READING THE CEMETERY

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PREFACE

In my ceaseless ruminations on site, I considered where this thesis would eventually be laid to rest– the Library at the Center for Curatorial Studies in Bard College, New York. Bound in black leather and embossed with gold letters, every CCS thesis joins the row of the previous ones just like it, in a library that seconds as an archive for past students' curatorial investigations since the program was founded in 1990.

However, before I first came to Bard, my online search for understanding the institution I would soon be joining led me to another establishment. The same year that I was accepted to the CCS program, the American novelist Philip Roth passed away, and he was due to be buried at the Bard Cemetery, which lies less than a mile away from where this thesis now rests. Roth made the decision to be buried at the cemetery, not for religious reasons (he was an atheist) or because of a sentimental association (he only taught one class at Bard as a guest lecturer), but because he didn't want to be "bored in the endless beyond."[1] The German-American political philosopher Hannah Arendt, who taught at Bard, was already buried here, and Roth's close friend, the Romanian writer Norman Manea who still teaches at Bard, will eventually be buried here– and Roth wanted to be in their company.

Bard Cemetery is not a particularly remarkable site. Situated off of Campus Road, which intersects the school grounds, and behind Stevenson Library, the small woodland burial ground counts a handful of modest, stone grave-markers that are nestled between tall, thick trees. A few simple benches are dotted between the loosely demarcated path and an unmarked cottage sits next to a wooden gate that opens up to an otherwise unfenced space. Even in its small size and simple design, the site has a typically tranquil, romantic atmosphere

[1] Philip Roth in Norman Manea, "Nearby and Together: Norman Manea on His Friend Philip Roth," in *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Translated by Philip Ó Ceallaigh (June 23, 2018).

for a rural North American cemetery– it's always quiet, and the changing Hudson Valley foliage makes it lush in the spring and summer, crisp in the fall, and calm in the winter. Though there are a few signs of past visitors–such as the stacked rocks on Roth's tombstone (a Jewish funerary tradition, which Roth would likely have not cared for), wilted roses on Arendt's grave, or a few letters penned to past professors–the site isn't particularly popular amongst Bard students and goes largely unnoticed by most others.

But for me, it holds unique significance. This is because I've always understood the cemetery as a central site for understanding the culture that formed it. Significantly, my longstanding fascination has very little do with death– after all, if you didn't know what cemeteries are, there is nothing particularly 'deathly' about them.The American historian Thomas W. Laqueur crystalizes my position, expressing that care of the dead is foundational "of religion, of the polity, of the clan, of the tribe, of the capacity to mourn, of an understanding of the finitude of life, and so of civilization itself."[2] In emphasizing the monumental significance of the cemetery, he maintains that "the dead make civilization on a grand and an intimate scale, everywhere and always: their historical, philosophical, and anthropological weight is enormous and almost without limit and compare."[3] Correspondingly, sites where the dead are buried are of immense importance throughout civilization, going far beyond specific belief systems in their longstanding pervasiveness.

Consequently, considering the cemetery–a site suffused with cultural production– presented a uniquely captivating opportunity. During my time at CCS, I have come to identify thinking through sites as my driving curatorial method. To me, this means looking at one site closely, but also thinking analogically and diagonally, finding unexpected overlaps and

[2] Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).
[3] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

revealing diversions between a site and its edges. When this thesis is laid to rest–in a neat row, with my name and the dates of my (CCS) lifespan on it, next to my own classmates (past, present, and future)–it will become its own strange analogue to the site it considers. A fitting reflection for this method of thinking.

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INTRODUCTION

In plain terms, a cemetery is an area of ground where dead bodies are buried. Undoubtedly, it is a practical space with the most materially incontestable facts. But utility alone would not produce cemeteries. Indeed, if all society needed was just to dispose of dead bodies, we would likely have no cemeteries at all. Rather, the cemetery is an overdetermined category that is clearly not limited to an understanding that is dictated by or limited to this function. This thesis focuses on reading these complexities, studying the cemetery through a variance of possible spatial understandings.

The cemetery as we know it today is a singular, modern space that marks a radical break from the sites that preceded it. As Thomas W. Laqueur notes, the advance of the modern cemetery meant that "a new kind of space had come into being that appropriated pieces of the past to make a future; as a museum of sculpture and architecture; as an arboretum; as a tourist attraction; as a pilgrimage site; as national, regional, communal, or familial place of memory; as the venue for the work of the dead that has made our modern world; as a place to make money."[1] Crucially, it was not just a new site for interment. It outgrew the parish, the town, the church, and the old gods. It invented new, secular gods of history, memory, and sentiment.[2] It laid down new sensibilities, traditions, and designs. The modern cemetery is a porous and intricate site; a physical, spiritual, and, emotional infrastructure; a real and fictitious production.

Throughout this thesis, 'the cemetery' will be read thematically, considered as a category rather than mapped out through specific case studies. But it does not purport to read as a universal category. Globally, the cemetery takes rich, varied forms, and cannot be

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[1] Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).
[2] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

universalized. Across geographies, it is imagined, understood, organized, and practiced in countless, incompatible ways. Rather, this reading will focus on the cemetery as a western space, originating roughly in the early nineteenth century, predominantly shaped by Christian traditions, and largely located in western Europe and North America. This is a fundamentally limited variant of the cemetery. However, this specificity allows for a more concentrated analysis, and for a more pointed critique of the specific tenants that formed this version of the funerary site. Though it will largely focus on the modern cemetery, it will sometimes use it to depart into models that have followed or preceded it.

The methodology for this reading borrows from Keller Easterling, leaning on an expanded notion of architectural theory. Easterling's argument that "we rarely define sites in a way that will permit exploration of organizational or network architecture" provides both impetus and framework.[3] Like Easterling's 'wild card' sites that defy neat categorization, the cemetery is recognized in its complexity and actively explored and organized through a network of spatial possibilities. In a thrust that is exploratory rather than conclusive, the effort is to broaden the cemetery's discourse rather than to determine its rightful place within one of these many understandings. If there is any conclusion to this reading, it's that any site can be better understood through a networked reading, with each new contact point opening up possibilities for a richer understanding.

THE CEMETERY IS A PARADISE

Before any cemetery became a physical site, it was imagined as one. It was a spatial revolution modelled on a fictional, prelapsarian, and bucolic age that was largely known

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[3] Keller Easterling, *Organizational Space: Landscapes, Highways, and Houses in America* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999).

through myths, poetry, and paintings. Within this, the leading precursors were Elysium and Arcadia– respectively, the mythological place for the blessed dead and an ancient landscape of unspoiled wilderness. Though both these sites are tethered to their own, specific histories and were rendered with distinction in cultural production, their effect was largely the same. Both sites are synonymous with paradise, and come to align with a rich and wide-ranging cultural imagination of utopian space. What mattered wasn't the specific tenets of these imaginaries, but what held them together. Without resorting to a specific poem or particular painting, the descriptors for paradisal space are curiously settled–it is quiet, slow, serene, reflexive, lush, pure, peaceful, sentimental. By appealing to idealized but fictional spaces, it became possible to think beyond the concrete, static history of the churchyard that preceded the modern cemetery. It became possible to reject centuries of funerary history by appealing to an ancient time. These spaces have an established pedigree, but remain malleable–each can be cherry-picked and still feel well-reflected and true. They are familiar spaces, even though no one's ever been. The point is that, by appealing to fictional landscapes, a new blueprint for the cemetery became available.

Within this new space, dying was also recast in a new, romantic light. No longer dictated by the linguistic pragmatism of burial grounds or churchyards, the cemetery was a place of sweet, undisturbed repose. The word itself stems from the Greek *koimētērion* or 'dormitory', and *koiman*, or 'put to sleep.' Ken Worpole explains how "in this new culture of the cemetery, death was now seen as an eternal sleep or rest, rather than the transitional stage between life on earth and another world elsewhere, suggested by the precepts of formal Christian religion."[4] Soon, the imaginary of death as eternal repose came to take hold.

[4] Ken Worpole, *Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003).

Curiously, Aaron Sachs points out that it is precisely the presence of this kind of death that makes a cemeterial Arcadia feel desirable. He explains that:

> a perfect Arcadia may not ultimately be realizable, but the presence of death gives Arcadian life new meaning. Without death paradise is static, lacking the possibility of creative transformation: if it is perpetually spring, then spring is no longer a blissful riot of awakening life but rather a kind of permanent… death. With death in mind, though, Arcadians are freed to work for change, to blend the contours of culture and nature, and to pause occasionally and immerse themselves.[5]

In a kind of reciprocal exchange, the symbolic reminders of mortality within an imagined Arcadia make it more substantive and the topological tropes that make the cemetery read as Arcadian soften its association with death. Additionally, the sense of an ending–which, evidently, death has always signified–is in and of itself a utopian trope that embodies a sense of completion. In effect, when the church loosened its dominating grip on the space for the dead, the cemetery was able to recast death in a built, grounded heaven.

As a space, paradise also engendered new behaviors. Laqueur suggests that "the visual trope of mourning in a new space had become familiar avant la lettre; commemoration was commonplace in art before it became so in reality."[6] The cemetery didn't just borrow from the Arcadian and Elysian landscape– it took its nostalgic, melancholic characters with it. Looking to a well-established history of painting and literature, the cemetery's new public referred back to its melancholic shepherds and wistful lovers. Worpole lists how the cemetery was understood to be "a place to mourn, to remember, to honor the dead, to understand (…), to find peace, to make peace, to re-visit, to re-live, even to reorientate, to listen to oneself, to examine oneself."[7] It is a decidedly and purposefully tranquil site that calls for a

[5] Aaron Sachs, *Arcadian America: The Death and Life of an Environmental Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
[6] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[7] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.

comparable mode of movement and interaction. It is a landscape that conjures soft, tender feelings of longing, pensiveness, and reminiscence. Echoing these behaviors, Laqueur credits cultural imaginaries with how we came to mourn; "thousands visited out of curiosity or conviction and wept as Rousseau, Gessner, and others had taught them to do."[8]

Paradise was also predicated on an ecology. The modern cemetery leaned heavily on the Edenic landscape. Rather than a wild nature, it was an unthreatening and harmonious one characterized by gentle winds, murmuring waterfalls, old trees, and fresh flowers– a vision of a landscape that closely aligns with the experience of Bard Cemetery. Standing in contrast to the vertical structures that dominate the metropolis, the cemetery exists as "a horizontal world" where "the contrast between the world of the cemetery and the footloose, upright, hurrying bustle of the streets around it is always affecting."[9] It is a romanticized site of peace and quiet. It not only moved out of the city, but became a world apart from it, dictated by a slower, softer, and quieter sensibility. Significantly, the cemetery serves the auxiliary purpose of providing a quiet retreat from the world that surrounds it. Cemeteries are meant to be sites of repose not only to mourn the dead, but also for escapism– a tranquil garden. The imaginary of Arcadia and Elysium translates into "*le jardin anglais*–asymmetric, artfully natural, deeply influenced by Virgil's and Horace's ideas of the blessedness of rural life."[10] The cemetery, in turn, inspires the design for public parks–another escape from the realities of the city life. Essentially, the imaginary structured the cemetery and the other way around, so that the paradisal category became a spatialized reality.

[8] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[9] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[10] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

THE CEMETERY IS A HETEROTOPIA

Michel Foucault classifies the cemetery alongside the museum, hospital, asylum, prison, and ship under the notion of 'heterotopia.'[11] Proposed as a category of spaces that exist outside of everyday social realms, heterotopias are conceptualized as in the world but somehow 'other'– incompatible, contradictory, intense. Though heterotopias are linked to all the spaces outside of them, they also operate on their own terms, creating a distinct world within the world. Worpole echoes this categorization, expressing that "burial sites are often regarded culturally as 'a place apart', hallowed, respected, and at times even feared."[12] The category of 'heterotopia' is notoriously slippery, but useful for our purposes.

Heterotopias maintain a unique temporality. Providing a place for a mapped and organized existence, heterotopic spaces usually operate according to their own time. Their precise and concrete function relies on a departure from the usual rhythms of quotidian life. For cemeteries, this applies on two levels. Firstly, cemeteries were conceptualized according to an alternative timeline. As elucidated by Laqueur, "cemeteries were meant to be radically novel and break with the historical past, by binding either with classical, idyllic or with future, utopian spaces."[13] It was a radical space–so effectively, new–but it was shaped by reaching far back or a long way forward, to two timescales that are only compatible because they are fantastical. This meant that its spatial manifestation wasn't tethered to its contemporary moment, but reflective of a fundamentally different time.

Additionally, the boundary between a heterotopia and other spaces is of special significance– Foucault explains how entering or exiting can either be non-voluntary, as in a

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[11] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," *Diacritics 16*, no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 22–27. Translated by Jay Miskowiec. First published: *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, no. 5 (October 1984): 46–49.
[12] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[13] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

prison, or can require special rituals, as in a Turkish bath, or a hammam. Here, the latter category is relevant. Especially differentiated against the churchyard, which was tethered to the church and enmeshed with the urban fabric, the cemetery promises itself as an exceptional, unquotidian space positioned apart from the city and its mechanisms–production, exchange, and consumption. By moving outside of the metropolis, the modern cemetery became a destination of its own. The modern cemetery maintains a threshold that signals a shift in space, mood, and expectation from the urban fabric that surrounds it, so to enter its walls is to leave all realities–except, perhaps, the certainty of mortality–at the door. The way in which the cemetery is physically produced and practiced as a marginal space is ensured by two main spatial methods which emphasize its distance from more uninhibited, lived space. Close to cities, the cemetery is usually walled off, making it unlikely that anyone would accidentally stumble upon it or have to be forced to walk through it. In suburban or rural contexts, the cemetery is usually positioned out of sight– and so, by extension, also out of mind. Kept in a place apart from the zones that we move through on a regular, daily basis, the cemetery is a bracketed zone.

By keeping reminders of our mortality outside of places in which we could find them frequently or unintentionally, our confrontation with death happens within a dedicated site that we can choose to access if and when we want to. Because the place for the dead is bracketed, it becomes possible to spatially contain the threat that it houses– the cemetery is a zone for defanging a profound experience. This experience can be understood through a theoretical consideration of the sublime. The sublime is widely theorized as a strong emotional response to an overwhelming force in the world, simultaneously stirring a sense of awe and fear. More specifically, the cemetery provides a site for Immanuel Kant's theory of

this phenomenon.[14] Kant's understanding of the sublime relies on our capacity to perceive something threatening and then to morally and theoretically transcend it. His logic emphasizes the importance of cognitive thought, where the realization of weakness or existential insignificance goes hand in hand with the ability to intellectually reflect on both. Taken together, this process allows for a paradoxical understanding of our place in the world. A comprehension of humanity's inescapable mortality is balanced against its power for reason and imagination. Through the cemetery, the encounter with death is continuously mediated in a way that upholds the possibility of a Kantian sublime experience. We are faced with death–an overwhelming force in the world–but through a space that gives us the will, capacity, and method for confronting it.

Within this new tradition, the cemetery became an available antidote for quelling the fear of our own mortality, mapping it onto an isolated, tranquil, unhurried, othered space. Indeed, the cemetery as a site stimulates just enough sadness for inspiration, reflection, and creation– but not enough for fear, panic, or despair. It micro-doses sentiment; it is a place where sorrows are "soothed and anguish and terror were softened."[15] Laqueur explains how "the dead in the modern cemetery are (…) available, by name, to the living: they are objects of calm thoughts and elevated feelings."[16] His suggestion that "standing in a cemetery might even make it possible to contemplate one's own death calmly" is right.[17] The cemetery offers a tamed, mediated, pre-chewed version of something that could be wholly overwhelming if it was pictured differently.

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[14] Immanuel Kant in *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, Edited by Clive Cazeaux (London: Routeledge, 2000).
[15] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[16] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[17] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

THE CEMETERY IS A FRONTIER

But before paradise took hold, burial grounds went unchanged and unmoved for centuries. By displacing the churchyard–a uniquely persistent, powerful topos–the cemetery became a novel, spatial frontier that rearranged the funerary landscape. Laqueur historicizes this split under the banners of the "old regime" (the churchyard) and the "new regime" (the cemetery), and it is his proposed history that this section condenses.

From the Middle Ages to the early nineteenth century, the churchyard was the only conceivable place for the dead. There was no other category of burial ground and no alternative term. Churchyard and a place with dead bodies were one and the same, whether the site was in fact a yard of the church or not. Laqueur describes how "the building, the ground, and the dead were conjoined by a common history that made them a given; the prototypical 'organic landscape' of the times."[18] Conversely, to hold the dead was to be a churchyard. In fact, this applied even if the grounds were not a yard of the church, consecrated, or even Christian. The churchyard of the old regime was ancient, hierarchical, religious, exclusively local, compact, and crowded. It was positively heaving with bones; messy with activity, it was common practice to constantly reuse churchyard land for the never-ending procession of new dead bodies. It was a model that captured, and held, the Christian, Western imagination. But it remained a profoundly functional and pragmatic site, dictated almost entirely by the constant need for interment.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, things started to change and "a thousand-year-old regime of the dead began to crumble."[19] As a site that was firmly resistant to change, the churchyard was unwilling to accommodate a growing population that was increasingly

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[18] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[19] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

pluralist or secular, as well as numerous, diverse, and mobile. As Laqueur explains "the small stage of the churchyard could not accommodate the cosmopolitan dead, the dead of the nation, the working-class dead, the dead of the city and of the middle class, the dead of many religions. Whereas the churchyard gathered its local, hierarchically ordered dead to await a common resurrection, the cemetery was home to civil society."[20] In dissolving parochial limitations, the funeral grounds that followed were nothing short of radical. The cemetery of the new regime opened up its gates to people of all origins, traditions, and persuasions; to publics of all faiths, or no faiths at all. It was a decisively inclusive, progressive space that was predicated on representing humanity at large. It promised "liberty, landscaping, and cosmopolitanism."[21]

As a site championed on the grounds of progress, the cemetery of the new regime was innovative– following the dictates of instrumental reason, "it was meant to be clean; it was the public policy alternative to churchyard intramural burial; it comported with the latest engineering, horticultural, and aesthetic fashions."[22] Unlike the churchyard, it was commodious, elegant, purified, and landscaped. Located on virgin territories outside of the city bounds, it could be furnished with new flowers, trees, and monuments. "Put negatively, the cemetery was not a churchyard; it was not controlled by a church; it was not autarchic; it was not old."[23] Bodies were no longer buried in directions dictated by religious superstition. The communal was superseded by the individual, with private lots and names of the deceased organizing the land. The cemetery didn't have to be anywhere specific to execute its task. It wasn't ruled by custom, tradition, or faith. Even though the imaginaries that helped shape

[20] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[21] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[22] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[23] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

the cemetery of the new regime were powerful and distinct, these burial grounds didn't have to abide by any design tradition to qualify as a cemetery– the rules of the old guard were being rewritten.

THE CEMETERY IS A FAÇADE

In the churchyard, it used to be normal to see loose, protruding bones. Laqueur observes that "the compacting, composting, jostling, and intermingling of corpses and coffins in various states of repair was and always had been endemic, a permanent condition."[24] This status was perceived as ordinary. Indisputably, the dead body is the *raison d'être* for any burial ground. Without the dead body, we don't need the churchyard or the cemetery. And, as stressed by Laqueur, it remains unthinkable not to care for these bodies– "an ancient and statutory communal right of the dead to be buried, grounded in the utter abjection of the unattended corpse and in demands that the living made of the dead, was unquestioned. The denial of this right (that is, refusal to properly bury a dead body) constituted a posthumous exclusion from the cultural and political order, an obliteration of personhood after death."[25]

But in the cemetery, the sight of dead bodies became expressly unimaginable. Though it remains a site for confronting death, it is no longer one that reveals it as a corporeal reality. Cemeteries need bodies, but "discreetly hidden bodies: there are no mounds and no jumbles of bones; there is no smell; monuments refer to death or the dead body only with metaphorical circumspection and historical allusiveness."[26] Indeed, the modern cemetery is spatial proof that the dead body came to be seen as wretchedness– corpses continue to be rigorously denied in the West. Though the dead are consistently understood as something

[24] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[25] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[26] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

that has to be dealt with, even honored, they are also something that has to be done *away* with. As sites, cemeteries are informational, iconographic, and textual– but not bodily. The cemetery denies the dead as bodies, and leaves only the memory of the once living.

Death as a biological, bodily thing that we bear witness to through the dead body is best explained through Julia Kristeva's writing on the abject, wherein "the corpse seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life… As in true theatre without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being."[27] It is the feeling of being confronted with something that disturbs identity, system, and order. Especially in our geographical and historical specificity, the cadaver is the abject; it is pure disgust and horror. Within a Western understanding, the corpse is the classic exemplar of the abject because it is an object that has been violently cast outside of the cultural world. Laqueur outlines this contemporary attitude by contrasting it with older ones. As an idea, death went from being "an expected and ordinary part of life" to "something more terrifying, personal, and threatening."[28]

Dead bodies are sensorially unpleasant: cold to touch, offensive to smell, drab to sight, mute to hearing (and, certainly, socially unacceptable to taste). We have a biological aversion to it, which in turn signals danger. But, both in the nineteenth century and now, this urgent hygienic rationale "belied the lack of evidence for the mortal danger corpses posed to the living."[29] Even rotting, en masse, and in close proximity to the living, the cadaver is not particularly dangerous. A dead body poses a minimal health concern. It does not spread disease. But it was convincing that it could, and that was enough. Regardless of truth,

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[27] Julia Kristeva in *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, Edited by Clive Cazeaux (London: Routeledge, 2000).
[28] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[29] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

miasmatic conceptions of the rotting, the infectious, and the deadly had huge consequences for cemeteries. Paired with a new attention to hygiene, the nineteenth century marks a moment when misconceptions about the mortal danger of corpses provided a deeply flawed, but largely believable and effective, reason for sanitizing spaces of the dead. Cemetery aesthetics were predicated on the decoupling of memorials from the specific dead– the tomb to the lost soldier or the halls of heroes do the work of transmediation, hiding the corpse behind tropes, symbols, and titles. This was a war fought and won on the grounds of flesh, dirt, and smell, and one that buried its disdain for the poor through a smoke screen of progress and cleanliness. Laqueur maintains that under the sway of this new understanding of health and hygiene as odorless, sanitized, and tidy, "crowded churchyards had come to stand-in for the morally repulsive, horrible, almost phantasmagoric crowding and poverty."[30] It is a conviction that was sufficient to cast burial grounds outside of the city, recast the cemetery as a melancholic garden, and hide all traces of the dead body within it.

THE CEMETERY IS A LANDSCAPE

That the cemetery is landscaped is evident by the way in which it borrows from paradisal models, as well as English gardens. This speaks to the decorative organization and cultivation of land. The creation of snaking paths, the placement of shading trees, or the choice of tasteful flowers help produce a calm scene set apart from the city and ripe for contemplation. The melancholic garden is more concerned with the idea than the utility of a cemetery. But the interring of dead bodies–the chief function of a cemetery–is not just an activity that is concealed under this topographical production. As Worpole observes, "burial

[30] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

of the dead creates dynamic shapes and force-fields in the inherited landscape: barrows, tumuli, stone circles, groves, windswept cemeteries and even burial islands."[31] Sepulture does its own landscaping, even after the protruding bones of the old regime churchyard were cleared away. This catch is most clear in Adolf Loos' famous dictum, which reads: "if we find a mound six feet long and three feet wide in the forests, formed into a pyramid, shaped by a shovel, we become serious and something says, 'someone lies buried here'... Now that is architecture."[32] Notably, his notion of a body buried in a natural landscape has been taken up by a recent turn away from the modern cemetery.

Recently, natural burial grounds have garnered increasing popularity in western cultures that usually inter their dead in modern cemeteries. Usually set in the woods or other non-urban environments, natural burial grounds are predicated on impermanence. Burial plots are contracted on a temporary lease, laid down through a funerary practice that leaves no sign of burial; both the body and its marker are meant to eventually disappear into the ground.[33] Eventually, the whole site is meant to revert to a natural, and often protected, environment. Worpole accurately suggests that this type of burial ground can be "a reminder not just of another world, but of a different topography, (…) a vegetative, entropic, timeless world that is beyond human or bureaucratic control."[34] Within funerary practices, he notes this as an impulse that seeks to build on natural materials and preexisting forms in the landscape, but in a selective and heightened fashion, so as to bring the underlying morphology of natural forms to the surface. Consequently, natural burials can be understood

[31] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[32] Adolf Loos in Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[33] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[34] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.

as methods of cultivating a landscape so that it synchronizes personal and topographical memory, a method that centers on as little labor into the land as possible.

Worpole describes this as "a presumption of astonishing radicalism."[35] Both an "unexpected" and "late-modern phenomenon", he argues that natural burial goes against centuries of funerary practices because it wholly rejects permanence.[36] Unlike the tombstones, cenotaphs, and mausoleums made out of durable stone, this structuring embraces entropy. As a spatial manifestation, he also posits that natural burial grounds are "anti-architectural," understood as gestures against the human need for disrupting or rearranging the landscape to accommodate the dead.[37] Though Worpole's read of natural burials accurately synthesizes its motivations, it is misleading to view this impulse as a radical break. Instead, natural burial should be seen as a return to earlier practices– ones that can either be traced back to the "old regime" or, better yet, ancient practices that precede both the cemetery and the churchyard. Equally, the notion that natural burials successfully manifest an "anti-architectural", minimal, and restrained interference is not entirely convincing. This is because, either through "barrows, tumuli, stone circles, groves, [or] windswept cemeteries," grounds that hold dead bodies necessarily produce a landmark, alter geography, and become a landscape.[38] Whether it's a shaped series of hills or a single raised tumulus (one of the earliest grave forms, which denotes raised earth over one or several buried bodies), there is evidence of culture inscribed into the land. Loos' dictum is central here. Inescapably, funerary practices turn land into landscape, if landscape is to be understood as "not something in and of itself but the creation or organization of land, a

[35] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[36] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[37] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[38] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.

process."[39] It is a process by which memory can become activated, relying on landscaping to form an organic connection to what it is evoking a memory of. Indeed, Mitchell Schwarzer explains that "landscape humanizes land" in a way that reveals the fabrication that the term signifies.[40] Sachs echoes this sentiment, explaining how "landscapes that are powerfully, indubitably, overtly, shaped by human artifice" are "shaped specifically so as to inspire an experience of blending."[41] Any form of interment is a cultural response of excess, of accretion, and of putting in place rather than of lack, of privation, and of taking away.

THE CEMETERY IS A CITY

Let us return to the built environment made of stone, cement, and bricks. When the churchyard was within the city, it was its constituent– a 'yard' to its 'church.' When it moved beyond its walls, it became its mirror– a necropolis, constituting its own 'city of the dead.' The parallels between the cemetery and the city and, by extension, the tomb and the house, are profuse. In part, this is because the imaginary that led the construction of grave markers and burial grounds borrowed so heavily from urban and domestic architecture. Much like the cemetery as garden, the cemetery as city shared design principles with other known spatial formations. Diogo Seixas Lopes' account of Aldo Rossi's designs reflects these shared design principles. When speaking to his own plan for a cemetery in Modena, Rossi explains that "this project (…) complies with the image of a cemetery that everyone has. In fact, it resorted to archetypal images of the house and the city."[42] Rossi expounds that the cemetery "is an analogical representation of a house, a quarter, a part of the city", where, "initially, no

[39] Sachs, *Arcadian America*.
[40] Mitchell Schwarzer "The Moving Landscape," Robert S. Nelson and Margaret Olin, *Monuments and Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2004).
[41] Sachs, *Arcadian America*.
[42] Aldo Rossi in Diogo Seixas Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture: On Aldo Rossi* (Zurich: Park Books, 2015).

distinction was made between the typology of the house and that of the tomb."[43] This shared architectural genealogy has largely remained true. Funerary architecture rarely diverges from domestic and urban forms. Thinking of tombs as houses for the dead eventually extended the same logic to all categories of grave markers; "the mausoleums resembled small cabins" and "the rational scheme of the columbaria evoked the tenants of a civic architecture."[44] The modern cemetery has maps and streets. It has its own gates and districts. In fact, often one of the most striking views from a modern cemetery is when its vertical tombstones, monuments, mausoleums, and cenotaphs align with the city's skyscrapers, factories, and churches– a layering that accentuates their structural similarities.

With these cities came new communities. Worpole points out that "the very word necropolis itself embodies the term polis, which implies both the city and the civic culture which that city embodies, simultaneously."[45] The makeup of these communities was largely shaped by shifts in institutional power. When the new regime superseded the old, it was largely because the influence of the church was waning and the influence of the state was strengthening. This allowed new communities to be reimagined along national, rather than provincial or regional, lines. Consequently, "a cosmopolitan community of the dead had succeeded a local one."[46] Lopes explains that the city of the dead was frequently thought of "as the fixed setting of the perpetual dwellers. Confined to a precinct, they were placed like showpieces of a collective memory."[47] Even the vocabulary–"dwellers", "precinct"–reveals the common shade between the cemeterial and the civic. What, then, does a cosmopolitan funerary landscape look like? Laqueur describes it as decisively inclusive– "even if every

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[43] Rossi in Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture*.
[44] Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture*.
[45] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[46] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[47] Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture*.

corpse was not a citizen of the world: it could be anywhere; it welcomed strangers."[48] In many ways, this made for a more diverse population than the churchyard ever could– the dead of the cemetery spoke many languages, believed in different gods, and hailed from different towns and cities. This heterogeneity came to be reflected in its structure, with different tastes, traditions, and styles intertwining within one ground. If the modern cemetery is a city, it is a distinctly modern one, filled with unusual, puzzling, and surprising juxtapositions in its design.

THE CEMETERY IS A HOME

But this new, diverse space had its consequences. No one truly belonged to it. Cosmopolitanism came at the price of familiarity, intimacy, and kinship. Worpole emphasizes "the significance of that 'second' home at the end of life" in a world where "geographical ties with the place of birth have been severed for so many people."[49] He adds that, within this, "the grave can become an important locus of attachment, a fixed point in a changing and sometimes turbulent world."[50] This notion is central to understanding the modern cemetery. Again, it is an example where the imagination and application diverge. It is a site where the tomb is analogically related to the house, but the site is not necessarily a home.

By home–rather than house–we mean not just a concrete, inhabited structure, but a locus of attachment. A house is an architectural category, qualified through function. A home is a social construct, associated with comfort and safety. It is also a place of belonging. There remains a consistent understanding that a tomb is the last home–a relationship that is reflected in architecture, as well as in the enduring imaginary that death is the 'final sleep'. In the old regime, the relationship between the tomb and the home was clear. The churchyard

[48] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[49] Worpole. *Last Landscapes*.
[50] Worpole. *Last Landscapes*.

was local, so a town's population would be laid to rest where it once lived. Effectively, the idea of the home was largely fixed, and the event of death didn't separate the body from its precinct. This relationship was secured by both law and ritual– ecclesiastical regulations secured you a place of rest in your parish, and no one thought to undermine this right. The cosmopolitan cemetery decisively and consequentially severed this bond.

Robert Pogue Harrison points out that, "for the first time in millennia, most of us don't know where we will be buried."[51] In the old regime, this was so deeply established that it wasn't even a question. Today, our own space of interment is often only made apparent posthumously. This is a profound and consequential shift. David Morley explores the contemporary symbolism of home, community, and nationhood and how these operate as crucial elements of identity in the modern, globalizing world. With respect to the starkly unequal ways in which global movement has proliferated in the contemporary moment, Morley specifically mentions the frequent hope of many migrants to be buried at home, seeing the establishment of a final resting place as a significant way in which one can ultimately return to it.[52] The new regime didn't unsettle the profoundly human desire for security and attachment. Consequently, the importance of "creating new symbols of habitation, settlement, and community are now among the most important tasks of modern political cultures."[53]

THE CEMETERY IS A WASTELAND

Unmoored from the church and set apart from the city, where did the cemeteries of the new regime go? Unlike the churchyard, which was meant to "belong to its place", the

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[51] Robert Pogue Harrison in Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[52] David Morley in Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.
[53] Morley in Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.

cemetery didn't correspond to a predetermined location.[54] Because the burial grounds of the new regime were no longer tethered to a local chapel or an existing town, they could be formed anywhere. This liberty meant that the cemetery's relationship to land became deeply pragmatic. Freed from its structural moorings, cemeteries "were where they needed to be, their location determined by the demands of instrumental reason, not history, not sentiment, not something holy. (…) They were like any other utility, near those they served."[55] For the first time, prospective burial grounds would be selected based on the size, malleability, and potential profit of land. This meant that burial grounds would be placed in territories outside of existing infrastructures and networks– they were free to occupy no man's land. In order to do their work–of fabricating a paradise, of stimulating melancholia, of hiding abjection, of inscribing a landscape, of housing a populous community of the dead–cemeteries needed a clean slate. And, topographically, that's exactly what they got. Usually, cemeteries either flattened land, so that it could signify nothing, or settled on virgin territories, because they already signified nothing. Modern cemeteries could appropriate "a past or pasts as their managers saw fit, a *tabula rasa* eager to take on new cultural meanings."[56] The new work of the dead was a total and domineering production, theoretically and physically detached from preexisting histories and textures.

Within this shift of the funerary landscape, one road led away from the ornate, intricate, and melancholic burial ground and to the peripheral, standardized cemetery. Worpole notices this, pointing out that "in recent times, especially in the neoliberal economies and cultures, the intimate churchyard or cultivated civic cemetery has been replaced by the mass suburban cemetery, where land values and eschatological values can

[54] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[55] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[56] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*

be had at reduced cost."[57] Producing the quintessential, celestial cemetery had its limitations– it was expensive. So, this was the modern cemetery, minus paradise. It was still fabricated, ordered, sanitized–it was still distinctly of the new regime–but it was no longer tied to an imaginary. It was a new version of the functional burial ground, and with it came a different, less romantic type of sadness. This category of burial ground of mass-produced grave markers occupies flat, featureless sites that sit in the hinterlands of cities across Europe and Northern America. Because these sites would crop up on culturally bare grounds, they had no topographical, historical, or social texture to respond to. Equally, with no church at its center, the mass suburban cemetery had "no fixed direction," and so "no given landscape or alignment"; "historical geography was not a constraint."[58] In his influential writing on critical regionalism, Kenneth Frampton laments this type of place-making. He argues for a restoration of topography to the center of design. For Frampton, "the bulldozing of an irregular topography into a flat site is clearly a technocratic gesture which aspires to a condition of absolute *placelessness*."[59] More simply, Frampton champions a purposeful consideration of location– a proposal unequivocally rejected by the cemetery.

Within these sites, paths that used to be organized with consideration for preexisting topography have been replaced by the grid. This change in organization is reflective of a wider change in priority and direction. Sachs points to how the grid, which has become the dominant design principle that dictates both the modern metropolis and the new cemetery, is both "the symbol and the instrument of expansion, speculation, efficiency, economy, uniformity, convenience, rationality, progress."[60] As a mode of spatial organization, the grid

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[57] Worpole. *Last Landscapes*.
[58] Laqueur, *Work of the Dead.*
[59] Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Edited by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983).
[60] Sachs, *Arcadian America*.

echoes suburban uniformity and conformity. The suburban cemetery is zoned– to find a plot, you can use coordinates. Moving off the ground, the grid also became the preferred design method for dealing with cremated bodies. Divorced from the land, cremated remains posed a novel challenge for funerary architecture. But, in most cases, the preferred solution erred on the side of organization and practicality. Lopes describes how "caskets gradually occupied vacant cells on the walls, until the grid was complete with human remains. In this sense, the tectonics of the ossuary was death itself by means of a morbid brick work."[61] Like the gridded ground, columbarium design came to lean on geometry rather than poetry.

These suburban cemeteries are to their predecessors as Smithson's Passaic is to Rome. What Smithson notices in Passaic, New Jersey, and then applies to a wider trend of land development, is sites that are "*ruins in reverse*."[62] He views this category as "the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they are built. (…) The suburbs exist without a rational past and without the 'big events' of history. (…) No past– just what passes for a future."[63] Within a cemetery, ruination is important. This is not just because entropy can signal the ancient, the melancholic, and the nostalgic within a fetishized pastoral landscape. Ruination is significant because it can be a moral agent in a built landscape. By preserving residues of ruin and destruction, the cemetery performs its crucial role of sustaining memory and easing our contact with death. Ruins also have their own particular relationship to mortality. Tom McDonough fleshes this out, noting that "waste, ruin, destruction are constitutive of present order, not mere surplus

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[61] Lopes, *Melancholy and Architecture*.
[62] Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," *Ruins (Documents of Contemporary Art)*, Edited by Brian Dillon (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011). Reprint: *Artforum* (December, 1967).
[63] Smithson, "Tour of Passaic".

negativity."[64] Arriola Magali echoes this position, advocating that "we must approach the contemporary ruin as a tool that allows us to read our present condition."[65] Ruins activate and help uphold a collective memory in space.

But the flat, indeterminate nature of these formulaic sites is mirrored in their material make-up. The gridded suburban cemetery–where tombstones take the shape of proto minimalist, concrete slabs–conjures a form of memorialization that deters, rather than attracts, the desire for visiting, contemplating, and remembering. Giuliana Bruno notes how "unlike the porous, permeable stone of ancient building, the material of modernism does not 'ruin.' Concrete does not decay. It does not slowly erode and corrode, fade out or fade away. It cannot monumentally disintegrate. (…) Adverse to deterioration, it does not age easily, gracefully or elegantly." [66] The "peeling marble, bending tombstones, eroded volutes, mangled sculptures, rusty rails, and oozing cornices" that, under an expert eye, could be read for historical clues, and, through an uninvolved glance, would help build a wistful, romanticized landscape for mourning, have no place in the suburban cemetery.[67] Worpole echoes the relevance of this category, explaining that lawn cemeteries were designed "specifically to deny the processes of time or the landscape of ruins, both of which burial places have traditionally symbolized."[68] This regression to utility chips away at how modern cemeteries could ease our contact with death. Unlike the historic cemetery, which bridged

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[64] Tom McDonough, "The Archivist of Urban Waste Zoe Leonard, Photographer as Rag Picker," *Ruins (Documents of Contemporary Art)*, Edited by Brian Dillon (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011). Reprint: *Afterall*, no. 25 (Autumn/Winter 2010).

[65] Arriola Magali. "A Victim and a Viewer: Some Thoughts on Anticipated Ruins," in Ruins (Documents of Contemporary Art). London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011. Edited by Brian Dillon. Reprint: *Afterall* (Autumn/Winter 2005).

[66] Giuliana Bruno, "Modernist Ruins, Filmic Archaeologies," in *Ruins (Documents of Contemporary Art)*, Edited by Brian Dillon (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011). Reprint: *Jane and Louise Wilson: A Free and Anonymous Monument*, (London: Film & Video Umbrella/Lisson Gallery and Newcastle upon Tyne: Baltic, 2003).

[67] Lucia Allais, *Designs of Destruction: The Making of Monuments in The Twentieth Century* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

[68] Worpole, *Last Landscapes*.

ancient time with one of progress, the utilitarian cemetery exists in a stagnant time that is always already past.

THE CEMETERY IS A CYBERSPACE

Thus far, we have traced the genealogies that produce the imaginary and physical sites for interring and commemorating the dead. The contours of paradise have been explored. In moving from the churchyard to the modern cemetery, we have gone from a messy, packed, and bony yard to a calm, neat, and tidy garden. Death has been sanitized. The local has become cosmopolitan. Cities of the dead have been built. Suburban sprawls of cement tombstones have been wasted. What, then, has followed? Throughout these histories, cemeteries continue to be characterized as spatially located places for burying the dead. But today, the primary space where we encounter death is not a place, but the screen. Though the digital realm doesn't offer solutions for interment, it has come to play a central role in commemoration practices. Consequently, if we are to think not only through but beyond the modern cemetery, then the internet should be read as the most contemporary space for doing the work of the dead. This is especially true when memory-making is understood as a central tenet of that mission– after all, the dominant inscription of the modern cemetery is not 'here lies' but 'in memory of.' There are two crucial implications new technologies have had for the site of commemoration– unlike any funerary space before it, the cemetery as cyberspace is impermanent (because it is subject to instant and easy change), and boundless (because it is can be virtually located, and so not restricted by physical geologies or geographies).

In some ways, tribute websites are analogous to physical cemeteries. Visitors can leave virtual flowers and candles. Some graphic design solutions mimic the tombstone. There

are names, dates, and epitaphs. It is a designated space apart. But it also makes room for many more possibilities. You can add a sonic element through background music. Admins and visitors can upload photos and videos. You can leave letters to the dead, often addressing them directly. These methods of engagement are not available at a physical funerary site. Crucially, all digital solutions that have been applied towards the handling of death have had one, cohesive result– they have animated the site of commemoration. No longer adhering to a singular, static memorial, new technologies have made room for a more animated, restless, and fluctuating afterlife– "the memorial site buzzes with sensory and emotional stimuli."[69] These are not revolutionary technologies, but they result in consequential changes.

The need for maintaining a designated site for the dead is deeply embedded in human culture– a locus of attention where people can gather or remember. Michael Arnold, Martin Gibbs, Tamara Kohn, and Bjorn Nansen astutely observe that, in physical cemeteries, "graves and related artifacts are not only sites for storage of the dead, but they also provide a material and geographic focus for mourning and remembrance."[70] A specific, situated site is essential. But it would be amiss to think only physical space can serve this purpose. The digital cemetery continues to provide this space (the frequent use of the word 'site' to denote 'website' is telling), but it is different. It is detached from material inscriptions or static geographies. An admin can determine whether a page is private or public. It is a space apart, because it can only be accessed through digital devices. But it is also a space that is deeply enmeshed in quotidian life, because these devices are available to us at all times. Through them, the dead can be accessed from far-reaching geographies, and on synchronized or individual timelines.

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[69] Michael Arnold, Martin Gibbs, Tamara Kohn, and Bjorn Nansen, "The Restless Dead in the Digital Cemetery," *Digital Death: Mortality and Beyond in the Online Age*, Edited by Christopher M. Moreman and A. David Lewis (Westport: Praeger, 2014).

[70] Arnold, Gibbs, Kohn, and Nansen, "The Restless Dead".

On the internet, a memorial space can be endlessly proliferated and relocated. Unlike the dead in the physical world, the dead online are "exhumed within a network of social and technical connections previously delimited by cemetery geography and physical inscription in stone."[71] As a space for delineating a community of the dead, the internet has expanded out from the local and national to the global. Within it, every personal connection is free to help form the posthumous memory of the deceased, irrespective of predetermined closeness.

It is also an infrastructure that seriously disrupts any institutional, authoritative grip of the dead. Owned and controlled by no singular entity, online memorials are unique because they enter the deceased into an intimate rather than institutional relationship. Unmediated by the church and the state, an online repository for the dead can be "informal, intimate, and transient."[72] It can be multiply managed, authored, and visited. In turn, these alterations help build a post-humous identity that is multivocal and personal. Because the online cemetery interpolates "social agency rather than social structure", it is a space that significantly reshapes its earlier contours.[73] Most significantly, the cemetery in cyberspace aligns with Deborah Cowen's definition of "alternative infrastructures" as ones that "embrace relations and material forms that do not fit a national territorial mold; their form may be networked, urban, or digital."[74] Read through this logic, the digital cemetery is the promise of a site that continues to do the fundamental, cultural work of the dead, but in ways that open up unprecedented possibilities for future landscapes of commemoration.

[71] Arnold, Gibbs, Kohn, and Nansen, "The Restless Dead".
[72] Arnold, Gibbs, Kohn, and Nansen, "The Restless Dead".
[73] Arnold, Gibbs, Kohn, and Nansen, "The Restless Dead".
[74] Deborah Cowen, "Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance," *Verso* (25 January, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Throughout these chapters, the cemetery is read through multiple spatial lenses in an effort to recast its contours. As a paradise, it is a site that borrows from myth, poetry, and painting to fabricate moods, behaviors, and aesthetics. As a heterotopia, it is a site set apart from others, operating behind its own walls and according to its own timeline. As a frontier, it is a site for institutional powers to war for control of the dead. As a façade, it is a site that masks a culturally marginal approach to the material facts of death. As a landscape, it is a site which inscribes social worlds into natural environments. As a city, it is a site that is planned, zoned, constructed, and populated. As a home, it is a site for securing identities, kinships, and communities. As a wasteland, it is a site where material stubbornness stands in the way of sentimentality. As a cyberspace, it is a site online, expanding notions of boundaries, stillness, and control. Of course, this list is not exhaustive. The cemetery might be a marketplace– it is a site of commerce, and one that has been turned into a sellable and exportable model. The cemetery could also be a museum– it is a site concerned with both display and preservation. But the thrust of this thesis is not to exhaust these understandings. To return to Easterling, it is about "privileging not the formal, morphological attributes" of a site, "but rather a repertoire of operatives affected by time, patterns of connectivity, and changing populations of multiple components."[75] It is about taking a specific site and not only looking at it but reading *through* it, continuously recasting its category to better understand the various tenets that shape it.

[75] Easterling, *Organizational Space*.

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