buildings customarily provided in conjunction with the agriculture (Klickitat County Zoning Ordinance, 2015, p.II-7-1).

Conditional Uses. (12) Cemetery; (17) Any other uses judged by the Board of Adjustment to be consistent with the purposes and intent of this chapter and to be no more detrimental to the adjacent properties than, and of the same type and character as, the above listed uses (Klickitat County Zoning Ordinance, 2015, p.II-7-1).

Unlike the Glendale Memorial Nature Preserve, White Eagle is recognized under zoning ordinance as a conditional use of cemetery; this no doubt plays an important role in its recognition by the GBC as a Conservation Burial Ground, given its protection in the code. Further, the code explicitly states a purpose of the zoned land is to protection of the county water and natural resources. This can be perceived as not only a factor in the Green Burial Council ecological classification, but municipal endorsement of the cemetery as critical in the steadfast maintenance of ecological and groundwater health.

The virtues of the Natural Burial Movement are abundant; the movement has served to fight the deceptive nature of the modern funeral industry, actively promote a return of human burial to natural perpetuity through a trans-national grassroots movement, offset the detrimental effects of the modern funerary rite, and in the case of White Eagle, champion local municipalities to include the natural cemetery as part of overall ecological preservation goals. Despite the momentum and progressive efforts of the movement, it is difficult to envision a future in which all cemeteries are solely natural landscapes comprised of groves and wildflowers in an increasingly urbanized world where space is precious, and utilization as productivity is valuable.

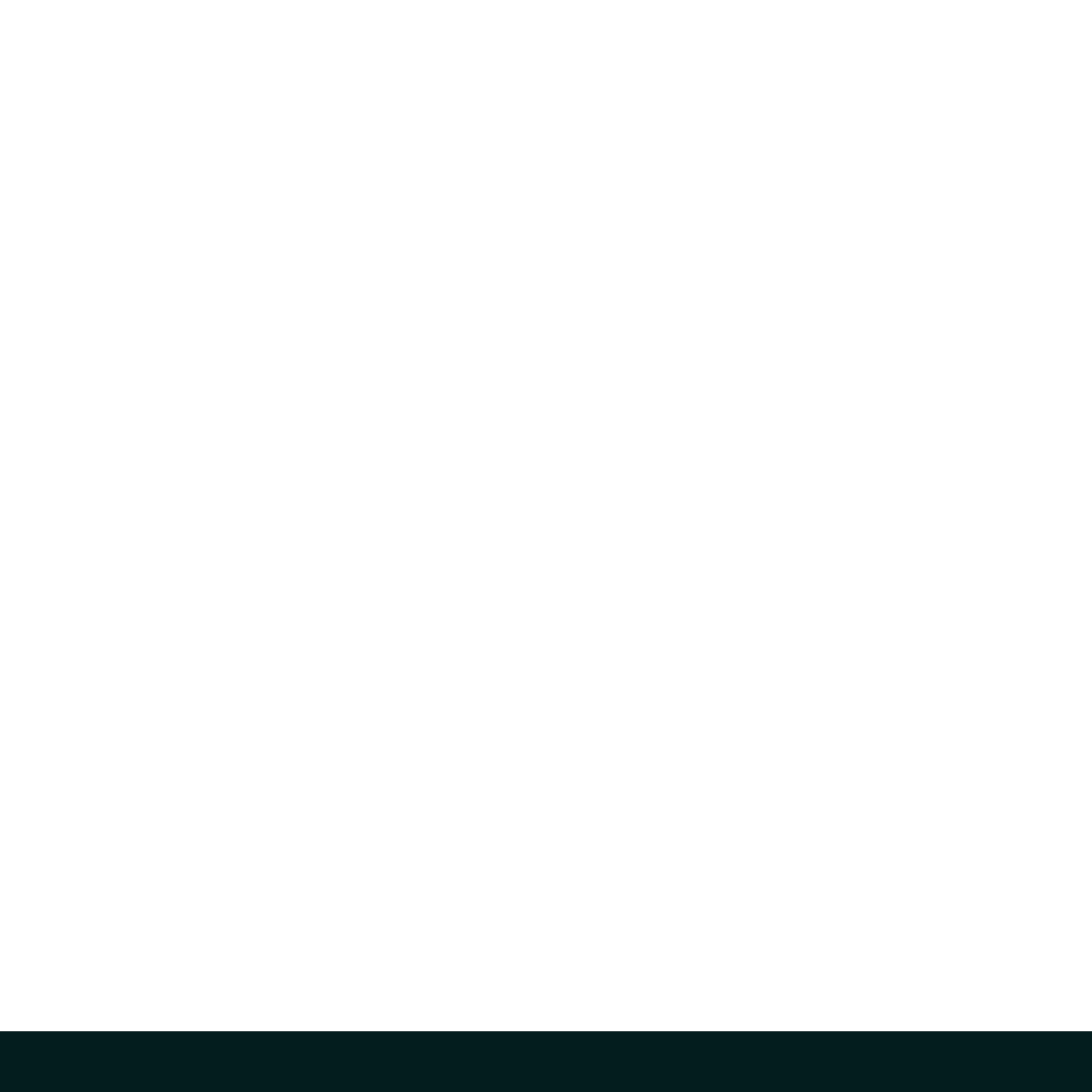
The Natural Burial Movement is a representation of the status quo; the natural cemetery as a pastoral and passive landscape is simply a regurgitation of the Rural Cemetery Movement with disregard for the socio-cultural and urban complexities of the Twenty-First Century, where urban space, equity, voice, and justice are all players in the spatial arrangement of the city. In fact, the rating system established by the Green Burial Council promotes site management tenets of ecological preservation and conservation that inhibits human interaction with the site, and prevents human activity from imprinting on the site through unsanctioned memorial. The Natural Burial Movement is undoubtedly the preeminent contemporary cemetery conservation movement-

the movement represents the deathscape of now. But why must this movement embody a landscape that only promotes ecological life and preservation, but not human life and preservation? Why can a cemetery not be an active and productive landscape that both promotes human interaction and ecological resilience? What if cemeteries actually followed the antecedent of burial as learned from the pre-dynastic Egyptians who used corporeal remains as nourishment for the land and the living?

What if the future urban cemetery took one step beyond the Natural Burial Movement, with one eye on historical context, aware of how cultural treatment of death as progressed to this nexus in the socio-cultural and urban fabrics through the dissemination of embalming as an ancient practice without the original intrinsic cultural reasoning of rebirth attached? What if cemeteries actually followed the antecedent of burial as learned from the pre-dynastic Egyptians who used corporeal remains as nourishment for the land and the living?

What if...deathscapes of the future were edible landscapes?

The urban deathscape of the future as an edible landscape speaks to the course of history upon which modern ways of death have been founded. A reimagination of deathscapes in this regard even lends itself to envisioning deathscapes as other archetypal active landscapes, like playscapes. However, in visioning the deathscape as an edible landscape, the form stays true to the history of death and the espoused foundational principles of modern ways of death.





YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Making a substantiated case for future cemeteries as active, edible landscapes is not a far reach when examined within the boundaries of the presented historical context, yielding science, and present urban and rural land-use policy. Indeed, all are favorable to the concept, and in fact, the aforementioned Glendale and White Eagle preserves are zoned to include agricultural land as a primary use. However, it is the contemporary socio-cultural understanding of death that remains to be the greatest challenge in the creation of edible deathscapes, and presents the most unfavorable conditions for preempting subsequent change in the built and natural environments.

The creation of edible deathscapes – *a natural burial cemetery that functions as an edible landscape by using the nutrients from the human decomposition process to nurture the growth of fruits and vegetables* – requires a coalescing of historical understanding and theoretical analysis to catalyze an undercurrent of change in the modern understanding of death. The nexus of history and theory must be used to create a moment of change in death ideology as monumental as the Osiris Bed, the Pere Lachaise, and *Night of the Living Dead*. Thus to effectively bring about such change to both the socio-cultural and constructed landscapes, it is necessary to carefully dissect the common meanings of each of these symbols as they relate to each other, then utilize the gained body of knowledge within the context of modern urban design and landscape architecture theory to suture a substantial case that speaks to collective human sensibility in the progress of the built environment.

When studied, the commonalities among the three symbols – the Osiris Bed, the Pere Lachaise, and *Night of the Living Dead* – can be divided into three distinct principles: the first, opposition to contemporary cultural ways of death; the second, monumentality of perpetual identity; and the third, artistic enchantment with death. These three principles serve not only as the evolutionary footprints of the history of the treatment of death, but provide the blueprints for the future of edible urban deathscapes.

Opposition to Contemporary Cultural Ways of Death is inherent to The Osiris Bed, the Pere Lachaise, and *Night of the Living Dead*. The Osiris Bed was symbolic of death as the seed of life, a plant growing in entombed darkness. As a symbol, the Osiris Bed stood in physical opposition to the long-held socio-cultural belief that the buried body brought nourishment to the land and the people; it represented the cultural evolution from reverence for the regenerative powers of the corpse to reverence for the preserved corpse and the political power of monumental tombs. The Pere Lachaise stands as an architectural beacon within the cityscape, surrounded by six-story buildings and housing monuments of Romanticist accord. Its life in the history of Paris stands in opposition to urban blight and a denigrated quality of life as caused by death. The *Night of Living Dead* is filmic opposition to a cultural disassociation with death, and the social denial of physical body of the deceased lying dormant in the landscape. Taking these commonalities into account, the edible cemetery must stand as a living landscape in opposition to the normative nature of sustainable design and the Natural Burial Movement, the futility of modern embalming and burial, and the stagnancy of the corpse in the landscape.

Constructing a cultural consciousness around the edible cemetery oppositional to contemporary ways of death can be best examined through the lens of Elizabeth Meyer's "Sustaining Beauty, The Performance of Appearance, A Manifesto in Three Parts." In the manifesto, Meyer makes the case for exploring sustainable landscape and urban design beyond the principle tenets of ecological health, social justice, and economic prosperity. Instead, it is encouraged to oppose the notion that a landscape must be traditionally "beautiful," and to instead view the system of sustainability as innately beautiful; simply put, it is necessary to celebrate the beauty of natural ecological function.

Ecological health, social justice, and economic prosperity have undoubtedly been principles in which precedent cultural ways of death have been rooted; the Rural Cemetery Movement and the natural cemetery mutually uphold the traditional Romantic ideal of beauty. Redefining beauty as a functional system in which we all participate is inherent to Meyer's definition of landscape and urban design: "Design is a cultural act, a product of culture made with the materials of nature, and embedded within and inflected by a particular social formation; it often employs principles of ecology, but it does more than that. It enables social routines and spatial practices, from daily promenades to commuting to work. It translates cultural values into memorable landscape forms and spaces that often challenge, expand, and alter out conceptions of beauty (Meyer, 2008, p.15)." It could be argued in dissent that the natural cemetery, in its present untouched glory, in fact promotes sustainable ecological function. Though, as a counterpoint, it can be argued through Meyer's manifesto "this type of work is not enough, especially if a designer's hand is not legible, if our contributions are invisible infrastructure. We (designers) are different from restoration ecologists and civil engineers (Meyer, 2008, p.13)."

One prime principle of both the modern cemetery and the natural cemetery is indeed the preservation of natural aesthetics akin to Romanticism, regardless of the means of burial; form takes precedent over function. The edible cemetery, in both form and function, would go beyond the natural aesthetic in opposition of superficiality. While the edible cemetery inherently preserves nature, as a designed landscape the human hand would be evident. In an urban situation, the designer must carefully design a space that is inviting, serving as a culturally-reflective space that enables the connectedness of the living and the dead to supersede aesthetics. The function of the cemetery as a space that transforms the decomposed human remains into nutritive food for the living embodies the splendor of the natural process, while simultaneously "challenging, expanding, and altering cultural conceptions of beauty (Meyer, 2008, p.15)."

Though, perhaps most importantly, the edible cemetery opposes the modern process of embalming and burial, challenging corporeal preservation and the painted corpse awash in the rose colored light of the funeral home, comprising a Beautiful Memory Picture (Mitford, 1963). The edible cemetery acknowledges the unsustainability of the painted and preserved corpse, and asks for a socio-cultural expansion in thought with regard to

reimagining the sustainable beauty within the dead body; it acknowledges that the industry-marketed notion that the chemically-embalmed corpse sustains public health is in actuality contrary to ecological sustainability, given the potentiality for ecological disaster. The edible cemetery asks for the corpse to be seen as beautiful component of a larger ecological system with embodied memory in the energy of the food and landscape. This, in opposition to the contemporary picturesque mannequin sealed within a casket, stagnant within the landscape.

In discussion of the nexus between ecological design and aesthetics, Anne Spirn once wrote, "This is an aesthetic that celebrates motion and change, that encompasses dynamic processes, rather than static objects, and embraces multiple, rather than singular, visions. This is not a timeless aesthetic, but one that recognizes both the flow of passing time and the singularity of the moment in time, that demands both continuity and revolution. This aesthetic engages all the senses, not just sight, but sound, smell, touch, and taste, as well. This aesthetic includes both the making of things and places, and the sensing, using, and contemplating of them (Spirn, 1988, p.108)." As a culture, we have undoubtedly become accustomed to the aesthetics of the beautiful corpse and Romanticized cemetery; in order to make the idea of edible landscapes a viable concept, it is necessary to promote the idea that aesthetic is poly-sensory. While the edible cemetery may not adhere to the standard notion of landscape – or corporeal – beauty, we should celebrate the natural ecological process of decomposition and the sustainable beauty of natural rebirth from death.

Like its symbolic predecessors, the edible cemetery has the embodied potential to become the cemetery of the future by standing in opposition of the contemporary cultural way of death; by opposing the superficial corpse, the potential for a denigrated environment, and the stagnant place of the corpse in the landscape, the edible cemetery challenges the persistence of the marriage between beauty, aesthetics, and landscape. Or, as Meyer so eloquently states, "Antiquated conceptions of landscape beauty as generic, balanced, smooth, bounded, charming, pleasing, and harmonious persist and must be reexamined through the lens of new paradigms of ecology (Meyer, 2008, p.19)."

A Monument of Perpetual Identity is found in the Osiris Bed. Located in only the tombs of Pharaohs and Queens, not graves of the everyday person, the sculptural symbol of rebirth embodying the God of the Underworld does not simply represent a continuum of cultural identity through rebirth, but highlights injustice in the lack of identity given to the average Egyptian in death. The Pere Lachaise not only stands as perpetual identity for the reformative power of Civic Code to promote quality of life, but also as an equitable landscape that identified to each decedent in grave and monument, regardless of the social class. The *Night of the Living Dead* acknowledged deep-seeded cultural fears by giving identity to the silent monster that was the embalmed corpse. The film forced a collective people to confront their fears, and to question the life of the corpse in the landscape, the purpose of modern burial, and their individual places in perpetuity. As an amalgamation of

the lessons learned from these three symbols, the edible cemetery must stand as a regenerative landscape that remains constant in a reflection of cultural identity, equitable in form of burial, and just in the function of providing access, social interaction, and nourishment for life.

Within the context of memorial, identity, and social equity in death and landscape, it is important to view the principle of perpetual identity through the lens of Gunhild Setten and Katrina Brown's "Landscape and Social Justice." The article demonstrates the inextricability of landscape and social justice, outlining the "strands of thought and practice where landscape is given conceptual power in relation to different versions of social justice (Setten & Brown, 2013, p.245)." Three strands are particularly important when exploring the potentiality of edible cemeteries - law, justice, and polity; nation, race and memory; and everyday struggle and belonging; within the strands, Setten and Brown urge for research and professional practice in the thinking of urban landscapes in relational ways in order to understand the core of existing social injustice to create greater social equity.

With regard to the strand of law, justice, and polity, Setten and Brown justify the inseparability of social justice and landscape through the work of Kenneth Olwig, who once wrote: "Landscape... need not be understood as being either territory or scenery; it can also be conceived as a nexus of community, justice, nature, and environmental equity, a contested territory that is a pertinent today as it was when the term entered the modern English language at the end of the Sixteenth Century (Setten & Brown, 2013, p.247)." The very nature of the edible cemetery lends itself to being more than a delineated urban territory or natural scenery; it is landscape that is of productive function, bridging the divide between man and nature to enable equity in the perpetuity of life and death.

Equity and justice, however, are not merely achieved in the constructed urban landscape through a conceptual existence; they are fought and won through consistent narrative, public visibility, and legal implementation as assurance in the right of impartiality. This is demonstrated in the second thread, nation, race and memory. As stated by Setten and Brown:

Narrative is... an important tool in 'storying our world into shape.' In this research does not sit benignly to the material landscape or artefactual evidence, but actively shapes the encounter, experience, cognition, and comprehension of the landscape... Narrative is understood and becomes phenomenon through a synergistic binding between representations, narrations, and the embodies experience of landscape, and is often oriented through national historic framings (Setten & Brown, 2013, p.249)." Further, "we need to be alert to these framings, attending to 'whose stories are being told, and to be aware that they naturalize particular sorts of social relations,' particularly because 'within nation states, history and heritage tell powerful stories, often ones

that stress stability, roots, boundaries, and belonging (Setten & Brown, 2013, p.249).”

The strands of law and justice, and nation, race, and memory are tightly woven in the told narrative of the history of death and burial. Starting with the pre-dynastic Egyptians through modern embalming, the varying cultural ways of death have “storied” their respective geographic and urban landscapes, and in doing so, have demonstrated the narratives of socio-cultural equity and justice. In ancient Egypt, Pharaohs and Queens built pyramids and tombs as monuments of their everlasting power and rule in the afterlife, while the common Egyptians’ corpse was left to mummify in the dry desert sand; the Roman pagans oppressed the Roman Christians, forcing them to conduct funerals during the darkest hours of night in catacombs beneath the city; after ascent to power and recognition as the state church, Roman Christian Catholics were buried either in the church or in a cemetery, depending on social class or financial means to purchase a final resting place in the cathedral near relics and religious figures; public health concerns with regard to vast burial pits like the Cimitière du Saint-Innocents catalyzed civic code to formalize burial in cemeteries to protect urban quality of life; rural cemeteries of Europe and North America were Romanticized through natural inclination and monumentality; and modern embalming and burial created a divide between the natural world and man. Each of these points in the collective narrative of death speaks to pointed issues of the imbalance of equity, the divide between the economic and the social, and the diversion of man from nature.

The third strand outlined by Setten and Brown is demonstrative of everyday struggle and belonging in the face of social justice and the imbalance of equity; aesthetic, appearance, and property are examined through the writings of Duncan and Duncan who note “potential tension between the aesthetic and social justice presents a political problematic for understanding and analyzing landscapes of home (Setten & Brown, 2013, p.249).” It is further noted that “resistance to gentrification have demonstrated that urban landscapes produced by neo-liberal, non-social notions of property, stand in sharp contrast to community-based and more inclusive and egalitarian notions of landscape (Setten & Brown, 2013, p.250).” The correlation between aesthetic and egalitarian landscape is not lost through the lens of history; the notion that aesthetic can serve as a cause of social injustice speaks to the social divide as seen in the monumental ostentation of the Egyptian deathscape, the difference in Roman Catholics being buried in cathedrals or cemeteries, and the disregard for the environment in modern embalming. Conversely, the correlation also speaks resoundingly in affirmation of the First Principle, Opposition to Culturally Contemporary Ways of Death, and the conception of re-imagination of antiquated aesthetic beauty through equitable “paradigms of ecology (Meyer, 2008, p.19)” to create a new vision of systemic beauty in urban landscapes.

When woven together in collective history of death and burial, the strands of law, justice, and polity; nation, race and memory; and everyday struggle and belonging form a basis for the edible cemetery as a landscape of equity and justice. If given the proper legal zoning designation, the cemetery could serve as a physical

manifestation as the nexus of community, justice, nature, and environmental equity. As an accessible burial ground for all members of the community, regardless of social or economic class, the cemetery could function as a sustainable piece of the urban and environmental fabric while simultaneously providing equitable nutritive assistance to the community; in short, the edible deathscape has the potential to be a sustainably democratic space within the city.

In functioning as an equitable space, the edible deathscape creates a new narrative of the socio-cultural framing of death and equity in the city. It would answer the injustice of the Osiris Bed, the equity of the Pere Lachaise, and the question of the life of the corpse in the landscape by giving the nameless and faceless a just place in the urban and environmental continuum of life and death, and allow the likes of the community, the people, and the environment to stake an equitable claim in perpetual identity.

The Artistic Enchantment with Death is embodied Osiris Bed as an art sculpture representative of a deathscape displaced from the banks of the Nile to the darkness of a tomb to satisfy a culture that placed perpetual life and death at the center of public life; the Pere Lachaise catalyzed the notion of cemeteries as Romantic landscapes and the subsequent Rural Cemetery Movement, inviting people to experience death in new, intimate ways; and the *Night of the Living Dead* gave image to the reanimated embalmed corpse, stoking imagination aplenty and inspiring subsequent pop-cultural enchantment with darkness, through music videos like Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, and fictional characters like Hannibal Lecter. As such, the edible cemetery must draw from spirituality, the Romantic mystique of the Rural Cemetery Movement, and the infectious nature of pop culture to bring about a new understanding of death and the cemetery that is resolute in meaning, enchanting in nature, a resonant in human understanding.

Andrea Kahn's "Defining Urban Sites," challenges landscape architects and urban designers to forgo the definition of urban sites as "locational or dimensional grounds (Kahn, 2005, p.295)," but instead reconsider them as elastic and relational. Kahn introduces five specific concepts for urban site thinking – Mobile Ground, Site Reach, Site Construction, Unbound Sites, and Urban Constellation – in an effort to better help designers redefine and represent urban site. Mobile ground is the understanding that sites are dynamic and provisional, and points of departure rather than arrival (Kahn, 2005, p.289); site reach measures the extent, range, and level of interactions between a localized place and its urban surroundings (Kahn, 2005, p.290); site construction is a site study process that yields designed understanding of site through selective viewing (Kahn, 2005, p.291); unbound sites uncouple the definition of site boundary from notions of ownership and property and views site limits as open to configuration according to various forms and forces of determination (Kahn, 2005, p.292); and urban constellation references dynamic relational construct formed by myriad interactions between variable forces (physical, social, political, economic) animated across multiple scales (local, metropolitan, regional, and global networks) (Kahn, 2005, p.294).

These five concepts for site thinking allow for an interpretation of site beyond the physical; they beg that a site and site representation be interpreted as something more than a place in the city, but something of perhaps ethereal nature - a memory, an emotion, or an object. As Kahn writes, "site representations propose working hypotheses for comprehending and testing working definitions of urban site. To grasp the full import of this idea, one first has to recognize the expansive potential of representation: that in the most profound sense, representation is not about depicting reality, but about making knowledge (Kahn, 2005, p.288)"...Site representation is not a matter of getting a reality right as much as a matter of constructing forms of knowledge (Kahn, 2005, p.288)." The freedom of site interpretation lends itself to an artistic interpretation of edible cemeteries in order to construct forms of knowledge about their meaning and purpose to catalyze a movement to renew socio-cultural understanding of death.

Invoking *Confessions* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau adds an important layer in constructing landscape knowledge through artistic interpretation. As he famously wrote regarding the state of nature, "I dared to strip man's nature naked, to follow the evolution of those times and things which have disfigured him; I compared man-made man with natural man, and I discovered that his supposed improvement had generated all his miseries (Sheather, 2009, p.23)"; he later would exclaim in the *Social Contract*, "Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains (Kleiner, 2009, p.339)!" Rousseau's Eighteenth Century writings were a cornerstone of dissent in the face of scientific advancement and the European Industrial Revolution; his writings of individualism and the nexus of the moral, physical, and natural were significant in drafting the intellectual blueprint for Romanticism, as Romantics proclaimed that freedom was the right and property of all (Kleiner, 2009).

Romanticism encompassed art and literature, with works of the period embodying the idea that nature was an uncontrollable and unpredictable power. Portraiture looked into the individual psyche and oft portrayed "feelings of awe mixed with terror...fear evoked the most intense human emotions (Kleiner, 2009, p.340)!" Landscape paintings expressed "nature as a 'being' that included the totality of existence and in organic unity and harmony (Kleiner, 2009, p.345). In nature, Romantics found the theme to portray the connectedness of the human soul with the natural world.

As examined through the historical lens of death and burial, Romanticism, death, and landscape are inextricably linked. Romanticism and the inherent power of nature were catalysts for the Rural Cemetery Movement throughout Europe and the United States. In fact, artists often characterized an enchantment with death through Romantic transcendental deaths-capes in paintings, exemplified in Caspar David Friedrich's *Abbey in the Oak Forest*:

Under a winter sky, through the leafless oaks of a snow-covered cemetery, a funeral procession

bears a coffin into the ruins of a Gothic church. The emblems of death are everywhere – the season’s desolation, the leaning crosses and tombstones, the black of mourning that the grieving wear, the skeletal trees, and the destruction time wrought on the church. The painting is a meditation on human mortality. As Friedrich himself remarked: ‘Why...do I so frequently choose death, transience, and the graves as subjects for my paintings? One must submit himself many times to death in order someday to attain life everlasting (Kleiner, 2009, p.346).

Submission to death time-and-time again to reach everlasting life is thematic in the cross-cultural artistic enchantment with death. The Egyptians keenly represented the dislocation of the corpse from the natural landscape by creating living art that mimicked landscape and the core cultural perception of the afterlife. The Osiris Bed embodied the intellectual knowledge of the corpse’s rightful place within the nutritive cycle of life, but existed as a socio-cultural and artistic response to continually evolving cultural ways of death. The submission to death, and changed ways of death, is emblematic in the meaning of the Osiris Bed. Similarly, *Night of the Living Dead* used modern filmic technology to raise the embalmed corpse from the ground and walk it into the living room, both in the movie and as a movie. Throughout the film, the protagonists are continually faced with reanimated corpses - the corpses appearing from the fog to attack, ambling toward the house in droves, or relentlessly beating on windows and doors. The film served as a cultural reminder that the corpse is inseparable from the socio-cultural and physical landscape despite disassociation. Moreover, the greatest irony is that the film used modern technology to make an artistic statement that cultural disassociation with death was brought about by technological advancement; the film in turn used modern technology to bring about a reassociation with death.

Examined through the ideology of Romanticism, it is evident that all three artistic symbols share a common belief in the power of nature over technology; individually, the symbols were modern interpretations of the deathscape that sought to depict a natural consciousness about the place of the dead in the landscape. The ability of the Egyptian, Romantic, and film artists to represent site and landscape through art, and in the process create a form of knowledge that catalyzed a movement that changed cultural perceptions of death, exemplifies why it is necessary to explore the edible cemetery beyond the constraints of site and delineated urban boundaries. It is a clear demonstration of the value in stepping beyond the simple “amassing of organizing facts, figures, and impressions of a given condition (Kahn, 2005, p. 288)” and allow for representation to instantiate social discourse with regard to reshaping cultural views of death and dying.

Though, perhaps what is most important about an enchantment with death and artful representation of urban landscape is the ability to wholly encompass the accompanying principles of opposition to cultural ways of death and monuments of perpetual identity. Art and deathscape, linked, create the universal narrative of death; in doing so, they create the narrative of mankind. They create the narrative of man’s imprint on the landscape

in the creation of cities, the treatment of social justice, the respect for the natural world.

Julian Sheather's "The Art of Medicine, Landscape and Health," demonstrates the correlation between the Romantic notion that cities were the equivalent of immorality and illness, and the contemporary notion that internalized mental and physical pathology lead people from the city to nature in a symbolic search of purity and cleansing of illness (Sheather, 2009). A common denominator in the correlation of the two points is death, or rather a fear of the diseased corpse. Corporal putrefaction in burial pits bred inner-city disease and was just one point of departure for the Romanticism movement, but the fear of the diseased corpse that promulgated as a result of Romanticism is echoed in the Rural Cemetery Movement and the sterilization of death in the modern funeral industry. As a result, the corpse was not only removed from the city, but from nature, in an effort to heal the ills of man and the urban environment that is perceived to be caused by the decaying corpse.

The causal sequence of death not only removed the corpse from the city, but from nature. In an effort to heal the ills of man and the urban environment that were caused by the rotting flesh, a man-made nature has been created. As such, the struggle between man-made nature and natural man is self-evident in the struggle between ancient burial, modern burial, and the natural burial movement. Sheather writes:

Against ideas of engineered human perfectability is set the sheer, fertile, haphazard, and exuberant contingency of nature. Thinking about this reaction, it is beginning to look as if we are fearful that we might have paid a high price for our triumph over the natural landscape. We may have subdued the external world but the idea of nature has come back to haunt us, holding out the possibility of a wellbeing we fear we may have lost forever (Sheather, 2009, p.23).

"Engineered human perfectability" is directly proportional to embalming and the modern deathscape – a painted corpse awash in rose-colored light, pumped with formaldehyde, hermetically sealed to fester for eternity in a cemetery, but sold as a packaged Beautiful Memory Picture (Mitford, 1963) and a means of health and environmental preservation. The engineered version of nature the funeral industry has created does not take into account the impermanence of embalming or the potential for environmental catastrophe that could arise from the "haphazard and exuberant contingency of nature (Sheather, 2009, p.23)." Moreover, in human and corporeal perfectability, the flow of energy between organisms and ecosystems, and the relationship between the human body and the environment, is devastated.

Human death and rebirth into food for human consumption is the intended biological function of the body; it was the reason the pre-Dynastic Egyptians buried the dead on the banks of the Nile River. The rhythms of nature predicated on the relationship between man and environment allow for the perpetuity of life and death; "We are the prairie from which we eat. The comforting illusion that our bodies can remain separate from

their ecological surroundings cannot be sustained, nor can the idea that relationships with landscapes are unidirectional - that they are may be described solely by what we do to the landscape, without accounting for the effects of landscape on and in our bodies (Sheather, 2009, p.23).”

To break this illusion, it is necessary to look to history to understand ancestral treatment of the dead with regard to landscape and environment, where the points of evolution occurred within the history of cultural ways of death, and why the current socio-cultural perception of death exists as a result of these multi-evolutions. In doing this, the edible cemetery is a natural conception, it is the urban cemetery of the future with roots planted firmly in the past. But in order to get this done, we must step away from the modern funeral home and go outside. We must stop viewing the painted corpse through rose-colored light.



FIN

I have always heard that your life flashes before your eyes the second before you die. First of all, that one second is not a second at all. It stretches on forever, like an ocean of time. For me, it was running through cotton fields. And falling asleep in the car at night on the way to my grandparents house. Catching lightning bugs in a jar. It was being called a faggot when I was just twelve years old. It was the sound of glass cracking on the floor. And the fear of rainy nights. It was my drunk father. And my abusive father. And the day my mother finally left him.

I guess I could be pretty pissed off about all of it. I could be angry that so many people died when I was a kid. Or that I had to spend my afternoons in a funeral home. That I was afraid of being at school during the day, yet it was the only place I wanted to be at night. That I had to submit myself to death time and time again.

But it is hard to be mad when there is so much beauty left in the world. Sometimes I feel like I am seeing my life all at once. I fight the bad to make it seem okay. To make my life feel perfect. When it is too much to handle, I just take off my glasses, close my eyes and let the beauty consume me. I listen to the wind rustle through the leaves, and feel the grass under my feet. Suddenly my heart fills up like a balloon that is about to burst, and I remind myself to relax. And to stop trying to hold on to what could have been. And then it flows through my like rain, and I can't feel anything but gratitude for every moment of my stupid little life. ¹

¹ The verbiage of this final passage was based on the final monologue in the film *American Beauty* (1999) performed by Kevin Spacey, directed by Sam Mendes and written by Alan Ball.



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FINIS:

noun

1. end; conclusion