Loss Lessons

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From the Subject

In Space

Editor's Note

In the opening of Elizabeth Strout's *Oh William!*, the author provides a definition of emotions when losing someone: "Grief is such a — oh, it is such a solitary thing; this is the terror of it, I think. It is like sliding down the outside of a really long glass building while nobody sees you." Contemplating human existence when grieving, Strout positions it as absolute loneliness, like falling, and a horror. Loss, in this way, is both private and fatalistic. While no one dismisses these sentiments to losing someone, my previous reference to Professor Michael Cholbi pleads that it can be this, but also much more.

Experiencing loss has many caveats to this idea of a stagnant, solitary grieving over death. Firstly, loss is not necessarily about the griever but might occupy an environment or focus on our lost ones themselves. Secondly, loss may well not be about someone who has passed, but can be about mourning a friendship, relationship, or connections. Thirdly, and most importantly, loss rarely appears to be static, but mobile, lively, spirited, potentially productive but constantly a process. As many of our writers have argued, experiencing loss is very rarely about death itself. Rather, it concerns the processes of grieving, remembering, and attempting for restoration; a vibrant social economy of loss, so to speak.

There are also a multitude of ways for us to intellectually study loss. Accompanied by critically meaningful poetry from The Creator's senior writing team, our university's own creative writing house, loss perhaps begins as a creative pursuit. It is about trialling and testing feelings, predicated on affective experiments. These poems frame the themes within this edition, moving from individual and community mourning to grief that travels afar from the griever and into the air and spaces around us. The papers written by our contributors are frequently more narratively than analytically scoped, emphasising the polyvocality of loss writing. Equally, *Loss Lessons* is distinctly multidisciplinary, being constructed by a wider number of Classicists and Archaeologists than our previous editions. There is also a potent contribution from art historians, litterateurs, and even philologists and linguists.

So then, perhaps the most valuable historic lessons from loss is the topic's insistence on creativity and alternative approaches, particularly in the relationship between subject and scholar. After reading this edition, I hope loss no longer appears to be an exclusively negative phenomenon taken singularly about the griever and someone who has passed. Loss, through the same vein, creates, transforms, unities, and builds communities. On the latter subject, I must say a much needed thank you to all the contributors with pieces inside this edition, our copyeditors who perfected them further, and the illustrators with their beautiful, and sometimes striking, designs moving across this journal. Finally, my unfalteringly talented Senior Editors, our Secretary/Deputy Editor, Imaan Shamsi, our Treasurer/Deputy Editor, Jake Beecroft, our Head of Copyediting, Lauren Hood, and our Social Media Officer and Head Illustrator for this edition, Dalma Roman. What a joy it is, as always, to work with you all on these projects and present this together.

I hope *Retrospect*'s 38th printed edition warms up your day or even gives you a thought provoking chill,

Harry Alexander Fry
Editor-in-Chief

Featured Artist Note

Before my grandfather was thirteen, he and his family were sent to a Soviet gulag from their small Polish village of Mosciska. The family were taken in daylight, through the snow by armed soldiers. When my great-grandfather, Mikolaj, returned home, he discovered that his house had been commandeered, his family gone. He went to the railway sidings where he found his family and many others kept in cattle trucks. He joined them. After two days of waiting, they were transported on a two-week journey to the gulag at Kluczanka, quite close to Perm (then known as Molotov). At Kluczanka, families lived together in crowded and unheated barracks. The primary task for the deportees was "lesozagotovka" (felling trees). This gruelling work was performed by men, women, and even teenagers in temperatures that dropped to -40°C.

During this period, death rates were high due to disease. There were also many inevitable strains and injuries, including one that Mikolaj sustained trying to free his horse from a snowdrift.

"In that place a horse was worth more than a human being."

When the inmates were amnestied under the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement, they embarked on an arduous trek towards the Middle East. Mikolaj never recovered from the injury sustained in the snowdrift. He died in Tehran.

This painting is developed from a photograph at the graveside of Mikolaj in Tehran. It depicts my grandfather (central figure), his mother (second right) and his four sisters. The painting takes on a present-day perspective of remembering, struggling between agency, distance and memory. Personal stories of loss like this allow us to recognise the sentimental, human experiences within stories that we are generationally distant from. The figures merge from, and stand against a sandy, unremembered background. Indeed, my grandfather never returned to the graveside nor Tehran, nor the family home in Mosciska. Ultimately, the family migrated to Manchester, England.
Their names, left to right:

Krystyna
Stefania
Tadeusz
Helena
Katarzyna (great-grandmother)
Ludwiga

Natasha Kawałek
Cover Artist
Instagram: @natashar_k

Society Update

The Edinburgh Creator Magazine

The Creator Magazine is a student-run creative writing and visual arts magazine that is a registered society of the University of Edinburgh. The magazine's themes often revolve around questions of introspection, identity, reflection, and politics which have found a companion in Retrospect's theme this edition. Loss Lessons has inspired four of the magazine's committee members to contribute poetry to this edition: Mihika Agarwal reflects on sudden loss and facing mortality for Elegy; Kristy Galbraith portrays the forfeiture of individuality within collective bereavement for Grievers; Freya Siebert holds a conversation between the living and the dead for From the Subject; and Meg Leaver sheds light on the emotional and geographical toll that accompanied the damming of the Klamath River for In Space. All contributors have been incredibly grateful for this opportunity. This past semester, it was a delight to publish RIOT!, our eighth edition, inspired by artists and activists who use their voices to speak loudly and boldly. The Creator Magazine has another edition coming out in the 2026 Spring/Summer Semester, that will be available in print and online. All submissions of poetry, prose, non-fiction, art and photography are welcome! More information on the edition's theme, how to submit, and how to get involved with the society can be found on the instagram, **@thecreatormagazine_**

Meg Leaver
Co-President & Poetry Editor of the Creator

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Society Update

Edinburgh University Classics Society

It has been a fruitful term for the Classics society, with various socials, fundraisers, and events all aimed at promoting the Ancient World.

Our semester began with our infamous Toga Pub Crawl, which saw members running around the city centre as if they had just walked out of the Roman Forum. Other social highlights include our screening of Gladiator, in collaboration with FilmSoc, and our sculpture social.

However, arguably the most significant event of this semester was our charity fundraiser. Organised by our amazing Charities Officers, Anna and Madi, the society raised an astonishing £1379 for Children's Hospitals Across Scotland, with 10% of these funds going towards subsiding our annual society ball. To celebrate this milestone – and incentivise donations – lecturers wore togas to teach for a whole day on the 'Day of the Toga'. It is our hope that this fundraiser will become an annual event with the Classics Society, raising even more money for charities important to us.

Harry Sharma
President of Classics Society

Edinburgh University History Society

This semester has been one of our busiest yet, with an incredible range of events across the whole society. Our Academic Secretaries have balanced the serious and the light-hearted, running a trip to Historic Environment Scotland while also continuing the ever-popular Drunk History nights. Building on that momentum, our Social Secretaries delivered a fantastic calendar of activities, including our popular Pub Quiz, a Horrible Histories- themed Halloween social, and our Winter Ceilidh in support of Health in Mind, raising £150.

Alongside this, our SEWOs kept things thriving with their cosy fortnightly coffee mornings, while excitement is already building for our Prague trip this February. Our First Year and Postgraduate Reps have contributed hugely to our sense of community, hosting Calton Hill outings, food tours, and an end-of-term ugly-jumper competition. Our four sports teams have continued to impress, both on the pitch and through meaningful community efforts. Netball tackled the 7 Hills of Edinburgh, while rugby organised a blood- donation initiative - and both have been shortlisted for intermural team of the year! Behind the scenes, our Exec committee have kept everything running smoothly and financially viable. We were also delighted to lead our collaborations with EUSA on our Teviot Archiveathons and to partner with Retrospect Journal for the Copycats? Student Research Forum on 5 December. At the heart of all this is the community that makes the History Society what it is. Thank you to our committee and members for your enthusiasm, support, and creativity. We can't wait to see you next semester!

Kirsty Ross-Oliver
President of History Society

Society Update

The Edinburgh Archaeology Society

As the year draws to a close, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments of ArchSoc over the past semester, celebrate the hard work of the committee, and extend my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to its success. We kicked off the semester with a busy Welcome Week with great turnouts at our events. Our regular programme of events began with our weekly Monday dig at the Cammo Estate, our Thursday evening lecture series and our fortnightly Monday coffee mornings.

Our Semester 1 New Members Night welcomed many new faces, with some old ones joining us as well. We also welcomed four new committee members: Marta as PG Rep, Amelia as First-Year Rep, Charlie as E&I Officer, and Kemian as General Member. Semester 1 held some other very exciting moments, including trips to Lauriston Castle, Edinburgh Underground vaults and Dumbrae. Looking forward, ArchSoc will continue its normal range of events in Semester 2, with annual events including SSASC 2026, hosted by Aberdeen; Queering Archaeology in February; the Fieldwork and Career Fair and Women in Heritage, both in March. Keep an eye on our social media or sign up for our newsletter to receive updates on those events! I would like to take this opportunity to extend a generous 'thank-you' to everyone who has contributed to ArchSoc this semester. Firstly, thank you to all of our members; your participation and enthusiasm at events are what make ArchSoc a fantastic community!

Thank you to the ArchSoc Committee: Fenn, Oswyn, Freya, Eva, Peter, Sofia, Naomi, Laura, Charlie, Marta, Kemian and Amelia. Your hard work and dedication have been fantastic over the last months, and I am forever grateful. I'd also like to thank the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society for continuing to allow us to participate in their archaeological dig at the Cammo Estate, and the Archaeology Department for jointly hosting our lecture series again this academic year. I feel fortunate to be part of such an enthusiastic society, and I'm looking forward to seeing you all once again in the New Year!

Emily Rutter
President of Archaeology Society

Elegy

Thought two days and four years are worlds apart,
but time loops in a wormhole, i fall and get caught
in your arms across my neck, face melts into fabric
step on autumn leaves, sounds like a crash-landing

of glass, swerve of a car – years later and i start
to hear melodies of Ravel stringing through your guitar,
battered and shattered, a shard through your heart
i watch the cinematography of a windshield blowing you apart
or a fire, flipped-over bus, concrete collides with your face

i imagine you dying in a hundred different ways

death, kiss me, feed on my heart and soul
gasp for breath, freeze the grass, icicle-cold,
your vice-grip fingers wrap around my chest,
your teeth – a grinding bass metronome.
tick tock, your whispers infect my dreams
another car crashes in the night,

the moon mocks our mortality.

thought five days fly into oblivion but years condense
collapse into dense point of singularity, the single moment where
the wind cries to the tune of a piano never played
burn the sight of you behind my eyelids.

but you already start to fade.

– Mihika Agarwal

The Grammar We Dream

Ami John

The language came first as a dream. A linguistic lullaby, held with the kind of reverence reserved only for a tongue as old as its people. Neutrality is never the nature of language, yet in the dream, the words seemed pure, detached from consequence. When Tamil touched the ear, its longevity felt unmistakable, its social configurations drifting in like weather. A geological fact made linguistic. It simply existed.

All dreams have a design, a layout. Perhaps the ground rises seventy feet only to twist into a maze, or the fish you swim with turn green. There is always a hidden narrative. Here too, in the half-light, the words revealed their angle. திருமதி. திரு. The feminine title and the masculine one. The masculine stood upright, steady as a wall. The feminine sank downward, pulled into deep water, like swimming without ever reaching the surface. Polite but unmistakably uneven. Respect rising on one side and thinning on the other. Unlike land and sea, there is no natural difference here. No inherent beauty. Simply an excess, an attachment to one sex. Grammar stays loyal to its maker: man.

Then the dream dissolved. Morning arrived. And the mind, like the language, kept its record.
The Tolkāppiyam, composed around 1500 BCE, austere and inherited rather than observed, maps out Akam, the inner realm, where women are rendered passive, soft, gentle, feminine. Men are positioned as movement, decision, exterior action. These distinctions are ancient, unsurprising, repeated across civilizations. But they linger. Children memorize them, then pass them along. The dream's air shifts as residual meaning settles, invisibly into the language, into the room, into thought itself.

Stories behave the same way. You tell them to your mother, your friends, anyone listening. You alter details, forget others, but the core remains. Tenali Raman, the South Indian poet of folklore, witty and quick, his brilliance gifted by Kali herself. A tale of moral cleverness repeated for decades. And yet, across variations, women remained peripheral, almost decorative. Children's stories do not conceal their rules. Men act. Women react. A phrase that repeats until it sounds factual. Song lyrics like "நீ எனக்கு பிட்டு படம் டி", meaning "you are pornography to me," reinforce the idea that women exist for male consumption. Language here, like dreams, mirrors life. Subjects and objects. Action and aftermath. Even when a Tamil offers a heroine, the alignment rearranges in familiar ways.

Kannagi steps forward in the Silappathikaram with fire in her hands, burning a city in her demand for justice. For a moment, the dream seems to shift. A woman acts. A woman devastates. A woman refuses containment. But the narrative soon reverts. Culture insists on remembering her not as a burning force but as a paragon of chastity. Her fury is reframed as loyalty. Loyalty to her husband. A man who betrayed her. Her destruction softened into devotion. The narrative tightens its walls, turning a conflagration into a moral lesson. Even here, the blaze must follow an inherited path. Irigaray might call it a "masculinist signifying economy." Chakravarti names it the ideology of the "good woman": loyal, pure, with controlled anger. Even a woman who reduces a city to ash must do so under the terms of a man's story.

In dreams, landscapes can appear open until we realize the corridors loop back to the same doorways. So it is with Tamil's heroines. The dream shifts, but the architecture remains. Language is a room. You learn the layout before you realize you live inside it. The doorway is just narrower for some.

There is a cleft in everyday speech. Insults. Breasts, genitals, pubic hair. Bitch. Whore. Son of a whore. A catalogue of Tamil invectives orbiting the female body again and again. Butler calls gender the stage where power rehearses itself. This is a linguistic economy that punishes one gender to shame another. Moral order policed through vocabulary. Douglas would call it pollution: a body made anomalous, then punished for the anomaly.

A dream will often release you into another one. Reality offers no such release. It grows unwieldy, the room suddenly wrong. Loss arrives early here, not through clarity but confusion, a narrative misplaced before you could claim it.

Yet the dream remains beautiful. There is value in sight with closed eyes. Language arrives long before you understand what it asks of you. Tamil is loved and deserves to be. Not all of what it reveals is constraint; it equips too, in ways women have long used. Its possibilities carry a contradiction: the clearest female voice in early Tamil literature belongs to Avvaiyar, a name that simply means "respected elder woman", while her actual name is lost.

The work survives; the woman doesn't. Her poetry is political in its plainness, arming women with clarity even as the grammar that carried her voice left her unnamed. It is a beautiful contradiction, but beauty does not absolve. You cannot defend a language by pointing to its loveliness.

To critique is not to wound. It is a necessity. Without it, we fall into what Bourdieu calls habitus, the subtle arrangements of culture that become reflex. Grammar sliding into the bloodstream. Instinct turned inheritance. Passed and passed and passed until the moment you pause and ask what exactly you are passing along.

Tamil appears in thought, in sentences not yet spoken. Its fissures are visible now, with new precision. The dream shows what Tamil could be: luminous, open, unrestrained. Less beholden to ancient loyalties.

Whether that dream returns is uncertain.

ILLUSTRATION BY DALMA ROMAN

Andromache's Grief in Homer's Iliad

Bethany Hicks-Gravener

Homer's epic poem the Iliad, which charts the events of the Trojan War, is one of considerable grief. On both sides we see the impact that the losses which war inflicts affect the soldiers in and out of battle. The Trojan army is fronted by the effective 'crown-prince' Hector; however in Book 22 he is killed by Achilles in an act of revenge, and we are left with his wife Andromache as she tries to navigate her own grief of losing both her husband and her sense of security.

In the Iliad, Andromache appears twice, once in Book 6 and again in Book 22. In Book 6, Hector returns to the city of Troy from the battlefield and is greeted at the gate by a multitude of women asking about their husbands, brothers, fathers and sons. Hector tells them all to pray to the gods for their safety, despite knowing that many of the men who are being asked about are dead. One of the key roles that women hold in ancient Greek texts is that of the lament. Women are vital in the realm of death; it was their job to prepare the body for the funeral rites. They would wash the body and sing hymns to the gods for the safe passage of the soul to the underworld. We see evidence of the importance of respect in death in many different ancient texts, but one that sticks out in particular is that of Euripides' play Hecabe, in which, after the Greeks have sacrificed her daughter Polyxena to the ghost of Achilles at the end of the Trojan War, Hecabe (or Hecuba, as she is most commonly known) is granted the right to properly care for the body of her daughter and to bury her with dignity despite belonging to the 'enemy' side. In Book 18 of the Iliad, captured Trojan women lament even Patroklus after his death. Lamentation was a fundamental pillar within female community as it bonded women together and reinforced their social role. It also highlights the role of women in society: responsible for bridging the space between life and death, both producing life and protecting death.

The women inside the gates of Troy are stuck in a constant cycle of worry and lamentation; if it is not them who has lost a relation at the end of the day, then it is one of their friends or neighbours. They gather by Hector because he is their link to those who they love and who will protect them, and they wish to know not just the fate of the men but of their individual fate too.

Once inside the gates of Troy, Hector first seeks out his mother at the palace of his father Priam. He speaks briefly with her before moving on to the house that he shares with Andromache. When he reaches their house, Andromache is not there: she has left the feminine domain of the house where she is expected to be. Hector asks a handmaid where she is and she tells him that Andromache "was in a total // frenzy and rushed off – it seemed as if she was out of // her mind," (6.391-6.393). Hector finds Andromache on top of the Scaean gates with their son Astyanax (and Astyanax's nurse). Arthur notes that the Scaean gates act as the divide between Troy and the battlefield. They are the liminal space between the female domain of lamentation, mourning, and prayer in the city and the male domain of violence and death that is present on the battlefield. On the gates, Andromache and Hector are isolated from the two spaces whilst also being completely surrounded by them, and it is in this liminal space that Andromache opens her heart to her husband. Andromache begs Hector to stay inside the walls of Troy with her. She tells him that if he fights against the Greeks then she will soon become his widow and he will leave their son without a father. Hector responds, stating that he understands Andromache's fear but that his place is on the battlefield, and if he shied away from the war then he wouldn't be respected by his fellow men. He specifically tells her that "it is my place // to be brave and scorn danger and always fight in the front

line," (6.440-6.441).

At Hector's refusal to hold back from the war, Andromache knows that she only has a short time left with him. A brief moment of happiness occurs between the couple when Hector reaches out to Astyanax to hug him, but Astyanax is scared of Hector's helmet. In this short moment the two laugh over Astyanax's fear towards his father and Hector removes his helmet. Recognising his father, Astyanax then goes to him happily and they are joined together in a moment of bliss. In that moment, Andromache grieves not just for her husband's impending death, but for the life she has had. She is also trying to savour that brief comfort of having her husband and her son safely together despite the horrors that are occurring so close to them. Hector then tells Andromache to go home with Astyanax, tells her to return to her loom and therefore return to her 'feminine space' while he prepares to return to the front lines, his 'male space'. Hector also knows that Andromache will be safer at home and that alongside the handmaidens she will find comfort. Hector is very aware that he is not going to survive the war and so wants to make sure that if he can't keep his wife and child completely safe, at least he can keep them comfortable. The moment that Andromache returns to her house, her handmaidens all break into lamentation for Hector, despite him being alive in that moment.

In Book 22 of Homer's Iliad Hector is killed in an act of revenge by Achilles, leaving Andromache as his widow. Andromache discovers the news of his death because she hears the lamentation of Hecuba (Hector's mother) whilst she is working at her loom in her and Hector's home. From hearing Hecuba's lamentation, she realises that one of her sons must have died and, as she runs out of her home, she discovers that it is her husband who has been slain. It is on the very walls that her and Hector spoke in Book 6 that Andromache stands and sees her dead husband being dragged away to the Greek encampment. At seeing her husband's corpse, Andromache collapses into the arms of her

sisters-in-law until she recovers and begins her lamentation for Hector.

From the moment that Andromache hears the lamentation of her mother-in-law, she knows that everything that she feared would happen, and everything that she was hoping to stop from happening, has happened. Andromache is a particularly interesting character because, much like Penelope, she is seen as a 'perfect wife'. She is submissive to her husband's requests and behaves completely as she is expected to. Despite the fact that she is the 'perfect woman', she has to submit "to unimaginable suffering," but in the moment when she hears Hecuba, she forgoes any sense of what is expected of her as a woman and rushes out to the wall "like a madwoman" (22.454). At this moment in the text, we are drawn to Andromache's only other appearance in the Iliad: in Book 6, where she is once again described as acting in a very 'un-feminine' way when she fears for the safety of Hector.

Andromache's character is the fictional manifestation of the real-world widowhood and suffering experienced by Greek women in antiquity. She shows "how the treatment of innocent victims of war delineate what is heroic and unheroic" and how those who are not actively involved in the fighting suffer just as much as those on the battlefield. Andromache and her son are the personification of war widows and war orphans. They represent the real-life pain that was felt and experienced through the loss of love and the loss of security. She collapses into the arms of the wives of the men on the battlefield, each of whom had probably suffered their own loss and was also going through the motions of grief; but they put all their feelings aside to steady her. In times of war, women would find an even deeper sense of community in one another in antiquity and would look out for one another. Widows, especially war widows, would have been able to see their grief within Andromache and their stories of her would have helped to provide comfort for themselves at the most difficult of times.

Medea and the Violence of Maternal Grief

Maria Magdalena Morek

Greek tragedies are a locus for the complexity of human emotions, especially grief. Men, women and children encounter the terrifying uncertainty of the physical body, once mobile and soulful, now pierced, bloody and greying. It is not surprising that scholars speak of the universality of these plays, making an event that seems so inconceivable to the audience a point of sympathy and understanding.

Euripides, in particular, has been crowned as a 'Prince of Tragedy', able to blend beautiful choral odes with heart-wrenching speeches from his protagonists. In 2006, Carson published an anthology of some of Euripides' plays entitled *Grief Lessons: Four Play by Euripides*. Translating *Herakles*, *Hekabe*, *Hippolytos*, and *Alkestis*, Carson prefaces by stating that these plays capture the crisis of emotion, with grief bursting forth through madness and blood. In line with this logic, I intend to add *Medea* to this list of grief lessons, complicating the loss of self with violence and polarising private and public griefs.

Medea has, by all accounts, confounded audiences by being too sympathetic and forgiving for the horror that the titular character evokes. Performed in 431 BC as Euripides' earliest extant play, *Medea* follows the tragic tale of a woman who sacrifices her homeland, her ancestral gods and family to protect the life she carves out with Jason, only to be brutally rejected as he finds a new girl to give the glory that he feels he deserves. Her brutal rage at this transgression culminates in the cathartic murder of her two sons, whom Jason is not given the privilege to bury.

Modern receptions have cast Medea as a pop-feminist icon that sticks it to the man and gets what she wants. The line "I'd rather stand three times in the front line than bear one child" sticks in people's minds that Euripides understood the female lot (249-50). Her rage and grief are deeply intimate and striking. This lends itself to a 'good for her' mentality, even if she kills every step of the way to a happy life. The *Peliades*, a fragmentary production from 455 BC, details the daughters of Pelias killing their father under the instructions of Medea. To assist the Argonauts in fleeing Colchis, she cuts up her little brother into pieces so that her grieving father might be delayed gathering his limbs. So, what is it about the story of Medea that lets her get away with such a monstrosity?

The death of the children happens at the very end of the play as Euripides makes us wait in excruciating horror as we expect the inevitable, knowing that a "dreadful purpose is forming in her mind" (37). However, Medea's grief and loss is not predicated on the death of her children, in fact her loss begins and ends with Jason. Her home, family and soul lost to chase a romance and family with him. The primary space for women to be individuals of importance was the *oikos*, and Medea's purpose is firmly situated in this private life where stability and family are paramount.

The Archaic *oikos* was intrinsically tied to the moral value of the political world. If the man's home was stable and virtuous, so would be his public life. Medea cannot bring Jason this stability and virtue that he wants. She is unsuitable as a wife in that she is a foreign woman, associated with witchcraft and murder and is in a completely powerless position. Her 'otherness' is perfectly contrasted with Creon's daughter, a Greek princess of Corinth who does not really speak and demonstrates all the attributes of the gentle and submissive woman. So, Medea is simply cast aside to seek more virtuous company.

Medea is not given the space to grieve the loss of the life that she has fought hard to carve out for herself with Jason. She is not given the kindness of sympathy by the men that are meant to protect her, though she may find solace in the chorus who reaches out to her from the sidelines, unable to do anything but cry with her. The desecration of the private life is refracted on the dominant stage, her anger and grief on full display.

She is placed in a liminal space of not quite wife and not quite mother. She is the centre of public attention, but this is an uncomfortable and uneasy spectatorship. She bridges the gap between feminine and masculine representations, switching between the 'intellectual' and 'emotional' to try to convince Jason and Creon to let her stay in Corinth and take care of her children (269-356). This plea is not granted, though her emotive negotiations with Creon leave her with enough time to action her grief. Both Creon and Jason undermine her rational response, unphased by the fact that her life has been completely upended. In however bloody a manner, she feels that she must destroy Jason's life, just as he ruined hers, moving away from a symbolic death to a real one. The difference between the home and politics is also a difference of which loss matters and which one does not.

Zeitlin asks us to question the attention given to the violence of women in tragedy, arguing that playwrights use the feminine in narrative to bring forth what "haunts the Athenian civic imagination". Medea represents a breakdown of structure by refusing to sit by and watch her husband willingly breaking oaths of marriage. Medea forces spectatorship on the silent destruction of women, making it clear that Jason is to blame for the social dissolution of familial bonds. The monstrosity of her act is necessary for grief to be justified, for the loss of the normal is not enough to mourn. Medea must kill her children. The ambiguity and privacy of the feminine spirit in the Athenian imagination is sidelined without the actual physical manifestation of grief. Medea mourns the loss of her children before they die.

Her delegation to concubine puts her children in danger immediately. Future children of Jason may see these boys as a threat to their throne and kill them before they get a chance at adulthood. Their lives would always be premature because of the status of their mother. Whether Medea kills them or not does not matter. Her purpose is to make her grief heard.

In 2025, a musical version of *Medea* was performed in London. In this musical, Medea does not kill her children. Confined to subtext, critics had noted that this made Medea more sympathetic. With her grief, culminating in bloodshed, being necessary to me, I wondered what this omission did for the narrative. A modern audience may not need Medea to kill for her loss of self to be valid. Though, I would argue that her killing her children to be shown on stage is what makes her emotions and empty grief so poignant. This act of monstrosity disturbs the echoing silence of marriage and motherhood, and screams to the meaning of family and oath. Her pain is deafening.

FREDERICK SANDYS (1868) MEDEA

I am not sure I would understand this modern Medea more, since Euripides' original emphasises that grief is not universal. Constructed on gendered lines, Jason and Creon do not see female grief until it is presented to them bleeding out on the main stage. Silence is not enough for loss to be dramatized. For Medea, she learns that grief must be public and noticeable. Her loss is complex and needs to be acted upon so that it might be worth attention. Euripides probes what loss means for a woman and asks whether it starts with the death of her kin or rather ends with it. Her act is just and spectacular and deserves to be seen and heard, however monstrous.

FIGURE 1- JASON REJECTING MEDEA, GIOVANNI ANTONIO PELLEGRINI (1711)

# "The Saddest on God's Earth": Landscape as Witness and Wound in the Post-Clearance Scottish Highlands

Kirsty Ross-Oliver

In the small kirk of Croick in Sutherland, faint scratches linger on the windowpanes: "Glencalvie people was in the churchyard here May 24 1845." These marks, etched by tenants sheltering outside after their eviction, have outlasted their makers, standing today as fragile, material emblems of grief. Along the coast at Helmsdale, a bronze family gazes outward from the Emigrants' Monument, representing those who left the straths and sailed for Canada. Between these two places – one intimate and desperate, the other monumental and commemorative – lies the larger story of a region transformed into both an archive of dispossession and a symbol of romantic beauty. The Highland landscape, shaped by trauma and reimagined by artists and travellers, has become something more than scenery: it is a witness, and in some sense a wound, capable of carrying grief across generations.

The Highland Clearances constitute a long and uneven period of social, economic, and cultural upheaval across northern and western Scotland. Although often dated from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth century, the Clearances were neither a single event nor a uniform process. Landlords, responding to pressures of agricultural improvement, shifting markets, and the collapse of the clan system after the 1745 Jacobite rising, increasingly restructured their estates to prioritise large-scale sheep farming. This restructuring disaggregated traditional clachan settlements, consolidated landholdings, and often forced tenants to relocate to the Lowlands, coastal villages, or to elsewhere in the British Empire. While debate continues over the scale of coercion involved in the resettlement, the emotional rupture experienced by displaced communities is clear. Contemporary commentators sometimes attempted to sanitise the upheaval as economic inevitability, but testimonies, travellers' accounts, and surviving material traces attest to profound loss. As Hilda Kean argues material traces carry meaning not because of their survival but through the ways they are interpreted; a ruined cottage or a scratched window gains significance when mourned, remembered or engaged with.

ILLUSTRATION BY DALMA ROMAN

This landscape of rupture, however, was swiftly superseded by an alternative set of meanings. From the late eighteenth century onward, Romantic artists and writers began to reframe depopulated regions as sites of ancient tranquillity. Painters such as Horatio McCulloch rendered misted glens, solitary lochs and ruined cottages in soft, atmospheric hues. What were, in reality, the remnants of recent eviction appeared instead as picturesque elements of a timeless landscape. As art historian John Morrison observes, these paintings commemorate Clearances and emigration paradoxically through their very emptiness. Human absence, produced by economic displacement, was aestheticised as natural solitude. To Victorian viewers, the cleared landscape became authentically Scottish precisely because it seemed unpeopled. This reframing risked obscuring the trauma embedded in the land, transforming hardship into scenery. Some late-nineteenth-century travellers recognised this tension. Writing in the 1880s, one tourist remarked that the "beautiful" scenes admired by tourists were in reality "the saddest on God's earth", their loveliness inseparable from the devastation that had made them so still. What the local population understood as loss, visitors repackaged and sold as beauty.

Against this romantic gaze, the landscape itself continued to bear its own quiet testimony. Croick Church remains the most striking example. In May 1845, around ninety evicted tenants from Glencalvie camped in the churchyard rather than take shelter inside, believing it sacrilegious to occupy the kirk. During the night, several scratched their names and messages into the windows. These fragile inscriptions - "Glencalvie people," "the Glen Calvie was here" - function as improvised memorials, materialising grief through acts of fleeting defiance. Their story reached the correspondent of The Times, who described how "hundreds of people and generally industrious peasants have been driven ... to become wanderers and starving beggars - a brave and valuable population lost."

Here, the interplay of materiality and memory aligns with Kean's argument that historical significance emerges through interpretation, rather than being inherent.

Elsewhere across the Highlands, ruins took on similarly charged meanings. Fallen walls and grass-covered foundations became physical traces of lives interrupted. Nineteenth-century writers often wrote these ruins as emotional texts. John Stuart Blackie described "the ruins of cottages where once happy families dwelt... now swept away, leaving nothing behind but dreariness and desolation." These accounts imbued abandoned settlements with a kind of aching presence, evidence not merely of architectural decay but of social fracture. Yet at the same time, artists such as McCulloch and Peter Graham transformed these sites into Romantic icons - empty, mist-filled, and emotionally ambiguous. This aesthetic reframing softened the trauma embedded in the land while giving it a new, sentimental afterlife. The landscape oscillated between witness and aesthetic object, its wounds at once visible and concealed. As Morrison's work underscores, art both preserves and obscures the realities of human displacement, illustrating the tension between grief inscribed in the land and mythmaking imposed upon it.

The emotional geographies of the Clearances, however, were not confined to Scotland. As emigrants and their descendants dispersed across the world, they carried memories – and imagined memories – of the Highlands. Poetry and song played a central role in shaping this diasporic emotional world. Yet the relationship between memory and imagination was often blurred. The celebrated "Canadian Boat Song", published anonymously in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1829, depicts a Gael on a Canadian river longing for his homeland. Thomas Kennedy has shown that the poem's authority derived less from emigrant experience than from the Romantic imagination; still, readers embraced it as an authentic lament. Such works expressed longing for a homeland that many authors had never seen.

Distance intensified idealisation, and the Highland landscape - already mythologised within Scotland - became still more potent in exile.

In sharp contrast, Gaelic poetry composed within the Highlands often articulated displacement with stark directness. One such example, "*Venus nan Gàidheal*" ("Venus of the Gaels"), captures the solitude of those left behind when families scattered and familiar patterns of life collapsed. In a brief but poignant extract, the speaker writes:

"I am here on a hillock,
at the foot of a hill, all alone,
thinking about my friends and how I have been left behind;
my father and mother have gone
and all my brothers,
and although my laughter can be heard,
it breaks through the desire to shed tears"

The poem's potency lies in its uncluttered sorrow. Landscape here is not a background but a companion, a mute presence that amplifies the speaker's solitude. The hill and horizon become emotional agents, repositories for grief that words can only partially express. Such lyrics reveal how dispossession severed not only economic ways of life but also the deep, almost spiritual relationships between people and place. Where Romantic painting transformed landscape into beauty, Gaelic poetry insisted on its pain. The processes by which these meanings are created and sustained can be illuminated by theories of public history and memory. Ashton and Hamilton liken historical engagement to a house with many rooms, inhabited by scholars, descendants, tourists, and artists. No single voice dominates; all contribute to the ongoing negotiation of meaning. In the Highlands, these ideas help explain how material traces, Romantic art, heritage institutions, and diaspora memory converge. The result is a landscape understood not as a fixed record but as a living palimpsest - its surfaces continually written, erased, and rewritten as each generation returns to it with new questions.

As the twentieth and twenty-first centuries unfolded, the cleared landscape became a site of return. Descendants of emigrants, local communities, and heritage groups began to revisit the places from which families had been expelled. These acts of return often function as informal pilgrimages - gestures of remembrance that seek to bridge the gap between past rupture and present identity. The aforementioned Emigrants' Monument at Helmsdale, unveiled in 2007, exemplifies this shift from private grief to public memorialisation. Its presence marks a contemporary effort to acknowledge dispossession while reconnecting with ancestral land. For many members of the global Scottish diaspora, the monument offers a physical point of orientation: a place where scattered genealogies can be temporarily gathered, and where the wound of departure becomes part of a shared narrative.

Today, the Highland landscape remains shaped by centuries of upheaval. The Clearances did more than alter settlement patterns; they transformed the emotional imagination of the region, leaving behind a terrain marked by grief, memory, and contested narratives of identity. Sites such as Croick Church and the ruins of abandoned clachans reveal how absence can be made visible, while the quiet glens remind us that landscapes can carry emotional weight long after the events that scarred them. Recognising the landscape as both witness and wound allows a recovering of suppressed emotional histories and to understand how remembrance and romanticisation continue to intersect.

Whether through diaspora tourism, community heritage projects, artistic representation, or the simple act of walking the land, the impulse to return persists. In the end, mourning and belonging in the Highlands remain inseparable. By tracing the intertwined histories of place, memory, and emotion, we can better appreciate the ways in which landscapes not only record the past but actively sustain its meanings in the present.

'Her death is a baby-cry on the moor': The Death of the Poet in the Late Twentieth-Century

Naomi Wallace

"I learn of death as the ineluctable destiny of the object-body" writes philosopher Paul Ricœur. This realisation – the body will die and this is inescapable – prompts varied responses from twentieth-century poets. For Ted Hughes and Tony Harrison, the poet's self-awareness of his place in a literary genealogy stimulates meditations on death. Both are expressed bodily, reflecting the potential for "temporal nonsynchronicity" and "corporeal kinship with the departed", as Freeman outlines under her concept of erotohistoriography. Both poets invoked other writers as sites of reflection for their relationship with the problematic contraries of life and death. Hughes, Troupes explains, "cultivat[ed] a religious sensibility oriented towards the natural world". His interests in creativity, divinity and the human soul are manifest in his short but beguiling poem, 'Emily Brontë.' He constructs a darkly Romantic landscape:

"The wind on Crow Hill was her darling.
His fierce, high tale in her ear was her secret.
But his kiss was fatal.

Through her dark Paradise ran
The stream she loved too well
That bit her breast."

Apropos for the author of Wuthering Heights, Hughes invokes gothic tradition by blending sensual and foreboding imagery, personifying the wind as Brontë's deadly darling. The oxymoron "dark Paradise" presents the moors as gothic Eden; the vampiric metaphor "bit her breast" representing her contraction of tuberculosis similarly owes itself to Gothicism. This continues in the subversion of medieval romance tropes: "The shaggy sodden king of that kingdom / Followed through the wall / And lay on her love-sick bed". The mystifying blend of sexuality and morbidity represents a consummation of the relationship between Brontë and her beloved moorland, extinguishing her body whilst engendering the production of her work.

This is cemented by the eldritch image, "The curlew trod in her womb". This anthropomorphic metaphor, uncanny and distinctly bodily, is intelligible with the help of Hughes' inspiration, Dylan Thomas. In 'In the White Giant's Thigh,' Thomas writes that infertile mothers "yearn with tongues of curlews for the unconceived". Hughes' image is decidedly weirder – impregnating Brontë with the curlew – yet the connection between birds and infertility is illuminating. Pregnant with the curlew, its mournful cry the antithesis to a baby's cry of life, Brontë is pregnant with death. The layers of irony are potent, as Catherine dies following childbirth in Wuthering Heights and Charlotte Brontë died in 1855 from pregnancy complications. Dying childless, the Brontë sisters' legacy is their art. The "stone" that "swelled under her heart" again evokes Brontë's pregnant belly, containing not a life-force but the offspring of her intimate relationship with the natural world: her writing. In the absence of a baby, Brontë has her poetry. Her body is a vehicle for Hughes' poignant engagement with literary legacies. The poem concludes with the haunting line, "Her death is a baby-cry on the moor". Hughes problematises the binary distinction between life and death through the oxymoronic image of death as birth.

As Brontë dies, her memory is born. The tense shifts from past to present; her death "is" rather than "was" a baby-cry, evoking a sense of continuity and regeneration, sustained through her work's enduring influence. The relationship between Hughes and Brontë, which I deem queer because it "complexly exceed[s] the present", is anchored in the moors. The birth of her legacy atop the moor positions the setting as a site of queer reproduction and one upon which there is the potential for "tactile contact with the past". The moors, further evinced by the description of them as a "dark Paradise", come to represent a spiritual and literary afterlife. Rather than thinking of Brontë in terms of the historical, which is "textual, human-made and linear", the perspective is, as Ricœur understands the term, "suprahistorical": it "directs the gaze away from the future and carries it toward the eternity-dispensing powers of art and religion". This "eternity-dispensing" power is configured in 'Emily Brontë' through the extended imagery of pregnancy, culminating in the "baby-cry" of her legacy echoing across the moors. Through this Hughes illustrates literature's immortalising potential.

Where Hughes uses the moors as a site for queer kinship, Harrison uses fruit in 'A Kumquat for John Keats.' He responds to Keats' words from a letter to Fanny Brawne in 1819. Keats sensuously describes "apple-tasting, pear tasting, plum-judging, apricot nibbling, peach scrunching, nectarine-sucking and melon carving," climaxing with the phrase upon which Harrison seizes, "joy's grape bursting against my palate fine". Instead of this, Harrison claims, the kumquat is the perfect metaphor for 'how Melancholy dwelled inside Delight':

> *"he'd bite just once and then apostrophise*
> *and pen one stanza how the fruit had all*
> *the qualities of fruit before the Fall,*
> *but in the next few lines be forced to write*
> *how Eve's apple tasted at the second bite"*

Keats died at twenty-five; the fashioning of the kumquat as representative of a time the poet did not live to see emphasises life's ephemerality. The Edenic imagery positions the kumquat as analogous to the Tree of Knowledge, by which humans apprehended the reality of death. The Blakean contraries of innocence and experience are allegorised in the sweet then sour taste of the kumquat. 'Kumquat' presents these contrary states then collapses them into one another. For Ricœur, death has a "radical heterogeneity in relation to our desire", an idea that Harrison contests in his suggestion that desire emerges in tandem with the knowledge of death. Harrison describes the kumquat: "You'll find that one part's sweet and one part's tart: / say where the sweetness or the sourness start". It is the contiguity between sweet and sour – between death and life – that makes the fruit the best "metaphor, to fit the soul". Life's "skin of death" sweetens its pleasures.

The framing of the poem as a one-sided dialogue with Keats prompts sobering realisations about time:

> *"And it isn't just the gap of sixteen years,*
> *a bigger crop of terrors, hopes and fears,*
> *but a century of history on this earth*
> *between John Keats's death and my own birth –*
> *years like an open crater, gory, grim"*

The literary genealogy to which Harrison and Keats belong metonymically represents the passage of time and life's transience. That it is not just years that separate them but history "like an open crater, gory, grim," suggests that the horrors of the twentieth century have, as Goerke argues, "created an insurmountable gulf in minds and souls". Moving to consider sexual pleasure, Harrison sets this against the fact that "dead men don't eat kumquats, or drink wine, / they shiver in the arms of Proserpine, / not warm in bed beside their Fanny Brawne".

Just as Hughes adopts Brontë's Gothic tropes, Harrison here echoes Keats' Romantic style in the classical reference to Proserpine. His wish for Keats' "verdict" on his kumquat metaphor is fruitless because Keats belongs to another time. Keats' death forces Harrison to acknowledge his own mortality; the pair form an imagined community which hinges upon their identities as poets but ultimately highlights the indiscriminatory nature of death.

Keats' presence is a reminder that "[t]he past is – irretrievably – temps perdu". Yet, the penultimate stanza in which the speaker eats the kumquat stages a transcendental moment – we might even call it jouissance – in which linear history is interrupted. He writes, "My spirit greets / the kumquat with the spirit of John Keats", which is suggestively ambiguous. It is unclear whether he is greeting Keats, or if his spirit is Keats' as he bites it. Nonetheless, the consumption of the kumquat momentarily dissolves the temporal chasm between the poets. Freeman's concept of erotohistoriography resonates here. She articulates, "erotohistoriography posits the value of surprise, of pleasurable interruptions and momentary fulfilments from elsewhere, other times". Retaining the poem's sensual register, and borrowing Keats' words, Harrison narrates: "I burst the whole fruit chilled by morning dew / against my palate. Fine, for 42!". Following a caesura which suggests a moment of revelation stimulated by eating the kumquat, "Fine, for 42!" intimates that in the ecstasy of eating the fruit an awareness of mortality emerges, which becomes "the foundation for pleasure". The moment Harrison bites into the kumquat is one of sensory delight and one in which he tastes death. Freeman also considers the consumption of fruit as a conduit for what Carolyn Dinshaw calls the queer touch of time, "past bodies palpably connecting with present ones". She conceives of the mouth "as a tactile rather than just a verbal instrument for temporal transactions, for temporal binding". As he greets, or inhabits, Keats' spirit, the speaker's mouth sbecomes a site of "temporal binding" between them. History remains irreversible, and time moves forward, but 'Kumquat' uses the relationship between Harrison and his literary peer to exhibit the possibility of "pleasurable interruptions and momentary fulfilments" that intervene in the present.

For Ricœur, "art and religion" both contain "eternity-dispensing powers". Hughes and Harrison posit that art, and the imaginative community of a literary canon, undermine the finality of death. According to Casarino, time is "fully incorporated, [. . .] nowhere existing outside of bodies". Hughes locates time in Brontë's pregnant belly in which her literary legacy gestates, and Harrison in his mouth as he encounters Keats in the bite of a kumquat. Invoking the canon, for the self-aware poet, is to both confront one's mortality and express the queer potential for immortality in the creation of art.

Voice from the Damned: Reflections of Loss in Gramsci's Prison Letters

Liam Schwentke

Those who know of Antonio Gramsci will have likely heard his use of the powerful dictum, "pessimism of the intellect; optimism of the will." The most striking instance is found in a letter sent to his little brother Carlo in 1929 – three years into his eleven-year confinement that would ultimately lead to his death. In this letter, Gramsci consoles Carlo on their older brother Gennaro, who had been deeply troubled after his experience in the First World War. "Nannaro [a familial name for Gennaro] in particular fought the war under exceptional conditions," he writes. "As a miner underground, with only a thin partition separating his tunnel from the Austrian one, he could hear the enemy trying to set off a mine to blow him to pieces."

Gramsci then renders Carlo his famous philosophic conviction:

"It seems to me that in similar circumstances, a man ought to be so deeply convinced that the source of his own moral forces is in himself – his own energy and will, the iron coherence of ends and means – that he never despairs and never falls into those vulgar, banal moods, pessimism and optimism. My own state of mind synthesizes these two feelings and transcends them: my mind is pessimistic, but my will is optimistic."

In this, Gramsci not only consoles Carlo on Gennaro, but subtly on his own condition in prison. What we risk in commemorating Gramsci is that we keep him in his cell, pedestalling his notebooks as the works of a genius left to his isolated study. This distorts reality. Gramsci was not latent prior to his confinement; whilst his imprisonment did

impress onto him an opportunity for erudition; this only served as a response to his confinement. The fact is, his 'optimistic will' was conditioned by the relational world he shared with those he held dear, their presence becoming memories. Confinement calcified these memories, their physical representation being abruptly replaced by letters – heavily censored, and prone to all manner of distortions. What we observe with Gramsci is a form of loss that is somewhat neglected, that is, the loss of the inaccessible – the loss of freedom itself. This article spotlights various aspects of this loss, from feelings of regret, to the distorting effects of confinement, and finally, the loss of a potential life.

Gramsci was incarcerated on 8 November 1926 under orders from Mussolini. It may surprise some that his very first letter was sent to his dear landlady Mrs. Passarge, apologising for the distressing arrest and subsequent police searches. This letter, and a subsequent letter written a few weeks later, would never reach their destination – instead being seized by the police. Gramsci would never get to speak to Passarge again, for she passed away in February 1927. Even this early on, the disabling effects of incarceration would prove fatal to Gramsci's ability to connect with lived reality. His next letter was to his wife, Giulia, a person whom he spent only a fraction of time with prior to his arrest. Despite this, he had managed to father two sons: Delio, who had spent a brief holiday with him that summer, and Giuliano, whom he would never meet. He writes these letters after having been told he would be sent to a work camp in Ethiopia, which to his fragile body would have proven certain death. He writes:

"I've tried to imagine how all of your future life will unfold, because I certainly will not be receiving news from you for a long time."

That same day he wrote to his mother. Facing his mortality, he begins:

"Dearest Mother, I've thought about you a great deal during these days. I've thought about the new sorrow that I was going to cause you at your age and after all the suffering you've endured."

Like writing his own eulogy, he says:

"My dears, especially at this moment my heart weeps at the thought that I have not always been as affectionate and good toward all of you as I should have been and as all of you deserved."

This reveals a typical manifestation of grief, that is, regret; however, it is inverted. This passage could easily be imagined said beside a grave, but Gramsci, like the many souls Dante encounters in his journey into Hell, is the voice of the damned. In some ways, this grief is more potent than that reserved for the dead: the condemned still have a voice in which to mourn.

Gramsci's life was characterised by women; this is something noted by others such as Merrifield and Kroonenberg, with the latter poignantly linking this to Gramsci's lifelong ill health, and the fact that the work of care is a gendered matter. She states, "I wish to emphasize that Gramsci survived due to the female care he received." The 'Virgil' to Gramsci's 'Dante' is undoubtedly his sister-in-law Tatiana, who consistently, for the entire period of his incarceration, stood by his side, even relocating entire regions in lockstep with his transferrals. In fact, without her smuggling his notebooks to the Soviet Union after his passing, Gramsci would be nothing more than a martyr; Tatiana made sure he had a legacy, tending to him both during and after life.

This close relationship meant that Tatiana was often the prime medium for Gramsci's communication with the outside world. Yet this presents problems, for Gramsci already had one layer of distortion from the prison censors. This arrangement often meant that she had certain authority over his connection with theoutside world. Her intentions were entirely altruistic: as Gramsci's health worsened, and his emotional resilience waned, Tatiana increasingly filtered what reached him. Acts meant to protect him unfortunately became another filter of distortion. This is best illustrated in the fact that Gramsci sent a letter to his mother on 8 March 1934, despite the fact that she had already passed away fifteen months earlier. Everyone held it from him, thinking it would cause him too much pain. Gramsci's remaining life was out-of-sync. Menial things such as delays, forgetfulness, or silence meant that he was fundamentally unable to temporally reciprocate social relations. Like a spirit box, Gramsci's ability to communicate was separated from his body, and his words swallowed in a sea of static.

With this in mind, we shall turn toward Gramsci's last letters. These words are soaked in the ink of a dying man. At this stage, Gramsci was largely left bedbound in clinics; his diagnoses varied and grim. A letter sent to Giulia on 25 January 1936 reads as follows:

"For ten years I've been cut off from the world. What a terrifying experience it was to look out from the train after six years of seeing nothing but those roofs and walls, those surly faces, and to realize that the vast world had gone on existing with its meadows and woods and ordinary people, its flocks of boys and girls, its particular trees and vegetable gardens! But most of all, what a shock it was to look into a mirror after such a long time."

For just a moment, the distortion ceases, and faced with reality, Gramsci comes to terms that the world had gone on without him. During this period, Gramsci was also frequently visited by Tatiana and others as his worsening health facilitated a partial parole. This perhaps provided relief for the loss of freedom, but as death drew closer, our final space of grief becomes ever more present. That is the mourning of a life that was stolen. The final letters Gramsci wrote were increasingly to his sons. He asks them of their interests, their times at school, and requests drawings and photographs. Often times he has difficulty producing letters intellectually appropriate for them. Whilst being some of his most heartwarming letters, what they reveal is that Gramsci felt intense anguish at not being able to form relations with his own children:

ILLUSTRATION BY DALMA ROMAN
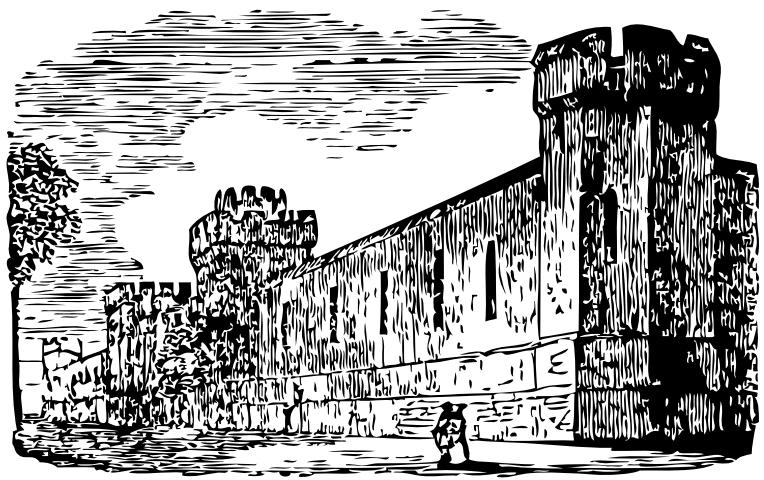
"Dear Delio,
I was told by Mamma lulka [Giulia] that my last letter (and perhaps others, too) made you unhappy. Why didn't you write me? When there is something that disturbs you in my letters, you should let me know and explain your reaction. You are very dear to me, but I'm not able to hug you close and to help you, as I would like to, to solve the problems that you dream up."

Gramsci had children, but was unable to be a father; he had a wife, but was unable to be a husband; he was unable to be much more than words on parchment. When we envisage Hell, we cannot detach its purpose as a place of abstract torment from the real suffering we experience in life. Gramsci had thus journeyed through Hell, and his body had not survived. The onus is on us to not keep his soul there; that is, in commemorating him, we should not mistake his cell as a place of sanctuary, but rather, as an altar to loss. We free him once we understand the lessons learned from his loss.

Grievers

CHORUS

Who are you to make us new?
Always, comment vous sentez-vous
Net cast among wide receivers,
The burden of the grievers.

We are sleeping in the snow
Streetlamps that no longer glow
Sick with haunting childbed fever,
O, the burden of the grievers!

These few stolen fragments bright
Memories of another night
Bid farewell to another long-sleeper,
O, the burden of the grievers!

And still we lie here waiting
Constant past we are recreating
Like Penelope and her weavers,
O, the burden of the grievers!

Handkerchiefs in our memory
The fading break of reverie
You can keep your joie de vivre
O, the burden of the grievers.

We are waiting,
Waiting,
Waiting,
Wait,
– Kristy Galbraith

Ritual Manuals and Poetic Lamentations: A Study of Mourning in Middle Imperial China (800s-1300s CE)

Kate Abbosh

'The Beginning of the End'

At the moment of death, when the spirits abandon the body, the deceased's relatives prostrate themselves at the deathbed and wail, beat their breasts, and beg for the return of the dead to the plane of the living. These actions of mourning are extracted from Zhu Xi's (1130-1200 CE) ritual handbook, Family Rituals, and constitute only the first day of what is a ritualised mourning process that spans years. Zhu Xi's work follows a process of around twenty-one steps, from the three-month wait before the burial to the ancestor worship rituals carried out on the two-year death anniversary. Zhu Xi himself based this work off the even more elaborate ritual handbook created by his Northern Song predecessor, Sima Guang (1019-1086 CE). The adherence to a regimented set of ritual practices is not unique to the Middle Imperial era but follows in the footsteps of two core Confucian ritual texts, the Liji and the Yili, which are thought to have originated from the Han period (206 BCE – 220 CE), when Confucius was active. However, from the eleventh until the fourteenth centuries, the imposition of strict ritual guidelines occupied a significant part of the national consciousness, particularly among the scholar-officials such as Sima Guang and Zhu Xi. These three centuries represented one of the most turbulent periods of Chinese history after the Warring States era (c.475-221BCE). There were three successive invasions by nomadic groups from Central Asia and the Steppe:

the Khitans who invaded part of northern China to establish the Liao dynasty (916-1125 CE), the Jurchens who established the Jin (1115-1234 CE) after invading the Liao and pushed the Northern Song population southward, forming the Southern Song (1127-1279 CE), and finally the Mongols, led by Genghis Khan, who conquered both the Jin and Southern Song to establish the Yuan dynasty (1260-1368 CE).

Confucian elites saw these invasions as resulting from the weakening moral fabric and degradation of the qi of the nation, in response to the violation of strict Confucian rituals in favour of following local populist belief or Buddhist ceremonial practice. Cheng Yi (1033-1107CE), a Confucian philosopher, stated that a single ritual violation could pollute the balanced and pure qi to such an extent that the individual would turn into a barbarian, referring to the 'uncivilised' nomadic population from the Steppe. This dramatic statement aligned with the influx of ethno-centralist morality discourse during this period. This referred to the leveraging of the Han ethnicity of the Song population and geographical location of the Han population's indigenous home, the Central Plains which were rich and fertile land surrounding the Yellow River, to argue for the Han population's spiritual superiority. When this homeland was taken by the Jin, the maintenance of spiritual hygiene through the form of strict ritual adherence directly related to the survival of the Southern Song dynasty.

The wailing and calling back of the spirit of the deceased therefore served two functions, the adherence to prescribed mourning behaviour and the public display of grief to evidence the descendant's pure filial devotion to the dead. This re-formed the familial bonds ruptured upon death, strengthening the spiritual integrity and social structure of the nation.

Damnation of the Dead, Damnation of the Living

The death of an individual also prompted fear and cosmological uncertainty regarding the fate of the deceased's soul(s). Entrenched within popular belief, an individual was considered to have around seven if not more souls, these souls were divided into two types, the *po* and the *hun*. The *po* was the body-soul, after death it remained inert inside the body, and would do so until its host ceased to exit or maintain a physical form. The hun, the soul which the mourners cried out to return after it abandoned the body upon death, either joined the plane of the immortals or face damnation in hell. Ritual manual sought to placate the fears of the living over the state of the deceased's spirits, through offering libations of rice and wine, burial in a coffin to ensure a slow, painless decay and outfitting the tomb with appropriate regalia for the deceased in their post-mortem existence. If this was not executed properly, the *po* body spirit could transmute into a vengeful spirit. This disruption to the *qi* of the deceased would then infect generations of living descendants.

For many, this fear for the dead was not fully placated by the regimented ritual manuals, particularly regarding the status of the *hun*. Despite the best efforts of Zhu Xi and others to simplify and disseminate Confucian rituals throughout all strata of the population, many turned to Buddhist rituals. Within Zhu Xi's manual, there is a section extracted from Sima Guang's work, titled Do not Perform Buddhist

Rituals, which ridicules the belief in the Ten Kings of Hell. This underworld kingdom which originated from Buddhism had preoccupied the minds of the Middle Imperial population since the end of the Tang (618-907 CE). In the chamber of the first king, the deceased's sins were weighed up against their merits. If the sins weighed more, the deceased faced damnation through their reincarnation either as an animal, a hungry ghost, or a demonic being. If this eventuality came to pass, the living relatives faced an existential threat of karmic backlash. For the living, they too had to weigh up a decision, either adhere to Confucian precepts and risk the damnation of the deceased or partake in Buddhist rituals to bribe the demonic officials through burning the imitation paper money. For many, the Ten Kings constituted a far more apparent danger than the violation of Confucian convention.

Voicing Loss Beyond Ritual

This uncertainty which came with death often bled over the neat confines of ritual into personal life. This can be explored through poetry, which often acted as an outlet for processing the more personal toll of loss and the rupture of personal bonds. Li Qingzhao (1084-ca.1155 CE), a notable Northern Song poet who fled to the south during the Jurchen invasion, faced the death of her husband Zhao Mingcheng (1081-1129 CE) as he travelled to Jiangning to uphold a key political post in a futile attempt to keep the Jurchen at bay. It was through a large corpus of work which Li Qingzhao sought to process this traumatic loss, a key example being First Night. This poem mourns both the loss of her husband and the loss of her homeland in the now-conquered Northern Song. It details the celebration of the First Night festival, lamenting the 'glory days of Kaifeng' (capital of the Northern Song). The latter part of the poem constitutes a poignant reflection on the passage of time with Li Qingzhao commenting how she is but a 'bag of bones', a literary memento mori, mirroring her husband's bones laying in the post-mortem abode of his coffin.

For Yuan Haowen (1190-1257 CE), one of the most prolific writers of the Jin and early Yuan periods, the death of his brother Yuan Haogu (1183-1214 CE) at the hands of the invading Mongol represented a permanent scar in his consciousness. Unlike Li Qingzhao, who explicitly mentions the burial of her husband, Yuan Haowen leaves this key detail obscured and vague. A 'successful' death and burial hinged on one vital condition evident within the ritual manuals, the presence and wholeness of the body of the deceased. During this period of instability, death was omnipresent, but the bodies of the dead were absent, often left abandoned in battlefields or in homes when families were unable to bear the weight of a corpse when fleeing conflict. It is possible that it was this unburied fate that befell Yuan Haogu.

ILLUSTRATION BY DALMA ROMAN
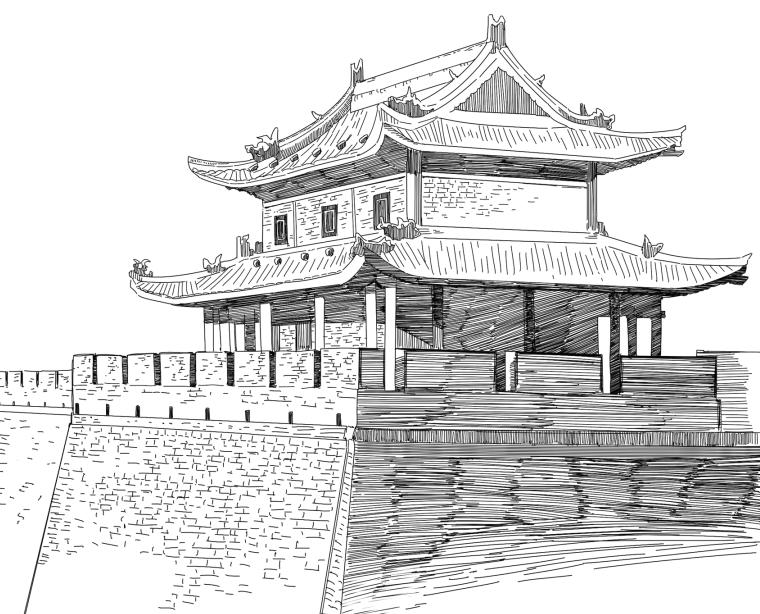
If true, Yuan Haowen would have been grappling not only with his brother's death, but also the inability to fulfil the Confucian burial rites, the risk of his brother's *po* becoming a corrupt soul, and the possibility that his hun was trapped in the halls of the Ten Kings of Hell. In As Witnessed at Stone Ridge Pass, Yuan Haowen describes the chaos of people fleeing the Mongols along the narrow ridge pass. It is also a key work exploring Yuan Haowen's grief for his brother through the line 'To be turned into an insect or grain of sand is not to be lamented'. This is a reference to a Warring states era text which uses this transformation as an allegory for the fate of those who die in battle re-joining the earth and their *qi* being re-distributed across the land. Instead of dwelling on the unknown, Yuan Haowen frames the loss of his brother within the ephemerality of human life, that existence is but a temporary configuration of *qi*.

'Ars Moriendi' as an Artistic Response to the Collective Trauma of the Black Death

Bethan Williamson

Ars moriendi translates from Latin to 'the Art of dying,' and this term is used in two different ways by historians and theologians. More generally, ars moriendi refers to a literary tradition within Catholicism, a genre of late medieval and early modern texts that concentrate on the practice of a 'good death.' The Ars Moriendi however, refers to two specific texts from 1415 and 1450, the long version and the short version, that are the focus here. Whilst the author remains unknown, the most prominent English language version, titled 'The Arte and Crafte to Know well to die,' was published by William Caxton in 1490. Almost a hundred similar translations and copies circulated throughout Europe from the fifteenth century, as it became one of the most popular pieces of

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theological literature at the time. These texts and their illustrations shaped the fifteenth-century loss and death culture, revealing how the catastrophe of the fourteenth-century Black Death was rationalised into a new conception of what a 'good' life meant, through finding purpose in death. The act of examining an alien construction of loss can even reveal to us how we define and cope with our own mortality.

The Black Death

A little context on the Black Death is necessary to bring these texts to life. The original outbreak of the bubonic plague, the Black Death, began in 1346 and lasted until 1353, killing somewhere between 50 percent to two thirds of the population of Europe. The following centuries experienced sporadic outbreaks of the same bacterium, Yersinia Pestis. This pandemic, with its enormous death toll, is often considered a modernising force in the development of European economies, leading to a higher demand for labour. This in turn had the effect of improving the general quality of life for the poor population, as they found their labour had increased in value. These changes reorganised Europe's economies and therefore the fabric of social life in this period, but the social and cultural experience of loss after this pandemic remains a fascinating and underexplored area of research. The Black Death left a lasting mark on late medieval culture, creating an intense awareness of death that shaped both literature and art, which can be seen in the popularity of macabre imagery. From this perspective, the Ars Moriendi appears not just as a set of clerical instructions but as an artistic response to a society grappling with collective loss and trauma.

The Art of Ars Moriendi

The longer version of the Ars Moriendi is organised into six chapters, dealing with the acceptance of death as a journey, how the family of the dying person could support them, and outlining prayers to be said to aid them. This earlier edition, it has been argued, appeared to be a kind of priest guidebook to support the dying or even existed to compensate for the lack of an available priest during times of widespread death. However, the shorter edition, which featured eleven woodcut illustrations and was adapted from the second chapter of the original text, functioned more as a personal spiritual method highlighting the autonomous power of the individual over experiencing a 'good death'. The second chapter and the illustrated rendition of it is the most interesting for presenting the moral opportunity that death provided, explaining how one could reach salvation and experience this 'good death'. It outlines five temptations, personified in the woodcuts as gruesome demons, and five angels that reveal the path to overcoming them. These are the lack of faith, despair, impatience, spiritual pride, and avarice (desire for material possessions). The first ten of the illustrations show the conflict between these temptations and spiritual strength, and the final one depicts the dying man achieving salvation. His soul is seen escaping his dying body, depicted as a child being lifted by the angels on the left, as the image of Christ watches over his salvation, and the devil's temptations lie at the bottom of the page, vanquished. This depiction of his soul as a child brings a sense of hope to the death presented here, almost promising a purification and new life in salvation. This shows how the Ars Moriendi was designed as a comfort in the face of loss.

These illustrations reveal a practical, instructive manual for how to die well, depicting the act of death as a personal challenge of faith to be embraced instead of giving in to fear and hopelessness. The Black Death and late medieval life in general were characterised by an uncertainty of life, and loss as an experience was much closer to everyday life than most of us today can understand. It has been argued by social historians that death rituals such as the
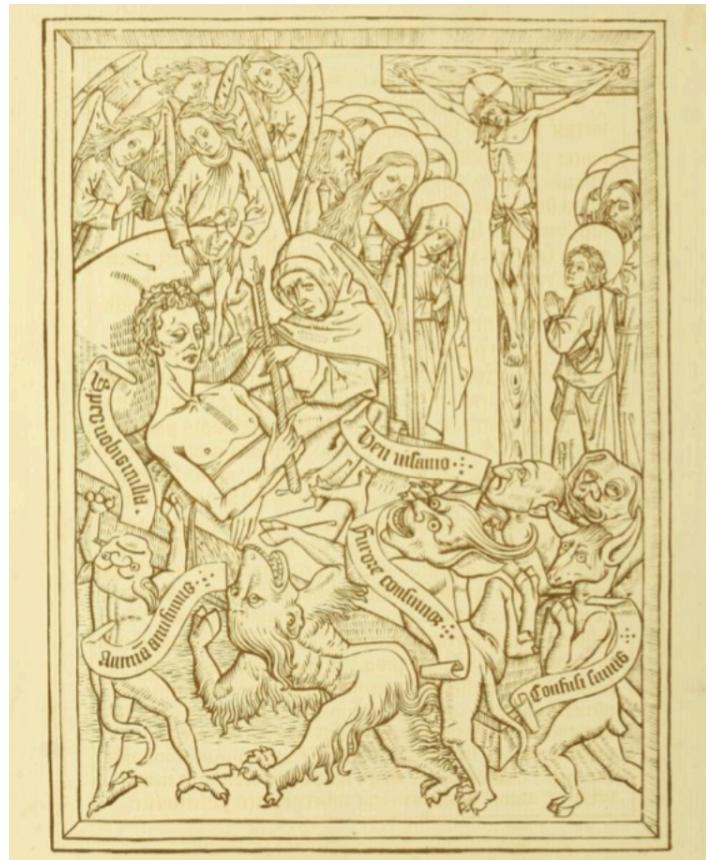
THE ARS MORIENDI (EDITIO PRINCEPS, C. 1450), ED. W. H. RYLANDS, LONDON: HOLBEIN SOCIETY, 1881

prayers recommended in the Ars Moriendi strengthened ties of social cohesion within late medieval communities. This idea of bringing communities together during periods of great loss emphasises how the Ars Moriendi functioned as an artistic response to uncertainty. The moment of death was beginning to be considered the most important moral event of a person's life, reframing loss as a positive spiritual opportunity.

The origins of the Ars Moriendi are widely debated and mysterious. Jean Gerson, author of De Arte Moriendi, is often credited as the inspiration for the unknown author of the *Tractatus artis bene moriendi* (the long version of the Ars Moriendi) in 1408. Other authors such as Henry Suso are similarly credited with pioneering the Ars Moriendi genre, leading some to consider that this renders the key Ars Moriendi text that has been the focus here derivative or unoriginal. Yet its sustained popularity would suggest that it emerged as the most effective tool for communicating the broader

loss culture and theological methods of its time, as it was unique in its universality.

The Legacy of the Ars Moriendi

One of the most interesting and surprising developments of the Ars Moriendi tradition is modern medical researchers' applications of it today. In medical journals, we can find arguments for the revival of this late medieval genre in the field of palliative care. They often use Ars Moriendi to criticise our contemporary death culture, which some say has lost a sense of a healthy acceptance of death due to the emphasis on practical, clinical solutions and care. They praise the genre's attempt to bring meaning and personal autonomy to dying and offer it as a potential framework for improving palliative care, just as it served as an instructive guide in the fifteenth century (Espi Forcén and Espi Forcén, 2016). Be that as it may, the physician is not even present at the dying person's bedside in all eleven woodcut illustrations, as the goal was saving the soul, not the body. As a spiritual tradition, it has survived well, but applying it to modern medicine risks overlooking the vast differences between the lost cultures of today and of the fifteenth century. Its spiritual application has instead been realised in the Centre for the Art of Living and Dying Well at St. Mary's University, London. This organisation trains 'end of life companions' to visit care homes and hospices to spread spiritual techniques to come to terms with death and loss. They are not distributing copies of these medieval texts, of course, but it is remarkable to witness how the ideas have lived on for six hundred years. All of these examples of contemporary discussions around Ars Moriendi demonstrate that loss culture, whether medieval or modern, is a significant part of our shared experiences as social groups, and that mechanisms for dealing with loss and mortality can form social networks that last for centuries.

Conclusions

These texts, in their many different editions and copies, were a defining part of a genre that typified the late medieval and early modern construction of death and loss. They played a major role in the creation of a collective language of dying, universalised across Europe through the production of dozens of translations and even aiding in transcending illiteracy amongst the poorer social groups through the short version's woodcut illustrations. Reframing death as not just a natural end to life but as a personal moral challenge to overcome shows us how collective loss was rationalised by these communities through faith in the aftermath of the Black Death. The core message of these texts places the act of dying as a moment of opportunity for the soul, rather than focusing on attempting to save the body, as our loss culture is often preoccupied with today. This shows us how the unique conditions of an era or a society are often clear to see in the way that loss and death are understood.

Lost at Sea: Donald Crowhurst's False Voyage

Robbie Palmer

In 1968, The Sunday Times decided to host the Golden Globe Race, inspired by Francis Chichester's round-the-world single-handed yachting voyage, the next step in maritime racing by completing this journey without stopping once. The competition was open to all, with a cash prize of £5,000, roughly £80,000 in today's money. This came in the era of Britain's changing place in the world, post Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' and Wilson's 'White Heat' of technology; meaning the race epitomised both British innovation and attempts to hold onto the nautical legacy of Empire. In this context enters Donald Crowhurst, born to a colonial family in India in 1932, leaving after Partition, a charismatic engineer and amateur sailor. His company 'Electron Utilsation' had seen intermittent success dealing in specialised yacht safety equipment of Crowhurst's own design. But by 1968, it was facing financial pressure from Stanley Best, his main investor. Crowhurst saw the Golden Globe Race's £5,000 prize as a potential lifeline for his business and the race as an opportunity to showcase his products. If an amateur sailor could complete a voyage of this scale with this equipment, then why would you not buy it for your sailing needs? Crowhurst managed to convince Best to fund his entry. It was a win-win for his investor: either Crowhurst succeeded, or he would be heavily compensated by the sale of Crowhurst's home. He had essentially bet everything on the race.
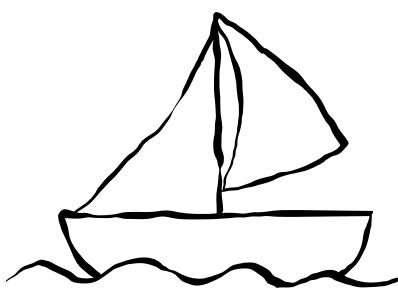
Compared to the other contestants, Crowhurst was incredibly inexperienced. Robin Knox-Johnston was a veteran of the Merchant Navy with over a decade spent at sea, Nigel Tetley was a Lieutenant-Commander in the Royal Navy, and Bernard Moitessier was an expert yachtsman who had been surrounded by the sea since childhood – Crowhurst, by comparison, was a weekend hobbyist. As planning for the race went on, construction of Crowhurst's boat, the Teignmouth Electron, was falling behind schedule. The best appraisal of Crowhurst's sailing abilities comes from Peter Eden, a Royal Navy officer, who accompanied his journey to the start line. Eden thought Crowhurst a good sailor but underprepared in navigation, with work needed on his boat for a journey of this scale. He left the start line at Teignmouth, Devon to crowds and cheers from the public. By this point, he had become somewhat of a local icon – a normal man attempting the impossible – as he sailed out on October 31st 1968, the latest possible starting date for the competition.

The race started in Britain, and the intended route went down into the Atlantic, then around the Cape of Good Hope, the southern tip of Africa, then across the Southern Ocean past Australia, then through the Pacific, progressing through the Drake Passage under South America, ending back in Britain, covering some of the most unpredictable and dangerous sailing in the world. As Crowhurst set into the Atlantic, it became clear that the Teignmouth Electron was not capable of the journey; he was spending hours each day bailing water out of the hull. By mid-November, Crowhurst placed his odds of surviving the Southern Ocean at fifty-fifty.

He found himself in a dilemma, either retreat from the race and face public humiliation and certain financial ruin or continue onwards and risk losing his life. In the face of this, he decided to begin the difficult task of fabricating a circumnavigation of the globe whilst sailing around the Atlantic, planning to slot himself in at the end of the race to finish last where he hoped his logs would not be scrutinised. The mental strain of creating this cannot be understated, Crowhurst had to make up convincing descriptions of weather and sailing conditions alongside the mathematics of working out where he would be on this journey to seem real. As a result of this, whilst the race carried onward, Crowhurst cut radio contact to the reporters and his family in late January, completely isolating himself from the rest of the world; drifting alone at sea.

ILLUSTRATION BY BETH AGNES

When Crowhurst reopened radio contact in April, it became apparent that he was now considered a contender for the fastest time because all other competitors but Nigel Tetely and Robin Knox-Johnston had dropped out of the race. This placed further strain on Crowhurst because it guaranteed that his logs would be analysed and his deception would be found out. His situation worsened when, in early June, he learned that Tetley had dropped out after pushing his boat too hard. There was no escape from his situation. The media back home had made Crowhurst into a national hero, an icon of British determination; he could not admit his fraud without enduring financial ruin and national

embarrassment. So, on July 1st 1969, he left his last note and disappeared into the ocean.

The Teignmouth Electron was found on July 10th July by a Royal Mail ship close to where the Mary Celeste had been found almost a century before. There was no sign of life, no sign of any disturbance. A soldering iron had been left balancing precariously on the table next to both logbooks and a 25,000-word manuscript tracing Donald Crowhurst's mental collapse. Henry Raymont, writing in the New York Times in 1970, describes this as 'disclosing Mr Crowhurst's morbid fear of failure and finally, his haunting visions of 'sea monsters' and a 25,000-word testament with metaphysical speculation about man's progress toward cosmic disintegration.' When his town was preparing a triumphant homecoming, Crowhurst was isolated at the edge of the world, enduring conditions beyond what he could bare. In the writings left in the Teignmouth Electron was a damaged man trying to maintain his personal identity and hold on to who he was after eight months of total isolation. In the aftermath of Crowhurst's disappearance, Knox-Johnston, the winner, donated the £5,000 prize to Crowhurst's family.

In the face of this comes a larger question: how do we write loss in public, and how do we handle what happens when private grief becomes public narrative? Donald Crowhurst was a complex man with a life that extended beyond the Golden Globe Race. Yet when his deception became clear, his life became open to judgement and moralisation. It no longer becomes a matter of whether his actions can be criticised, but who, if anyone, is entitled to do so, and at what cost. The tension is clear in the conflict over Crowhurst's posthumous biography. His wife, Clare Crowhurst, was asked for her involvement by the writers, yet she makes it clear to The Sunday Times in her letters that she had no control over the book's form, nor over the return of her family's personal grief into the public view. What we are left with now are fragments

and among them is the Teignmouth Electron itself. Today, its decaying hull lies off the shore of Cayman Brac, Jamaica, slowly collapsing into the coastline. A material trace of Crowhurst's false voyage.

WINSLOW HOMER (1885)
LOST ON THE GRAND BANKS

The Linguistic Loss of Chinese Dialects on Singaporean Identity Formation

Wong Yuen Sum Sophia

A defining characteristic of Singapore's history and society is its multicultural and multiethnic nature, a result of the early migration of various communities. Though this diversity is recognised as a unique strength of Singaporean society, there is a general acknowledgement of the constant sensitivity and investment necessitated in maintaining the harmonious coexistence of different groups. Singapore's promotion of a supra-ethnic national identity through the CMIO (Chinese-Malay-Indian-Others) framework ensures equal protection and enjoyment of rights and privileges. This principle also forms the basis of various sociocultural policies, a prominent example being language. Under the policy of bilingualism, students are mandated to study two languages – English and Mother Tongue, the latter determined according to the official assigned language to each ethnic group – ensuring a shared language whilst honouring ethnic identity. However, the promotion of bilingualism marginalises languages excluded from the official list, in particular Chinese dialects, which were widely spoken by the Chinese community at the time.

As part of a national directive to promote the use of standardised Mandarin, dialects were banned from Singapore's broadcasting from 1979. This policy significantly altered the sociocultural experiences of the Chinese population by reducing the diversity of Singapore's linguistic diversity from a variety to patois to bilingualism. Within historiography, Singapore's language policies are often studied through their economic and political role in nation-building. However, the converse is often neglected – the minoritisation of language. It is in response to this gap that dialects provide an important counternarrative: what happens to identity with language loss? In this article, I examine the

sociocultural context of the loss of Chinese dialects and its implications on Singaporean identity. Analysis of oral interviews illuminate on-the-ground sentiment surrounding the loss of dialects, revealing how the formation and construction of identity is understood and legitimised through the tangible and pragmatic, whereas the intangible aspects of identity such as culture and heritage are positioned as unfortunate trade-offs. As part of a national directive to promote the use of standardised Mandarin, dialects were banned from Singapore's broadcasting from 1979. Analysis of oral interviews illuminate on-the-ground sentiment surrounding the loss of dialects, revealing how the formation and construction of identity is understood and legitimised through the tangible and pragmatic, whereas the intangible aspects of identity such as culture and heritage are positioned as unfortunate trade-offs.

The role of language in nation building is not unique to Singapore; language plays an integral role in various national histories as a unifying strategy. The Southeast Asian region is a rich exemplar showcasing the significance of linguistic plurality and the resultant construction of language policy in support of national identity formation. In the context of Singapore, language was harnessed to eradicate potential faultlines and animosities: the espousal of multilingualism through the recognition of the four main languages (according to the CMIO model) was the first example of Singapore's use of language as a bulwark against ethnic separatism, demonstrating language's sociopolitical impact in supporting national objectives as well as implicitly acknowledging

language's ability to divide and destabilise society. This was further expanded upon through the policy of bilingualism, with the aim of promoting social cohesion and cultural belonging. However, the persistent use of dialect and the less-than-ideal levels of bilingual language competency drove the introduction of the Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC) in 1979.The SMC singled out the continued use of dialects as impediments to the effective adoption of bilingualism and instituted the ban of dialects within media. SMC heralded a shift in the elevation of Mandarin's position, centring Mandarin ability as key to education, work, and social life, whilst simultaneously eroding the value and use of dialect.

As posited by sociologist Benedict Anderson in his seminal work Imagined Communities, language contributes to identity formation as a medium of constructing belonging. Hence, what was the impact of the strategic and intentional alienation of the Chinese dialects on the identity of Singaporeans? Oral interviews from several Chinese Singaporeans reveal two major implications of the structural ban of dialects – (1) emphasising the value of pragmatism in identity formation by assessing dialects in relation to their political and economic value and (2) the unfortunate trade-off of cultural identity and heritage with the unique and irreplaceable value of dialects versus Mandarin. This article analyses oral interviews of several Chinese Singaporeans from the National Archives of Singapore over the topics of education, broadcasting, and general grassroot sentiment towards Chinese Language reforms.

A notable sentiment identified in these interviews is the acknowledgement of the economic and political pragmatism of foregoing dialects. The increased uptake of Mandarin was perceived as strengthening the unity of the Chinese community through improved outreach and communication. In the interview of educator and principal Mr Wan Fook Weng, he described how election rallies and speeches were conducted in various dialects prior to the official promotion of Mandarin, and the

difficulties this posed for politicians in disseminating their message. This showed how the Chinese community were divided according to their linguistic background, which complicated the government's efforts in unifying the country according to their CMIO agenda. Mr Wan therefore presented the adoption of Mandarin as a successful measure of unifying the population, in comparison to "any other language". Mr Wan's opinions illustrate the priority of practicality that underpinned language policy, and the view that dialects were less useful in contrast to Mandarin. It might be easy to chalk up Mr Wan's sentiment as a product of his English-educated background, but this view was also similarly acknowledged by Chinese-educated and dialect-speaking individuals like Hokkien broadcaster Mr Chua Kian Thye. Mr Chua made his living through dialects – dialect broadcasters like him were especially popular back in the day, and the ban of dialects resulted in a significant loss of income for his radio broadcasting company.

Nonetheless, despite his personal and professional interest in the preservation of dialects, Mr Chua recognised the necessity of promoting and prioritising Mandarin, particularly for the sake of Mandarin uptake among children and youths. Both interviews illuminate the general public's belief in the rationale behind SMC as driven by economic and political considerations. The convergence between official narrative and popular sentiment in the recognition of pragmatism can be read as a successful achievement of the state's national development and its acceptance by the public. However, I propose that these interviews also reveal how Singaporean identity and consciousness was altered through the eradication of dialect, by elevating and cementing the significance of economic and political pragmatism. This is illustrated in the consistent framing of dialects around their economic and political pragmatism across the various interviews analysed, suggesting how this sentiment was not only widely shared but also reflected an enduring mindset, despite variations in linguistic background and position.

The second sentiment identified among the interviews was the weakening of cultural and heritage ties with the eradication of dialects. Unlike official state messaging which positioned improved Mandarin competency as a panacea to the dilution of Asian values and culture, interviewees perceived dialects as a unique and irreplaceable aspect of identity, now unfortunately lost. This divergence demonstrates how popular sentiment was not merely a reiteration of state-messaging. Most interviewees highlighted the relationship and value of dialects to culture and identity. For example, broadcaster Mr Nigel Lim Ngian Tiong identified dialects as crucial to the transmission of cultural practices and beliefs, which the dialect ban threatened. This was similarly expressed by Mr Chua Gim Siong, the former secretary of the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, who described the clan associations' dissatisfaction with the ban of dialects brought about by the SMC as perpetuating cultural loss through the loss of language. Both responses illustrate the recognised importance of language in shaping and supporting the continuity of identity, curtailed by the dialect ban. Consequently, the loss of dialects implied that matters of culture and heritage were sidelined in favour of material pragmatic interests, influencing the understanding and conceptualisation of identity in Singapore. Dialect loss meant that the identity of Chinese Singaporeans was henceforth seen as incomplete, even with the SMC's goal of bolstering Asian culture and identity through Mandarin. As suggested in Mr Chua Kian Thye's interview, the distinctive popularity of dialect radio programmes meant that the absence of the language erased an integral part of media and culture to Chinese Singaporeans of the older generation. This illustrates the impact of the dialect loss on identity by exemplifying one of the ways in which popular cultural practices were eradicated.

Although the interviewees demonstrate understanding of the rationale of the economic and political pragmatism of SMC, they also maintain that the loss of dialects introduced repercussions for cultural ties and connections. This suggests how Singaporean identity was altered with dialect loss, by placing a premium on pragmatism and resultantly sidelining practices and norms deemed as less tangibly and materially valuable. In the context of the nascent nation, such measures were perhaps understandable – to secure stability and unity amid great diversity. Nonetheless, recent developments suggest a resilience despite loss: there has been a growing resurgence of interest and attention in Singapore to the dying dialects. Cognisant of the role of language in identity formation, younger Singaporeans are expressing greater interest in reconnecting with their culture and heritage through dialect learning. This trend signifies two things – one, a recognition of the impact of language loss and two, efforts to remedy its repercussions. This demonstrates the enduring value and role that dialects have in Singapore and hints at a brighter future for their continuity.
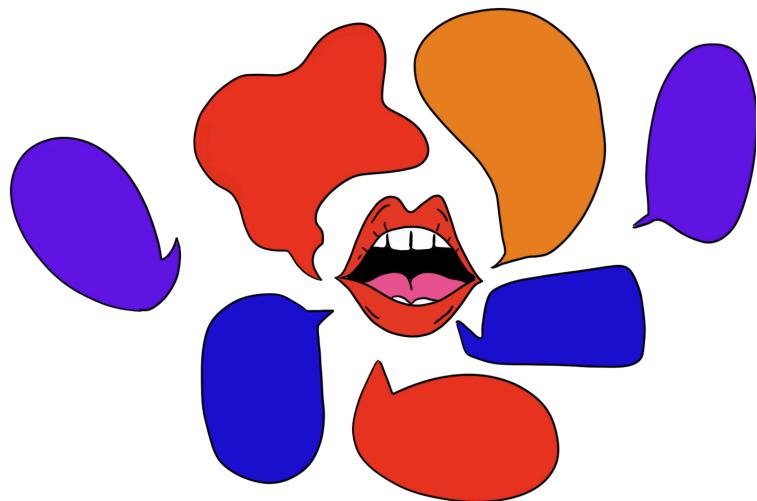
*ILLUSTRATION BY
DALMA ROMAN*

From the Subject

Come closer, my darling
Come read the tombstone where I lay
Sit closer, I can't hear you
I want to listen to the words you say.
You've read the epitaph. Countless times.
I like the way it plays on your tongue.
Loving Husband, gone too soon.
Died 1991.

Sitting down, you cross your knees,
And listen to the wind in the air.
You think the wind is me, I think;
A movement to remind you: I am there.
You think I shake the leaves, to imitate your laugh,
You think I sway the flowers, left by my epitaph.
And then, when you cry,
And the wind touches your face, like I used to do.
Remember it is not me, my love.
I am ten cold feet
Away from you.

A coffin board digs in my chest and soil plugs out my eyes.
The wind can hold you now, my love,
Oh! How sweetly it moves as she cries.

– Freya Siebert

Memento Mori: A Journey Through the History of Death and What it Teaches Us About Grief

Millie Oliver

Throughout history, global cultures have differed greatly from one another. In this way, it can be hard to connect with people from places so different from our own; however, the one event that we all universally share is death. Death is everywhere in our lives, and as such many cultures have dedicated a lot of their time and care for the deceased to prepare them for the afterlife. The treatment of the dead varies depending on a country's religious, philosophical and cultural practices and this is important in analysing how different cultures grieve their dead.

Of all the species on the planet, human beings are unique regarding death. As anthropologist John Lubbock has said, we are the "only creatures on earth who don't abandon their dead and create rituals about the passage of a soul beyond death." Humans have celebrated death with these rituals and practices as far back as 60,000 BCE. These rituals differ greatly from one another across the globe; however, trends in death rituals still emerge. Burial is the first of these trends.

Burial

Burial is an ancient custom that has been practiced all over the globe. The primary reason for burial has been to protect and preserve the living. This many seem counterintuitive, but in an ancient world dominated by the spirit realm, people believed burial was a way to appease the spirits that were thought to have caused the deceased's death. Ancient people seem to have prevented the negative influence of these spirits in a multitude of ways. In western cultures, shutting the eyes of the deceased is supposed to close the window between the human and spirit realm.

Similarly, pagans covered the faces of the deceased with veils due to the belief that spirits came out of and in through the mouth. This even manifested in more physical and violent solutions, as evidenced by the Saxons who cut off the dead's feet to prevent them from escaping their graves and walking around.

"There is always another to be considered savage in their treatment of the dead." It is clear the fear of evil spirits as agents of misfortune seems to be widespread. However, whilst many previous burial methods may appear unorthodox or rudimentary, there is also much compassion to be displayed by ancient civilisations' burials. For example, the Neanderthals were the first culture to start burying flowers with their dead. As pointed out by archaeologist Ralph Solecki, this conveys that "in Neanderthal man we recognise the first stirrings of the concept of man caring for his own, a sense of belonging and family." As a result, we observe a transition from the purpose of burial being solely to protect the living to exhibiting care and compassion for loved ones. Burial methods such as these are common among European societies. The process is reinforced by western religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam which are all in favour of burial.

Other methods such as cremation are thought to interfere with the resurrection process and undermine the sanctity of the human flesh God has created. Cultures that practice burials do so because they believe our minds are inextricably intertwined with the bodies they inhabit, and so the careful treatment of said bodies is linked to their perceived importance. In their minds, to forego burial and burial rites was considered an insult to human dignity.

Mummification/Embalming

Whilst burial seems to have been a cultural norm for the treatment of dead people, more permanent preservation methods were also commonly adopted throughout history. The practice of mummification and/or embalming was widespread, with the earliest documentation of it occurring in the Chinchorro tribe of Chile (c.7000-1700 BCE) long before their famed ancient Egyptian counterparts. Many methods were used to embalm the dead such as using honey, wax and other substances to begin the mummification process. The main purpose of mummification was to preserve the body for its permanent residence in the afterlife, which provides a different insight into the grieving process. To the ancient people death was not finite, as their care for the deceased assured their success in the afterlife. This framework didn't bring them the same sense of sorrow as a western burial might have as a clear path for the dead's journey to the afterlife was set out for them to follow and receive comfort in.

The practice of embalming would evolve in later centuries, with its primary purpose becoming an anatomical one. The world became interested in science and pioneers such as William Harvey preserved bodies so they could examine how they functioned. This led to important discoveries such as the human circulatory system. Nonetheless, the original intended purpose of embalming did not vanish. In fact, the process of mummification became popular again after the American Civil War when relatives of soldiers wanted to bring their loved ones home in decent shape for burial.

The legacy of embalming can also be seen in the preservation of world leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Mao Tse Tung. Therefore, the practice of mummification is one driven by belief in the afterlife and memory as it allows us to halt the natural decaying process to remember our loved ones the way we want to remember them, providing a different perspective into the grieving process.

Exposure

The first method of death - burial - focuses on the idea that the body, even when dead, still contains a person's soul and therefore must be treated with the utmost respect; however, the method of exposure works on the opposite principle. The most important example of this comes from Mongolia and Tibet, where inhabitants practice sky burials. This entails the deceased being placed on platforms or trees and then being left to be consumed by fire or the elements. This has often been received as abhorrent by western societies who believe these corpses are being desecrated, but in truth the practice is much less gruesome. Vajrayana Buddhists teach that respecting the body after death is unnecessary as the soul and body are separate entities and therefore the body is simply an empty vessel. This idea of the psyche and body being separate is not unique to Buddhism: the Druids in the British Isles believed in metempsychosis which suggests that souls are immortal and can go on to live in other bodies. Additionally, the Parsis of ancient Persia left bodies exposed to sun which was commonly viewed as purifying.

The practice of exposure is a unique one and as a consequence has a unique impact on the way those cultures grieve their loved ones. Contrastingly to western practices, this method highlights the impermanence of flesh and emphasises a sense of detachment to the deceased person. This helps loved ones find peace in knowing their souls live on rather than fixating on the physical remains themselves which is thought to prolong people's sorrow.

This example conveys the importance of cultural relativism when discussing death rituals. Something considered grotesque and unempathetic by one culture is perceived as rational and fulfilling by others. For instance, in modern day Egypt, grieving for a loved one after seven years is considered normal whereas in America grief that exceeds twelve months is considered as 'prolonged grief disorder.' Overall, this shows us how the relative importance of the physical body has a substantial impact on how we grieve the deceased.

Conclusions

On the whole, it has been explored how human beings have treated their dead across the globe and throughout time. It is clear that a culture's dominant religion and other practices are massively influential in how the dead are treated and why they are treated that way.

These global differences are still present in the modern day and the contribution of cultural relativism to death practices negatively impacts our ability to understand and respond to different methods with compassion and understanding.

As previously stated, despite the vast differences between societies across the globe, the one thing we all have in common is grief: a universal emotion experienced by all inhabitants of the world. In this way, taking the time to educate ourselves about different ways people process grief could greatly reduce our tendency to ostracise methods we deem unsuitable due to our own cultural biases. More importantly, it can help everyone to interpret their grief better. By providing ourselves with a different perspective of loss, perhaps we can learn to process our grief more effectively.

It has become apparent that from the ancient world to modern day, the lessons we learn and teach each other about loss are as important as loss itself.
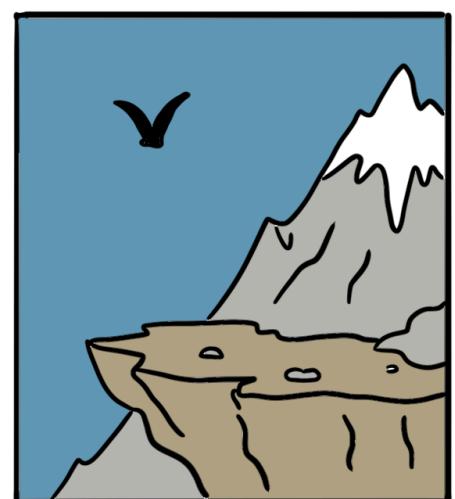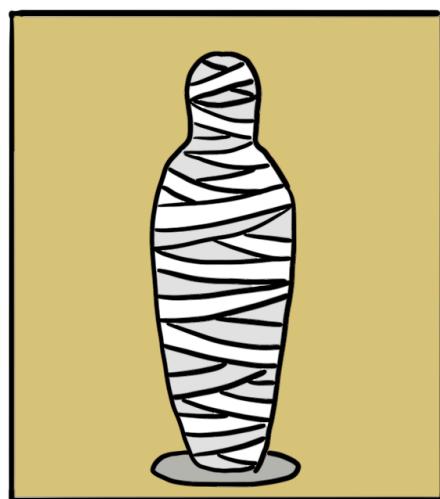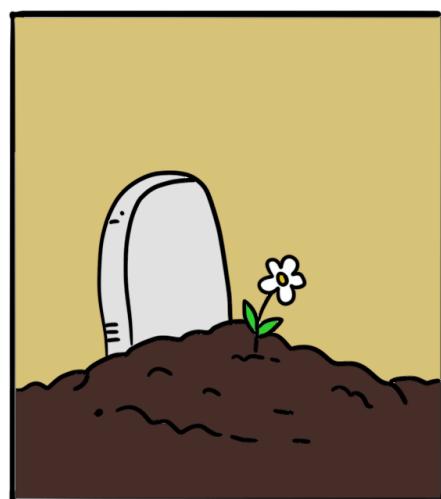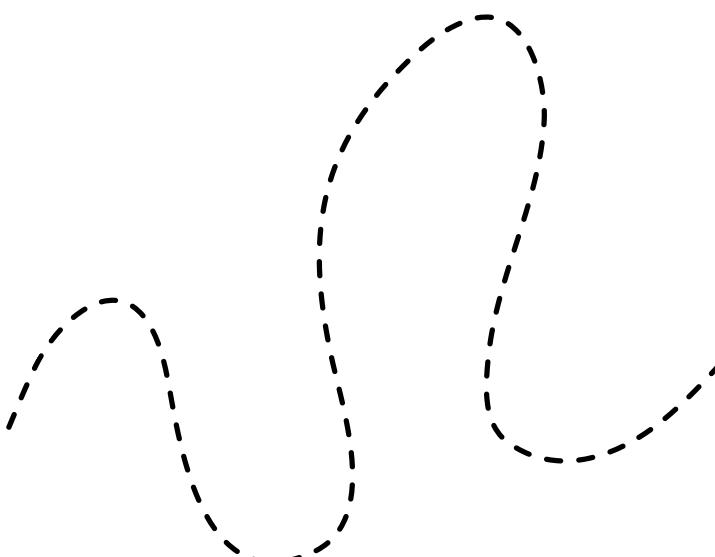

ILLUSTRATION BY DALMA ROMAN

Drinking with the Dead: Consoling Ancient Egyptian Textualities in Letters to the Dead

Harry Fry

من أجلك أدمر السماء
من أجلك أهدم الجحيم
فلا وعود
ولا وعيد

For you I would destroy the sky
For you I would tear down hell
No promises
No threats

La Yugular – Rosalía, Lux.

ILLUSTRATION BY BETH AGNES

Applied not as loss but restoration, not a test but a practice, and a processive rather than passive script, some grief literature insists on regeneration. In Rosalia's chorus, female spirituality is enigmatised to corporeally access those lost in heaven, hell, and the afterlife. Antecedently, the ancient Egyptian *Letters to the Dead* stand as a dubious textual genre compared to the better-known *Book of the Dead* that guided the deceased into the afterlife. These Letters, divergently, were written requests by the living to deceased relatives who had already passed through the netherworld and gained an afterlife status: akh. Being written not only on papyri, ostraca, and linen, but notably onto ritualistic cups and bowls that could be filled with water to be drunk, the Letters became a live text which spirited the dead into mobile agents, restoring their identity back to the living world. The dead were able and expected to respond, or consume, thus occupying a conscious paradigm away from how we perceive them. Through dissolving boundaries between conceptual and living worlds, the living rejected the deceased's severed lostness as a means for physical consolation and emotional comfort.
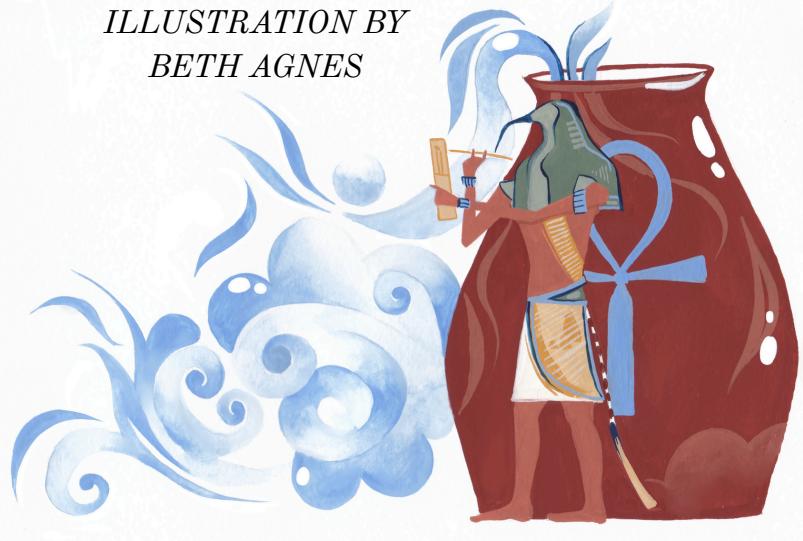
Focusing on the Letters' orality as a performative, spoken ritual, their positioning of those lost into reactive and responding agents, as well as the employment of water to be consumed by the dead, I argue that living Egyptians could actively feel the lost in a certain realm of consciousness, producing tactile sensations between the living and their idea of the dead. This emphasis on life serves to break from the tradition associating ancient Egyptians with an obsession towards death, instead being a matter for preserving their vitality. The Letters, therefore, were crafted not for, but with, the dead, building a reciprocity between family who remained alive and those who had passed. It was predicated on the deceased's embodiment as listening and moving, transitioning authority away from the living. At once a site for sorrow and grief writing, these textual appeals become a praxis of consolation, a node through which those departed were emotionally reproduced on earth as operating subjects.

On the Cairo Linen, Qau Bowl, and Chicago Jar Stand, three known 'letters' to the dead, their opening lines start as "an oral reminder" or "a count of the mouth". Amidst the growing demand for appreciating ancient Egyptian literature as contemporaneously performed, Julia Hsieh finds these openers to mobilise a performative voice. Such texts were written either "here/'3" or "beside/r-gs", next to divine iconography or in front of the deceased relative, suggesting that these locations for depositing and enacting their text was calculated. Extant writings built certain linguistic formulas, but the deployment of words such as 'here', 'there', 'besides', 'away', or 'in your presence', highlights the shifts and subjectivities of writers. These rituals were not wholly scripted, but deeply personal and circumstantial, meaning they were likely read out to be trialled. Perhaps depending on the medium that text was written on or when the living required support, they were left both inside and outside, during and after the burial. The senders appear consequently to invoke conceptualised forces within a necropolis or a tomb: written requests had a deity's approval, but more importantly, were heard and taken by those lost into their graves. Speaking prior to writing, the living performed their emotional appeals to the listening ears of deity and dead, calling on an auditorily sensational power.

While the realms of the divine and the afterlife were implored, revelatory is the unique privileging of the dead's, over the deities', calling. Letters were only written to the deceased relatives that had become an akh spirit and had a confirmed post-earthly authority. Being one of many metaphysical aspects of the Egyptian human soul, the akh is concurrently associated with magic. In the netherworld, the dead could argue and advocate for the living, and in the living's writing of appeals to them, those alive preserved the deceased's name, identity, and their ancestors on earth. What makes the Letters unique is that this singular genre of evidence was written not for or about, but with the dead, carrying an expectation

of their response.

This was almost certainly an unsaid, visionary practice, as it depended on envisioning both corporeal and incorporeal powers. Emphasising Egypt's notion of the akh, they are described as '3/"great in height and might" and wr/"great", as such taking up a physically mighty space which was felt in the land amongst living Egyptian relatives. In the context of the Letters, the dead were emotionally qualified by a tactile, visceral sensation around those who remained alive. The dead are widely portrayed with a voice that was k3-hrw/"loud" or s.t sgr/in a "place of silence", following the socio-religious regulations of ancient Egypt where oratorial authority could be in some instances appropriate and in others wrong. Speaking, albeit being conditionally appropriate, nevertheless positioned the dead as both heard and silent, evidencing their conceptual presence. The akh could help, and therefore equally harm, the living, which empowered them past solely what they did but also what they did not do. Occupying a longer Egyptological debate as to whether ancient Egyptians truly believed they were real, this uncertainly could show how the living purposefully blurred the lines between themselves —the living reality— and their developed conceptualisation of the dead.

To comprehend the dead as reacting agents to the Letters, their literacy is perhaps gestated. Ancient Egyptian literacy cannot be precisely quantified, but it was definitively a public practice for only male elites. It therefore took on an honorary role for those who could write, as the scribal profession was highly valued. In *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*, the removal of scribes leads to chaos, as it destroys knowledge, meaning the akh's capacity for writing and reading in the afterlife ensured order—better known as the prominent Egyptian notion of Ma'at/"order". Another level of uncertainty centres not only around literacy, but also on to what degree religious, cosmological, magical, ritual, and afterlife-oriented systems existed across

popular culture. The developments of these customs were predominantly written or drawn inside private, royal tombs, lending a possibility that much of what modern scholars excavated was only esoteric to ancient Egyptians. Critically, however, the dead's assumed literacy removes its presumed exclusivity in the living world, pertinent to the question of female literacy. Women are senders and recipients of these Letters, meaning that in the afterlife, perhaps all women gained the capacity to write back to the living's appeals once their akh status was confirmed. Regardless of their ability to write on earth, the Letters dissolved the formal gendered codes for literary training, allowing elite women within Egypt's literary culture.

In the Qau and Hu Bowl, the akh are said to wnm/"consume". This verb, away from a query over genuine literacy, contends that the dead could use water as a channel to understand and absorb the written word. Following magical practices, liquid was poured over papyri or stelae, often enchanted by a spoken performance, to transmit the knowledge of the text to the receiving human. The Letters, when written on bowls, likely can be interpreted as textual genre which were in incomplete form until absorbed by the dead. Egypt's dry desert climate meant writings were ingested by the deceased as heat, using the environment as a conduit. Nature, therefore, allows a ritual performativity for the text to be spoken and thus heard, and then drunk: translated into the dead reading or processing it. This culture of imagined literacy must have felt very real for Egyptians, meaning that while it was a process studied for and completed by those lost, the Letters were formulated within the minds of the living.

These Letters to the Dead dissolve the boundaries between private and public social imaginations, visible and felt affect, and the living and the lost. They are not written aimlessly out of grief, but for a cause; not with known outcomes but pleading for

a response. Necessitated by signals of the dead's return, the Letters only become a functionable textuality when the afterlife folds back into earth's nature, order, or knowledge. Whether an exterior or interior concept for living Egyptians, the Letters' restoration of what could be lost preferably regenerates life through to the next world.

Una gota de saliva ocupa la Quinta Avenida
La Quinta Avenida cabe en una perforación
Una perforación ocupa una pirámide
Y una pirámide cabe en un vaso de leche
Y un vaso de leche ocupa un ejército

A drop of saliva occupies Fifth Avenue
Fifth Avenue fits in a piercing
A piercing occupies a pyramid
And a pyramid fits in a glass of milk
And a glass of milk occupies an army

La Yugular – Rosalía, Lux.
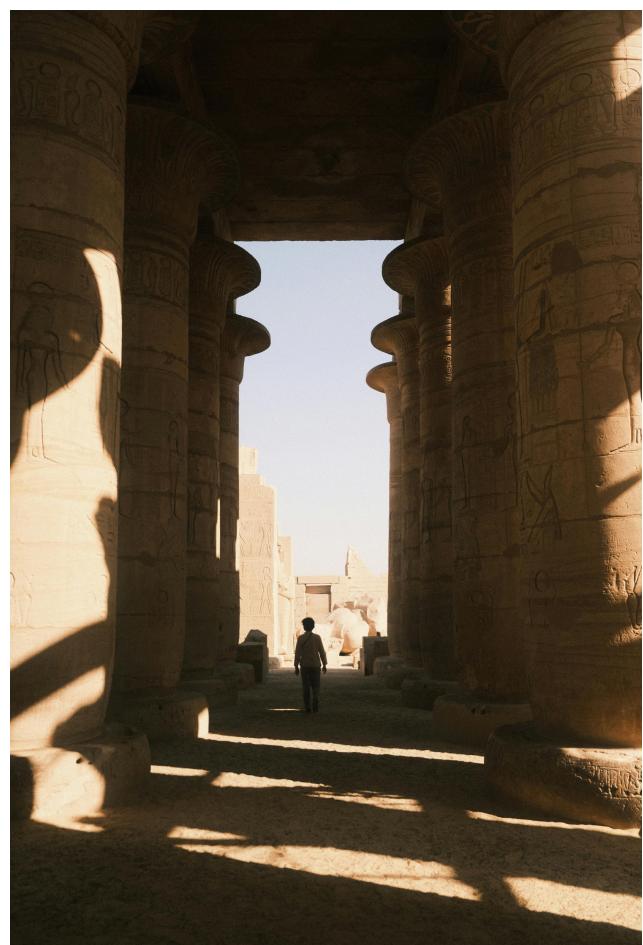
The Weight of Memory: Loss, Violence, and the Partition Trains of 1947

Jake Beecroft

The Partition of India in 1947 is remembered as one of the most traumatic moments defining South Asian history, not just for the redrawing of territorial borders in the region, but for the violence and loss that followed in the wake of Independence. Divided along religious lines between Muslim and Hindu majority provinces, the new states of Pakistan and India split the majority of the subcontinent's territory. The Partition uprooted millions, as families and often whole communities were broken up and forced to resettle within new territorial boundaries drawn based on religious lines. As communal violence began to spiral during Partition, a particularly haunting symbol of the chaos emerged in the form of 'death trains' or 'ghost trains'. These trains would often arrive at their destinations packed with the bodies of refugees who had originally boarded seeking safety and escape, but were left massacred on board. These trains became another victim of the devastation that ravaged new states of India and Pakistan. The ghost trains offer a poignant and often under-analysed example that demonstrates how far the violence of Partition carried, not only in the immediate loss of life, but also in the psychological trauma and legacy that scarred South Asian history. Examining the tragedy of these trains provides insight into the human cost of political upheaval and the enduring impact of loss within the legacy of Partition.

The violence that spread to the railways during Partition was the result of a poorly managed British withdrawal, as the British Government sought to end its governance of the costly territory. This was however, challenged by the deep disagreements between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League over political representation and territorial control, particularly over the contested region of the Punjab, making a unified independence impossible under the Indian National Congress. The decision to divide British India instead was formalised through the Radcliffe Line, a plan developed in just five weeks to divide the subcontinent, including the contested regions of Punjab and Bengal. Lord Radcliffe finalised the borders in August 1947, with the line being publicly announced on 17 August, just two days after the official independence on 15 August 1947. This delay left tens of millions unaware that they were now living in an 'alien territory'.

The chaos that followed soon turned to conflict, as millions were displaced. The vast network of trains left by the departing British appeared to offer one of the most viable options to safely escape the violence, particularly out of the Punjab region, where communal violence between Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus was the most concentrated. Trains quickly became overcrowded as over three million people boarded the railways between August and November seeking an escape. Refugees were packed into carriages for several days with no food, luggage or space to sleep. These trains failed to provide protection, as violent mobs, particularly along the northwestern border between Pakistan and India, began to see the moving trains as targets, easily identifying which religious group was on board based on the direction the train was travelling, either to the new Hindu state of India or the Muslim state of Pakistan. One of the most infamous and well-documented incidents with the refugee trains occurred on 22 September. A train carrying Muslim refugees bound for Pakistan was attacked around thirty miles east of the city of

Amritsar by Sikh fighters. Despite attempts to repel the fighters by the train's escort under British command, the Hindu soldiers ignored British demands.

The massacre resulted in the death of over three thousand and a further one thousand injured. When the train arrived at its final destination, it appeared like a 'ghost train', as each carriage arrived packed with the dead. This attack, while the most memorable, did not occur in isolation, with another just two days later on 24 September, when a train carrying Sikh and Hindu refugees destined for India was attacked not far from Lahore, resulting in the deaths of hundreds and the abduction of many Sikh and Hindu women.

While the immediate loss of life had an immense psychological impact on survivors and their families, the long-term memory of Partition and its violence contributed to divided relations between the new states. Incidents of brutality witnessed by those onboard the trains, or told on by survivors and family members, fuelled mistrust between religious communities and individual narratives of victimhood, as the deaths of anywhere between two hundred thousand and two million people during Partition violence shaped a new national consciousness. The feminist historian Urvashi Butalia, in The Other Side of Silence, through survivors' testimonies, recalled how some would only survive by hiding under the bodies of others, only to re-emerge days later as the sole survivors in entire carriages. Evidence like this highlights the legacy that was carried on through survivors and into the national experience of Partition. Gyanendra Pandey, in his writing, has sought to emphasise the generational trauma that passed through survivors' testimonies. Pandey found that many survivors, struggling with fear and unresolved grief, often avoided retelling the stories of those ateful journeys long after 1947. This created a cycle of unresolved psychological trauma passed down from survivors on both sides of the Partition line. Post-Partition

literature has embraced the role trains played during the Partition as another space for loss and trauma. In Train to Pakistan, Khushwant Singh uses the arrival of trains to signal impending violence, set in the village of Mano Majra in the Punjab. This presentation of the train reflects the deep legacy the violence had on public consciousness. Another contemporary Pakistani writer, Saadat Hasan Manto, used the analogy of a mental asylum in his short story Toba Tek Singh to compare the sense of identity loss, displacement, and insanity, a feeling comparably shared by millions displaced during Partition and exposed to the violence of the conflict. The cultural legacy of these works transformed the trains from more than just a space of loss into a broader, cultural symbol of loss.

The refugee trains offered hope for many as a means of escape from the violence, yet as conflict spread across the Punjab and surrounding regions, they became a moving target for Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim rebels on both sides of the border. From the massacres, such as those at Amritsar and Kamokee that arrived in stations as 'ghost trains', to the many lived experiences of those that crossed the subcontinent in 1947, these journeys reveal the transformation of a space intended to offer an escape from conflict into moving monuments of despair and loss, carrying on the trauma and memory of Partition violence. The loss many experienced on board carried into the psychological scars of survivors and the fragmentation of communities, creating an intergenerational cycle of trauma. The memory of these trains, although only a small segment in the broader Partition struggle, has come to symbolise the enduring legacy that Partition loss has had on the identity and collective consciousness of both survivors and successive generations.

No Time to Die: The Little Island and the Ghost of Empires Past

Lea Lang

In Freud's vocabulary, healthy grief requires mourning: the deliberate labour of accepting that something beloved is irretrievably gone. Its pathological counterpart, melancholia, is defined by refusal – denial, displaced hostility, and the manic assertion of an identity that no longer matches reality. Freud wrote about individuals, not countries, yet, his distinction maps with unsettling precision onto the emotional history of post-imperial Britain. Across the mid-twentieth century, Britain experienced a loss without precedent in its national story: an empire that once claimed a quarter of the globe contracted into a modest island state, newly dependent on alliances rather than dominion. The formal structures of empire dissolved, but its cultural shadow lingered. The end of empire represented a profound diminishment of status and self-understanding – one the country never fully named, let alone mourned. Instead, as Paul Gilroy argues, Britain drifted into a condition of "postcolonial melancholia": an unresolved attachment to empire that continues to haunt political imagination long after the flag was lowered. Seen from this psychoanalytic vantage, Brexit appears less an abrupt political convulsion than the latest, and perhaps most consequential, symptom of that melancholic condition – the political expression of a nation still negotiating with the ghost of an empire it refuses to bury.

The problem begins with 1945. In public memory, Britain "stood alone" and triumphed over Nazi Germany – a neat, consoling narrative that forestalls any honest reckoning with decline. In reality, victory arrived with economic exhaustion, military overstretch, and dependence on American finance. Yet, post-war governments clung to the fiction of great-power status, reiterating Churchill's vision of Britain at the centre of three concentric circles: Europe, the Atlantic world, and the Commonwealth. As David Edgerton has noted, this state-centred nationalism encouraged fantasies of global influence long after the material basis for such ambition had waned. True mourning would have required acknowledging limitation. Instead, Britain spoke the language of greatness while quietly administering a shrinking sphere.

If the empire has a "death moment," it is Suez in 1956. When Egyptian General Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the canal, Prime Minister Anthony Eden colluded with France and Israel in a theatrical bid to reassert imperial authority. The performance backfired spectacularly. Under American pressure, Britain withdrew abruptly, exposing what elites had been reluctant to admit: the empire no longer conferred autonomy, and British action was now constrained by a superpower it once imagined as a wayward offspring. France responded by turning decisively toward Europe, signing the Treaty of Rome the following year. Britain drew the opposite lesson: never again jeopardise the "special relationship" with Washington. Suez deepened Atlantic dependence and entrenched scepticism toward European integration. Crucially, it produced no public reckoning with imperial loss. It was framed as a diplomatic miscalculation, a "blunder", not an imperial death knell. The empire became something Britain had chosen to retire, not something it had been forced to relinquish. Mourning, again, was deferred.

Decolonisation was engineered as a narrative of benevolence. Britain portrayed withdrawal as the culmination of a civilising mission – a trust nobly discharged – rather than the outcome of anti-colonial revolt and strategic necessity. The Commonwealth provided a soft-focus afterimage of empire, allowing continuity to masquerade as friendship. This required prodigious acts of forgetting. The violence of late empire – detention camps in Kenya, repression in Malaya and Cyprus, massacres in India – was excised from national memory or relegated to archival footnotes. What survived in the popular imagination was disproportionately railways, cricket, and the English language. But where mythmaking dominates, mourning cannot begin.

Gilroy's "postcolonial melancholia" captures the emotional residue left by this refusal to mourn: nostalgia inflected with guilt, and guilt displaced into hostility. Immigration from former colonies brought imperial subjects into the metropole; those once governed from afar now arrived as neighbours and citizens. The press described it as "the empire coming home," or, in darker tones, "colonising England in reverse." If empire itself could not be openly grieved, its end could be projected onto those who seemed to symbolise national transformation. Migrants became repositories for anxieties about decline. Figures such as Enoch Powell exploited these emotions with chilling fluency. His "Rivers of Blood" speech transformed migrants, Europe, and domestic elites into avatars of a vanished global order.

Popular culture, meanwhile, registered Britain's diminished power more honestly than Westminster ever dared. In Diamonds Are Forever (1971), Bond-villain Blofeld sneers that Britain's "pitiful little island" has not even been threatened by him. Played for menace and humour, the line hits an exposed nerve. "Islandness" – geographic and psychological – complicated Britain's relationship with Europe. Joining the European Communities meant accepting not only regulations but a new

self-image: Britain as one state among many. For a nation raised on imperial centrality, this was a profound and difficult emotional adjustment.

Against this background, Brexit seems less an aberration than the culmination of a long-developing malaise. "Take back control" resonated because it echoed older fantasies of Britain as a commanding global actor – a nation acting upon the world rather than negotiating within it. Visions of post-Brexit prosperity invoked imaginary revivals of imperial trading networks. Talk of the "Anglosphere" or "Empire 2.0" suggested that former colonies, recast as partners of "kith and kin," would welcome a return to British leadership. Whether those countries had their own interests, histories, or grievances was treated as an awkward diplomatic inconvenience. Boris Johnson captured the melancholic logic with characteristic breeziness: "We used to run the biggest empire the world has ever seen... Are we really unable to do trade deals?" Accuracy was beside the point. The line reassured a public wrestling with unspoken loss: the empire may be gone, but its shadow remains strategically useful. Meanwhile, the EU was cast in recognisably imperial terms – an overbearing superstate infringing on British sovereignty. Brexit became another ritual of heroic defiance, a Suez-in-reverse, an opportunity to "stand alone" once more.

The aftermath revealed the gap between imperial fantasy and geopolitical reality. Trade negotiations proved slow and frequently humbling; states such as India asserted visa policy, recognition, and historical memory alongside tariffs. The imagined queue of eager partners turned out to be shorter – and far more demanding – than promised. Domestically, Brexit reopened dormant fractures: the Good Friday Agreement had blurred borders; Brexit sharpened them. Scotland was reminded that its place in the Union rests on consent, not inevitability. "Taking back control" proved far easier to chant than to implement.

None of this means all Leave voters were driven by imperial nostalgia, or that the EU was beyond criticism. It does suggest, however, that the emotional energy behind the referendum drew upon unresolved feelings about Britain's former place in the world – and its present one.

If Brexit is a symptom, the underlying condition remains untreated. Britain has yet to decide what to do with the ghosts of its imperial past. Encouraging beginnings exist: expanded curricula, public debates about monuments, scholarship that places empire at the centre rather than the margins of national history. These efforts do not "talk the country down." They mark the early phases of mourning: the willingness to confront what was, in all its entanglement of brutality and achievement. Mourning does not require self-hatred; it requires relinquishing the fantasy of
innocence. A nation that once derived wealth and status from empire cannot move forward if it remembers only the railways and forgets the famines.

Brexit has been described as mistake, liberation, rupture, catharsis. In psychoanalytic terms, it may also be read as an eruption: the moment when decades of deferred grief finally broke the surface of political life. Nations, like individuals, cannot live indefinitely on nostalgia. At some point, the story must be rounded off rather than endlessly embellished; the photo album must be closed. Until Britain confronts empire not as a comforting myth but as a finite, complex chapter of its past, the ghost will continue to govern the present – shaping policy, resentment, and fantasies of "standing alone" that ignore the realities of interdependence – long after the sun has set on the empire that once imagined itself everlasting.

The work of mourning is quiet, unheroic, and unspectacular. But without it, Britain will continue circling the ruins of an empire it refuses to bury, mistaking the echo of old glories for the sound of its own future.
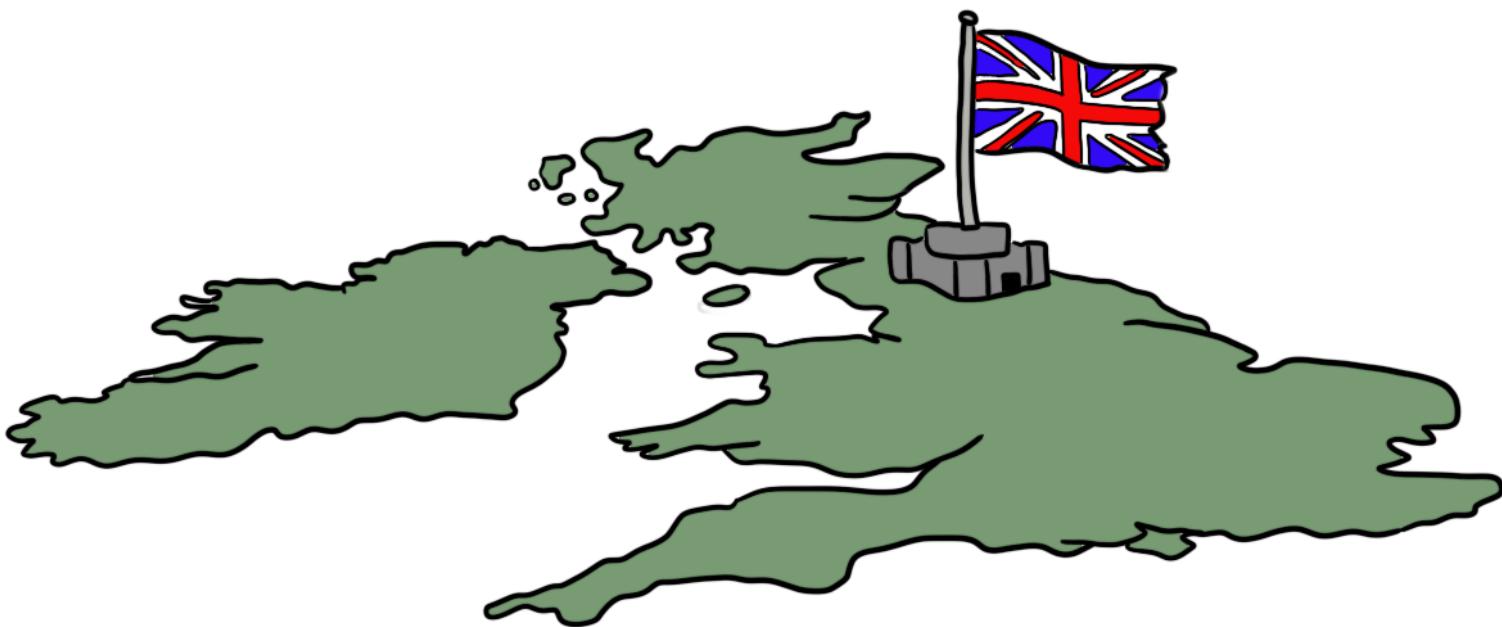

ILLUSTRATION BY DALMA ROMAN

Over My Dead Body: Stalin, Sovereignty, and the Physical Memorialisation of Lenin

Kate Taylor

On 21 January 1924, seven years after the Bolsheviks gained control of Russia in the name of Communism, the death of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov created a profound crisis of political legitimacy for the new Soviet regime. Just over one hundred years later, and despite communism's collapse in Russia thirty-five years ago, his preserved body remains on display in a purpose-built mausoleum just outside the Kremlin, a testament to the enduring political utilisation of Lenin's physical presence. According to multiple sources, including his widow Krupskaya, Lenin wished to be buried next to his mother in Petrograd, a wish that was promptly dismissed after key political figures realised the power of having a physical legacy. Significant debate exists among scholars as to the nature of the memorialisation that the state encouraged, with evidence indicating attempts to create a quasi-religious icon and a source of political legitimacy. This essay builds on and extends Nina Tumarkin's argument to suggest that Stalin reinforced the existing Cult of Lenin by allowing people access to his body in an attempt to fuse religious and political rule, legitimising the repressive controls of the Stalinist regime. While not going as far as to suggest the effectiveness of this strategy due to the inherent difficulty of measuring popular belief in this period, this essay highlights the multifaceted, and somewhat contradictory, uses of Lenin's preserved corpse in post-Lenin Russia.

On the day of Lenin's funeral, the state newspaper Pravda wrote that he was "a religious leader, comparable to but more successful than Mohammed, Christ, and Buddha", an arguably strange description of a political leader who described religious worship as 'necrophilia', highlighting the regime's willingness to ignore ideology for emotional mobilisation. This marked an early moment in Lenin's transition to a quasi-religious figure, drawing on the emotional force of a grieving population to bind loyalty to the new era of the Soviet regime. The preservation of Lenin's body was viewed by those familiar with Russian Orthodox traditions as a declaration of sainthood, drawing on their beliefs that a divine body would defy natural decomposition, reinforcing the idea that action in the name of Lenin was entirely legitimate. Scholars, including Robert Service and Paul Kengor, highlight this process of making dead Lenin a religious figure as a key part of the manipulation of his legacy by political leaders. However, the relationship between Leninist-Marxism and religion is not straightforward. As Roland Boer highlights, Lenin's critiques of religion were inconsistent, and atheism was not a requirement of party membership, highlighting a limited level of religious tolerance from Lenin. Some of his early writings even note the role of clergy in revolutionary action, suggesting that the party's attempts to create a religious figure were not entirely contrary to their doctrine. This ambiguity allowed Stalin to shift belief away from a strictly Marxist perspective in order to execute his political demands.

Crucially, this religious manipulation existed before his death, with peasants having 'Lenin corners' in their homes, allowing them to 'worship' his portrait, similarly to Tsarist idolism in the pre-Communist era, although the popularity of such remains debated. Indeed, while not entirely convincing, Robert C. Tucker argues that

communism was like a religion from the start, based on ideological 'fantasies' of a better, fairer world. On the other hand, many peasant folklore stories of Lenin's continued life had very few religious undertones, creating a direct comparison instead to Tsarist rulers (particularly Alexander I, who was rumoured to have snuck off and lived as a nomad after faking his death). This display of 'naïve monarchism', as described by Daniel Field, drew on Russian peasant tendencies to personify political power in paternalism. While significant debate remains between historians over whether the Cult of Lenin was created with the intention of filling the Tsarist hole, it is clear that it acted in this way. Therefore, whether intended to be religious or not, the idea that a preserved Lenin never dies ensures that the ideology also lives. By drawing on this existing Cult of Lenin, Stalin was able to position him as a legitimate ruler, creating a belief that policies could be implemented by claiming that they were the will of Lenin. It is worthy of note that this conversion of Lenin into a religious figure plays specifically into a Russian Orthodox belief, instead of a wider Christian one, highlighting Stalin's goal of consolidating his political power primarily in Russia. Further, the similarities between Ancient Egyptian mummification practices and Lenin's preservation suggest a rejection of western influence, pushing away from the Leninist-Marxist visions of global communism. Therefore, to suggest that Lenin's body became a purely religious symbol would be to misrepresent the traditions and cultural inclinations of the majority rural Russian population. This being said, party tolerance and encouragement of religious iconography in relations to Lenin highlight Tumarkin's view that attempts to fuse religious and political rituals were based on mobilising the population around a singular belief system: communism.

The political manipulation of Lenin's body and death are more readily identifiable than the quasi-religious elements. Despite opposition from key figures, including Lenin's widow Krupskaya, the decision to preserve Lenin's body marked a significant propaganda opportunity for the Russian Marxist cause. Though developed with medieval monarchs in mind, Ernst Kantorowicz's theory of the 'king's two bodies' indicates that sovereignty of European monarchies is linked to the physical body of the king through blood. Therefore, as the new leadership of Russia was not to follow hereditary birth rites, the continued presence of the leader's body highlights that political sovereignty remains. By defying the natural decomposition of the body, Stalin was able to illustrate that scientific Marxism was greater than both religion and nature, positioning it as the only true method of political rule. Indeed, some early sources, including one from Trotsky, suggest that the decision to preserve his body was partially based on Stalin's wish to prevent an autopsy from being carried out, based on rumours that Lenin had been poisoned. Scientists were allowed to study Lenin's brain, eventually concluding that he had genius organisational skills, despite the significant damage of the four strokes that he suffered towards the end of his life. While this is a contested, and potentially unlikely, point, it further illustrates the Soviet desire to position communism as a forward-thinking regime, who could give answers to the questions that both political and religious rulers could simply ponder.

The permanent mausoleum, which continues to house Lenin's body to this day, was built in 1930, and heralded as a triumph of the first Five Year Plan, embedding Lenin physically within Stalin's vision of modernity. Of the 117 architects that entered the competition to design it, all were rejected, highlighting how seriously Stalin took the task of creating this crucial symbol of public grief and power. The eventual design showcased stability, centralised power, and longevity, with a platform on top of the mausoleum to allow Stalin to make speeches literally over Lenin's dead body. This ability to control the public view and relationship with Lenin in death allowed Stalin to legitimise his actions in the name of Lenin. Indeed, Christel Lane furthers Tumarkin's ideas by

arguing that the Soviet government adopted a cultural management system in order to create a positive memory of Lenin, using his body as a screen to mask his legitimisation of state violence in the name of the revolutionary movement. This is also evident in the strict control that Stalin personally retained over Lenin's private documents, allowing the party to publish those that appeared to compliment Stalinist policies. Further, through his role in the decision to preserve Lenin's body, and the design of the mausoleum, Stalin initially positioned himself as a grieving pupil and natural heir to the Leninist-Marxist regime. As Johnathon Dreeze highlights, as Stalin's own cult of personality increased in strength, this position was pivoted to place them as friends and equals, despite evidence on the contrary, positioning Stalin as the legitimate ruler and justifying divergence from Leninist theory. Indeed, by Stalin's own death in 1953, many people in Russia believed that Stalin had played an equal, if not superior, role to Lenin in the 1917 Revolution. Through manipulating the memory of those alive at the time, as well as teaching later generations a twisted version of history, Stalin reinforced his own power, continuing to reference Lenin's preserved corpse as his source of legitimacy and sovereignty.

By considering the religious and political manipulation of Lenin's corpse, this essay has highlighted the crucial significance of the decision to preserve his body to state legitimacy. Drawing on familiar Russian Orthodox symbolism, as well as political-scientific knowledge, Stalin presented Lenin as the immortal figurehead of Communism on a global level. Despite divergence from Leninist-Marxism during his rule, the continued use of Lenin's body as a legitimising force solidified Stalin's position as his true successor. Today, in the post-Communist state, Lenin's preserved corpse and 1930 Mausoleum act an enduring reminder of Russia's complex political past. Like in 1924, debate continues as to when

Lenin should finally be put to rest, highlighting the unresolved conflict between power, memory, and authority.
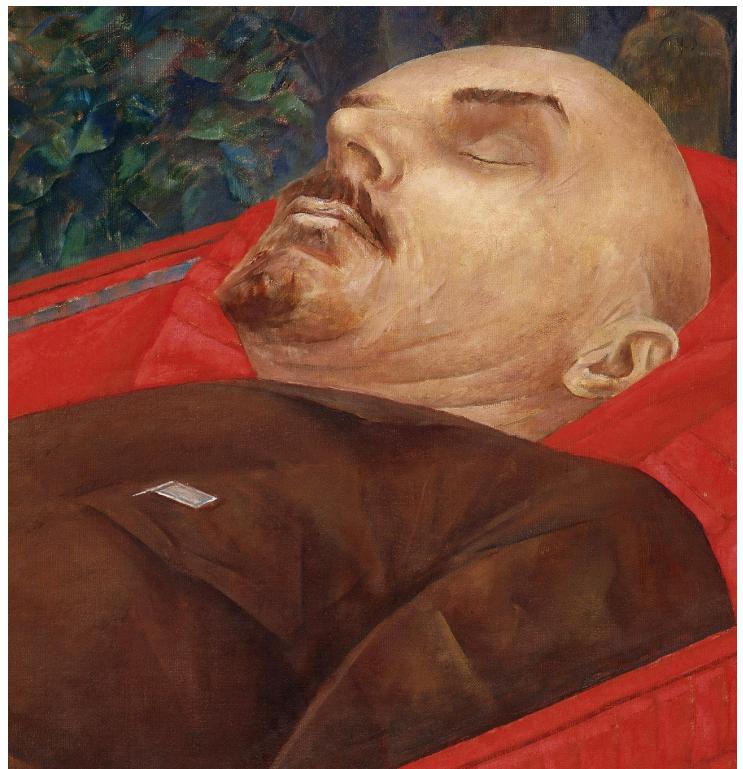
KUZMA PETROV-VODKIN (1924)
BY LENIN'S COFFIN

Seamus Heaney's Punishment and the Disembodiment of Women in Northern Ireland

Molly Barrow

Seamus Heaney wades into the boglands of Ireland in Punishment to examine how its colonial traumas manifested themselves into the modern conflict known as The Troubles. Critics broadly agree that Heaney conflates this conflict with the barbarism of ancient religions, represented here by the mummified bog-body the poet's speaker is watching the exhumation of. Yet the Troubles was not simply a sectarian conflict and nor does Heaney treat it as such. This attribution ignores Britain's violent actions in Ireland and its enduring colonial afterlife. By borrowing from Begoña Aretxaga's analysis of republican political prisoners, one could argue the entombed feminine corpse is used in the place of Mother Ireland to address the physical and emotional legacy of colonialism. However, Heaney offers an uncritical portrayal of this image of the nation that fails to fully interrogate the relationship between imperialism and patriarchy. In his treatment of the Windeby Girl, Heaney condemns the British and sectarianism while disempowering Irish women. Importantly, a femicide is currently unfolding in Northern Ireland. This can be linked to the reproductive futurism used by the IRA to justify their infringement upon working-class female sexualities: if the British could not defile Ireland's daughters, nor could they cross her geographical borders. Then and now, Ireland's incredible scale of loss represents itself within the disembodied female, who is perpetually tethered to the land.

Heaney's political opinions were less than clear. Born into a Catholic family in Derry, he belonged to a minority in the Protestant North, a state still in its infancy having been founded less than twenty years earlier with the Government of Ireland Act.

Yet Heaney once described himself as "torpid in politics", perplexing considering the pervasive extent of partisanship within twentieth-century Ireland. Across his career, Heaney offered paradoxical but non-committal reflections on the national question: in Punishment, he condemns the inaction of onlookers as women and girls are tarred-and-feathered and yet, in focusing on the crowds' silence, he never has to directly confront the IRA's inhumane actions. His attitude toward female emancipation was also ambivalent. As with the rest of the postwar Anglophone world, second-wave feminism did amass, albeit limitedly, in Northern Irish society. When, in 1997, Patricia Coughlan accused Heaney of operating within a traditional gender binary, a series of rebuttals between the poet and critic ensued. Coughlan's assessment is indeed compelling. Normative for much of his oeuvre, here Heaney identifies himself as the "artful voyeur". He dwells on the corpse's nipples and gives her the epithet "little adulteress", an oxymoron that perverts an image of child-like innocence and physical smallness with sex. Laura O'Connor agrees Heaney seems to be unaffected by the women's movement.

Despite these ambiguities, by centralising the bog – wetlands that are intrinsic to Irish ecology and folklore – Heaney was knowingly engaging with issues of land, culture, and, by implication, the questions of identity and ownership in Ireland. Heaney's bog entombs the body of a young girl who was ritualistically drowned in the peat, positioning Ireland's bogs as figurative mass graves, their morbid contents haunting its landscape.

Heaney is struck by her similarity to victimised girls and women in his contemporary North. During the Troubles, the IRA established their own internal justice systems within Catholic communities as the police, regarded as a Protestant and loyalist organisation, could not enter these neighbourhoods. Rachel Monaghan identifies their "alternative forms of justice", including kneecapping and the tarring-and-feathering of women. Tarring-and-feathering was a form of public humiliation endured by girls and women accused of 'touting' or having sex with British army personnel. Crucially, tarring-and-feathering intended to destroy a woman's social and sexual status. Like the Windeby girl, her head was shaved, tar was poured over her skin, and she was punished with a living-death, forever ostracised from her community.

However, to reduce this to a condemnation of intracommunity violence overlooks how feminine bodies were linked to the notion of nationhood and colonialism. When violence is perpetrated against the Windeby girl and the tarred-and-feathered women, Heaney regards it as imposed on Mother Ireland as a whole. Mother Ireland was a patriotic image popular among republican communities that perceived Ireland as a maternal entity. It promoted traditional forms of femininity, predated colonialism in the mythological image of Queen Maeve, and became an anti-imperial symbol in the eighteenth century, with the English John Bull often pictured brutalising a woman in print. For Heaney to centralise a female body savagely murdered by her community, he is participating in the feminisation of the landscape that, while emphasises British cruelty, also plays into colonial stereotypes. Aretxaga's analysis of the Dirty Protest by republican political prisoners in the 1980s demonstrates this dualism. Aretxaga argues the protestors understood the excreta and blood they smeared on prison walls as "primordial symbols", in that the act defies principles of socialisation and civility and therefore redirected the pejorative stereotypes of Irish savagery to embarrass the

British government. When the press criticised the British for allowing the prisoners to live in such abject conditions, the cruelty of state-power in Northern Ireland was undeniable. Likewise, Heaney compares the Troubles with ancient tribalism not only to admonish sectarianism, but to reclaim damaging stereotypes and highlight the persistence of the colonial project in the events of the Troubles.

Yet this anti-colonial perspective lacks the nuance that a female writer would have presumably approached Mother Ireland with. Speaking in a documentary in 1988, former female political prisoners, activists, and ordinary working mothers spoke out against the patriarchal image. They rightly argue it implies Ireland is something to be "penetrated" and "despoiled", and this language of sexual conquest inevitably affects women. Indeed, Heaney is invoking the nation and not the plight of women in Punishment, as his sexualised depiction of Windeby shows his feminist consciousness was limited. These are not "vaginal bogs", as Stephanie Alexander remarks, birthing a female-led resistance to colonialism, as Heaney uses the feminine body without ever radically engaging with her autonomy. Thus, while Mother Ireland is a helpful image for visualising colonial violence, it legitimated gender violence in the North. This is illustrated by the strip-searches conducted within Northern Ireland's women's prisons. Female political prisoners were strip-searched far more frequently than their male counterparts because their bodies had become a stage for the IRA and British war to play out upon. Women often recall the experience as a "sexual assault", due to the heavy-handedness, harassment, and staring of male officers during the process. Public outcry against strip-searches indicated that to defile a woman was to figuratively defile the state, deny men of their reproductive monopoly, and corrupt the Irish nation with Protestant, English blood. If tarring-and-feathering also portrayed women as "damaged goods", it is clear the IRA adopted a policy of reproductive futurism that required women to be as docile and pure as the

various iterations of Mother Ireland.

This is most starkly illustrated by the murder of Jean McConville, who was taken from her home by the IRA in 1972. Her body was discovered in 2003, a bullet wound to the back of her head. She is one of many known as the "Disappeared", a term used to describe those who were abducted, murdered, and buried across the border in the Troubles. McConville, a mother of ten, had been accused of helping a wounded British soldier. This act of humanity was regarded as a justification for her murder, as she was a woman who defied the patriarchal order of the IRA.

3532 people died in the Troubles. However, this statistic does not include the women who were harassed, assaulted, and humiliated by the British, the IRA, and loyalist extremists. Rightly, there has been an effort – limited to a handful of feminist scholars – to address conflict-related sexual violence in the North as stories continue to emerge after the peace process. Northern Ireland, however, is increasingly considered one of the most dangerous places to be a woman in Europe. Many incidences of intimate partner violence, for example, go unreported, as communities continue to distrust the police and fear the New IRA. "I who have stood dumb", Heaney writes, while women are tarred-and-feathered speaks to the inaction that continues toward gender-based violence. Punishment, however, shows how this silencing stems from the rendering of a woman's body to the landscape, a rendering that trumps her personhood. Until more is done to recognise the misogyny of founding republican ideologies and their ramifications today, violence will remain a constant in the lives of Irish women.

ILLUSTRATION BY DALMA ROMAN
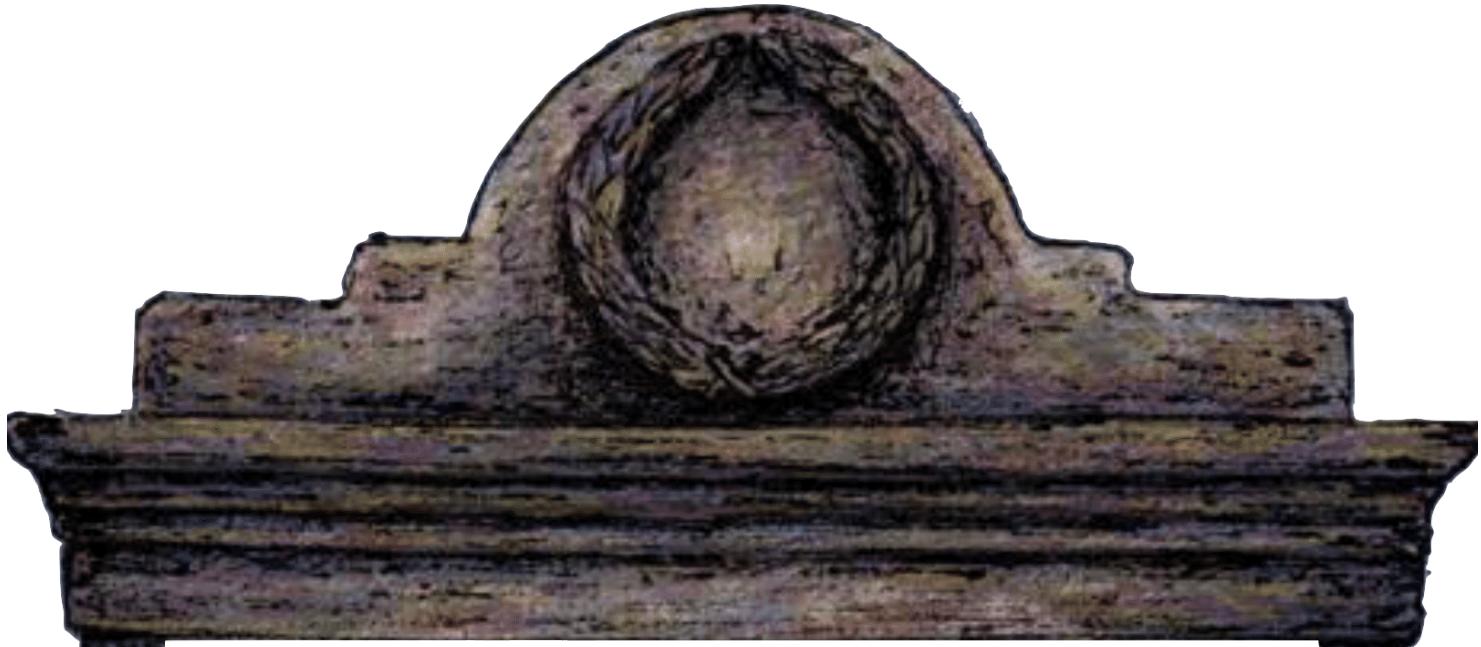
In Space

Frost is holding fast onto these dripping walls.
It's Winter now and the crash
is quiet: corroding these canyon sands and laughing
at the moon. Isn't he sly in this witless abandon,
this carnivorous cause? Mouth of the Klamath, stomach of the Sierras.
His limbs stretch south, boughs branching out like oak.
This damage runs old, but this river flows new.

This river that hungers and eats and pleads.
River of dollars. River of ghosts.
River that will swallow you whole. Churning
like an engine, this river with twenty-tin carriages and
Miles of steel to go before sleep. River
that is dominated. River that cannot give
anymore. River that runs dry and river that just wants to rest.
River that is the water and the rocks and is doing all this to itself.
This river that kills. This river that births.
River that has no end.

River of desire, of rush, of life.
This river with its teeth that knows how to fight.
River of the Yurok. River of the salmon and river of the eagle.
This river that is home.
River that provides.

BLAST!

– Meg Leaver

Grief in Hellenistic Demetrias: The Tombstone of Hediste

Emily Griffiths

Demetrias was founded in the Hellenistic period by Demetrias Poliorketes in 294 BC. Although new foundations were common in the Hellenistic period, Demetrias was important because of its position on the coastline. The foundation of Demetrias and its important strategic positioning is mentioned in Strabo, Geography, 9.15. Demetrias itself was an urban centre occupied by people from all over the Greek world. The reason Demetrias is so important to our understanding of death in the Hellenistic world is the painted stelai. In the walls of the defensive towers of Demetrias, Arvanitopoulos found several painted tombstones. These must predate 88 BC, when the Mithridatic Wars created a need for Demetrias' citizens to build new walls. These painted tombstones included the Hediste stele. The Hediste stele depicts a woman, Hediste, as a corpse. The painting is of a woman lying on a bed, naked. She is surrounded by her husband, a servant, and a nursemaid holding her baby. The painting is made with egg tempura and uses rich colours, including Egyptian blue. The stele includes a poem:

"The Fates spun out a painful thread from their spindles for Hediste, when she, as a bride, encountered childbirth. Oh enduring is she, not intended to embrace her infant, nor even to water the lip of her own offspring with the breast. One light looked upon them both and Tyche led them both into a single tomb, coming upon them indistinguishably." Salowey, 2012, 254.

The act of depicting a woman as dead is atypical and has greater implications for our understanding of the Hellenistic period. This work will discuss other depictions of women on painted tombstones within Demetrias to show that Hediste's stele was unusual but not unique. The stele represents a change in the Hellenistic period, where individuals were allowed to express their grief outside the typical social boundaries.

Most tombstones of women, from both the Hellenistic and Classical periods, depict a seated figure in the 'correct' fashionable clothing to display their social position or wealth. Two tombstones from Demetrias' contemporaries to the Hediste stele show the typical dress of the period. The Tombstone of Aphrodeisia (Volos Λ28, Fig. 12) and the Tombstone of Archidike (Volos Λ20, Fig. 13) show two seated women, both on ornate chairs with an arm outstretched. Aphrodeisia is in the deixos pose, which is a pose where two figures shake hands. This is a pose commonly used on Attic funerary stele. Aphrodeisia is following an older classical tradition. Archidike is seated with a raised arm, and she is accompanied by a female attendant or child. Both women wear a chiton (sleeveless dress) and a himation (mantle) and both have a veil drawn over their heads. Aphrodeisia has a wide light pink hem on her himation. The paint still survives. Archidike's dress seems to have been blue. This colourful dress was the fashion within Demetrias at the time. There are terracotta figurines of women from Demetrias which used copper-based blue and madder lake to produce garments of bright blues or bright pinks, respectively. The trends in both the terracotta and stele show this was the fashion in Thessaly at the period. Mireille M. Lee states that proper draping of the himation by both genders was a symbol of elite status. Lee also states:

"Because garments both envelop and reveal the body, they comprise an important social layer between the dressed individual and her community."

Archidike and Aphrodeisia are draped in these garments because it was fashionable and proper. If Archidike and Aphrodeisia represent women in the typical clothing of the period, which displays their social status and perhaps even morality, then it is clear that Hediste's is unusual. Hediste's pose is atypical; she is lying down and dead. The Archidike and Aphrodeisia stelai depict women sitting up with open eyes and in fashionable clothing, depicting moments from life. Hediste's stele is different. Hediste's stele chooses to emphasise the tragedy of her death by existing outside of social boundaries.

Although the Hediste stele is unusual, it is not unique. The Hediste stele is not like the majority of stelai depicting women from Demetrias, but there is one example with the same iconography. The tombstone of Hephaistion's daughter (Volos Λ350, Fig. 14a-b) is a stele, which is very similar to the Hediste. This is a Naiskos stele and only the preliminary drawing survives. The inscription is at the top of the painted stele. It is a short inscription only indicating that the tomb is for the daughter of Hephaistion. The stele depicts a woman lying on a bed. She faces towards the viewer, with closed eyes. She is lying on three soft pillows like Hediste. A figure stands to the side of her bed, wearing a chiton. It is likely a female figure and based on the size of the figure, it is either a child or a servant. The room in both this stele and the Hediste stele is split by a partition wall. It is clear how similar this painting is to Hediste. A lot of the small details are shared, such as the three pillows, the downturned gaze of the eyes, the frontal direction of the head and the arm lying by her side. There are differences between the two. There is not enough space on the Hediste stele to have a female figure in the corner. There is also no male figure on the stele of Hephaistion's daughter.

Salowey thinks that the two stelai are similar because of a copybook scene used frequently in the instances of death in childbirth. If the iconography is based off of paintings or sculpture, the image may be famous and spread further around Greece. It may also be the design of an artist from Demetrias that is repeated within the city. In the case of this report, the most important information provided by the Hephaistion stele is the repeatability of the Hediste stele. The stele of Hephaistion's daughter shows that while the iconography of the Hediste stele is atypical, it was not unacceptable, and it was repeatable. The shared iconography implies the 'type' may have been popular.

Hediste's tombstone existed outside of the typical social boundaries, but it was a repeated 'type'. Why could Hediste's husband choose to purchase this atypical tombstone for his deceased wife? The inscription itself emphasises the tragedy of Hediste's death. "The fates spun out a painful thread from their spindles for Hediste." A funerary poem from Erinna, dating to the Hellenistic period, shows that monuments could serve the purpose of expressing tragic fate. "These beautiful monuments will announce the cruel fate of Baucis". Hediste's stele and this funerary epigram occupy the same role. They emphasise the particular tragedy of losing the deceased individual and the extreme loss felt. Baucis died young and Hediste died in childbirth, with her young child. From this evidence, it appears that in cases of extreme tragedy, those related to the deceased could express their grief publicly and by breaking social normality. It is possible that the growing importance of the family within the polis allowed family members to express their grief in new ways. The type of the Hediste stele did not exist in the Classical period, the culture around loss had changed enough in the Hellenistic period to make this stele possible. Individuals could in particular express their grief in manners that broke typical social boundaries.

The Hediste stele was a tragic and evocative tombstone. It depicts a woman in her final moments, unlike the typical tombstones of Demetrias, which depict women in life. The tombstone does have a shared iconography with the tombstone of Hephaestion's daughter. The fact that the Hediste tombstone is part of a 'type' suggests that the new imagery of a woman at the moment of death was part of a wider shift in the Hellenistic period. The culture shifted towards allowing individuals to express extreme grief publicly. This was not socially acceptable in the Classical period, but it was becoming fashionable in the Hellenistic period.

ÉMILE GILLIÉRON (1924) PAINTED FUNERARY STELE OF HEDISTE, FROM DEMETRIAS, THESSALY

Memory, Morality and the Macabre: Medieval Cadaver Tombs in Britain

Amy Carr

Unlike today, the fact of death was an unavoidable omnipresence in medieval Britain. Reminders of mortality permeated all forms of art, performance and literature. The worlds of the living and the dead, and the body and the spirit, were considered both separate and inherently intertwined. Cadaver or *transi* tombs offer a potent representation of this preoccupation with loss. Appearing in the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, this form of funeral monument depicted the deceased as a rotting corpse, often ridden with worms, rats or frogs. Intentionally gruesome, these effigies were intended as both markers of remembrance and warnings to the living. Alongside other visual and literary forms of *memento mori* – 'remember you will die' – the monuments stressed the transience of life and worldly success, inspiring humility and piety from their beholders. This essay will trace the background and evolution of cadaver tombs and analyse their eventual fall from the conventions of commemoration.

In examining *transi* tombs, we must first understand medieval beliefs about life and death. Scholars such as Nancy Caciola have asserted that, throughout the Middle Ages, the spiritus was believed to be the force of human vitality. This was responsible for the regulation of bodily function and closely tied to the Christian notion of the 'soul.' Theologians promoted that, after death, the body would decay but the spirit would continue into purgatory. Here, the deceased would be cleansed of their sins through terrible and inevitable suffering. This purgatorial period could be reduced through a lifetime of piety, repentance for one's sins, and receiving the prayers of others. Therefore, the fate of the soul was partly dependent on the grieving and commemoration of the living. After being purified, the spirit could progress into the afterlife. It was as a result of these beliefs that the *memento mori* developed. Allegories such as the *Three Living and Three Dead* and the *Danse*. Macabre depicted the living confronted by the dead, and therefore facing their own mortal fate. In the former tale, three nobles are terrified to see three corpses, who urge them to repent in recognition of their mortality: "what I was, you are; what I am, you will be." In the *Danse Macabre*, or *Dance of Death*, the personification of death, represented as a skeleton or hooded figure, gleefully interacts with the living, often guiding them to their graves. Both themes highlight life's transient nature and the inevitability of death. They remind the living that the accumulation of earthly success is ultimately futile, as all will eventually be lost. Furthermore, Lawrence Green contends *memento mori* allegories portray a medieval belief that the worlds of the living and dead were interconnected, or that the two may collide. Corpses or skeletons are depicted transgressing into the realm of the living, with symbolic vegetation signifying a world balanced between one life and the next.

Cadaver tombs offer an overt representation of the intimacy between the dead and the living. Many variations of this tomb type exist. The decaying corpse is commonly represented lying on a plinth, either naked or partially covered by a shroud. Sometimes, the cadaver is infested with vermin, such as rats, worms, frogs, or other insects. It is frequently accompanied by a recumbent effigy or gisant: the body of the deceased dressed in armour or robes, appearing to be asleep rather than displaying rigor mortis and decay. These double monuments were reserved for those of a higher

status, such as knights or bishops. They recorded memory and encouraged grief for the lost virtue of the deceased. One example is the Arundel Castle tomb of John Fitzalan, 7th Earl of Arundel, who died in 1435. In his double effigy, he is portrayed twice – an idealised knight in armour on the upper level, and a rotting cadaver below. This intentionally grisly depiction, like *Three Living and Three Dead* and the *Danse Macabre*, emphasises the ravaging effect of death. It also highlights the transience of worldly success – the loss of John Fitzalan's body, earthly power and material wealth. The inscriptions on the monuments often directly addressed the viewer, urging repentance, mourning, and prayer. The Lincoln Cathedral cadaver tomb of Archbishop Richard Fleming, the founder of Oxford's Lincoln College (d.1431), reads, "Stand, seeing in me, who am eaten by worms, what you will be" (Fig. 1). Green has posited that graphic depictions of the "putrefying skeleton" visually manifest the purification of the spirit in purgatory. This suggests that the body and spirit were thought to be intrinsically linked, transcending the boundary between life and death. Therefore, *transi* tombs

FIG 1. TOMB OF ARCHBISHOP RICHARD FLEMING, UNKNOWN ARTISAN, LINCOLN CATHEDRAL, LINCOLN, 1431, IMAGE VIA ATLAS OBSCURA.

served to unite the dead and the living, encouraging remembrance and prayer for the deceased, and warning the beholder to prepare for their mortal fate.

Many contextual factors have been proposed to explain the popularity of *transi* tombs and *memento mori* in the later Middle Ages. Helen Roe has argued that graphic portrayals of decay resulted from the traumatic psychological impact of the Black Death, which lasted from 1347–1350. This plague caused more than fifty million deaths in Europe, explaining fascination with the macabre. Henriette Eugenie s'Jacob has also attributed the prominence of *transi* tombs to the Hundred Years War, which lasted from 1337–1453. These events resulted in a general mood of loss and anxiety, further influenced by religious leaders urging meditation upon mortality. Furthermore, there was increasing interest in anatomy throughout the fourteenth century, which corresponds with the detailed depictions of skeletons in tomb sculpture and art. The popularity of cadaver tombs also aligns with other examples of medieval funerary convention. The nakedness of the effigy relates to the custom of exposing the corpse of the deceased, as occurred with the body of Edward IV, who died in 1483. Another proposed explanation is that the transi tomb had precedents in the funerary architecture of the ancient world, as it was characteristic of medieval artisans to draw from ancient models. However, according to s'Jacob, classical skeleton effigies, though similar to medieval *transis*, had entirely different meanings. They represented the celebration of life – "carpe diem" – rather than a sense of grief, fear and warning. Thus, the popularity of the cadaver tomb largely resulted from a widespread sense of loss and mortal anxiety due to the catastrophic events of the late Middle Ages. Their gruesome effigies embody both individual and collective grief for deaths that have occurred, as well as fear for the deaths that were yet to come. The popularity of morbid imagery continued into the beginning of the early modern period, exemplified by Holbein's famous *Dance of*
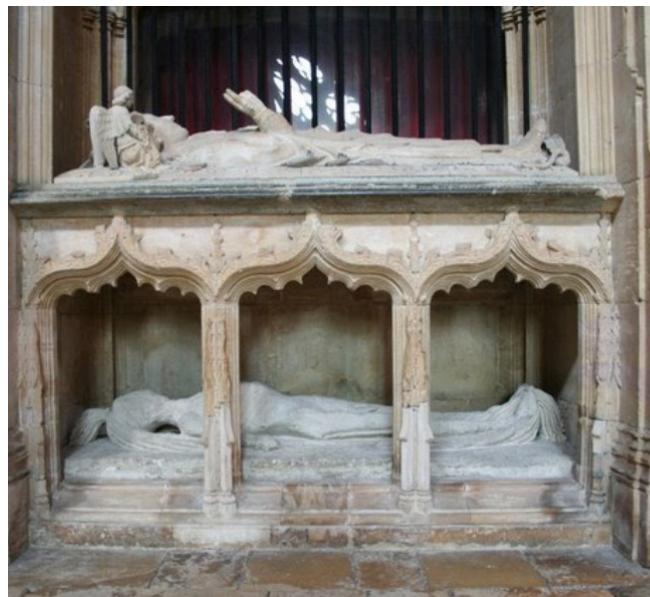
FIG 2. THE ABBOT, DANCE OF DEATH SERIES, HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER, PRINTED BY HANS LÜTZELBURGER, CA.1526, PUBLISHED 1538, IMAGE VIA THE MET MUSEUM WEBSITE.

Death woodcut series from the 1520s (Fig. 2). *Vanitas* paintings and *memento mori* portraits became popular allegories for the futility of earthly pleasure in the sixteenth century. These contained symbols of transience and mortality such as skulls, timepieces, and wilting flowers. However, with the Reformation beginning in the 1530s, macabre imagery took on new meanings. As purgatory was deemed superstition in Protestant England, repentance and the prayers of the living could no longer be relied upon to save one's soul. Instead, people were required to lead virtuous lives in order to ensure their ascension to paradise. Tomb monuments shifted away from using the macabre to inspire fear and grief, and towards positive associations with sleep and rebirth. The famous sixteenth-century poet and Anglican priest John

Donne often discussed these themes in his writings. In "Holy Sonnet no. 10," he compared death to slumber, saying "one short sleepe past, wee wake eternally." In his own effigy, Donne is depicted as though about to reawaken. His eyes are closed and he is wrapped in a white shroud, evoking both death and rebirth. Positioned upright rather than recumbent, he appears to be rising from his urn like a ghostly apparition. As the early modern period progressed, death, life and commemoration became increasingly distinct concepts. Neoclassical notions of decency and sophistication encouraged the incorporation of symbolic structures – pyramids, columns, and torches – rather than human-like effigies. Tombs served to assert the status and legacy of the patron rather than the futility of such worldly things. On the rare occasions morbid elements were used, it was to evoke a dramatic emotional response, rather than to warn of mortal fate.

Ultimately, *transi* tombs allow us to reflect on evolving attitudes towards mortality, loss and commemoration. Along with *memento mori* allegories, like the *Danse Macabre* and the *Three Living and Three Dead*, they encourage the beholder not only to mourn and remember the deceased, but also confront their own mortality, encouraging humility and preparation for death and rebirth. The popularity of such representations of the macabre reflect a moment of collective grief, trauma, and anxiety regarding the fate of the human soul. Though the popularity of the *transi* did not last, with gruesome monuments slowly disappearing in the early modern period, medieval interest in manifesting the macabre continued to influence art, literature, and funerary practice throughout history. Thus, today, cadaver tombs are a vital lens through which we can analyse medieval and early modern perspectives on loss, morality, and commemorative practice.

Painting in Music: Granados' Incarnation of Goya in *El Amor y la Muerte*

Bella Cripwell

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Francisco de Goya created his work *El amor y la Muerte*, the tenth plate in his series *Los Capriccios*. Almost a century later, and inspired by this image, Enrique Granados composed *El Amor y la Muerte* in 1911, the fifth movement in his piano suite, *Goyescas*. These works navigate a loss endured rather than observed, whereby private tragedy is turned universal to reflect the cultural and national grief of Spain, the homeland of both artists. In *Goysecas*, Granados aims to translate, but further evolve the emotional intensity of the painting into music,
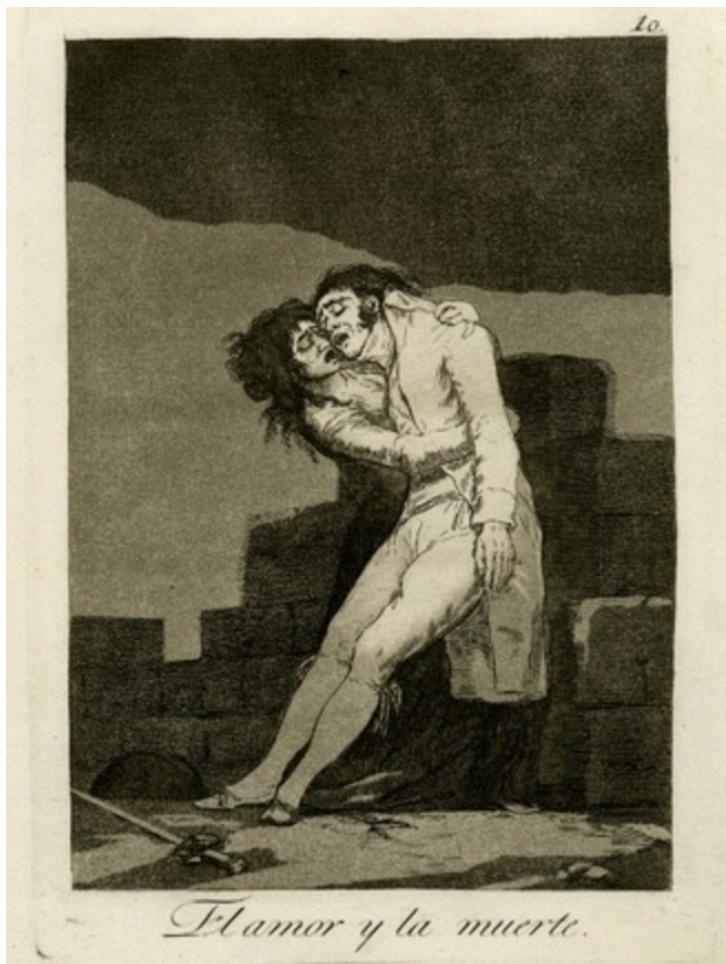
FRANCISCO DE GOYA, CIRCA 1797-1799. EL AMOR Y LA MUERTE.

eflecting Spain's collective memory of loss. In this essay, I will explore how Granados creates an intermedial dialogue by 'painting in music' the tragic world imagined by Goya.

Francisco de Goya (1746–1828) stands as one of the most influential figures in the development of Spanish modern art, working within a famine-ridden Spain marked by profound political instability and concurrent warfare, including prolonged conflict with Britain during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) and the War of the Pyrenees (1793–1795), in which Spain suffered military defeat to revolutionary France. These conflicts exposed the fragility of the Spanish state, amidst the reverberations of the French Revolution across the border, and intensified national fears surrounding political collapse and foreign invasion.

Named first painter of the Spanish court in 1799, Goya produced many prestigious works that reflected both his technical mastery and the evolution of his artistic vision, moving from aristocratic portraits and cartoons to prints. Following a severe illness that left him deaf in 1779, he created a series of engraved works titled *Los Capriccios* inspired by English satirical works, which was the pivotal point in his career towards modernism. This collection of eighty etchings and aquatints criticised social decadence, exposing the absurdities of human behaviour portrayed in physical experience. *Los Capriccios* marks the emergence of Spanish Romanticism in visual art, privileging individualism in a nation that was destabilised by war and privation laying the foundations for the imminent Peninsular War (1808–1814).

Enrique Granados was born in Catalonia in 1867 to a Spain that lay on the brink of revolution. This would lead to La Revolution the following year and the ousting of Queen Isabella II. 1870s Spain was characterised by vast political instability and civil war, culminating in the reinstatement of the Bourbon Monarchy. Granados left Spain for Paris in 1887, where he took private lessons from Charles-Wilfred de Bériod. He would return two years later, becoming a leading figure in the national cultural renaissance, and composing music heavily influenced by regional styles, notably the music of Monatañesa. The Spanish-American war (1898) resulted in the consequential loss of colonies such as Cuba and Puerto Rico, necessitating a cultural and intellectual renaissance focusing on internal modernisation.

Granados had seen Goya's works in the Museo del Prado, leading him to compose music that reflected the emotional life and cultural essence of the Spanish people. Created for the stage and later adapted into an Opera, Granados's *Goyescas* aimed to transform Goya's paintings, sonically immortalising the relations between *el majo* and *la maja*, infusing them with the fervour of the Spanish temperament. It evokes persisting desire for national and cultural identity, whereby love is no longer overshadowed by death. This theme of liminality exists as an existential space between life and death that suffuses both the works of Goya and Granados. *El Amor y la Muerte*, painted in 1799, features a woman holding between her arms a man who seems to have been injured following a duel, indicated by the sword positioned between his feet. The two characters, seemingly in love, reflect the fragility and nihility of love in the face of death, as shown by their faces, deformed by anguish. *El majo*'s pain comes from his mortal wound, whereas his lover, who lacks such physical injury, has her mouth half open, keens over, and clamps her eyes out of sorrow. Their lament reflects Goya's obsession with dualities, as the characters, seemingly in love, represent the fragility of love in the face of death. Maybe their suffering is due to more than a loss of life, but instead a loss of

themselves, mirroring a society devoid of identity. On the canvas, the viewer is presented with this collision, an existential confrontation revealed through tragic intimacy whereby their love clings on even as life fades in the shadow of mortality.

Furthermore, Goya uses space in order to create tension between movement and immobility. The open landscape reveals the recumbent man, leaning against a low wall. His diagonal orientation guides the view of the spectator, with the woman's arms woven around her dying lover's torso, her legs outstretched. The layers of aquatint create a near-tenebrist atmosphere. The man's white clothes are illuminated against the dark background, evoking a suffocating and melancholic atmosphere as powerful. This use of chiaroscuro creates a haunting, dreamlike world in a masterpiece of concision. In this work, Goya's physical motion is overpowered by psychological intensity, where emotion is prioritised over reason and human suffering, a study central to Romanticism. As a satirical work, it evokes Goya's rejection and disillusionment with Spanish ideals, exploring the overshadowing of love by death, and critiquing institutional practices of misplaced honour, such as duelling, leading to unnecessary deaths.

Granados' *El Amor y la Muerte* recalls the Spanish *cante jondo*, a flamenco intended to convey intense emotions, and illustrated by a modal ambiguity based upon Phrygian inflections and ornate melodic embellishment, that traditionally evoke death. *Cante jondo*, previously a marginalised and persecuted art form of the Andalucian Roma, underwent its own transfiguration to become a stylised genre appropriate for public consumption. The sorrowful and aching leitmotif is established immediately, consisting of a descending chromatic motif in the bass, accompanied by broken chords in the higher register marked "*con molta espressione e con dolore*." The use of triplets and staccato rhythms echoes the woman's heartbeat, either accelerated by desire or slowed by fatal inevitability. The work is transformed into an inevitable burden not only

observed but necessarily experienced.

Moreover, the uncertainty of death is conveyed through musical chiaroscuro, suspending the listener in a state of emotional tension, much as Goya's painting stops the viewer in a moment of existential tension. Granados uses the titles "*con moto un poco agitato*" and "*Molto espressivo e come la felicità nel dolore*" to convey the stasis of time in situations of emotional intensity. His work follows a ballad structure in which the principle theme is continually transformed, weaving in themes from previous movements, rather than through reprise or fragmentation. Applying unresolved dissonances and sustained pedal, Granados shapes the subjective temporality that acts as a sonic mirror of Goya's psychological fragmentation shown through shadow and light.

Finally, Granados transforms Goya's landscape by quitting the scene and moving towards the unknown. As a final act of movement, Granados illustrates life's end, declaring the "*muerte del majo*", whereby the extensive rubato mimics *el majo*'s waning breath. In this part, the performance directions regarding Granados' technique are explicit. He uses "*macando*", "*rallenando*", and "*piu rall*", mimicking the breath of life fading away. The harmonies continue to be displaced, creating a sense of instability, whilst in the section Lento, the bass line brings an anchored heaviness reminiscent of funeral bells. This contrasts the floating lines of the right hand where the intermittent dissonances remain unresolved, presenting the woman perfectly aware as each chord stretches to the point of suffocation, as the man's consciousness fades and his soul departs, maintaining the dualities encapsulated by Goya. This musical tension corresponds to the silence of Goya's canvas, where the frozen moments of death prevent any resolution, suspending time. Whilst the fall of the piano's dynamics to pianissimo emits the acceptance of destiny, a voyage that *el majo* has now achieved as revealed by the repetition of the main theme, returning transformed, and darkened

darkened as love, and man's life decomposes. In this way, the work represents a grief lived in the present, mourning the loss of love and life.

El Amor y la Muerte (Balada) by Enrique Granados, inspired by Goya's work of the same title, succeeds in sonically incarnating the emotional depth, existential tragedy and romantic tension that defines Goya's world, and moreover, his Spain. Granados does not only pay homage to Goya, but to Spanish Romanticism as a whole. He reflects the psychological profundity and use of chiaroscuro on the canvas by employing musical techniques such as Chromaticism and rhythmic instability mirroring an individual turned universal loss of love and life. Moreover, this intermedial dialogue imitates Spain's struggle with fractured identity in a period of political upheaval, and Romantic Enlightenment. *El Amor y la Muerte*, both as art and music, succeeds at confronting the human condition when faced with loss, bearing witness to a nation in search of identity.

ILLUSTRATION BY VITTO GINEVRI

Greek Istanbulites: Grief and Loss in Memory and Space

Aliya Okamoto Abdullaeva

DESECRATED CEMETERY, SEPTEMBER 1955:
PHOTOGRAPHED BY DIMITRIOS KALUMENOS

'*I miss old Istanbul very much. But it is no longer there.*' — Dimitris Souliotis, a Greek of Istanbul.

Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul. In 1914, although figures remain controversial, greater Istanbul's population was as follows: 61 per cent Muslim, 22 per cent Greek, 9 per cent Armenian, and 8 per cent other ethnic and/or religious minorities. By 1965, Muslims became the overwhelming majority, accounting for 93 per cent of the city's population. For the purposes of this paper, the question therein lies: what happened to Istanbul's non-Muslim Greek population during the twentieth century, and how are they grieving their loss of Istanbul in the present? The Greek Istanbulites featured in the documentary *Life After Life: The Greeks of Istanbul* (2021) by Bozoğlu and Hakverdi shall be the subjects of study.

(Ethno-)nationalist discourse and its violent praxes in and beyond the Ottoman Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (such as the Balkan Wars, First World War, Armenian Genocide and Greco-Turkish War), ruptured Ottoman intercommunality; i.e. local cultures of coexistence between religious and/or ethnic communities, as religiously defined millet communities began to acquire ethno-national connotations. Given this, the linguistic and spatial matrices of nationalism rendered people with different identities as an Other, a minority, an 'excess' in an ethno-nationally imagined community that must be expelled. As such, both a product of and a process emergent from the conditions of the time, mass displacement and ethnic cleansing homogenised populations: there was an influx of Muslims into Anatolia (or, what Turkish nationalists progressively defined as *kalb-i vatan*,

the heartland of [Turkey]), and the exodus of Christians from Anatolia to the (demographically Christianising) Balkans.

It is within this context that the 1923 Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey was conceived of and desired: 'it [eliminated] the heterogenous elements of a country'. The Population Exchange unmixed the heterogenous populations of the former Ottoman Empire, or rather, made the populations for the spatially-bound homogenously-imagined communities; i.e. nation-states of Greece and Turkey; the Republic of Turkey was founded in the same year. Two million Orthodox Greek and Muslim peoples were forced to move from their homelands as their racialised religious identities were seen as incompatible to the Turkish (Muslim) or Greek (Orthodox) national identity. However, not every community was subject to the Population Exchange. The Greek Orthodox population in Istanbul, around 125,000 people, was one of such communities. It is in this exemption from the Population Exchange that the identity of the Greek Istanbulite emerges: some Istanbulites, becoming *azınlık* (post-Exchange non-Muslim minorities), must now consider their (religio-)ethnicity in informing their identity and sense of belonging within the spatial matrix of Turkish nationalism, wherein national identity is defined as Turkish and Muslim. As such, the Greek Istanbulites find themselves in a liminal space: they exist outside 'the boundaries of the real Turkish nation' (Kuyuncu, 361), a nation that denies, forgets, and silences them; yet it is in Istanbul, not Greece, where they find home and belonging. Mina Ayanoğlu, a Greek Istanbulite living in Athens, remembers this liminality:

'When we were [in Istanbul] they called us "infidels", when we came [to Greece] they called us "Turkish seed."'

For İstanbullu Rumlar, or Greek Istanbulites, Istanbul itself is a lieu du mémoire, i.e. a site of (symbolic, material, functional) memory, intentionally remembered against the threat of

OF DIMIRTI'S BURYING HER GRANDPARENTS AT THE BALIKI RUM MEZARLIG LIFE AFTER LIFE: THE GREEKS OF ISTANBUL (34:19)

being forgotten. They remember old Istanbul, before mid-twentieth century moments of rupture, because it is no longer there: they talk of the cinemas they used to go to, the chicken pilaf they ate, the neighbourhoods they lived in (and whether or not the tram in Beyoğlu existed back then). But now 'Beyoğlu is too crowded,' says Zoi Konstantinidou. These conversations happen at the *İstanbullular'in Evi* ('House of the Ones from Istanbul') in Athens; they laugh and bicker as they (re-)live the memory of past-Istanbul in the symbolic and material space of their own 'Istanbul' across the Aegean, constructed by and for displaced Greek Istanbulites. *İstanbullular'in Evi* is founded on memory: it is the 'house' of those from Istanbul because they express their Greek-Istanbulness in it; it is a reminder of Greek Istanbulites' intimate and collective connection to Istanbul, yet its existence (and their displacement) in Athens is also a reminder of this connection's loss.

Greek Istanbulites superimpose their memory of an Istanbul that does not exist anymore onto the real space of Istanbul present; and it is in this imperfect layering, they feel both longing and loss— a longing for the past, and a loss in knowing it will remain there. The feeling of longing and loss is made perpetual by the Greek Istanbulite collective

memory of three moments of intercommunal rupture in the twentieth century: the Wealth Tax of 1942-43; the state-led 6-7 September Pogroms in 1955; and the forced expulsion of Greek Istanbulites with Greek citizenship in 1964-1965. These traumatic moments are collectively recalled within a coherent historical narrative of Turkish nationalism and its othering of non-Muslims; temporal markers such as 'and then' relate events of persecution to one another in memory, concluding with permanent rupture, 'but then'. Of the three moments of intercommunal rupture, the September Pogroms were most violent: hundreds were injured, women were raped, an Orthodox priest was burnt alive; thousands of shops and houses were damaged, seventy-three churches were burned, and two Greek Orthodox cemeteries were completely destroyed. Greek Istanbulite Dimitrios Kalumenos photographed the aftermath of the pogroms, memorialising the personal and communal loss of (Greek Orthodox) Istanbul. However, contemporary Greek Istanbulites, understanding the historicity of their persecution and liminality, narrativised these events as temporary, 'it will pass.' For Dimitris Souliotis' father Nikolaos and many others, the final traumatic moment was 1964, when he was told (according to his son):

'Niko Efendi, we are giving you one week. In one bag you can take your belongings — but not valuables — and you will be deported.'

Dimitris points to his father's name, circled, on *Apoyevmatini* (an Istanbul-based Greek newspaper). His name is among fifty-one others. The forced expulsion would see the Greek Istanbulite population decrease from 120,000 to 3,000.

'I don't want to go to Istanbul. I don't want to see it. I don't know why.'

Konstantinidou's words, spoken at the İstanbullular'in Evi, are the words of someone grieving; she is grieving the traumatic loss of old

Istanbul via the physical rejection of its present state, informed by the ruptures of the mid-twentieth century. Even seeing Istanbul is traumatic. But not all Greek Istanbulites grieve the loss of Istanbul by rejecting it. Rather, many grieve loss by reclaiming (Greek Orthodox) Istanbul. To them, old Istanbul still exists: by (re-)living the past in the present, memory facilitates and preserves cultural continuity, 'the heart continues to beat'. A sense of historical continuity is embodied by the Greek Istanbulite, both in diaspora and in Istanbul. Ayanoğlu says he 'had' to take his six-year-old son, born in Greece, to Istanbul:

'He [the son] saw the Patriarchate, the churches, the historical places. He was studying about the Byzantine age at school, so we told him we were the living continuation of Byzantium.'

Although the son himself has no memory of Istanbul as a local (he visits as a tourist), his father frames the son's experience via his own lived and imagined memory of past-Istanbul: as the son of a Greek Istanbulite, he is made to see himself as part of the historical and generational heritage of Byzantium.

These places are not only historical, however. They are also places wherein Greek Istanbulites exist today: students study at the Zografeion Lyceum and Phanar Greek Orthodox College, people get baptised and married at the Ecumenical Patriarchate; 'we are still here', headmaster of Zografeion Lyceum Yannis Demircioğlu states. It is in spite and because of the memory of loss and trauma that Greek Istanbulites continue to reclaim Istanbul; they sing and dance on the streets of Beyoğlu. For Tanaş Angelidis, former student at the Phanar College and resident in Istanbul, his life (and death) centre around the Patriarchate:

'I have a strong connection to the Church, because in the same Church my grandfather, my father, and I, were baptised, and got married [...] I hope that my funeral takes place there too.'

To be buried in Istanbul is to reclaim the physical space Greek Istanbulites lost over the twentieth century; as such, the cemetery is not only a personal *lieu du mémoire*, i.e. where your family is buried, but also a collective one wherein the presence of the (historical) community of Greek Istanbulites is made sacred and undeniable. Dimitris remembers his mother's words:

'When I die, you will take me [to Istanbul]. I want to be with my relatives, next to my mother and father.'

Dimitris brings his parents back to Istanbul to (re-)bury them by their family, in their home. The act of (re-)burying his parents reveals the intimate relationship between loss, grief, and reclamation; 'I am feeling all mixed up' he says. Even in death, Greek Istanbulites make their Greek-Istanbulness known, it is in their memory that a lost Istanbul is remembered and reclaimed.

ZOGRAFEION LYCEUM CONCERT, 2018: STILL FROM LIFE AFTER LIFE: THE GREEKS OF ISTANBUL (24:12)

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS: STILL FROM LIFE AFTER LIFE: THE GREEKS OF ISTANBUL (38:01)

Waxing Lyrical

Ruby Martyn

As the introduction of Voi e-bikes in Edinburgh in October of 2025 indicates, the landscape of the Scottish capital is continually evolving and changing, as is the face of its tourism scene, which is currently indisputably and frustratingly marked by the organised tours and individual pilgrimages of Harry Potter devotees to sites such as the Elephant Café, Museum Context, and Greyfriar's Kirkyard. The relationship between tourism and emotions, specifically the loss felt by former visitors when a cultural institution disappears, can be observed from comments on social media relating to the Edinburgh Wax Museum, which occupied a prominent place on the Royal Mile until its closure in 1989. The unique character of the museum, as a dark tourist attraction aimed at appealing to visitors of all ages, offers an excellent locus for an exploration of what museums mean to the people who visit them, and the profound and enduring sense of loss their vanishing can evoke a personal response. Whilst "death-related tourism" is not a new phenomenon in public history, the responses to the Edinburgh Wax Museum highlight the activity's emotional resistance to the passage of time.

During the process of trying to establish whether or not there are any waxworks in Edinburgh Castle, I came across the Edinburgh Wax Museum, which occupied a Georgian building and former bank headquarters at 140-142 High Street. Putting my automatonophobia aside, I discovered that it operated for thirteen years and has recently been recalled and discussed on social media sites by former visitors. The museum itself was curated and managed by Charles Cameron, a professional magician who founded the Edinburgh Magic Circle and performed shows dressed as Dracula in the theatre on the second floor of the building. The remaining three floors hosted over 150 wax figures which were organised thematically. Historical figures such as Robert Burns, Alexander Fleming,

Walter Scott, and Bonnie Prince Charlie featured in the Scottish History section alongside such tableaus as the murder of David Rizzio, creating a Scottish equivalent to the "British Pantheon" Charles Dickens observed at Madame Tussaud's. Characters from children's fairytales occupied Never Never Land, and visits ended with the Chamber of Horrors, in which the waxworks illustrated gruesome and sadistic historical torture methods and gave physical form to notorious criminals—although there was an alternative exit by which it could be avoided. All this was accessible to adults for an entry price of 50p, and children and pensioners for 25p, and at its peak the museum recorded 230,000 visitors annually. Its sudden closure in 1989, despite its popularity with the Scottish public and tourists, was a significant shock. The building was swiftly converted into legal offices which currently operate within the Faculty of Advocates, and the wax figures were dispersed to heritage sites and museums across the country. A plaque which attests to the existence of the museum as a unique institution and pays tribute to its founder was unveiled in 2003 and can be found in the archway of New Assembly Close, which leads onto the courtyard in which the former museum building, now known as the Lord Reid Building, stands.

The discussions which have taken place between
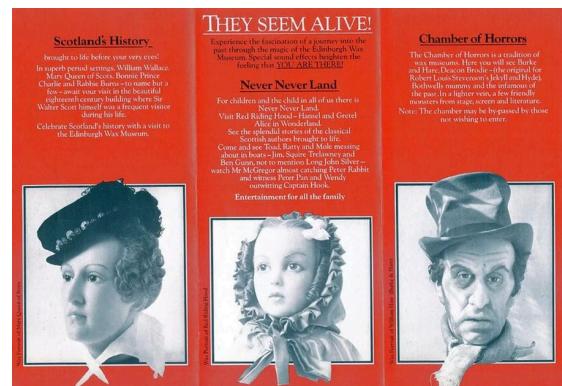
IMAGE VIA EDINBURGH LIVE

individuals on online forums exemplify the practice of "social sharing of emotions" associated with dark tourism and illustrate former visitors' attachment to the institution. On Reddit and the Facebook page for Lost Edinburgh, these interactions were prompted by individual posts which highlighted the existence of the museum and prompted a range of responses from other users, who generally shared personal memories of their time amongst the waxworks, although there are some notable outliers, such conversations between users which centred around a nearby pancake place. Across these responses the primary emotion associated with the remembrance of the museum was fear, which was felt by adult visitors, as well as children. This was expressed with reference to specific figures and elements of the displays, but also to the general atmosphere of the building and nightmares experienced as a result of the visit. However, alongside the memories of being traumatised by family members, usually fathers who were blamed for bringing their children when they were too young, and meltdowns which necessitated staff intervention, lasting feelings of loss and longing can be observed from individuals' nostalgic preservation of museum souvenirs, which allow them to access a treasured past. One such respondent emphasised the prominent place occupied by the museum in their memories of their childhood, which was expressed by many others in their recollections of class trips, family visits and teenage fun, and stated that they still owned a guidebook. As well as demonstrating the association of the museum with lost youth and sociability in the minds of former visitors, this response indicates a personal affection for a place which has pushed an individual to substantiate their own memories with a physical representation of their experiences. Without the museum, the guidebook cannot fulfil the function for which it was produced, but instead acquires a new significance as a bridge to a distant past and a visual tool to support continued emotional engagement with the museum. The role played by physical objects in creating memorable experiences at the museum was indicated by another

respondent's recollection of being bought a stick of rock from the gift shop at the end of every visit, reinforcing the connection between memory and materiality demonstrated by visitors' preservation of museum souvenirs. These actions attest to visitors' enduring feelings of loss and their conception of the museum as an important part of their own past that is worth preserving.

The loss still felt by former visitors to the museum was also expressed in the setting of hopes for Edinburgh's future. For one user, the closure of the museum shut down one of their aspirations, as they grew up with the expectation that they would be able to work there as an adult, but it disappeared before they reached an employable age. The museum stood as one of this individual's favourite spots in the city and its sudden closure signified a change in their internal map of Edinburgh and its hotspots, but also permanently closed them off from the future they had planned and envisioned for themselves. In this sense, the loss felt here was that of potential, as well as the physical environment of the place. However, many respondents also used the future as a vehicle to express their loss and their enduring attachment to the museum. This was communicated through numerous statements calling for its return and existence in another form almost four decades after its disappearance. The voicing of these desires for revival and resurrection illustrates

PHOTO VIA RUBY MARTYN

the lasting positive associations with the museum visitors have maintained in the years since its closure. These memories and experiences have given rise to feelings of longing rooted in nostalgia within former visitors, who do not only passively wish to return to the time of its operation but actively and publicly articulate their desire for future restoration.

Recent recollections of the Edinburgh Wax Museum and its significance to those who visited it reveal enduring emotional attachment to the museum and the profound sensations of loss its closure sparked on a personal level for former visitors. This loss was communicated through temporal frameworks by which individuals conceived of the museum and the longing it left in the cultural landscape of Edinburgh. The recent controversy surrounding the attempted closure of the People's Story Museum and the successful campaign for its continued existence reinforces the significance of public history sites to local populations as well as tourists. The efforts made by individuals and organisations to save it from being closed illustrates the desire to

protect the city from the heartbreak of losing a historical institution which means so much to the people who have visited it.
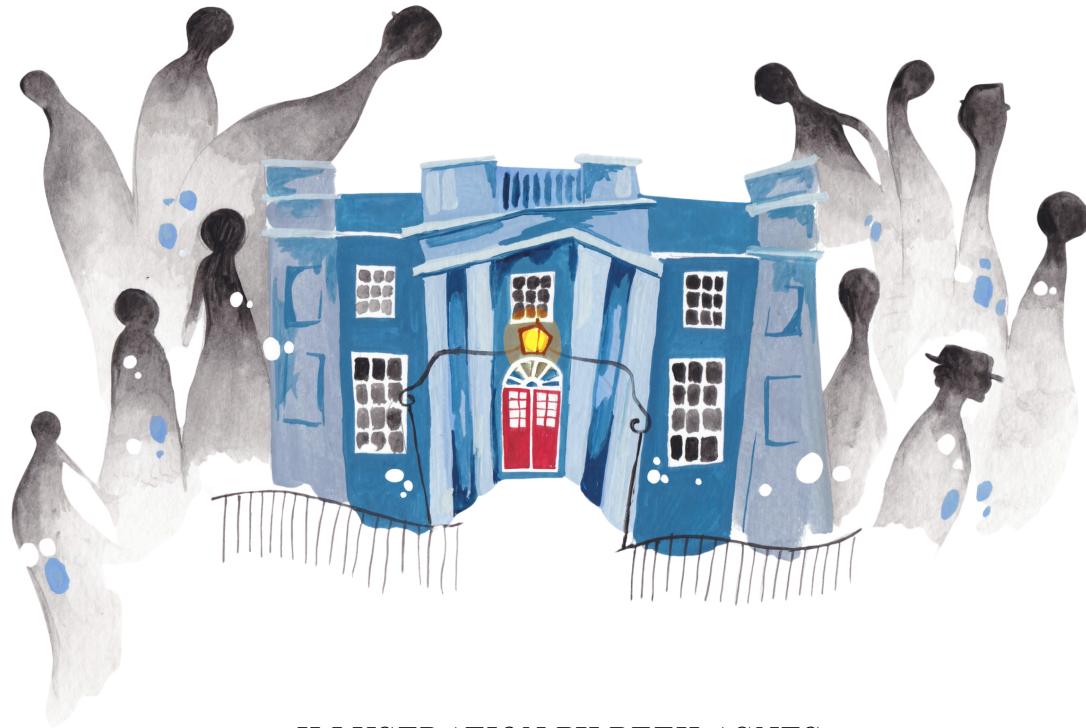
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THE DEATH OF A CHILD (1963) MAHMOUD SABRI.

Loss Lessons

"After great pain, a formal feeling comes –
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –
The stiff Heart questions 'was it He, that bore,'
And 'Yesterday, or Centuries before'?

The Feet, mechanical, go round –
A Wooden way
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

This is the Hour of Lead –
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –
First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –"

– Emily Dickinson,
After great pain, a formal feeling comes – (372)