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Special Issue

CONNECTIVE HISTORIES OF DEATH

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INTRODUCTION

Connective Histories of Death

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Death connects. Its inevitable yet unknowable nature has intrigued and compelled people across time and place. A confrontation with death—be it the loss of a loved one or our own mortality—is a certainty that awaits us all. The presence of death has recently, again, connected people worldwide in new ways, as we face the growing global death toll caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite being the "great common denominator," death can be hard to pin down. While the feelings and actions evoked by death vastly vary, being shaped by intersectional factors ranging from the intimate to the structural, death, nonetheless, induces feeling and action. While death can be destructive, its impact can also clearly be seen in the ways it has motivated the constructive. Death creates and re/shapes meanings, relationships, spaces, and practices.

The articles in this special issue have evolved out of presentations at the February 2020 "Histories of Death" International Symposium held at the University of Turku. The idea for this publication, much like for the symposium, was to see what types of connections, overlaps, and disparities may arise when historical studies of death across places and centuries are considered together. Rather than framing this collection as a work of *comparative* history, we see this as the forging of a *connective* history. Following the conceptualization of Marianne Hirsch, this issue takes "different starting and

reference points" but "aims to think divergent histories alongside and in connection with each other" (Hirsch 2012, 21). The potential of such an approach is great, as "*connective* reading...moves between global and intimate concerns by attending precisely to the intimate details, the connective tissues and membranes, that animate each case even while enabling the discovery of shared motivations and tropes" (Hirsch 2012, 206). By bringing together these articles, we aim to make connections between some of the many feelings, places, and experiences that intersect death.

In recent years, we have seen an exciting expansion of death and grief focussed dialogue, publication, and programming that has connected academic death studies, death care professionals, and the public in new, meaningful ways. These articles and the preceding "Histories of Death" symposium, as part of Samira Saramo's Academy of Finland funded postdoctoral project "Death and Mourning in 'Finnish North America'," are a response and offering to these developments, to consider more fully the historical trajectories that have led us to this point. At the symposium, each panel was concluded with a paper that brought the theme to the present day. Such an approach successfully facilitated discussion about change and continuity, and made connections between participants' historical research and lived experiences. This special issue, likewise, offers such bridges to readers. Our understandings of death come with long and complex histories, shaped by culture, place, time, power, and identities. By explicitly connecting the study of histories of death with the rich, interdisciplinary field of death studies, we further our understanding of how meanings of the "good death" are continuously constructed, negotiated, and contested, and the ways intersectional social factors—class, migrant background, religion, sexuality, gender, and even non/humanness, among others—shape access to mourning and "dying well."

By bringing together research with rather different starting points, the articles collectively encourage us to see the *connective histories of death*. The following explorations and analyses reveal varied and interwoven traditions, ideologies, and institutions that have shaped our experiences. They initiate a dialogue about the different ways people have approached dying, death, and mourning from personal, everyday,

cultural, and political perspectives. Through their differences, the articles help us to avoid the perils of reductionism and anachronism that can accompany overly generalized histories of death. Despite the range of times, places, and approaches represented in this special issue, it must be acknowledged that this work is in no way exhaustive or comprehensive in temporal or geographic scope. In fact, it is focused primarily on death in the (loose and messy category of) "Western Tradition." May this limitation, then, serve as a call to continue broadening the work of connecting histories of death.

Death, like life, is often envisioned as a journey (admittedly even to excess). Here, through the progression of articles, we move from the external spaces and communities of death toward interior feelings, both emotional and sensorial, demonstrating the multiple and often nuanced ways they overlap, make connections, and intersect along the way. This connective, rather than chronological, journey is a work of sense-making, a hermeneutic process that creates connections between experiences and feelings, between life and death. Indeed, as Immanuel Mifsud reflects in the final piece of this issue, the process of writing the thoughts of a dying man revealed that the only way it seems possible to communicate meaningfully about loss and death is through evocations of life. Each article in this special issue offers a window onto lives that sought to understand and manage death and dying, and they connect with one another through a mutual (hermeneutic) exploration of how people prepare for death, mourn death, and represent death. Travelling zig-zag across early colonial New Spain, seventeenth-century Lithuania, medieval to twenty-first-century United Kingdom, and modern day Iceland and Malta, bringing us to deathbeds, crematoria, funeral processions, and memorial services, readers of this special issue will take a journey across multiple spatial and emotional *deathscapes*.

Deathscapes, as popularized by Avril Maddrell (2010) and regularly built upon by the scholarly community of death studies (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010; Hunter 2016; Nash 2018; Saramo 2019, 18–19), provides an ideal frame for understanding how death and mourning are "inherently spatial" (Maddrell 2010, 123). During times of dying, death, and mourning topographical and emotional-affective spaces are re/claimed and

re/created (Brant, Metcalf and Wildgoose 2020, 7–8). As Maddrell and Sidaway (2010, 2) have shown, "experiences of death, dying and mourning are mediated through the intersections of body, culture, society and state, and often make a deep impression on 'sense of self', private and public identity, as well as 'sense of place' in the built and natural environment." For the individual, spaces where death and/or dying occur assume a unique significance; meanings of places may be partially or completely re-ascribed. On the collective level, deathscapes often foreground a shared sense of place. Embodied memory and affective engagements are entangled in the negotiation and navigation of deathscapes, be they physical, virtual, or even psychological.

Although this special issue analyzes death and grieving primarily from human perspectives, several of the contributions encourage us to make connections with the more-than-human. In her "Histories of Death" symposium keynote, "Pet Cemetery: Love, Memory and Grieving for the Animal Dead, 1880–1970," Julie-Marie Strange argued that while pet cemeteries showcase the anthropocentrism of pet ownership, they also offer a significant site for examining physical and imagined "spaces of feeling." As such, pet cemeteries are the spatial expression of memorial affective practices and, thus, they indicate the creation and bolstering of emotional communities beyond the human—uniting human and animal in "queer intimacies" (Herbert 2019). This special issue brings "spaces of feelings" that are small, private, and intimate together with city- and society-wide networks of feeling (see Figlerowicz 2017, 14; Flatley 2008). The contributions join in broader efforts to challenge the exclusionary notions of subject within the field of death studies and urge a rethinking of how and who/what we mourn for (see for example, Radomska, Mehrabi and Lykke 2020, 86). The issue further contributes to queering our views of death by addressing both the material and environmental dimensions of mourning and grief.

The map of this special issue is vast and varied. We begin in seventeenth-century Vilnius, Lithuania, where Povilas Dikavičius vividly describes funeral processions twisting through the streets, passing by churches, seminaries, and nunneries. The sound of church bells and the raised voices of crowds accompany and contribute to building

our view of a cityscape that teetered between peaceful multifaith community belonging and reluctant and even antagonistic coexistence. According to Dikavičius, the potential for clashes between different Christian denominations was particularly present during the planning and performance of death and mourning. The custom of accompanying the deceased to the burial place with a funeral procession equated to a *de facto* appropriation of streets and squares by that particular community of mourners. As Dikavičius compellingly demonstrates, when such visual and aural spatial acquisition (albeit temporally limited) was replete with explicit symbols and markers of religious identity, broader political-religious tensions were brought to the fore, and violence was a more likely result. When, instead, funerary rituals highlighted more secular (often guild-related) imagery and sounds, clashes were rarer. In this context, the movement of ritual items, caskets, and mourners required rigorous social, political, and spatial mapping and planning. The case of 17th-century Vilnius demonstrates how deathscapes play integral roles in the negotiation of community, belonging, and the making of the *polis*.

Whereas Dikavičius highlights public mourning in a delimited local landscape, Arnar Árnason and Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson's article demonstrates how the specific and local geographical site of the "late" Icelandic glacier Ok expanded to become a multi-sited deathscape of global significance. In this way, the case study of Ok provides a view of death "unbounded" (Frihammar and Silverman 2017). Their contribution analyzes the extension of public mourning to the more-than-human within the Western historiography of death studies. Árnason and Hafsteinsson read the story of Ok through the lens of "ecological grief," or the emotional response to the destruction caused by climate change. They analyze the case of Ok by turning to Cunsolo Willox's (2012) invitation to mourn and *work through* the death of natural phenomena, insofar as such grief may result in effective actions to curb climate change. That is, the celebration of Ok's life and the public mourning of "his" death mobilize emotions that, in turn, may activate public discourse to protect the non-human world. Árnason and Hafsteinsson show how Ok's death, as inscribed within the anthropocene, brings to the surface questions about continuities, ruptures, and changes in experiences of mourning and

"grievability" (Butler 2004 and 2009) in what Anna Reading has termed the *globital* (Reading 2016).

When connected with one another, these articles show how "spaces for the dead and dying are a reflection of the changing conditions of the living" (Kong 2016, xv). Gian Luca Amadei, likewise, reflects on such changing conditions, turning our attention to early twentieth-century London. Amadei connects the close links between new technologies for disposing of the dead and the rapid development of the urban *techne*. The growth of the population resulted in the pragmatic outward expansion of the city's borders and the development of the underground, but these new suburbs, connected to imaginaries of romantic nature, were also meant to fulfill psychological and physical needs of "modern" urban people. New technologies, practices, and attitudes toward the dead—through the building of crematoria and the popularization of cremation—occurred in tandem with these changes to the configuration of London's cityscape. The analysis brings human-oriented feelings and practices surrounding death into close contact with technology and the environment. Amadei analyzes the interconnections of these new, "clean"—and even "beautiful"—developments and technologies, but takes a perhaps surprising entry point: the very personal and emotional correspondence of George Bernard Shaw. The entirety of the letter is provided at the beginning of the article to allow readers to gain access to Shaw's voice and pacing, complementing Amadei's analysis. Through Amadei's reading, Shaw's letter becomes emblematic of how—to quote Maddrell (2016, 170)—"death and bereavement produce new and shifting emotional-affective geographies, whereby artefacts, places and communities can take on new and heightened significance."

Shaw's letter about his mother's funeral and cremation at the then new Golders Green Crematorium in the new Golders Green suburb allows Amadei to move between an analysis of the (internal) emotions associated with funerary experiences and their (external) geographical features. By overtly encouraging readers to engage with both the spatial and the emotional, Amadei's article serves as an effective middle point for this special issue, bridging its two primary themes. Yet, more subtle overlaps of space and

emotion can be found in the entirety of this collection, and, arguably, in the whole of historical studies of death. Julie-Marie Strange (2010, 129) has identified that "much of the history of dying seems to be typified by attempts to divest dying of fear and to bring it under some form of human control." Such attempts could be summarized as addressing the place and feeling of death. By defining where and how death is to be made visible, be it corpse disposal, or funeral ceremony, procession, or commemoration, these spatial negotiations, as demonstrated by this issue's articles, are clear examples of attempts to control death. The prevalent attempts and desires to manage and comprehend the feelings arising from dying, death, and grief—fear common among them—provide further evidence of efforts at control.

David Harrap and Emily Collins's contribution asks us to consider how historical understandings and approaches to dying, grief, and mourning may offer practical guidance to the management of death today. Recognizing that beneficial end-of-life "spiritual care" has proven difficult to integrate into medically-oriented palliative care in today's multicultural, multifaith, and increasingly secularizing United Kingdom, Harrap and Collins turn to fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English *ars moriendi* literature for tools and inspiration. Their reading of the *artes* foregrounds how death has been perceived as frightening, difficult, and in need of being appeased, even when its presence was arguably closer to the everyday than today. Thus, their analysis highlights the ongoing need to prepare for death and the accompanying challenge of understanding how to best facilitate and support this process. Instead of calling for a reproduction of *artes* practices, Harrap and Collins make evident their potential as informative tools to reflect on and enhance modern healthcare strategies. They suggest that the two-part *ars moriendi* framework for spiritual care, which first tackled the dying person's fear of death and then moved on to their (religious) preparation for death, may hold a key to facilitating and supporting "dying free" and "dying well" today. In order to integrate "spiritual care" lessons from the *artes*, Harrap and Collins note the requirement of imagination and flexibility in the design of end-of-life care plans.

As Harrap and Collins encourage a contemporary open interpretation of the analyzed *ars moriendi*, Jacqueline Holler demonstrates that these prescriptive texts were also not always simply accepted *as is* in early colonial New Spain. Though European and Spanish ideals of "dying well" (*buen morir*) had been integrated into colonial life in Mexico by 1600, ordinary people and even clergy resisted the hegemonic conventions of the *artes*, and turned to their own strategies and emotions to confront death. While the *artes* provided instruction on how to control the emotions associated with death and thereby control death, Holler's research demonstrates that the emotional register of the "good death" provided by the *ars moriendi* often proved too narrow in the context of an everyday where death and even "bad death" were a constant feature. Instead, through Holler's case study analysis, we see a multitude of emotions about the dying and the ways deaths could be seen to encompass aspects of both good and bad death, all at once. Within the ambiguity, we see moments of simultaneous grief and consolation (Maddrell 2018, 50). In Holler's case study of a death at sea, we also see the ways that emotions serve as reactions to events (death in this case), but how emotions also cause events (the beating of the priest) (Ahmed 2004, 4; Boddice 2018). In this way, colonial New Spain provides a useful case for examining the contestation of what Sarah Ahmed has termed "affective economies" (Ahmed 2004, 8). By utilizing Inquisition documents and the remarkable autobiographical account of the mystic Madre María Magdalena, Holler successfully brings to view deaths and individuals that we rarely gain access to and highlights a unique Mexican culture of death that predated and looked rather different than the image of the Day of the Dead, which has come to popularly typify Mexican attitudes toward death.

Following the five research articles of this special issue, we present a concluding poetic intervention by writer and poet Immanuel Mifsud. After a brief situating note by Mifsud, readers are given the opportunity to engage with the thoughts of Leli, a dying man—as envisioned by the poet—in both the original Maltese and the translated English. The selected excerpts from the 276 line poem, *A Modest Requiem for Leli*, give us glimpses of moments and people from Leli's life, which he retraces and recollects (and

re-collects), in his final days (Armstrong 2004, 133; see also Tamboukou 2017). Nostalgia arises as the poet imagines Leli's life. With a different rhythm and a more emotional vocabulary, Mifsud is able to convey the sense of loss, of displacement, and regret for a lost "homeland"—or, in this case, as Leli prepares to die, a living life about to be extinguished (Boym 2001, 3). The poem allows us to explore how the feelings, memories, and places of life, dying, and death may be conveyed differently through poetic language and hendecasyllabic meter.

While we are presented in this issue with excerpts of the poem in written form, it is interesting to consider the multiple lives the poem has led and how the form further impacts the emotions elicited. Take for example, that in its theatrical adaptation, the protagonist, the dying man Leli, became a life-sized wooden puppet manipulated by the actors. Remarkably, according to Mifsud, many viewers expressed having felt powerfully captivated by the "humanity" of this puppet and emotionally moved by his painful onstage transition through illness and death. Leli-the-puppet became alive in front of the audience and touched them in unpredicted ways. Through the dying of Leli—be it in written, oral, orchestral, or theatrical form—Mifsud has offered the audience a mirror that allows us to smile and cry, rekindle memories, and foretell the future that ultimately connects us all.

At the heart of this special issue is an exploration of the many entangled connections that arise when we try to understand the long paths of death and its reverberations for individuals and communities alike. Starting with the "Histories of Death" International Symposium and leading to this collection, we have witnessed how death encourages us to think multidirectionally and intersectionally about its meanings, practices, and legacies, and how it urges us to nurture a dialogue between the past and the present, from one tradition to another. We have, likewise, seen the inspiring potential that emerges from extending our scholarship and our mourning to the more-than-human. Taken together, this issue's articles contribute to building a connective map whereby the shared emotions engendered by death and mourning are brought together. Continuing along the issue's trans-temporal and trans-spatial "journey", we look forward

to seeing where such connections across times and places will take the histories of death in the future.

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ARTICLE

VERTAISARVIOITU
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Somber Celebrations: Funeral Processions and Civic Community in 17th century Vilnius

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Abstract:

The present article examines the political significance of funeral processions in a multifaith environment. Seventeenth century Vilnius presents a rich case study for such research as it was home to five Christian denominations, whose coexistence was not always peaceful. Religious disagreements were often brought forward by public ritual action and prior historiography tends to view ritual as a liability. This article argues that under certain conditions funeral processions furthered civic belonging. In order to do so, the article begins with exploring occasions of religious violence in 17th century Vilnius and describes the interdenominational relationship among the inhabitants of the city. It continues by reconstructing the form of funeral processions by analyzing last wills and post-mortem registers. Lastly, these occasions are interpreted through the lens of semiotic anthropology, showing the binding potential of funeral processions on the civic community of 17th century Vilnius.

Introduction

The mid-17th century is a period popularly known as the Deluge in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Swedish and Russian military forces flooded its territory, causing damage incomparable to any prior experiences of the polity. It was then that Vilnius, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was occupied for the first time

in its long history. On that occasion the city was honored by the presence of royalty: in 1655, the Russian tsar, Aleksey Mikhailovich, entered the city in the full triumphant splendor of a victorious force. In 1661, the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Jan II Kazimierz Waza, came to witness the consequences of the occupation. By then, the last remaining Muscovite troops were barricaded in the fortress of Vilnius, enduring a siege that lasted for over a year until their supplies were eventually depleted and the garrison was exhausted. On December 4, 1661, the Muscovite troops rebelled against their superiors and laid down their arms. This day marked the complete liberation of the city from of its first occupation. Four decades passed and on April 16, 1702, the city fell under Swedish rule.

The Muscovite occupation inflicted serious wounds on both the individual and communal level. Many citizens lost their lives during the invasion, which also caused a fire that raged for 17 days. According to Maria Łowmianska, roughly 17,000 Vilnans died during the occupation, which amounted to over half the urban population (Šapoka 2008, 466).[1] The more fortunate ones were able to flee and, as Irina Gerasimova estimates, over 1600 Vilnans relocated to Königsberg (Gerasimova 2009, 455). While individual citizens met different fates, the occupation dealt a heavy blow to the communities of Vilnius. Its impact varied from bad to worse, with some urban communities affected especially strongly: Elmantas Meilus estimates that up to 75% of Vilnan Jews either fled or died (Meilus 2009, 57–58). The wide scale violence dissolved the network of interdependent communities.

Vilnius was not able to recover from this blow in demographic or economic respects for at least a century, but once the political situation stabilized, its social body began to heal. Survivors took up their respective trades again, while some fortunate exiles returned to the city in search of their loved ones, or in hopes of retrieving a fraction of their lost wealth, among a plentitude of other reasons (Meilus 2004, 241). Once back, they had to reintegrate into the extant corporations and reestablish ties with the survivors.

[1] This number is often contested, however, there has been no final conclusion to this problem.

Ritual action was a means to fulfill both aims, but it also had potential to sow dissent, because of its religious character. 17th century Vilnius was home to no less than five Christian denominations and religious belonging was by far the most divisive demographic trait. These differences could provoke a violent response, particularly because the occupation undermined settled practices of religious toleration.

David Kaplan names funerals among the most dangerous events throughout early modern Europe because they incited an extraordinary number of religious riots (Kaplan 2010, 78, 93–96). One of the reasons for this volatility was that funeral processions escorting the deceased to the place of their final rest made religious rituals highly visible. As a public ritual act, the procession laid claim to otherwise shared public space and exposed the bereaved to nonparticipants. Despite its clear-cut religious significance, funerals were not exclusively a religious ceremony. They were also rituals of honor, an occasion for individuals and communities to gather, pay respect, and bid farewell to a fellow member of society. The dual nature of funerals leads to a question: did they hold the potential to act as an integrating factor, strengthening civic ties, or were they a social liability that incited religious violence and disrupted them?

To consider this question, the present article focuses on the most public part of the funerary ritual in Vilnius—the procession. Aiming to consider its political significance, the article begins with examples of denominational strife in Vilnius related to funerary practices. It continues by reconstructing the materials used at a funeral procession, based on the analysis of testaments and postmortem registers. The article ends with an interpretation of these findings through the lens of semiotic anthropology, showing the integrating potential of funeral processions in late 17th century Vilnius.

Strained Coexistence

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is often celebrated as a haven of tolerance in early modern Europe (Tazbir 1973), however, quotidian religious coexistence was far from consistently peaceful. The Warsaw Confederation Act of 1572 protected the freedom of conscience and religious practice in its many forms. Nevertheless, public

religious ceremonies did sometimes lead to conflict in Vilnius and its history of religious violence has grown into a considerable field of inquiry. Henryk Wisner argued that Catholic zealots were responsible for the most cases of interdenominational violence in the mid-17th century Vilnius and Poland-Lithuania in general (Wisner 1993, 89–102), while Urszula Augustyniak emphasized the decisive role Jesuit students played in inciting it (2006, 169–190). Building on their contributions, Tomasz Kempa recently authored the most extensive analysis of religious strife in early modern Vilnius to date (Kempa 2016).[2] His work narrates the history of religious coexistence and the danger religious difference posed to public peace in the city. Religious disturbances were a cause for concern, but, as David Frick has argued, overlapping communal belonging often subdued violence (Frick 2013). These works emphasized the potentially divisive effect of ritual action, whereas the present study urges the reader to consider the opposite. Aspects of funereal culture have also been studied previously. For instance, art historian Mindaugas Paknys analyzed the funerary customs of the noble elite of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, although their urban iterations mostly eluded the scope of his study (Paknys 2008). Aivas Ragauskas (2002) examined the mortuary culture of the Vilnius ruling elite and David Frick (2013) addressed that of the ordinary burghers, but their work rarely considered the binding potential of ritual. Overall, when the aforementioned studies addressed the importance of ritual action, they often treated it as a potential threat to the public peace in the city. Although this article aims to present a contrasting view, there has been significant historical precedent to treat ritual as a liability.

When religious tensions peaked, acts of violence followed. The triggers for violent eruption were manifold but it is important to note that religious processions were among the most common. In her study of religious violence in 16th century France, Natalie Zemon Davis (1973) gives a useful definition of religious riots as "any violent action, with words or weapons, undertaken against religious targets by people who are not acting *officially and formally* as agents of political and ecclesiastical authority" (52). This definition accommodates insulting or blasphemous words as well as desecration of

[2] For the most recent anglophone summary of religious coexistence in the early modern Vilnius, see Kempa 2020.

corpses under the broad category of violence. By emphasizing that the people inciting violence were not acting in their professional capacity, the definition excludes examples of violence brought upon by soldiers or mercenaries, inquisitors, as well as representatives of the law. Therefore, applying Zemon Davis's definition allows us to focus on acts of violence incited by citizens or urban communities, informing us of popular responses to religious differences.

Peaceful religious coexistence relied on the affinity of the dominant confessional group, settled practices of toleration, and governance strategies. In the second half of the 17th century, Vilnius was dominated by Catholics, who were the largest confessional group in the city and exerted most influence over its public life. The Catholic faithful regarded Vilnius as their own; therefore, once the governing structures failed in their duties to exemplify that, the Catholic crowd felt entitled to enforce it by means of mass violence (Davis 1973, 61, 70). Opportunities for interdenominational strife were many, since Vilnius was home to five Christian denominations as well as Judaic and Islamic minorities. The religious composition of the urban society is well reflected by its sacral architecture: in the early 17th century, Vilnius had 23 Catholic and 9 Greek Catholic churches, while Calvinist, Lutheran, and Orthodox communities had one church each (Łowmiańska in Witkowski, 2005, 227). The Orthodox constituted the second largest confessional community in Vilnius, while Lutherans and Calvinists were significantly fewer in number; however, their presence was far from inconsequential to urban life (Kempa 2016, 447).

The relationship between the Vilnan Orthodox and Catholic communities is a good example of religious coexistence based on settled practices of deeply engrained mutual toleration. During the early modern period their relationship was most significantly undermined by the Union of Brest (1596) and the Muscovite occupation (1655–1661). The Union of Brest aimed to bring the Orthodox faithful under the authority of the Roman Pontificate. According to its provision, the Orthodox would retain the Eastern rite but were to become a part of the Roman Catholic Church, thus creating a Greek Catholic creed. Jesuits and the ruling Catholic elite of the

Commonwealth championed the Union and so the Vilnan Orthodox churches were handed over to Greek Catholics (Sharipova 2015). However, the Orthodox faithful were largely reluctant to follow suit. In 1597 the Orthodox brotherhood of the Holy Trinity funded a wooden church of the Holy Ghost to meet the spiritual needs of those disapproving of the Union. A monastery and a primary school, bearing a lofty title of collegium, were founded shortly after. During the Orthodox Easter of 1598 students of the Jesuit academy attacked the Orthodox complex in what was the only large scale religiously motivated attack against Vilnius' Orthodox faithful for more than a century. The complex survived and grew to become the stronghold of Orthodox anti-union thought in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Kempa 2010). From there, penned by people such as Meletij Smotryc'kyj, religious polemics against Greek Catholics soared throughout the first half of the 17th century (Frick 1995). The most important intellectual and spiritual center for Greek Catholics stood just across the street from the monastery of the Holy Ghost. Such territorial proximity led to unrest among the faithful in the first decades of the 17th century (Kempa 2017b). Smotryc'kyj's career may be indicative of the Orthodox fate in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. At first a staunch Orthodox and author of passionate polemics in favour of their cause, later in life he turned to support the Union and took the office of Greek Catholic Archbishop in Polotsk.

By the time of the Muscovite occupation the Orthodox did not pose a threat to Catholic religious domination in Vilnius. Their religious fervor waned, and the Vilnan Orthodox community was neither as strong nor as active as it had been at the turn of the century (Kempa 2016, 181–182).[3] Moreover, following the Muscovite occupation the Orthodox were treated with increased suspicion, because they were seen as receiving special treatment from their occupying co-religionists (Frick 2009). The suspicions were confirmed by the fact that while many churches in Vilnius were desecrated, the Orthodox church of the Holy Ghost was left unscathed (Kempa 2016, 465; Mironowicz 2007). Furthermore, the church grew richer at the expense of Greek Catholics, who were

[3] Tomasz Kempa names the lack of adequate education that could prepare the Orthodox to dispute the Catholic and Protestant faithful as a major factor that led to the demise of their influence.

deprived of churches, priests, and political rights by the Muscovite government. In 1657 Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich issued an order to banish all Greek Catholics from Vilnius and other cities, unless they recanted their faith. The Palatine of occupied Vilnius, Prince Mikhail Semionovich Shakhovskoi, duly carried out the order in 1658, when he gathered some eighty Vilnan Greek Catholics to the town hall and presented them with the ultimatum of either converting to Orthodoxy or leaving the city. All of them complied to convert (Meilus 2015, 346–348). The years of Muscovite occupation saw the attempt to turn Vilnius into a city of the Eastern rite (Frick 2013, 316–317). But once Vilnius was liberated, Orthodox influence declined as fast as it had previously surged.

In contrast to the Orthodox case, neither settled practices of toleration nor the law could stop tensions from building between Vilnan Catholic and Calvinist communities. Peaceful coexistence was made impossible by the religious fervor of both sides and their animosity caused the most devastating religious riots in the history of Vilnius. Disagreements grew sharper after the arrival of the Jesuit fathers. In fact, the first significant outburst took place in 1581, when the newly appointed Bishop of Vilnius, himself a convert from Calvinism, Jerzy Radziwiłł, ordered the evangelical books to be confiscated, brought to the place where traitors were executed, and set ablaze (Kempa 2016, 139).[4] This must have come as a shock, for such actions directly contravened the Warsaw Confederation. Both Calvinists and Lutherans recognized the significance of the event and sent a united complaint to King Stefan Báthory, listing the many faults they were already suffering at Catholic hands. Although the complaint did not survive, the King's response hints at its content:

> The Catholics interfere with escorting and singing alongside the bodies of the deceased to the place of their burial, especially through the streets near the church of St. Johns, by abusing, shaming, and shouting publicly, and are incited do all that by the Catholic preachers. For this reason, the students of the Jesuit academy and people from other neighborhoods nearly stoned two ministers returning from the funeral. Furthermore,

[4] However, there are indications that the burning was initiated by the Bernardines, whose church and convent were closest to the Calvinist center. See Machaj 2017, 394.

> they threaten to burn and tear down the [Calvinist] church (Łukaszewicz 1843, 115).[5]

The funeral procession mentioned in the King's response was escorting a Calvinist senator, Maciej Sawicki (d. 1581). In the wake of this clash, Catholics aimed to implement a complete ban of Protestant funeral processions passing by the church of St. Johns. The King's response showed support to the Calvinist cause, as he wished to maintain the city's already-fragile religious balance. He reprimanded the Bishop and prohibited any further actions of this sort, ruling that the Protestants could pass by the Jesuit church of St. Johns and the Vilnius Bishop's Palace if it was the shortest path to their cemetery (Kempa 2016, 145; 2017). As this was in practice the only route leading to the extramural Calvinist cemetery, this condition did little to quell growing tensions between the groups. A decade later, on the night of June 9, 1591, students of the Jesuit academy carried out the threats of their predecessors by setting the Calvinist church on fire. It would burn thrice more throughout the 17th century and thrice again it would be rebuilt.

Hostilities between Catholics and Calvinists reached a tipping point in 1639 and resulted in a riot and the relocation of Calvinist communal institutions outside the city walls. The event that sparked the riot took place on October 4, 1639, when two Calvinist boys armed with a bow aimed their arrows at the jackdaws sitting on the roof of the Calvinist church. Some of the arrows missed their targets and flew straight over the edge of the roof, landing in the territory of Vilnius' Bernardine convent. Whereas a broken window and a frightened nun might have been dismissed as minor misdemeanors, one of the arrows struck the leg of St. Michael—the polychromic image on the façade of the homonym church (Niedźwiedź 2012a). This sacrilege triggered the riot, whereby a crowd attacked the Calvinist school and hospice, and then set fire to the church. Once the military intervention put an end to it, a long judicial process commenced.

[5] "ciała zmarłych ludzi ku pogrzebu do miejsc ich, gdzie się chowają, przez ulicę, zwłaszcza mimo kościół świętego Jana nosić i spiewać przy ciele zmarłego, katholicy zakazują, lżąc, sromocąc i wolając za nimi na ulicy, a toby snać z poduszczenia kaznodzieji katholickich czynić mieli. Zaczem i dwóch ministrów żacy z szkoły ś. Jana i inszy gmin na ulicy z pogrzebu idączch, mało nieukamienowali. A nadto przegrożki czynią, jakoby zbory spustoszyć y zburzyć gwałtem chcieli."

The trial lasted until 1640 and ruled that Calvinist communal institutions should be relocated near their extramural cemetery (Kempa 2016, 429). The expulsion also prohibited Calvinists from practicing their faith inside the city walls because it was now deemed a threat to the public peace. In 1646 King Władysław Waza lifted this ban and allowed the ministers to visit the sick and conduct funeral processions, albeit "in silence and without singing" (Wisner 1993, 101; Kempa 2016, 439). As the last and most violent attack against Vilnan Calvinists confirms, such measures could only solve the problem in the short term. The attack took place in 1682 and, once again, caught Calvinists by surprise. Several thousand people assaulted the church and the adjacent institutions in a coordinated effort, looted them, and desecrated the cemetery by exhuming and defiling corpses. Riots lasted for two days and more than 80 assailants were jailed in their wake; ultimately none of them were punished.

Vilnan Protestants were also prone to religious violence and interference with rituals. In 1588 an Arian nobleman from the Polotsk district, Ezajasz Jesman, rode into the Franciscan church of the Most Holy Virgin Mary on horseback, struck the altar with a sword and attacked the gathered faithful, eventually driving everyone out of the church (Kempa 2016, 159–160). During the Easter mass of 1599 Calvinists locked part of the Catholic congregation, including the Bishop of Samogitia, in the Vilnius Cathedral (Ragauskienė and Glemža 2012, 213–214). In 1611 a young zealous Italian Calvinist, Franco de Franco, intercepted the Corpus Christi procession attended by Queen Constance, Princes Władysław and Kazimierz Waza, and select senators (Kempa 2016, 305).[6] Standing on the steps of a temporary altar in a central square and holding an unsheathed sword, de Franco addressed the participants of the procession: "you are committing the greatest idolatry—the bread that you are carrying is not God but only an empty sign, one must seek Christ our God in heaven sitting at the right hand of God the Father" (Merczyng 1901, 329; Wisner, 1989, 41).[7] Bernardine nuns often complained

[6] Later that day, he was imprisoned in the dungeon of the city hall. See Wisner 1989, 41.
[7] He was swiftly imprisoned and sentenced to capital punishment four weeks later. Religious riots broke out soon after. Most historians agree about the causality between de Franco's sentence and the riot. For a contrasting view see Wisner 1989.

about Calvinists interfering with their religious ceremonies. The nuns were targeted more often because their convent was nearby the Calvinist church. Repeated interference warranted a royal decree of 1620 prohibiting Calvinist funeral processions to walk past the church of St. Bernard and St. Francis of Assisi (Wisner 1993, 96; Augustyniak 2006, 169–190). During the 1639–1640 Calvinist expulsion, Catholics claimed that riots broke out because a brick was thrown at Mikołaj Giedrojc, the Bernardine brother carrying the cross at a funeral procession (Kempa 2016, 408; Wisner 1993, 92).

Protestant funerals turned violent on more than one occasion. A procession escorting Jakub Gibel (d. 1637), a well-known and long serving Lutheran Burgomaster of Vilnius, was attacked. In the funeral oration addressed to Gibel, a prominent Lutheran preacher Andrzej Schonflissius lamented: "It was a pitiful sight, when your body, as it was carried to the grave, was wrenched and flayed, when your coffin was cast into the gutter, stones cast against it, and—what was more pathetic—when your face was hideously wounded by a stone" (Frick 2013, 379; Kosman 1972b, 104). Another attack took place during the height of the Calvinist expulsion and was directed at the funeral procession escorting prominent nobleman Aleksander Przypkowski. Just as the procession escorting Sawicki, it had to pass by the church of St. Johns, where the students of the Jesuit academy met the bereaved by pelting stones. The cortege continued past the Catholic church of the Holy Spirit, where a Dominican sacristan, Matiasz Karwowski, met the bereaved blurting out curses. Another round of stones followed, this time coming from the church of the Holy Ghost and wounding the participants of the procession. This occasioned a reaction from the military cohort of Krzysztof Radziwiłł (Wisner 1993, 96; Łukaszewicz 1842, 210–215). In the subsequent trial, Catholic Bishop Abraham Woyna claimed that the Calvinists provoked this clash by willingly organizing the funeral procession on a day holy to Catholics. He affirmed that they had been singing and drumming since the morning mass, therefore disturbing the most holy part of the service and provoking the students by clamoring in front of the church of St. Johns (Frick 2013, 385–386; Kempa 2016, 420–421).

There were several reasons that made public funeral processions a threat to public peace. First, the proximity of warring religious communities heightened the likelihood of violent reactions. Royal decrees aimed to solve this issue by barring the Calvinists from approaching some of the most predominantly Catholic parts of the city and by prohibiting Calvinist funeral processions to pass by certain Catholic churches as of 1581. These prohibitions were increased in 1620 and reached its heights in 1640–1646 when practice of Calvinist faith was prohibited inside the city walls. After the ban was lifted, however, their funeral processions were to be conducted in silence (Koslofsky 2000, 102).[8] Second, funeral processions demonstrated fraternal solidarity among a competing religious community. The final rites bore denominational differences and a procession of lamenters winding down the narrow streets could be taken for a statement of power, strengthening communal ties among the participants but perceived by the onlookers of other denominations as a challenge to their faith. Lastly, a procession was a dynamic act, therefore its significance mutated throughout its duration. This plays out most significantly in terms of space: while passing through the neighborhood of their coreligionists, the procession is predominantly a sign of unity, but outside its boundaries the participants were exposed to danger, especially while passing by the sacral architecture of the city.

Much like in 16th century France, nearly all outbursts of religious violence were incited by students (Davis 1973, 87). Although their motivations were manifold and majority of them remain unclear, it is clear that incentives were not purely religious. Urszula Augustyniak demonstrates that students grew to rely on the economic benefits of interdenominational strife (2006, 180). Looting and pillaging churches was a lucrative business, especially since the students were rarely punished for such actions. They were only answerable to the courts of the Academy and the Jesuit fathers protected this exemption as a part of the royal privilege to the Academy, thus keeping the students from facing legal responsibility in the courts of the city or the state that would have met

[8] Koslofsky shows that among the Calvinist faithful of early modern Germany only social deviants were escorted without bells and songs, silence serving as a sign of exclusion.

interconfessional violence with strict punishments. Students were often easier to convince carrying out violent action, because they were often newcomers to the city and were rarely involved in local networks of urban society and its institutions. Instead, students owed allegiance to the Jesuit Academy. Due to this positioning, Catholic students may have been more readily able to view the deceased as a heretic, rather than a neighbor, colleague, or a fellow citizen.

In contrast to students, the citizens of Vilnius were embedded in the social fabric of the city. They were united by their citizenship – a shared legal status that outlined their place in the hierarchical society and entailed subordination to municipal government and courts. Legal standing was complemented by ethnic, neighborly, and professional networks. Strong social ties superseded religious differences and encouraged thinking beyond denominational lines. For example, some citizens ascribed their final bequests to hospices ran by and for adherents of other denominations (LVIA f. SA, no. 5333, 319–322; Frick 2010, 107–122).[9] Others ascribed a sum to be donated to the poor of all faiths begging for money in the streets (LVIA f. SA, no. 5333, 422).[10] Moreover, marriage across denominational lines was a common phenomenon in Vilnius, even among the bitterly divided Orthodox and Greek Catholic faithful. This also applied to practices of godparenthood: Lutheran Jan Buchner became a godparent to five Catholic babies in 1674 alone (Frick 2007, 213). Ties of neighborliness and kinship encouraged Vilnans to see each other in terms other than just adherents to a competing faith and this, in turn, thwarted religious violence. Varied social allegiances, or the lack thereof, contributed to the way a funeral procession was interpreted. All in all, just as in other parts of early modern Europe, funeral processions occasionally provoked unrest in Vilnius. Nevertheless, most funeral ceremonies remained peaceful despite some of them morphing into a noticeable spectacle. Bernard Connor (1666–1698), an English royal physician to King Jan Sobieski and an astute observer of local customs, remarked that

[9] Lutheran armorer Melchior Illis (d. 1663) donated 10 złoty to all Christian Hospices both inside and outside the city walls. See Lietuvos Valstybės Istorijos Archyvas, Senųjų Aktų fondas [Lithuanian State Historical Archive, the Old Acts fond], henceforth LVIA f. SA, no. 5333, 319–322. See David Frick (2010) for an analyses of the denominational pieties.
[10] For example, Catholic royal secretary Józef Antoniewicz Proniewski, LVIA f. SA, no. 5333, p. 422.

"[t]he Ceremonies of Burial in Poland are usually celebrated with so great Pomp and Magnificence, that one would rather take them for Triumphs than Interments" (Connor 1698, 206–207). This was equally true of the capital city of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where at times grief engulfed the city for more than a day.

Elements of a Mournful Procession

Testaments and postmortem wealth registers offer a glimpse into the visual splendor of a Baroque funerary procession in 17th century Vilnius. An exhaustive testament was a constitutive part of a good Christian death and after allotting their worldly belongings to their surviving relatives, testators voiced their concerns about a proper burial. Usually, those were brief: the instructions were limited to a plea for a burial "according the Christian rite" or "fittingly, according to the customs." The form of "a fitting funeral" would remain oblique if not for a minority of meticulous testators who listed the desired funereal adornments and their prices. These inscriptions are the main source for reconstructing how burgher funeral processions may have looked. Although there are no sources that could attest whether those wishes were fulfilled to a proper degree (if at all), the dispositions themselves present an informative source for a case study, which illuminates the cultural atmosphere of Vilnius and provides a sketch of the desirable form of final rites. For the purposes of this analysis, 97 testaments and post-mortem wealth registers were studied. The majority of them are inscribed in the archival books of the Magistrate bench, kept at the Lithuanian State Historical Archive, while others were published in scholarly editions.[11] The overwhelming majority of these documents inform us on Catholic funerals, whereas sources on other denominations pale in comparison. Of the 97 primary documents studied, 60 wills were drawn up by Catholics, 7 by Greek Catholics, 15 by Protestants, and 15 by Orthodox.

[11] Акты издаваемые Виленскою археографическою комиссиею для разбора древних актов [Acts issued by the Vilnius archeographic commission for analysis of the old acts.] Том IX. Акты Виленского земского суда. Edited by Головицкий, Яковъ. Вильна: Типография А. Гз. Сыркина, 1878. Henceforth: AVAK.

The "proper" final rites testators demanded did not bear strong denominational differences. Wioletta Zielecka has shown that the Vilnan Orthodox and Greek Catholic funerals were very similar to the Catholic ones (Zielecka 2011, 168; 2014).[12] Moreover, at the beginning of the 17th century the protestant funerary customs of the funeral sermon caught on among the Vilnan Catholics, as a means to ensure the lasting memory and solidify the honor of the deceased (Frick 2013, 384–385; Niedźwiedź 2012b, 331–333; 337–343). Funerals in Vilnius shared traits of all denominations and were further shaped by the participation of local communities. Therefore, one can speak of a shared funerary culture among Vilnan burghers: a set of expectations that had to be met for a ritual to be deemed a fitting escort of a deceased Vilnan.

The cost of a proper funeral began at 10 złoty, which was the smallest amount of money ascribed specifically to the ceremony and might have been its base cost (LVIA f. SA, no. 5334, 79, 1252; no. 5334, 1577). Orthodox Anna Daniłówna (d. 1664) states in her will that her sinful body was to be buried properly, with various festivities and diverse almsgiving, which she binds the Orthodox fathers to carry out during the funeral procession by ascribing 120 złoty for their services (LVIA f. SA, no. 5334, 606).[13] Pompous funeral ceremonies could cost much more; for example, the Orthodox Teodora Czarniawska (d. 1695) ascribed 1500 złoty for her escort (LVIA f. SA, no. 5342, 395). Even more exorbitant, in 1691 the Catholic royal Secretary Józef Antoniewicz Proniewski funded a lavish funeral costing 8000 złoty (Ragauskas 2002, 395).[14] Some, however, had to take difficult measures in order to assure a proper ceremony: Stanisław Czubakowski (d. 1663) ascribed his house to the order of the Discalced Carmelites to pay for a fitting ceremony (LVIA f. SA, no. 5342, 395)

The analyzed sources suggest that surrounding the ceremony by candlelight was perceived as a cultural norm in the Old Vilnius. Illumination took central importance in

[12] Studies have shown that religious belonging did not completely determine the form of funeral rite: the Orthodox and Greek Catholic nobility adopted the cultural norms set by the Catholic nobles. The only religiously motivated difference were the pleas to hold Panikhidas.

[13] She indicates giving 200 shocks of groats, which amounts to 120 złoty.

[14] Ragauskas approximated the overall sum, however, Proniewski's will does not mention it. It ascribes 500 złoty for the funeral and another 2000 for the masses to be held in his memory, see LVIA f. SA, no. 5333, 422.

the funeral procession and most testators asked to be escorted in candlelight, and, therefore, candles were some of the most often mentioned materials in the wills.[15] Moreover, guilds collected a separate tax to provide for candles to be carried during a funeral procession, while the guild members who failed to participate in religious ceremonies had to repay in wax (Jovaiša 2001, 109).

Funeral portraits were a distinctive part of the funereal culture of the Polish nobility, but did not take a prominent place in Vilnius (Chrościcki 1974, 67–72; Paknys 2008, 85). The image of the deceased would be placed on the narrow part of the coffin, facing the participants of the procession (Łyczak 2011). Although this tradition was not as popular in Vilnius, Catholic weaver Jan Jodkiewicz (d. 1666) did ask for his funeral portrait to be carried alongside the coffin (LVIA f. SA, no. 5335, 220). Though the sources do not mention them often, such portraits were occasionally used in civic funerals. Rūta Janonienė states that the portraits used in funeral processions were later hung on the interior wall of the receiving church, thus memorializing the deceased. However, only the church patrons were granted this privilege (Janonienė 2001).[16]

The testators had their say about the preferred appearance of the body. Archeological findings affirm that burial in coffins was by far the most conventional practice, but exceptions did exist (Montvilaitė 2003).[17] For instance, Catholic coachman Stanisław Kulesz (d. 1663) asked to bury his body wrapped in a black cloth as a sign of humility (LVIA f. SA, no. 5334, 101). A more extreme example was recorded in the will of a wealthy Orthodox merchant, Jan Radkiewicz (d. 1691), who wished to avoid any unnecessary pomp and to have his body placed on a bier and buried in the ground just as it was (AVAK 1878, 504). The practice of humbling oneself was a manifestation of

[15] The importance of illumination in the funeral ceremonies, especially the lighting of the catafalque and *castrum doloris*, was previously explored by art historians. See Balaišytė 2008.
[16] In certain cases, the memorialization also took form of a sculpture, and although this practice is quite marginal among the burghers, it is traced back to the 16th century.
[17] This was not necessarily the case elsewhere, since the 16-17th century German Lutherans were often buried in a bier. See Koslofsky 2000, 97. These wills describe the appearance of the coffin which is to be carried in the procession: LVIA f. SA, no. 5334, p. 102; no. 5337, p. 9.

Baroque theatricality that emphasized humility over splendor, but was nonetheless a dramatic alternative.

Sound supplemented the visual spectacle and constituted an important part of the ceremonial pomp. The most grandiose part of the aural background were the tolling bells. Usually reserved to one church, chanting sometimes extended to several city churches, and in exceptional cases even several cities. As a later example attests, Semion Gukovich (d. 1778) willed that his body would be escorted while the bells tolled in Vilnius as well as in the city of his birth, Mogilev (AVAK 1878, 547). Bells could have been supplemented with music; for instance, drumming was a part of Alexander Przypkowski's (d. 1640) funeral, while Aleksandra Kwincina (d. 1658) asked to be escorted with lamentations, trumpets, and bells, allotting for it 740 złoty (LVIA f. SA, no. 5334, 1590). Catholic processions were often followed by lamenters, wailing and crying for the deceased.

An inquiry into Protestant funeral rites presents a different picture from the Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Orthodox Vilnans. Protestant faithful met death with calm and submission, ending their life as a candle in the wind. They treated their funeral procession with silence, therefore the wills of Protestant Vilnans bear little clues, except for often repeated plea to be buried in the usual place according to their customs. Although wills of Vilnan Protestants remain largely silent about their funeral processions, they were likely not very different from those of their coreligionists in other countries: led by a cross and a minister, followed by the coffin borne by the bereaved, surrounded by the sound of tolling bells and funeral hymns (Koslofsky 2000, 85–115; Karant-Nunn 1997, 163–171). However, the royal limitations silenced Calvinist funerals simultaneously making them less noticeable and more univocal.

Funeral ritual, and especially the procession, was a field of competition for religious and secular interpretations. The way onlookers saw processions varied from a public proclamation of religious difference, to an occasion honouring the secular achievements of the deceased. Moreover, since the procession is an act unfolding over time and space, its significance changed throughout its duration. In cases when religious

meaning overcame the honorific one, violent responses became more likely due to the pronounced religious divisions in early modern Vilnius. However, participation of citizens and urban communities encouraged an honorific interpretation of the procession. Guilds were particularly effective at altering the way ritual was perceived, because many artisans of all Christian denominations were obliged to participate in the procession. Historically, guilds derived from religious confraternities—communities aiming to inculcate deeper religiosity into everyday life (Jovaiša 2001, 109). The earliest Vilnan religious confraternities were also open only to a specific trade and ethnicity. Eventually, in some cases the importance of trade outweighed faith and this process led to the formation of guilds. However, guilds retained some religious traits: they funded altars, committed acts of Christian piety, and cared for their dead (Łowmianska in Witkowski 2005, 229).

Guilds were multiconfessional corporations with expressed religious leanings and as such they harbored internal religious tensions that manifested in guild statutes. Since the 17th century Vilnius had been dominated by Catholics and so were the guilds; therefore, their ritual practice adhered to Catholic norms (Chodnycki 1925). For example, participation in the Corpus Christi procession was made mandatory for the tailors and bricklayers of Vilnius (Baronas 2017). Similarly, tailors, bricklayers, and butchers were obliged to attend Requiem masses held for the souls of their deceased aides (ACW 2006, 55, no. 48: §4; 111, no. 92: §22; 119, no. 95: §28).[18] These obligations directly contradicted Protestant, Orthodox, and Greek Catholic religious practice. Some guilds presented their religious dissident members with an option to pay a fee and be relieved of the duty to attend masses (Kosman 1972a, 10).[19] However, this was not universal practice: the statute of the saddlers' guild obliged all members to participate in Catholic mass irrespective of their denomination (Meilus 2015, 473).[20]

[18] *Akty cechów wileńskich 1495–1759* [Acts of the Vilnius Guilds]. Edited by H. Łowmiański, M. Łowmiańska, S. Kościałkowski. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006. Henceforth: ACW.
[19] This right was granted by Władysław IV Waza in 1638.
[20] According to their guild statute reconfirmed in 1658, but this clause was inscribed earlier.

Nevertheless, every guild member was expected to escort deceased journeymen or members of their immediate family. It was considered an act of Christian charity, yet some guilds turned the expectation to a duty by inscribing it into their statutes. Since 1579, the weaver's guild obliged its members not only to participate in funeral processions but commanded six weavers to carry the coffin and fined those failing to attend (ACW, 2006, 76, no. 60: §33). Twenty-seven guilds functioned in Vilnius throughout the 16–18th centuries (Kaladžinskaitė 2004, 112). Every one of them had a distinct symbolic representation that was displayed in funeral processions, thus paying homage to the deceased and representing the people rallying under the banner.

Guild participation in funeral processions was generally peaceful but could lead to friction. This was the case during the funeral procession escorting Mikołaj Kliczewski (d. 1667), a Catholic Burgomaster of Vilnius. As a befitting ceremony required, the former head of the city was escorted with extensive funereal pomp. Therefore, a number of guilds attended, but the somber occasion could not supersede the animosity between the guilds of tailors and salt merchants, and they started competing for a position closer to the coffin. Soon their competition turned to conflict and deteriorated into a scuffle. As the people involved claimed in the subsequent trial, their intention was to honor the deceased by bearing candles alongside the coffin and both parties put blame on the commercial strife as the cause of unrest, rather than disagreements pertaining to religion (Frick 2013, 386).

Concurrent religious and secular meanings made the funeral procession into a site of semiotic tension. In order to be deemed fitting, the ritual had to represent the deceased as both a citizen and a faithful. This was to be done by adhering to the cultural expectations shared among the citizens of Old Vilnius and the denominational dogma of one's creed. These could be conflicting and if a ritual does not strike a balance between them, the risk of violent reaction increases. It was further complicated by the dynamic nature of the procession, which destabilized the perceived meaning further, as the cortege winded down the city streets. A way to track if the balance was attained or if one interpretation took precedence over another is to look at the signs processions

employed. In turn, their interpretation informs our understanding of the political significance of a funeral procession.

Civic Significance of the Ultimate Rites

Ritual was a widespread governance strategy throughout early modern Europe that served as means to solidify group identity alongside a variety of other goals (Muir 2005, 229–62). The features that made ritual action useful were the same ones that turned it into a threat, namely, the solidifying effect it had upon the people involved. Funeral processions were no exception in this sense, as the whole funeral ritual was devised to overcome death and pacify a community reminded of its temporality. However, public funeral processions were directed at specific communities to whom they communicated the allegiance of the deceased through the signs it employed. Following the aforementioned ideal types of funeral processions enacted in Vilnius, these communities were either united by their denomination or their civic belonging.

Semiotic anthropology theory helps to explain the possible meaning derivation processes at work and offers a key to understanding the binding potential funerals held in a multiconfessional environment (Keane 2003; 2005; 2014). Developed by Webb Keane, this theory relies on Peircean semiotics and aims to restore social and historical dimensions of cultural analysis through interrogation of material objects (Keane 2005, 186). Material analysis holds that while the meaning derivation is individual, the sign itself carries an inherent and limited significance. The range of its possible meanings depend on the physical qualities of the sign and its placement in the representational economy, constituted by the context-dependent material, social, religious, historical circumstances. Keane divides the representational economy by introducing the concept of semiotic ideologies. He describes them as

> the basic assumptions about what signs are and how they function in the world. It determines, for instance, what people will consider the role that intentions play in signification to be, what kinds of possible agent (humans only? Animals? Spirits?) exist to which acts of signification

> might be imputed, whether signs are arbitrary or necessarily linked to their objects, and so forth (2005, 419).

Therefore, the whole totality of meanings existing in the representational economy is filtered through adopted assumptions about signs.

Different semiotic ideologies coexist and compete for dominance. In the multiconfessional environment of 17th century Vilnius, these differences pertinently manifested themselves through a conflicting perspective towards material objects, informed by denominational dogma. Catholic and Calvinist beliefs were completely opposite in this regard. While Catholics believed in the efficacy of matter to achieve salvation, Calvinists dismissed it as superstition. Changing views towards materiality directly altered funeral rites: some of the early Protestant communities rejected any need of ritual and buried their dead without any procession, song, or funeral sermon (Koslofsky 2000, 92). This difference was also reflected in the patterns of violent responses. Calvinist crowds were given to destroying material signs and symbols, so aiming to disprove Catholic beliefs in the agency of objects. In contrast, Catholics directed their actions at the perceived heretics and even their remains (Davis 1973, 76–77).

Furthermore, the clash of semiotic ideologies extends to the most fundamental presumptions of subject-object relations: the efficacy of matter to mediate or embody supernatural power. This conflict is well reflected in the agency ascribed to saints. While Catholic funerals made wide use of insignia to plead for interception and care, the Protestant faithful were more likely to deem such adoration as idolatry. Other examples of this sort were Franco de Franco's challenge that disturbed the Corpus Christi procession of 1611 or Catholic complaints that Protestants directed their stones at the priest carrying the Host. This did lead to violence directed at the funeral processions in Vilnius, as exemplified by the bricks thrown at the Bernardine monk bearing the cross, as well as the many complaints by Bernardine nuns.

Semiotic ideologies compete for predominance in the attribution of sign meaning and their competition is made possible by the individual meaning derivation and capacity

of material objects to house simultaneously conflicting significations. In our case, the body of the deceased could be interpreted as a deceased religious dissident and a member of civic community. However, signs function in constellation with other signs and their meaning is processual, i.e. the process of signification is unending and final meaning is never fixed. Therefore, those already derived interpretations could be altered by putting emphasis on either of the signs of communal identity. That is to say, the impermanence of meaning allows for temporality to emerge: one sign placed along another will necessitate a reconsideration of both. Therefore, passing through the city streets provided the procession with various shades of meaning. For instance, the Calvinist procession beginning in their neighborhood was seen as a ritual of fraternal solidarity, while passing by the Catholic churches on their way to the cemetery held the danger of recontextualizing the ritual as a challenge to the dominant creed. Therefore, the multivalence of signs could exert a pacifying and uniting effect in one context and lead to physical violence in another.

All funeral processions shared the most important components and signs. It was always directed by a priest and attended by communities and the grieving family. Nevertheless, their importance paled before the central figure of the rite: the inanimate body of the deceased. The black clad coffin was the central figure of the ritual. The rite was enacted for the body and according to its will, despite the lack of individual agency. According to Keane's theory, powerful signs are able to assimilate and override the contradictory significations, and in any funeral procession the most valent sign was the corpse. The meaning projected onto it was a deciding factor in the interpretation of the whole ritual. In the case of funeral processions, the onlookers could interpret the deceased as either a member of a Church or a citizen of Vilnius. It was primarily decided by the personal history of the deceased, but a clear-cut interpretation was rarely possible due to the multiple affiliations Vilnans held. Therefore, the signs borne alongside the coffin had significant influence over establishing the predominance of either interpretation.

For example, the violence that broke out during the abovementioned funeral procession of the Catholic burgomaster Mikołaj Kliczewski (d. 1667) was triggered by the ambition to get closer to the body and benefit from its significance. The deceased burgomaster was an influential person in the Vilnan urban community and, therefore, the city-dwellers and guilds gathered to pay respects. Aiming to honor his memory, the guilds of tailors and salt merchants started competing for precedence. The ritual and their close proximity provided an occasion for old disagreements to resurface. This was not an example of clashing semiotic ideologies, but one of competition within the bounds of a shared one. Kliczewski's body was seen as the remains of an influential citizen, whose political importance could add to the prestige of the guild. In this case, the civic significance of the ceremony prevailed over the potentially divisive religious interpretation. Civic meaning took primacy due to Kliczewski's distinguished municipal career and the attendance of many urban communities, who came to honor him. Confraternities and guilds rallied under their banners, thus surrounding the body and the cortege with signs of primarily social meaning. The procession escorted Kliczewski to the church of St. Theresa, the necropolis of the Vilnan Catholic elite, but was not challenged by attendant religious dissidents.

In contrast, the funerals invoking primarily religious meaning more often kindled conflicts of semiotic ideologies. Processions that escorted the deceased surrounded by the clergy, candlelight, religious songs, and black-clad coreligionists reminded the onlookers of the denominational strife in Vilnius. Moreover, if we were to follow the interpretation of violence as means for purification and protection of the sacred, as suggested by Natalie Zemon Davis (1973, 59), these were exactly the kind of rites that threatened violence, especially once they traversed the centers of sacral topography of another denomination. Such processions were not necessarily prescribed by denominational dogma—pious Catholics were just as likely to be escorted in such form as the Orthodox, but the Protestant communities were more limited in this regard due to their differing view of materiality. Since complaints about the disturbances of funeral

processions came from both Catholic and Calvinist sides, rites enacted with exclusively denominational signification were more problematic.

As there are only a few descriptions of the funerals that attracted violence, it is useful to return to the analysis of Alexander Przypkowski's escort. Like Kliczewski, the deceased was a political figure, having served as the royal Secretary. As such, his funeral attracted the participation of notable guests, including the Calvinist patron, magnate Krzysztof Radziwiłł. Unlike Kliczewski, Przypkowski was of Arian creed and, same as Maciej Sawicki, whose funeral was attacked in 1581, was a nobleman. Both Przypkowski and Sawicki had little to no connection to the urban community. Although the funeral procession was interconfessional, surrounded the body with various signs, and Catholics described it as pompous, it sowed dissent. Pestering started once the escort passed by the Catholic churches of St. Johns, where it was attacked by the students, and at the church of the Holy Ghost, a Dominican father denigrated the lamenters. The most oft mentioned aggravating circumstance was that the funeral was allegedly very loud. Catholic complaints mention singing, drumming, and firing rifles in front of their churches (Łukaszewicz 1843, 208). This gave precedent for the subsequent silencing of Calvinist rituals. Violence broke out because Przypkowski, like Sawicki, was not imbedded in the society of Vilnius. Therefore, the ritual in his honor failed to establish ties with its onlookers and relied on few signs that bore civic meaning; instead, the funeral emphasized differences of faith.

An increased number of worldly signs encouraged a honorific interpretation, which represented the deceased as a social figure and framed them as a part of the community of citizens, as opposed to a member of a certain church. Making use of socially relevant and recognizable signs, such as a portrait, guild flag, or the sigil of the family, surrounded the dead body with signs carrying hefty honorific meaning and, therefore, emphasized a social interpretation over a religious one. In turn, the religious ceremonies bereft of secular signs were more problematic because they failed to present the deceased as a part of the multiconfessional civic community.

As Robert Hertz has long since argued in his classic anthropological study, the community stricken with death is facing more than the loss of one of its units. Death deprives it of everything that was socially invested in the deceased and, by extent, the way of life one embodied and the community leads. This is the cause for dread that extends throughout the community. Death puts the social equilibrium out of balance and strikes the very core of the community by reminding it of its own mortality (Hertz 1960). Funeral rites are invested with the power to pacify the community, making death a part of communal life. As such, they have inherent political importance. Enactment of shared cultural symbols ensured that individual death would be overcome and life in the community would emerge victorious. In Vilnius that meant making use of the signs capable to establish a connection with the multiconfessional citizenry of the city. In turn, the use of these signs represented the deceased as a part of the civic community and strengthened the group solidarity of Vilnans, as opposed to the faithful of a denomination. Perceived in this manned, although somber, funeral processions were a celebration of communal triumph over death.

Conclusion

The multiconfessional community of 17th century Vilnius was one beset by interdenominational strife and traumatized by a recent occupation. Ritual action could bring back the balance to a community unsettled by death. Funeral rituals were one of the means to do so. However, processions also harbored divisive potential due to the differences implied by denominational dogma. Nonetheless, in time, a local funereal culture developed which drew upon the final rites of all Christian denominations. Therefore, adhering to the locally prevalent norms strengthened Vilnan civic belonging. While most funerals aimed to strike a balance between denominational dogma and civic traditions, some took more divisive forms. Religious funerals were inclined to adhere to the denominational dogma and enact rituals that communicated a predominantly religious meaning, thus representing the deceased as a faithful member of a denominational community. The other type of funerals celebrated the deceased's

worldly achievements and emphasized their belonging to civic communities, transforming a funeral into a ritual of honor. The honorific and religious funerals did not strictly align with denominational norms, since some Catholic and Orthodox funerals were modest, while Protestant rites accommodated local ritual traditions. However, the sacred and secular dimensions were closely intertwined, therefore no purely religious or purely civic funerals were possible.

Nevertheless, the predominance of one meaning over the other was possible and often had a direct bearing on the intended audience and the effect a funeral ritual had. One method to analyze the significance of funeral processions is to interpret the material signs that were used. Following the theory of semiotic anthropology this article has shown that the signs employed in funeral processions had a direct bearing on deciding the overall meaning of the ritual. The predominance of religious signs and the lack of those placing the deceased into the social networks of the city could result in religious unrest, whereas the enactment of publicly recognizable social signs turned a funeral procession into a civic rite strengthening the shared belonging to the city.

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ARTICLE

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A funeral for a glacier: Mourning the more-than-human on the edges of modernity

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Abstract

Many have argued that contemporary western societies, broadly conceived, are moving towards a greater openness towards death and the public display of grief. While this development does perhaps not constitute a return to the "tame death" that Ariès spoke of, it certainly points to a situation at some remove from the "taboo" around death, the "wild death" that Gorer (1965) and Ariès (1974a; 1974b), respectively, argued had overtaken "modern" western societies. The point has been made, that examples of this new (alleged) openness towards death, include the emerging possibilities to mourn losses that until recently remained hidden. In many contemporary western contexts, for example, aborted foetuses and stillborn babies, that not so long ago would have been disposed of privately, are now publicly mourned. Similarly, pets, whose non-humanity until recently removed them from processes of public mourning, are now legitimate objects of the public expression of grief. In this paper we focus on the mourning of the glacier Ok in Iceland, as an example of how this trend is now extending to the loss of natural phenomena. Drawing on Cunsolo Willox's work and bringing together the recent literature on the more-than-human and the new materialisms, on one hand, and literature that speaks of the links between "modernity", mourning and loss, on the other, we ask if the trends hinted at above signal a

change, a rupture, or the continuation of mourning that has always been part of the modernity experience.

Introduction: the expanding scope of death (and the study thereof)

In this article we ask what recent examples of mourning the more-than-human can tell us about the history of death and the history of the study of death. Over the last thirty years or so, an interdisciplinary field of death studies has carved out a place for itself in the academic landscape. Bringing together expertise from the humanities and the social sciences, nursing, medicine, and the psy-disciplines, death studies approaches death, dying and bereavement, and its associated experiences and management, as cultural and social phenomena. Indeed, it might be argued that death studies emerged out of a sense of loss—the loss of a closeness with death—that the field, as an academic endeavour, attempts to respond to. Rooted as death studies is in reflections on the place of death in western societies, its founding observation was the alleged denial of death's reality in the Western world,[1] evident, amongst other things, in the disappearance of dying, death rituals and mourning from public life in the course of the twentieth century in particular. Since the ground-breaking work of Geoffrey Gorer (1965) and Philippe Ariès (1974a, 1974b, and 1981)—the evocation of whose work readers will of course have recognised in the account above—many have travelled down the same path. Ariès spoke of a history of death mentalities, "transformations in the very collective and cultural psychology of a given historical epoch" (Jacobsen 2016, 2) in relation to death and grief. Ariès wrote about a shift from a *familiarity* with death, a "tame death" (1974b, 25) as he called it, to a *mentality* in which death is denied. Ariès's work has had significant impact even outside the narrow academic circles most scholars usually move in. Indeed, the taboo around death in the Western world has long-since become something of a publicly accepted

[1] Western is of course a vague and loaded term. Roughly speaking, we mean by this the societies of north/western Europe and North America, as is usually the reference point of western in the death studies literature. Western here is of course a term that constitutes the very reality it speaks of.

truism, discussed in television and radio programmes regularly, denounced as unhealthy in newspaper columns nearly every week. Death is still described as taboo in the western world, despite Michael Simpson's (1987 [1979] see Walter 1991 and 1994) old observation that so frequently exposed a taboo is surely a curious thing. One is reminded of Michel Foucault's (1979) remarks about the repressive hypothesis on sexuality, or the obsessive discussion of the very thing that was supposedly repressed.

While death is still often proclaimed a taboo in general public discussions, over some thirty years now, scholars writing on the place of death in society have come to suggest a different story. Already in the mid-1990s Tony Walter (1994) spoke of the "revival of death," noting the way in which the development of the hospice movement and bereavement counselling, amongst other things, suggested a more open engagement with death in the public domain. Michael Hviid Jacobsen (2016) has recently revisited Ariès's history of mentalities of death to suggest that we are now in an epoch of "spectacular death." Jacobsen points out that "forbidden death," the mentality that marked the endpoint of Ariès's history, is clearly not an accurate description of the state of death in the contemporary western world. Death can hardly be forbidden given the strong sense of "a revival of interest in death, dying and bereavement, professionally, politically, publicly and personally, which renders problematic the notions of taboo, denial and disappearance of death that was so characteristic of Ariès's 'forbidden death'" (Jacobsen 2016, 2). Jacobsen evokes Benjamin Noys's acute observation that the question to be asked now is not whether death as such is invisible or taboo, but rather what are the forces that variably expose us to death or, possibly, hide it away from us (Jacobsen 2016, 10).

It seems clear that people in the contemporary western world are less likely to witness death first-hand than their predecessors were (see Walter 2019), while representations of death in the media abound. It is important to note that these representations often take the form of markedly melodramatic images of horrific deaths that form parts of news stories or works of art or entertainment. Jacobsen advances the idea of spectacular death to capture how contemporary death mentality in Western

society is shaped by the way in which "death, dying and mourning have increasingly become spectacles" (Jacobsen 2016, 1). The notion of the spectacle that Jacobsen mobilises here is drawn from the work of Guy Debord and the idea of the "society of the spectacle." Inspired by Debord, Jacobsen explains that:

> "spectacular death" is a death that has for all practical intents and purposes been transformed into a spectacle. It is something that we witness at a safe distance but hardly ever experience upfront. ... "Spectacular death" thus inaugurates an obsessive interest in appearances that simultaneously draws death near and keeps it at arm's length—it is something that we witness at a safe distance with equal amounts of fascination and abhorrence... (Jacobsen 2016, 10).

Spectacular death thus speaks of a situation in which death is not—or is no longer—a taboo, while it does not have the same direct familiarity for people as it once had. Walter (2019) has spoken of what he refers to as the "pervasive" dead. Taking on the long-standing sociological idea of the sequestration of death in contemporary western societies (see Mellor and Shilling 1993; see also Lawton 2000), Walter argues that while *the dying* are still sequestered in hospitals and hospices, in contemporary western societies *the dead* are all around us—in a word, "pervasive"—through evocation of their memory, through public monuments dedicated to them, statues and "spontaneous shrines" (Santano 2006).

Examples offered in evidence of greater "openness" towards death include the ways in which those who were previously not publicly mourned are now subject to elaborate public memorialisation. In many contemporary western contexts, for example, aborted foetuses and stillborn babies, that not so long ago would have been disposed of without much public ceremony, are now very publicly and openly mourned (Christensen and Sandvik 2014; see Faro, in press). Similarly, pets, whose non-humanity until recently made their deaths a cause of more private grief, are now more readily objects of public expression of grief (Redmalm 2015; see Eckerd, Barnett and Jett-Dias 2016). It is important to note that the grieving of pets often exists alongside intensive exploitation and slaughter of animals, sometimes alongside the industrialised destruction of animals

in response to the outbreak of disease (see Bush, Phillimore, Pless-Mullioli and Thompson 2005). Thus, while recent trends may suggest that the boundaries around the beings whose loss is to be mourned are extending, it remains the case that some beings, some lives, human and non-human, are clearly still placed outside the boundaries of the "grievable" (Butler 2004 and 2009). This may be the occasion to shift Noys's astute observation slightly: the question is not only how and why we are variously exposed to death but also and importantly whose death is it we are exposed to, how and why, and whose death is it we are sheltered from.

The point of departure for this article is the present history of death in the western world. In this moment, as we see it, the engagement with death is frequently, almost invariably, mediated and this mediation, this journey through *representation*, through spectacle (Jacobsen 2016), shapes our wider engagement with death in profound ways. Even if the dead are pervasive, as Walter (2019) has it, it is the dead as memory, as monument, as shrine. The dying, Walter (2019) reminds us, are still largely absent from our lives. The materiality of dying, if not death itself with the feel, the sight, and the smell of decaying human flesh—the putrescence that remains an important theme in the academic or at least the anthropological literature on death (see Engelk 2019)—is surely still largely sequestered from everyday life in the western world, located in medical settings: hospitals, hospices and morgues. At the same time, the possibility of mourning is being extended to *beings*—we want to mark the use of the term—that until recently would have been characterised precisely by their complete materiality, by their inability of speech, by their lack of representational capacity and by all that they are lacking in personhood and in "humanity." That personhood is now being extended into the animal kingdom and even into the material world when it comes to death and mourning, is in keeping with developments in social and cultural theory over the last thirty years or so. References abound and we will only mention here, as main examples among others, Donna Haraway (1991), Bruno Latour (1993) and Tim Ingold (2000). Indeed, arguments for the need to move away from social and cultural theory premised on the social construction of reality through processes of signification and symbolic

representation abound, often expressed in terms of new materialisms (see Cole and Frost 2010; Lettow 2017; Blok and Jensen 2019; Holbraad 2011). Such arguments are made on numerous grounds: theoretical, practical, ethical, and political. The possibility of coming to terms with and addressing issues of catastrophic climate change, is one reason frequently cited for such a move.

The work of Ashlee Cunsolo Willox (2012) and Renee Lertzman (2012) is particularly important and relevant here. Lertzman (2012) has mobilised insights from psychoanalysis to highlight the internal conflicts and ambivalent relations that may complicate turning private "ecological grief" into public action to counteract climate change. Cunsolo Willox, meanwhile, has noted that the loss of habitat, of landscapes, of flora and fauna, clearly evokes responses in humans that should rightly be called grief. The responses are not materially different from the grief humans exhibit at the death of another human being. Still, Cunsolo Willox continues, there is a huge reluctance, it seems, to speak about the effect of the destruction of habitats, about the effects of the catastrophe of climate change, as grief or mourning. Cunsolo Willox argues for such a response (see also Randall 2009). Drawing on Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida, she claims that grief draws our attention to shared vulnerability and as such mourning can bring about ethical and politically effective responses to climate change. Indeed, we s*hould* work through our "ecological grief" and mourn the death of natural phenomena, since such mourning can be mobilised to extend protection to other natural phenomena.

Here is located the example we want to take in this paper, an example that appears to be inspired by the call for the work of mourning around climate change issued by Cunsolo Willox. Describing briefly the recent mourning of the glacier Ok in Iceland, we ask what the mourning of Ok can tell us about the present history of death. Drawing on the links established between modernity, mourning and melancholia, in particular in Jonathan Flatley's (2008) recent reading of Sigmund Freud's (1957 [1917]) classic text, we wonder to what extent this present history of death signals something new and to what extent it represents a continuation of already well-established concerns. On the one hand the mourning of the more-than-human may signal new developments in the history of

death; on the other it may simply extend the compulsion to mourn that Flatley reads as inherent in the experience of modernity.

Ok: or how to mourn a glacier

An extensive report into climate change and its effects in Iceland, published by the Meteorology Office of Iceland in 2018, notes that Icelandic glaciers were at their most expansive towards the end of the 19th century (Björnsson, Sigurðsson, Davíðsdóttir, Ólafsson, Ástþórsson, Ólafsdóttir, Baldursson and Jónsson 2018, 9). Since then, glaciers have "fled," as the Icelandic frames it, their coverage shrunk a total of some 2000 km^2, 500 km^2 of which has happened during this century. If the scenarios that have been drawn up about climate change are accurate, the report continues, by the end of the century, Langjökull glacier might have lost 85% of its size, and Hofsjökull glacier and Vatnajökull glacier about 60% each. These are the third, the second and the biggest glaciers in Iceland, respectively. If the most pessimistic scenarios turn out to be accurate, then glaciers will disappear entirely from the Icelandic landscape over the coming centuries (Björnsson et al. 2018, 9).

Disappearing glaciers have, to some extent, become the most visible sign of the effects of climate change in Iceland. While deforestation, desertification, wildfires, heatwaves and more powerful hurricanes serve as evidence of climate change in many places, in Iceland, it would seem, the fate of glaciers signals most glaringly the progression of climate change. A few years ago, the National Museum of Iceland invited its visitors to reflect on their experience of and express their views on climate change. This was not a survey or any other systematic form of evidence gathering. Visitors to the Museum were simply offered the opportunity to write down their experience of climate change. The disappearance of glaciers was prominent here. In some ways this is an example of the more general way in which many people in Iceland reflect on the weather by comparing one year—a particular season of the year more usually—to another. The amount of snow lying in fields or in the mountains is something that many people comment on frequently to offer evidence of how the spring or the summer is progressing

or to reflect back on how mild or hard the winter was. It would appear that out of this, glaciers, in fact changes to glaciers, have emerged as the face of climate change in Iceland.

In the aforementioned report (Björnsson et al. 2018) there is a photograph of Ok Jökull glacier. The text accompanying the photograph explains that at the turn of the twentieth century, OK was roughly 15km^2 in size. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the glacier had shrunk down to about 4km^2. In 2012 Ok was 0.7km^2 and in 2014 it was deregistered as a glacier. Over the last few years, the text concludes, many small glaciers in Iceland have shrunk significantly or even disappeared (Björnsson et al. 2018, 10), it would seem, without much public notice. Why was Ok singled out, readers might ask? Why has attention been focused on this particular glacier?

Ok is an unusual name for a glacier, even if the word means a hill or a small mountain. It is a name that many people in Iceland will instantly recognise, in a way that they might not so immediately with many other small glaciers. Ok, like many other glaciers in Iceland, is a shield volcano. It is located in the west of Iceland, close to the much bigger Langjökull glacier, mentioned before. Ok stands at 1198 meters above sea level and was topped by a glacier for about 700 years. On September 21, 2014, Icelandic National Television spoke with the glaciologist Oddur Sigurðsson who said that the ice on Ok no longer met the criteria for thickness for Ok to be regarded as glacier. The newsreport, stated that "this small but well-known glacier has lost the title of glacier."[2] While reports of Ok's demise were, thus, seemingly accurate and its loss of status was a news item in September 2014, Ok's disappearance did not seem to provoke much reaction initially. This changed when two anthropologists from the United States, researching energy and climate change, entered the scene. In 2018, Cymene Howe and Dominic Boyer made a documentary film called *Not OK* about the disappearance of the glacier. The title of the film is of course a play on the name of the glacier juxtaposed with one of the most common refrains in the English language. The film is introduced in the following way on the accompanying website:

[2] https://www.ruv.is/frett/jokullinn-ok-er-ekki-lengur-jokull

> Glaciers have been distinctive features of the Icelandic landscape ever since human settlement on the island 1200 years ago. But since the early 20th century Iceland's 400+ glaciers have been melting steadily, now losing roughly 11 billion tons of ice every year; scientists predict that all of Iceland's glaciers will be gone by 2200. One of Iceland's smallest known glaciers is named "Ok." *Not Ok* is its story. This is not a tale of spectacular, collapsing ice. Instead, it is a little film about a small glacier on a low mountain—a mountain who has been observing humans for a long time and has a few things to say to us.[3]

We want to note here the steering away from spectacle that the text seeks to bring about. The dramatic story of collapsing Arctic or Antarctic ice is not the story of Ok. Ok, a small glacier on a low mountain, is disappearing slowly and undramatically in comparison to the collapsing icebergs of the polar regions, its fate as no longer qualifying as a glacier certified by such unspectacular a measurement as its thickness. Still, Ok is treated here as a person, a being of awareness, one that has over a long time been observing humans and that has, as a consequence of those observations, a few things to say to "us."

The film is part of a further reversal of established routines and tropes. Noting the role of glaciers in Iceland's blooming tourism industry—an industry that of course fuels carbon emissions and with that climate change—the anthropologists established what they refer to as an Un-Glacier Tour to the top of Ok. The introductory page of the website that houses the film says:

> Many tourists in Iceland are enchanted by the opportunity to walk across glaciers or thrilled to snowmobile across them. The Un-glacier Tour—the only one in the world—is different. It is a guided hike to the top of Ok mountain and an opportunity to see the glacial remains of Okjökull (Ok glacier). As anthropogenic climate change drives glaciers toward extinction, the Un-glacier Tour is meant to be a reckoning with glacial demise as well as a celebration of glacial life.[4]

[3] https://www.notokmovie.com/
[4] https://www.notokmovie.com/

The UnTour takes visitors to "remains," remains of a glacier lost in the march towards the extinction of glaciers. Species, languages and sometimes cultures have of course been said to have become extinct. Indeed anthropology, social science and the humanities more generally, have often mourned the extinction of languages and cultures; salvage ethnography was once the attempt to counteract such losses. Even so, at this stage, the Un-Glacier Tour is presented as "a reckoning with glacial demise," a celebration of glacial life, rather than a work of mourning as such. Still, having made the documentary film and established the Un-Glacier Tour, the anthropologists decided they needed to have a clearer "sense of closure" and install a memorial plaque on the top of the former glacier (Johnson 2019). The Not Ok page explains:

> Anthropologists Cymene Howe and Dominic Boyer developed the Un-Glacier Tour in 2018 and in 2019 they created a memorial marker to be placed atop Ok mountain in commemoration of Ok glacier: the first of Iceland's major glaciers to be lost to climate change. The memorial marker, with words authored by one of Iceland's most prominent writers, Andri Snær Magnason, is the world's first monument to a glacier-that-was: a modest recognition of a body of ice that once moved, but that now exists only in the form of what the Icelandic glaciologist Oddur Sigurdsson calls "dead ice".[5]

That Ok is now only "dead ice", "glacial remains" clearly stands in contrast with a prior stage of Ok having been alive, of having moved. The description enacts the anthropomorphising of the glacier in noting the importance of his[6] passing. Anthropologists have documented numerous instances of glaciers as beings, alive and afforded personhood (see Cruikshank 2005; Gagné, Rasmussen and Orlove 2014). The description above highlights the transformation of Ok, its transition into a living glacier that watches humans and that has things to tell them, even as he loses its life and becomes "dead ice." The possibility of mourning Ok, following Cunsolo Willox's (2012) call, is, it seems, secured through this transformation.

[5] https://www.notokmovie.com/

[6] Jökull, the word for glacier in Icelandic is a masculine noun, all nouns in Icelandic being gendered.

In a press interview, Cymene Howe explained the choice of a plaque as the memorial marker for Ok:

> We could have done a kind of headstone or a grave marker and that would have sent a certain message of loss and memorial. We also could have done a more scientific plaque like you might find in a national park with all the details about Ok. We decided to do a memorial very specifically because if we look around the world, we can see that memorials everywhere stand for either human accomplishments, like the deeds of historic figures, or the losses and deaths that we recognize as important, like on a battlefield memorial.[7]

Here the point is no longer simply to reckon with the demise of Ok and what that demise suggests for the fate of glaciers in Iceland, and indeed the world, more generally. Rather, now Ok is to be mourned, remembered as it disappears. And Ok is to be mourned not simply as any loss, but as an important loss, a significant death.

The plaque was unveiled during a ceremony in the summer of 2019. On August 18 of that year, around a hundred scientists, environmental activists, politicians, and others, from Iceland and abroad, gathered around an otherwise unremarkable stone in the middle of the former glacier after a two hour hike up the mountain on a rather windy day. A "lasting memorial"[8] plaque with an inscription in Icelandic and English was erected.[9] The inscription reads:

> A letter to the future. Ok is the first Icelandic glacier to lose its status as a glacier. In the next 200 years all our glaciers are expected to follow the same path. This monument is to acknowledge that we know what is happening and what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it.

The "letter" is in effect an address from the past. The "you" brought into dialogue here with "us," is a future you; a you that does not as yet exist and will not for another two

[7] https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2019/08/16/dead-icelandic-glacier-lost-to-climate-change
[8] McCaig, Amy. 2019. "Lost glacier to be honoured with memorial monument." Rice News. July 18. https://news.rice.edu/2019/07/18/lost-glacier-to-be-honored-with-memorial-monument/.
[9] O'Dowd, Peter. 2019. "Researchers Memorialize First Major Icelandic Glacier Lost To Climate Change." WBUR. August 16. https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2019/08/16/dead-icelandic-glacier-lost-to-climate-change?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=20190818&fbclid=IwAR1saTp5KslMIEnKxOA_O0haAU9fD8CGDE01G42ik4F1LTXRYFQB-f8Ffns

hundred years or so. We speak to the you as if (already) from beyond the grave. As such the letter is an example of "prosopopoeia, the fiction of a voice from beyond the grave" (Johnson 1994, 20). Barbara Johnson noted the "reversibility that in seeming to bring the dead back to life, threatens to strike the living dead" (1994, 20) which characterises prosopopoeia. Johnson evoked Paul de Man on how in reversibility of life and death in prosopopoeia, "the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death" (de Man 1984, 75–78; quoted in Johnson 1994, 20–21).

The letter is a declaration of responsibility and an invitation to judgement: "only you will know if we did it." Still, the event was to allow people to "say goodbye" to Ok by participating in a "mock funeral" that would "help people address climate grief" and "spur them to take action on the climate crisis."[10] Here clearly, and surely not coincidentally, there are strong echoes of Cunsolo Willox's (2012) call: to mourn the loss of Ok and to mobilise the mourning to combat climate change. One of the organisers of the event stated in a press interview that:

> By marking Ok's passing, we hope to draw attention to what is being lost as Earth's glaciers expire. These bodies of ice are the largest freshwater reserves on the planet and frozen within them are histories of the atmosphere. They are also often important cultural forms that are full of significance.[11]

This passage speaks to the complexity of mourning; it highlights that what is mourned through ecological grief can be a "multitude," as framed by Lertzman (2012; see also Gagné et al. 2014). In part, what is being mourned is something that might be considered largely of practical concern: glaciers are reserves of water, the disappearance of which endangers other lives. Perhaps here we deal with grief that anticipates further future losses as much as it responds to the current loss (see Lertzman 2012). At the same time the glaciers' disappearance is being mourned as the loss of the very particular histories

[10] Burton, Nylah. 2019. "Iceland's Glacier Funeral Helped Activits Manage Their Climate Grief." *Bustle*. August 19. (https://www.bustle.com/p/icelands-glacier-funeral-helped-activists-manage-their-climate-grief-18667800.). See also Johnson. 2019. "How to mourn a glacier." *The New Yorker*. (https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/how-to-mourn-a-glacier)

[11] https://weather.com/science/environment/news/2019-08-18-iceland-unveils-plaque-to-okjokull-first-glacier-killed-by

that are archived within the glaciers—histories of atmospheric changes for example—and, finally, glaciers are mourned as important cultural forms. And yet, the mourning is more complicated still. A few days before the event at Ok, the Icelandic writer and environmental activist, Andri Snær Magnason, published an article in the English newspaper *The Guardian* that served as a supplemental piece to the ceremony. There he said that previously the glaciers of Iceland seemed eternal but now "a country mourns their loss."[12] The glaciers had seemed eternal, in other words, *immortal*. It is as if, through their cumulated action that has resulted in climate change, humans have managed to turn the immortal and 'god-like' into something much more like themselves–hence mortal. It is the disappearance of eternity, of the glaciers as eternal, that is being mourned, making the glaciers mournable. Magnason's account is simultaneously deeply personal. He recounts his travels with his grandparents as they hiked glaciers in Iceland measuring their changing spa—a volunteer activity that a number of people have participated in. Thus eternity, long-term historical change and intimate family saga, all fall within the same view. An accompanying book that Magnason published the same year, titled *On Time and Water* (*Um tímann og vatnið*), expands this story. The book presents the effects of climate change as a fate completed, as if speaking already from beyond the grave. The nature of water on Earth, it says, *will* change fundamentally over the next hundred years, glaciers *will* melt. Magnason dedicates the book to his children, his grandchildren and his great grandchildren, that last of which, at least, are surely yet to be born. The ambivalences and the internal conflicts that can surface as nature is mourned, which Lertzman (2012) speaks about so powerfully, would appear to be at play in Magnason's book. The book serves as a call to arms while the battle is declared as already lost. The view is from a future already moving into eternity, as the eternity of the glaciers is lost.

[12] Magnason, Andri Snær. 2019. "The glaciers of Iceland seemed eternal. Now a country mourns their loss." *The Guardian*. August 14. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/14/glaciers-iceland-country-loss-plaque-climate-crisis

At the start of the walk up to Ok for the memorial ceremony, participants were asked to show "reverance and humility"[13] while they walked towards their destination.[14] When participants reached the disappearing Ok, they observed a "moment of silence." A glaciologist brought "a death certificate [...] noting [Ok's] [...] passing."[15] Eulogies to the "dead" glacier were read and Iceland's Minister of the Environment and Prime Minister both spoke.

The PM's speech had been published the day before in *The New York Times* with the melancholic title "The Ice is Leaving". In her article, the prime minister characterised the Ok event as a "local ceremony" but a "global story."[16] Indeed, news about the event swept through the international media, which framed the event even more firmly within discourses of death, loss and mourning. Some of the headlines in the media read: "Glacier is dead",[17] "Iceland glacier dies, so people hold a funeral for ice",[18] "Iceland holds funeral for giant glacier that melted after record heatwave",[19] "Iceland to Unveil a Plaque Dedicated to Okjökull, the First Glacier Killed by Climate Change",[20] "Iceland is mourning a dead glacier – how grieving over ecological destruction can help

[13] McCaig, Amy. 2019. "Lost glacier to be honoured with memorial monument." Rice News. July 18. https://news.rice.edu/2019/07/18/lost-glacier-to-be-honored-with-memorial-monument/.
[14] Johnson, Lacy M. 2019. "How to mourn a glacier." *The New Yorker*, October 20. (https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/how-to-mourn-a-glacier)
[15] Quiroz, Vanna. 2019. "Scientists bid farewell to first Icelandic glacier lost to climate change." August 18. CBS News. (https://www.cbsnews.com/news/scientists-bid-farewell-to-first-icelandic-glacier-lost-to-climate-change-today-2019-08-18/?fbclid=IwAR3NetB7qrSv3zQBcIBdtnzJQXFf8lL1JjDo4RfsjHymA51pZmtTRECz7fI). The "death certificate" was, however, several years old, issued in 2014 and part of a scientific monitoring of the statuses of natural phenomena like glaciers. The Meterological Office had already issued a list of 57 glaciers that had vanished. See also https://www.icelandreview.com/news/nasa-highlights-ok-glacier-disappearance-on-satellite-photos/?fbclid=IwAR3gla521rouOfLt_5EtEIjeYRBAhLuolvhhO8JbjrAZnJfd6nZs9MxpYlo
[16] Jakobsdóttir, Katrín. 2019. "The Ice is Leaving." *The New York Times*, August 17. (https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/17/opinion/iceland-glacier-climate-change.html).
[17] *Washington Post* (https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?destination=%2Fclimate-environment%2F2019%2F07%2F25%2Fglacier-is-dead-now-monument-tells-future-visitors-whose-fault-it-was%2F%3Ftid%3Dss_fb%26utm_term%3D.a721a1b39bcc%26fbclid%3DIwAR1Pqqka8Gc1VVt-ubF7C_ddyOXtrh0EFX9LnR4682iYmxMn1K6TAADkvyg&fbclid=IwAR1Pqqka8Gc1VVt-ubF7C_ddyOXtrh0EFX9LnR4682iYmxMn1K6TAADkvyg).
[18] Borenstein, Seth. 2019. "Iceland glacier dies, so people hold a funeral for ice." August 19. *Stuff* (https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/climate-news/115097076/iceland-glacier-dies-so-people-hold-a-funeral-for-ice).
[19] Perrone, Alessio. 2019. "Iceland holds funeral for giant glacier that melted after record heatwave." August 19. *The Independent* (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/iceland-glacier-funeral-memorial-climate-change-arctic-okjokull-a9064916.html)
[20] Pirnia, Garin. 2019. "Iceland to Unveil a Plaque Dedicated to Okjökull, the First Glacier Killer by Climate Change." August 1, Mental Floss. (http://mentalfloss.com/article/590874/plaque-for-okjokull-first-glacier-killed-by-climate-change-iceland).

us face the climate crisis."[21] The language used here clearly personifies Ok: Ok dies, or is killed, and he is mourned. In the process, at times Ok comes to stand in for all other glaciers, it seems, and other losses brought about by climate change. At other times Ok specifically is placed amongst the "grievable" in contrast to the ungrievable (Butler 2004 and 2009). The glaciologist Helgi Björnsson articulated the distinction between named victims and the nameless collateral damage that serves to dramatise Butler's notion so clearly. He said: "Several other small glaciers on mountains just reaching above the snowline have disappeared, most of them had no name ... but Ok was known to everyone, and therefore we miss it."[22]

Ecological grief and *solastalgia*: or the unappeased yearning for a return

The event at Ok inspired another similar event in the Glarus Alps, Switzerland, when in September 2019 dozens of people participated in a commemorative "funeral march" for the disappearing Pizol glacier.[23] It would appear that people are responding to Cunsolo Willox's (2012) call and starting to publicly mourn their ecological losses. The importance of mourning ecological losses has recently found expression in public discussions in Iceland.[24] Indeed, the notion of ecological grief has emerged as a key term in the literature on climate change and society. Ecological grief refers to the emotional reactions people may have as a consequence of the losses in their environment brought about by climate change (Cunsolo Willox 2012; Cunsolo Willox and Ellis 2018, 275; Randall 2009). Cunsolo Willox and Ellis suggest that it remains an understudied and unacknowledged phenomenon, a disenfranchised grief in other words. It is "the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species,

[21] Read, Rubert. 2019. "Iceland is mourning a dead glacier – how grieving over ecological destruction can help us face the climate crisis." August 21. *The Conversation* (http://theconversation.com/iceland-is-mourning-a-dead-glacier-how-grieving-over-ecological-destruction-can-help-us-face-the-climate-crisis-122071).

[22] Piccoli, Sean. 2019. "Iceland is Mourning The Death Of A Glacier With A Message To Earth's Future Inhabitants." *Medium*. August 22. (https://medium.com/@cleary_37690/iceland-is-mourning-the-death-of-a-glacier-with-a-message-to-earths-future-inhabitants-77f1e4889a6a).

[23] "Pizol glacier: Swiss hold funeral for ice lost to global warming." 2019. BBC News. September 22. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-49788483).

[24] Hjálmar S. Ásbjörnsson 3rd October 2019. "Óþægilegar upplýsingar." https://www.visir.is/g/2019191009531/othaegilegar-upplysingar

ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change" (Cunsolo Willox and Ellis 2018, 275). Similarly to Cunsolo Willox (2012), who seeks to mobilise the work of mourning for efforts to combat climate change, Randall (2009) stresses the need to acknowledge and work through ecological grief in the same way as any other grief. She suggests that reluctance to do so may hinder efforts to tackle climate change so that the refusal to deal with ecological grief may serve to increase losses caused by climate change and hence ecological grief in turn. She says: "When loss remains unspoken, neither grieved nor worked through, then change and adjustment cannot follow" (2009, 3). Randall draws on Freud's "Mourning and melancholia" and the idea that mourning can involve the loss of many things and not just other humans. Randall (2009, 17) draws parallels between grief understood in relation to the loss of human life and ecological grief. The necessary tasks of grieving, she suggests, are the same, and only when they are carried out can climate change be dealt with "using all of our creativity, reason, feeling and strength."

While fully supportive of the efforts to combat climate change that the mourners of Ok, Randall and Cunsolo Willox and others have gone to, we want to draw on Lertzman's work (2012) which brings to light the psychological complexities that may complicate efforts to mobilise ecological grief to combat climate change. One source of such complication, Lertzman notes, is the many different things that are possibly mourned at the same time, the 'multitude' implicated in any loss. Here we want to establish a link, a debatable link to be sure, between ecological grief and the notion of 'solastalgia'. In 2005, the philosopher Glenn Albrecht coined the term *solastalgia* to capture an experience that he saw as increasingly common while not adequately represented by existing theoretical vocabulary. The word might be familiar to readers of the recent scholarship in cultural memory. Bringing together, as it does, the Latin word *sōlācium*, comfort, and the Greek *-algia*, pain, *solastagia* resembles the now established English term nostalgia. In *Ignorance*, Milan Kundera (1993) noted that the "Greek word for '*return*' is nostos. *Algos* means 'suffering'. Nostalgia is the suffering caused by an unappeased yearning to return" (Kundera 1993, 3; see also Boym 2001). In current

English usage, nostalgia would be described as the unappeased longing for a return to the past, to home, or even homesickness. Drawing on but differing from this understanding, solastalgia can be described as a longing for a home that one has in fact not left. It is a yearning for a home changed beyond recognition by natural disasters or war. In particular, solastalgia refers to the pain experienced as the home in which one's livelihood and identity was rooted, or routed as some would have it, is transformed, even destroyed by environmental change brought on by climate catastrophes (Albrecht 2006, 35).

We want to dwell a little bit longer on the part played by the yearning for a return in solastalgia and nostalgia. Georges van den Abbeele (1991) has spoken of "the journey" as an important metaphor in western thought, evident, just to give one key example, in the place afforded to the epic of Odysseus as a foundational text in western civilisations. van den Abbeele says that in the western imaginary, the journey is construed as a transformative undertaking, an ordeal of sorts through which the traveller undergoes something like a rite of passage before returning home. This notion of the journey implies the idea of home, in particular of a home untransformed, home as it was when the journey began, home unchanged to underscore the transformation the traveller undergoes during their journey. It would appear that the assumption of an unchanged home is the necessary precondition for the yearning for that very home one has not left. If that is the case, then solastalgia, it might be suggested, starts to evoke melancholia rather than, or at least as much as, mourning—the refusal to accept the loss and to mourn it fully. That suggestion might be taken as an opportunity to examine the mourning of Ok more carefully in light of Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia.

Mourning, melancholia, modernity and the more than human

Jonathan Flatley (2008) has noted, in his recent reading of Freud, how modernity as an idea and an experience is fundamentally constituted by a sense of loss. Modernity signals a break with and the loss of the past. "Modernity", Flatley reminds us, comes from the word *modernus*, meaning "of today". Modernity implies a sense of anteriority, it suggests

a time consciousness that is "not oriented toward repeating cycles or the promises of divine eternity, but a temporality that was linear, sequential, irreversible" (Flatley 2008, 28). It is a temporality that rejects the possibility of a return. Thus "modernity signified an epochal shift, the sense that we live in a historical moment that in its totality is somehow categorically different from the periods that preceded it" (Flatley 2008, 28). Modernity also signalled "the subjective experience of such a difference: the feeling that one's own experience of the present is contingent, fugitive, and fleeting" (Flatley 2008, 28).

Flatley (2008, 29) points out that "modernity and loss would seem to be inextricably linked: to be 'modern' is to be separated from the past ... that modernity signals nothing more or less than the impulse to declare the difference of a present moment in respect to the moments that preceded it...". Flatley (2008, 2) argues in this context that Freud's work should not be seen as an attempt to improve our understanding of mourning and melancholia, as Freud surely presumed, but rather that it provides "an allegory for the experience of modernity, an experience [...] that is constitutively linked to loss".

What precisely is this link between mourning, melancholia and modernity? In "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud explains that mourning "is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (Freud 1957 [1917], 243). Mourning for Freud is natural, necessary, healthy. According to Freud (1957 [1917], 245), mourning is a long and laborious process of disattaching "each one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object"—object here signalling potentially anyone or anything outside the self, the subject—that has been lost, so that the attachments and the emotional energy they carry can be invested again in new relations. When that process is complete, the mourning is done but while the disattachment is being carried out, "the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged" (Freud 1957 [1917], 245). That is, the work of detachment requires a temporary "hallucinatory wishful psychosis" in which the mourner must pretend that the

object is still there. Only in that way can the mourner detach themselves from the loved object. This happens through identification, the process whereby I replace the departed other by identifying with that other, and thus replacing it from within. In this the departed other becomes a part of me, or as Diane Fuss (1995, 1) has put it: "By incorporating the spectral remains of the dearly departed love-object, the subject vampiristically comes to life". While situated specifically in mourning, identification is posited more generally in psychoanalysis as "the psychical mechanism that produces self-recognition. Identification inhabits, organizes, instantiates identity", it is "the detour through the other that defines a self" (Fuss 1995, 1).

People clearly mourned many different things when they mourned Ok. A general process of reverse identification has taken place whereby the glacier is constituted as a being of human-like qualities and is thus made grievable. For others, Ok clearly speaks to more specific aspects of identity, more distinct desires of return. But what of melancholia then?

Freud saw the *self-critical*, *self-deriding* aspect as the unique feature of melancholia. He said:

> The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment (Freud 1957 [1917], 244).

This "lowering of self-regard" happens because of a splitting in the self, the subject, whereby "one part of the ego sets itself over against the other, judges it critically, and, as it were, takes it as its object" (Freud 1957 [1917], 247). Crucially, Freud argues that the criticism of the self is really a criticism of the loved object that has been lost, criticism effectively for abandoning the ego, transferred to the ego. In mourning, as noted above, emotional energy is eventually withdrawn from the lost loved object and invested in another loved object. In melancholia, when the process of mourning has failed, the now free libido is not invested in another object but drawn into the ego (Freud 1957 [1917],

249). How does this happen? Freud argues that in mourning the emotional tie between self and the object is replaced by an identification with and internalization of the lost object. This is to allow the wish hallucination necessary for the ego to work through their memories of the loved one and should last only until the work of mourning is complete and the ego is able to invest emotional energy in another loved object. In melancholia, however, the emotional energy attaches to the ego itself. The identification that ego makes with the lost loved object is prolonged with the abandoned object effectively creating a split within the ego. Melancholia is thus mourning gone wrong. The shadow of the object falls upon the ego, and the internalised object sits in judgement of the ego. Thus "an object-loss is transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification" (Flatley 2008, 46). While Freud sees "mourning ... as a kind of libidinal decathection from the lost object," he suggests that "the melancholic internalizes the lost object into his or her very subjectivity as a way of refusing to let the loss go" (Flatley 2008, 46). Thus, as Eng and Kazanjian have put it, as "a psychic entity, the ego is composed of the residues of its accumulated losses" (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 4).

What bearing may this reading of Freud have upon how we understand the mourning of Ok? The mourning of Ok is a complicated mourning for many things. It speaks to spectacular future losses and the most minute personal yearning. Is this mourning or melancholia? Is Ok a loss mourned in such a way that new attachment can then be formed? Our answer is that it would appear so, but what is melancholic, we suggest, is the ceaseless desire for mourning. We conclude by fleshing out our reasoning here.

Concluding remarks

Our intention in this paper has of course not been to question in any way the experiences of those who suffer from ecological grief. It has not been, either, to question or even assess the call to mobilise mourning to galvanise efforts to combat climate change in general or in relation to the mourning of Ok in particular. We have nothing but

admiration for the efforts we have documented so very briefly here. What we have hoped to do is to speculate on what the mourning of Ok tells us about the current history of death in the western world.

We began this paper with the suggestion that death studies themselves are founded in a moment of loss, in a process of mourning. The work of Gorer and Ariès is redolent with a longing for a closeness with death, dying and grief that they claim used to exist but does no longer. One could say that the foundational object of death studies is thus not death as such, but rather the absence of death, even its absent presence, death as a haunting. The impact of death studies in the western world has been to inform and mobilise efforts to establish greater closeness with death. We could go as far as suggesting that inherent in death studies has been a drive for the recognition of grief, whatever causes it and whatever form it takes. Mourning the loss of natural landscapes is a continuation of the extension of griveability that death studies has informed. That is explicitly the call issued by Cunsolo Willox (2012) and others. It is in this context that we place the mourning for Ok. However, there is another context here too. Theoretical shifts in philosophy, social sciences and the humanities more generally, happening over the last three decades or so, have worked against assumptions of human exceptionalism. In line with new materialisms and actor-network-theory, the argument is now oft the times that agency is not an exclusively human capacity. Most fundamentally, this theoretical development seeks to undermine the distinction between subject—essentially human—and object, understood to be a cornerstone of western ontological assumptions and epistemological practices at least since Descartes. Indeed, this distinction, this separation is understood as the founding moment of "modernity", the disenchantment of the world, the reduction of the world to a mechanism subject to natural laws, and the elevation of society or culture as the human sphere of singular agentive capacity (Holbraad 2011; Blok and Jense, 2019). Latour's (1993) claim that we have never been modern rests on the argument that the distinction between subject and object does not hold, has never held but for the very effort necessary to make it hold, effort that inevitably, at the same time, shows the impossibility of what it seeks to achieve. It is

significant that the mourning for Ok was instigated and organised by social scientists. The possibility of mourning Ok involves, as the examples we brought forward seem to show, the personification, the humanisation of the glacier.

Social sciences and the humanities have already mourned the loss of traditions, languages, cultures, and, in the narrower form of death studies, the death of death. These are the sciences that lately have sought to do away with the distinction between subject and object, human and non-human in part in order to combat the losses brought about by climate change. It is here that we find Flatley's (2008) reading of Freud particularly useful. Modernity is itself constituted by a sense of loss, by the sense of a past now inaccessible, by a yearning for that which has been irrevocably lost, that which cannot be returned to. Modernity is what makes a return impossible, and the timelessness of eternity all but unthinkable. That sense of loss, the incorporation of that which is understood to have been lost, is constitutive of contemporary subjectivities, Flatley argues. The mourning of Ok is clearly a complicated, multi-faceted mourning for many things. It is mourning that in some cases signals a yearning for a return. But is the mourning of Ok simply mourning or also melancholia? Is it a loss mourned in such a way that new attachment can then be formed, or is it loss that cannot be overcome? Our answer is that it would appear that Ok has been and is being mourned, but, following Flatley's reading, what is melancholic is the ceaseless mourning, the desire for further things to mourn. The mourning of Ok shows us its own particular moment in the present history of death: in claiming that we have never been modern by moving beyond the subject-object distinction, we are at our most modern in being subjects who mourn. We mourn, therefore we are. That is our melancholia.

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ARTICLE

VERTAISARVIOITU
KOLLEGIALT GRANSKAD
PEER-REVIEWED
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A New Urban Modernity? George Bernard Shaw's Written Recollection of His Mother's Cremation.

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Abstract

In a letter, written on Saturday, February 22, 1913, the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw described to his actress friend Stella Campbell the eventful day of his mother's funeral and cremation at Golders Green Crematorium in London. From Shaw's recollection, two intertwined aspects of his experience emerge. One is internal—intellectual and emotional—and the other is external, informed by the environment in which this funerary experience took place. By retracing Shaw's steps, this article questions the extent to which his recollections of the spatial qualities of the crematorium, London's emerging metro system, and the newly planned suburb were signs of a new urban experience. I discuss the changing space of the city in the early twentieth century by drawing on urban history, death culture, and architecture. The intention is to highlight how these elements—transport, crematorium, and suburb—all embodied the notions of order and efficiency, which promised a new idea of urban living in early twentieth-century London.

Shaw's Letter to Stella Campbell, Saturday, February 22, 1913, Full Text

> Why does a funeral always sharpen one's sense of humour and rouse one's spirits? This one was a complete success. No burial horrors. No mourners in black, snivelling and wallowing in induced grief. Nobody knew except myself, Barker and the undertaker. Since I could not have a splendid procession with lovely colours and flashing life and

triumphant music, it was best with us three. I particularly mention the undertaker because the humour of the occasion began with him. I must rewrite the burial service; for there are things in it that are deader than anyone it has ever been read over, but I had it read not only because the person must live by his fees, but because with all its drawbacks it is the most beautiful thing that can be read as yet. And the person did not gabble and hurry in the horrible manner common on such occasions. With Barker and myself for his congregation (and Mamma) he did it with his utmost feeling and sincerity. We could have made him perfect technically in two rehearsals, but he was excellent as it was, and I shook his hand with unaffected gratitude in my best manner.

I went down in the tube to Golders Green with Barker, and walked to the crematorium; and there came also the undertaker presently with his hearse, which had walked (the horse did) conscientiously at a funeral pace through the cold; though my mother would have preferred an invigorating trot. The undertaker approached me in the character of a man shattered with grief; and I, hard as nails and in loyally high spirits (rejoicing irrepressibly in my mother's memory), tried to convey to him that this professional chicanery, as I took it to be, was quite unnecessary. And lo! it wasn't professional chicanery at all. He had done all sorts of work for her for years and was actually and really in a state about losing her, not merely as a customer, but as a person he liked and was accustomed to. And the coffin was covered with violet cloth—no black.

At the passage "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," there was a little alteration of the words to suit the process. A door opened in the wall; and the violet coffin mysteriously passed out through it and vanished as it closed. People think that door is the door of the furnace; but it isn't. I went behind the scenes at the end of the service and saw the real thing. People are afraid to see it; but it is wonderful. I found there the violet coffin opposite another door, a real unmistakable furnace door. When it lifted there was a plain little chamber of cement and firebrick. No heat. No noise. No roaring draught. No flame. No fuel. It looked cool, clean, sunny, though no sun could get there. You would have walked in or

put your hand in without misgiving. Then the violet coffin moved again and went in, feet first. And behold! The feet burst miraculously into streaming ribbons of garnet-coloured lovely flame, smokeless and eager, like pentecostal tongues, and as the whole coffin passed in it sprang into flame all over; and my mother became that beautiful fire. The door fell; and they said that if we wanted to see it all through, we should come back in an hour and a half. I remembered the wasted little figure with the wonderful face and said "Too long" to myself, but we went off and looked at the Hampstead Garden Suburb (in which I have shares), and telephoned messages to the theatre, and bought books, and enjoyed ourselves generally.

The end was wildly funny: she would have enjoyed it enormously. When we returned we looked down through an opening in the floor to a lower floor close below. There we saw a roomy kitchen, with a big cement table and two cooks busy at it. They had little tongs in their hands, and they were deftly and busily picking nails and scraps of coffin handles out of Mamma's dainty little heap of ashes and samples of bone. Mamma herself being at that moment leaning over beside me, shaking with laughter. Then they swept her up into a sieve, and shook her out; so that there was a heap of dust and a heap of calcined bone scraps. And Mamma said in my ear, "Which of the two heaps is me, I wonder!"

And that merry episode was the end, except for making dust of the bone scraps and scattering them on a flower bed.

O grave, where is thy victory?

(Dent 1952, 72, 74)

Introduction

On the evening of Saturday, February 22, 1913, George Bernard Shaw wrote to his friend Stella Campbell[1] a recount of his mother's funeral and cremation, which had taken place earlier that day at Golders Green Crematorium in North London. Shaw's letter is a rare written recollection of cremation by a writer and public figure. In it, precise descriptions of the funeral service and cremation processes conjure powerful visual images that are both evocative and emotionally loaded. Alongside this, Shaw also captured the spatial transformation taking place in London at the time: the metro transport network, the capital's first crematorium, and a newly planned suburb. The aim of this article is to analyse two intertwined aspects emerging from Shaw's letter. One is his internal journey, emotional and intellectual. The other is his physical—or spatial—journey across the city to the suburbs, its buildings, and spaces. The objective is to learn, through Shaw's account, how the built environment, emerging in the suburbs of London, integrated death in the urban life of the city, in a new and unprecedented way.

The playwright captured on paper the intensive dynamism of his day, which was punctuated by movement. Shaw travelled from home to the crematorium in Golders Green by public transport, entered the public-facing chapel and the hidden cremation furnace area, visited the Hampstead Garden Suburb, then, later on, proceeded to Oxford by motorcar. This dynamic movement between locations was made possible by mechanical innovations (metro transport system and motorcars) that emerged at the time, broadening the urban experience beyond the local sphere. The newly established Underground Electric Railway Company of London was starting to connect outer suburbs to the city centre. Golders Green station was opened in 1907 and was part of the Charing Cross, Euston, and Hampstead Railway also known as the Hampstead Tube. Golders Green Crematorium was a relatively new building, as it was opened in 1902. The mechanical processes adopted for the cremation of human remains made it efficient and precise, faster, and hygienically cleaner than the traditional earth burial. The

[1] The passionate yet platonic friendship of the two, dating back to 1912, is documented by an extensive exchange of letters (Dent 1952).

new, neighbouring Hampstead Garden Suburb started to get implemented in 1906 and was still in construction in 1913.

Shaw's mother, Lucinda Elizabeth Shaw (née Gurly) was 83 when she died in February 1913. Shaw was 57 at the time. He lived with her in Fitzroy Square (Fitzrovia, London) until 1898, when Shaw married Irish political activist, fellow Fabian and co-founder of the London School of Economics (LSE) Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend, and moved to 10 Adelphi Terrace (Gibb 1990, 428; Dent 1952, 72). About his relationship with his mother Shaw once said: "We lived together until I was 42 years old, absolutely without the smallest friction of any kind, yet when her death set me to thinking curiously about our relations, I realised that I knew very little about her" (Dent 1952, 72). At the time of his mother's death, Shaw was already a prolific writer and theatre reviewer, and throughout his life corresponded with friends and acquaintances. He is often described as a progressive thinker and supporter of social change aimed at eradicating inequality between classes and in favour of women's emancipation. He was an active member of the Fabian Society and a strong advocate of cremation. It is known that Shaw was also a proto-environmentalist and, in his writing and speeches, he advocated for green spaces in cities and public health connected with the air quality in urban areas (Dukore 2014).

According to his biographer Hesketh Pearson (2001, 338), Shaw had an innate passion for machines and knowing how things were made. Photography and image-making were one of his strongest passions. He kept photographic records of friends and locations he visited, as well as more experimental photographic studies that provide insight into his creative life and influences. With the development and availability of portable cameras, Shaw publicly promoted the medium and actively supported and influenced Modernist photography in the early twentieth century (Kearney 2010, 87–88). Shaw's image-making abilities complemented his writing skills, as the reader can experience in the letter to Campbell.

Shaw's life, work, and correspondence have been extensively studied and interpreted (Pearson 2001; Holroyd 1998; Laurence 1985), as has the history of

cremation (among others: Jupp 2006; Grainger 2005; Davies 1995) and Golders Green Crematorium (Grainger 2005). The Hampstead Garden Suburb and the history and the London Underground transport system have also been previously researched and studied independently mostly from the perspective of urban history (e.g. Mehalakes 2015; Kuster 2020; Bownes and Green 2008). This article, however, draws connections between all of them, as they cut across Shaw's experience of his mother's funeral and cremation. In addition to Shaw's letter, I include research and theoretical work by his contemporaries, who were also experiencing and writing about the changes London was undergoing at the time (Dennis 2008; Simmel 2006; Gorer 1965). I complement these sources with critical work that investigates the formation of space (Lefebvre 2009).

Shaw's letter documents the inner questions that he was faced with, as he visually and emotionally experienced the stages and processes of his mother's funeral and cremation. Shaw's tone and writing style are ambiguous and restless. He switched constantly between the objective and the subjective, and between the public and the private sphere. In some passages he adopted a more rational, journalistic voice, as if he was reviewing the events for a newspaper or magazine. In other passages, he appeared to be more reflective, introverted, and poetic. One is never quite sure which one is the "real" Shaw, and wonders whether he might have written the letter for himself, as a way to make sense of his own experience and to psychologically process his eventful day.

The emotional experience

Old and New

> Why does a funeral always sharpen one's sense of humour and rouse one's spirits? This one was a complete success. No burial horrors. No mourners in black, snivelling and wallowing in induced grief. Nobody knew except myself, Barker and the undertaker. (Dent 1952, 72)

The first few lines of Shaw's letter offer a sense of his contradictory feelings about what would have made his mother's funeral a perfect one, as well as the tension of not being able to change existing traditions that he wished to refuse. Shaw declared the funeral "a

complete success," as, in his view, it was free from the "horrors" of earth burial practices and the insincere "induced grief" of mourners in black, as "nobody knew" about the funeral. Shaw agreed to a Church of England service for his mother's funeral, even though they were both nonreligious (Dent 1952, 72). According to Pearson, one of the reasons that brought Shaw to select a religious funeral service was his wish to test its effect on himself (Pearson 2001, 337). He was deeply touched by the service. He wrote that "it is the most beautiful thing that can be read as yet." However, being a man of the theatre, he could not resist making suggestions for improving the clergyman's delivery of the actual service, so as to make the funeral technically perfect. One may question whether Shaw included this passage to make the events more visually engaging for Campbell, or to make an impression on her with his rhetoric.

Mourning practices in the early twentieth century were still entrenched in Victorian funerary traditions, which were mainly structured around earth burial practices. These were often a public display of private grief in the form of a funeral cortege, and later, at the cemetery, a display of privilege and social status, defined by elaborate gravestones or monuments. With the introduction of cremation, funerals were adapted to suit its processes. In the case of Shaw's mother, the horse-drawn hearse that transported her coffin was met by Shaw directly at Golders Green Crematorium, without any public cortege. This made the event private even if, by contrast, Shaw lamented not being able to have a "splendid procession with lovely colours" to contrast the Victorian traditions of using black for mourning.

Shaw was not alone in desiring change from Victorian societal conventions around mourning practices by means of embracing cremation. In the first decade of the twentieth century cremation was still associated with particular groups in society, such as non-religious free-thinkers, intellectuals and radicals (Holmes 1896, 270). An article titled "The Progress of Cremation," published in *The British Medical Journal* on February 25, 1911, stated: "Cremation is still almost entirely confined to the well-to-do classes, and the fact that interest in the movement is surely spreading among them is shown by the

number of inquiries on the subject addressed to the Cremation Society of England, and by the intellectual distinction or social position of the persons cremated" (448).

The article continued by making a roll-call of famous and great people,[2] from artists to writers and clergymen, who had been cremated since the crematorium at Woking first opened in 1895 and later Golders Green Crematorium in 1903. Despite the number of famous people that chose cremation in the early twentieth century, Shaw's letter is perhaps the only document that allows us to get an insight into the actual emotional experience of a funeral service and cremation at the time. Furthermore, through his writing we also get a sense of how the experience of his mother's funeral activated in Shaw an inner tension between liberal thinking and conservative forces.

Behind the Scenes

Shaw followed the coffin of his mother from the chapel to the cremation chamber: "I went behind the scenes at the end of the service and saw the real thing. People are afraid to see it, but it is wonderful" (Dent 1952, 72). Shaw was confronted with the technical processes of cremation, he captured with mesmerising intensity his emotional journey, and the physical transformation of his mother's corpse into fire. When Shaw entered the committal room he saw the coffin of his mother placed near "a real unmistakable furnace door" (Dent 1952, 72). Shaw also explained that people mistakenly think that the committal door in the funerary chapel is the door to the furnace. Unlike the chapel space, the committal room had a functional aesthetic that was not regulated by rituals but by technical processes, and, therefore, its aesthetics were rather functional and utilitarian. However, Shaw's description of the furnace is not technical but sensorial. In a passage he explained that there was: "No heat. No noise. No roaring draught. No flame. No fuel. It looked cool, clean, sunny, though no sun could get there" (Dent 1952, 72). Shaw could hardly believe that the clean and cool-looking space of the furnace was where the cremation of his mother was about to take place. The concealed heating system, the

[2] Among others: philosopher Herbert Spencer, author and historian Leslie Stephen (father of Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf), the founder of the Cremation Society Henry Thompson, physician and author Benjamin Ward Richardson, and Scottish poet and writer George MacDonald.

absence of flames and the glow of the heat, the efficiency and hygienic neatness were the opposite of the earth burial horrors despised by Shaw. Although the precise technology that controlled the furnace was not visible, its absence defined the experience of the furnace by making it visually "pure". The glowing and clean space of the furnace was "plain," non-decorated, functional and simple. Instead of the technology, it was the actual materials—cement and firebrick—that defined the aesthetics of the experience. Only in the moment the coffin was inserted in the furnace the fire revealed itself to Shaw's sight, "...and my mother became that beautiful fire" (Dent 1952, 74). Shaw's words marked the climax of his emotional experience and captured the transformation of his mother's corpse into fire, into something elemental and mystical, which had a sensorial intensity richer than the funeral service.

With Shaw's passion for technological processes, as well as laboratories and microscopes (Pearson 2001, 338), we may presume that he had wanted to see with his own eyes the actual cremation process. His mother's cremation was the first one he witnessed in person. The experience had a cathartic effect on the playwright and convinced him about the efficiency of the method. Indeed, it had such a deep impact on Shaw that he financially supported the establishment of new crematoria (Pearson 2001, 337–38). Shaw's support of cremation started while working on the Health Committee of the Borough Council of St. Pancras. In that role, he often visited hospitals, workhouses, and other institutions (Holroyd 1998, 235), and was, therefore, used to seeing and inspecting the behind-the-scenes workings.

Shaw's praise of the cremation process extended beyond his letter to Campbell, and to some extent also influenced his Fabian Society circle of friends, including H. G. Wells and Beatrice Webb, among others. For example, in 1927, at the funeral service of Catherine Wells at Golders Green Crematorium, Shaw encouraged his friend H.G. Wells to witness his wife's cremation. In a passage of his introduction to *The Book of Catherine Wells* (1928) Wells recalls:

> I should have made no attempt to follow the coffin had not Bernard Shaw who was standing next to me said: "Take the boys and go behind.

> It's beautiful." When I seemed to hesitate he whispered: "I saw my mother burnt there. You'll be glad if you go." That was a wise counsel and I am very grateful for it. I beckoned to my two sons and we went together to the furnace room. (Wells 2004, 42–43.)

Wells and Shaw both associated cremation with cleanliness, particularly when describing the spatial quality of the committal room, where the furnace is located. Wells' mention of cleanliness could be interpreted as environmental, particularly in the following passage:

> I have always found the return from burial a disagreeable experience, because of the pursuing thoughts of that poor body left behind boxed up in the cold wet ground and waiting for the coming of the twilight. But Jane, I felt, had gone clean out of life and left nothing to moulder and defile the world. So she would have had it. It was good to think she had gone as a spirit should go.
> [...]
> Then in a moment or so a fringe of tongues of flames began to dance along its further edges and spread very rapidly. Then in another second, the whole coffin was pouring out white fire. The doors of the furnace closed slowly upon that incandescence. It was indeed very beautiful. I wished she could have known of those quivering bright first flames, so clear they were and so like eager yet kindly living things. (Wells 2004, 42–43.)

Wells seems to suggest that cremation was the most appropriate way of disposing of his wife's remains and the one that best suited her character. In the descriptions of his experience of witnessing the moment his wife's coffin was pushed into the furnace he is poetic without being romantic.

Through his long life, Shaw experienced the cremation of friends and family members including his own sister, Lucinda Frances (in 1920) and also his wife Charlotte in 1943. These were very different experiences from the cremation of his mother. The cremation of Shaw's sister was not an intimate event: he found himself among a congregation of people he did not know and to whom he delivered an elegy. He also recalled that due to the shortage of coal, the glow of the furnace was feeble, and resembled the white light of a wax candle (Pearson 2001, 338). When in 1943 his wife

Charlotte died he again wanted to view the cremation process as he had for his mother and sister. However, he reported with disappointment: "But cremation is not what it was," and further lamented that "you can't see the body burned: it is a very unsatisfactory ceremony these days" (Pearson 2001, 490). Shaw and Wells associated a corpse in a coffin being consumed by flames with beauty. In both cases, their experiences proved positive and uplifting. Yet, depending on the psychological circumstances of the individual witnessing the scene, the sight of a coffin being consumed by flames could be shocking and traumatic, or perceived as a brutal act.[3]

Two Heaps of Ashes

> Then they swept her up into a sieve, and shook her out; so that there was a heap of dust and a heap of calcined bone scraps. (Dent 1952, 74)

For Shaw, seeing the crematorium workers handling the ashes of his mother was not as sublime as gazing at the coffin becoming fire in the cremation furnace. He was not physically present in the space where the ashes were prepared, but he was looking down into an opening in the floor from above. It feels as if Shaw was observing something he was not supposed to see, something that was not suitable, perhaps too unsettling for mourners to see. There is something almost photographic in the way Shaw described to Campbell the moment in which his mother's ashes were separated from the calcined remains and the "nails and scraps of coffin handle" were taken out. The crematorium workers were so busy with their task that they did not realise that they were being watched. The focus of the action is the table in a "roomy kitchen." Instantly, the otherwise sanitised spaces of the cremation room became associated with the domestic settings of a kitchen. The comforting analogies to the familiar and the lighter tone used by Shaw may be part of a coping strategy to deal with the unsettling sight of his mother's transformed corpse.

[3] In sharp contrast to Shaw's beautiful experiences, it is important to remember that in the year Charlotte Shaw died, mass killing and cremation of European Jews across German-occupied Europe were taking place.

In witnessing all aspects of the process, Shaw realised that cremation was not fully mechanised. The final stages, dedicated to the preparation of the cremated ashes, were carried out manually by the crematorium workers. In a passage Shaw mentioned that the last mechanised part of the cremation consisted in "making dust of the bone scraps" (Dent 1952, 74), by using a machine called the cremulator, which grinded the larger pieces of calcined bones into dust. Shaw stated that it was "wildly funny" to watch over the preparation of his mother's ashes. It may be that the situation triggered his sense of humour and comedic anti-climax. Perhaps one can also interpret Shaw's reaction as disenchantment, as by then all the mysteries of cremation had been revealed to him.

Beyond his personal and emotional experience, Shaw's written recollections make us reflect on the absence of visibility and, indeed, the absence of rituals (either religious or secular) in Western cremation practices. This is in contrast to cremation practices in Eastern countries such as Japan, China, and India, where the family and other mourners are present and actively involved in the process. There, mourners' participation is structured around specific rituals and traditions connected to the different stages of the cremation process, including the preparation of the ashes. Instead, cremation in the Western context was adopted mostly as a rational solution (Davies 1990, 7). It was designed to deal with the hygienically safe disposal of human remains in large cities, in a way that would not affect the public health of city dwellers as earth burial did in the nineteenth century (Jalland 1999, 249). By contrast, rural communities did not have to address the sanitary issues of overcrowding and shortage of burial space and thus retained stronger connections with death through earth burial practices (Jupp 1993, 169–173).

The spatial experience

The Journey

> I went down in the tube to Golders Green with Barker, and walked to the crematorium. (Dent 1952, 72)

At the time of his mother's funeral, Shaw was living in central London, near the Strand and Covent Garden. This was a convenient location for him as most of London's theatres

were (and still are) located in the surroundings. The closest Underground station to Shaw's house was Charing Cross, so most likely the playwright travelled from there to the crematorium. Golders Green station opened in 1907 and was, at the time, the northern terminus of the Charing Cross, Euston and Hampstead Railway (CCE&HR). The coming of the Underground to that part of London contributed to the development of the suburbs and the shaping of the capital's metropolitan areas (see Image 1). The transport infrastructure also helped to promote new housing developments in the nearby areas, including the newly planned Hampstead Garden Suburb (Mehalakes 2015, 29).

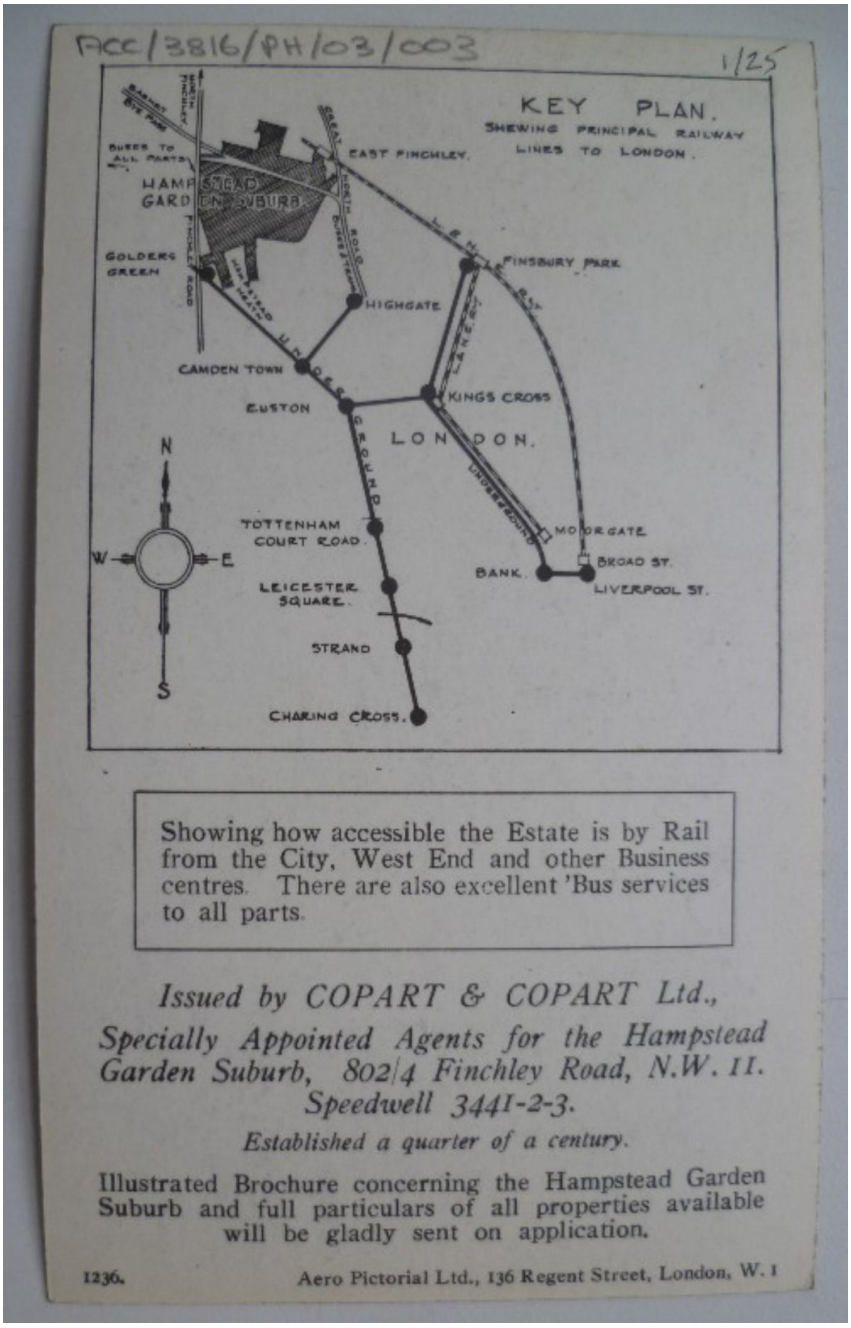

Image 1. Postcard: Transport links between Hampstead Garden Suburb and London. Hampstead Garden Suburb Archives Trust, 1914.

Shaw's journey by public transport from the city to the suburb is a testimony of the changes that were taking place at the time in terms of access to the city and the countryside. The expansion of the transport network into the semi-rural areas surrounding London provided an opportunity for urban dwellers to experience the countryside with its nature, open spaces, and fresh air. The walk

Shaw and Granville-Barker took from Golders Green's station to the crematorium must have felt like a stroll in the countryside, featuring views towards Hampstead Heath.

In the early twentieth century, the ideal of Arcadian pastoral harmony was actively promoted by the Underground Electric Railways Company of London Limited (UERL) through a programme of illustrated posters. The UERL commissioned artists and illustrators to stimulate the imagination of travellers, just like railway and cruise (and later air) travel posters promoted distant destinations (Mehalakes 2015, 28). The opening of new Underground stations particularly in northern areas of London, such as Golders Green, was already promising new prospects for the middle-classes that wished to escape the overcrowded urban city centre. Indeed, the expansion of the Underground lines helped to relieve London of the overcrowding and congestion that restricted the flow of movement on the streets of the capital (Hwang 2013, 75). The Underground Electric Railways Company of London poster programme promoted new suburban developments by shifting cultural assumptions about nature and by promoting new green spaces planned following modernist principles and aesthetics (Kuster 2020). Moreover, the posters suggested that the Underground provided fast and reliable connectivity and accessibility to both rural areas and the urban city centre. Londoners could benefit from both locations and live in the idyllic suburbs, but still be able to work in the city and access its amenities and entertainments.

Image 2. Poster: Golders Green. TfL - London Transport Museum Collection, 1908.

One of the early posters produced as part of the London Transport visual project was for Golders Green, in 1908 (see Image 2), which depicted an idealised version of the new developments taking place in the northern suburb. The posters made the areas desirable as they promised new homes, green spaces, and a healthier lifestyle. To make the poster even more evocative, it featured words by eighteenth-century poet William Cowper comparing the suburb to a sanctuary (Bownes and Green 2008). Cowper's poem served to link Golders Green to the romantic principles of eighteenth-century Arcadia, popular among English aristocracy at the time (Mehalakes 2015, 28). The arrival of fast public transport to Golders Green made the crematorium more accessible to Londoners. However, it is worth remembering that even when early Victorian suburban cemeteries were established on the outskirts of London in the 1830s, connectivity was considered a priority in order to make sure that the cemetery would be accessible to the public. This was the case of Kensal Green and Highgate cemeteries, connected via omnibus to the city centre. By the mid-1850s, Brookwood Cemetery was also connected to the city by a private railway station. Golders Green Crematorium was, however, the first to be connected to the city centre by a fast public transport system.

Metaphorically, the underground transport system made not only the space of the city more accessible, but also more democratic by allowing fluidity across the city in terms of geographical mobility but also across the class system in society (Hwang 2013, 72-3). The underground railway was a milestone of progress not only from an engineering and mechanical point of view but also because, by connecting the city to the suburbs, it opened to city dwellers new horizons of possibilities, aspirations and explorations beyond the urban space of the city. Victorian mechanised technologies and infrastructures such as the urban transport system were getting upgraded and expanded; when it started to be powered by electricity in 1902, it became technically more advanced than the railway. New and cleaner electricity was gradually adopted for lighting the streets, which contributed to further transform the experience of the urban space of the city. Although electricity was cleaner, it did not have any visible features of steam-powered engines.

Golders Green Crematorium

Shaw's descriptions of Golders Green Crematorium are solely related to its interior spaces, where the funeral and cremation took place. However, he briefly mentioned that he walked from the station to the crematorium. From a period postcard stamped March 5, 1912, and featuring Golders Green Crematorium entrance on Hoop Lane, we can get a sense of how the crematorium looked like at the time. One can clearly see in the distance the houses which are part of the planned Hampstead Garden Suburb and which overlook the crematorium's Garden of Remembrance. The postcard sender marked a spot on the postcard to show the location of their house: "our house is about where the x is" (see Image 3).

Image 3. Postcard: Golders Green Crematorium. Hampstead Garden Suburb Archives Trust, 1912.

As seen in the postcard above, there is a visual link between Golders Green Crematorium and Hampstead Garden Suburb. In fact, the site of the crematorium, on Hoop Lane, is close to Meadway Gate, one of the main entrances to the Suburb. The proximity between the station, the crematorium, and the newly planned suburb can be seen in the aerial photograph below.

Image 4 - Aerial photograph: Hampstead Garden Suburb. Hampstead Garden Suburb Archives Trust, *n.d.*

Indeed, proposing to reconfigure the disposal of human remains through man-made mechanised processes was challenging. The aesthetics of cremation needed to be configured in such a way that the technology was either hidden away or camouflaged. Therefore, many considerations informed the overall look of the crematorium, as well as the design of its interiors. This included the ante-chamber (or committal room) that Shaw mentions, which is the space between the chapel and the furnace room. In a book commissioned by the Cremation Society in 1931, Jones and Noble explain that:

> The ante-chamber should be designed, therefore, in keeping with the Chapel itself. All the appearances of the blazing furnace fire—the heavy iron door, the counterweights, and the necessary utilitarian appliances—should be removed or hidden so that those who are compelled to witness the committal probably for the first time, are not struck with horror and fear. All should be made peaceful and quiet. (Jones and Noble 1931, 10.)

Historical Archaeologist Lindsay Udall argues that the invisibility of the operations connected with the daily life of the cemetery was carefully thought through to uphold "the theatre of the funeral and the visitation of the graveside without interruptions of the realities entailed in the process" (Udall 2019, 257–258). Udall's interpretation is specifically related to earth burials taking place at Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol. However, her idea is also pertinent to the context of a crematorium, where there is a distinct separation between the spaces dedicated to rituals and processes. Access to those areas is regulated in different ways and the congregation is not able to move freely from one to the other. From a reader's perspective, Shaw's experience of the funeral and cremation of his mother offers a unique opportunity to understand those spatial qualities of the crematorium, as well as the restrictions and regulations that orchestrated the cremation rituals and its processes.

The implementation of a radical innovation such as cremation had implications not only on a socio-cultural level, but also in the actual physical manifestations of crematoria in the vicinity of cities. For Grainger, crematoria embodied the:

> expression of a movement that sought to provide a radical alternative to burial [...]. Cremation, therefore, called for a new building type, moreover one for which there was no architectural precedent. In that sense, the crematorium was analogous to the early-Victorian railway station. (Grainger 2005, 16).

Grainger argues that architecture had an important role to play as a mediator between the supporters and the sceptics of cremation. Architectural style came particularly into play during the commissioning process for Golders Green Crematorium, whereby the Cremation Society appointed the architecture practice George & Yeates to the task. According to Grainger:

> The choice of style was crucial. The London Cremation Company realised from the outset that a confident note had to be struck, especially after the criticism of Woking in 1888. Visitors would wish to take the leave of their loved ones in appropriate surroundings and the architectural style was paramount in creating the ambiance. While

> committed supporters of cremation looked for a dignified, but glorious departure, sceptics looked for reassurance. A delicate balance had to be struck. George & Yeates elected to adopt the Romanesque of twelfth-century Lombardy, where master masons had created a style which spread across north and central Italy. (Grainger 2005, 82).

With the Golders Green Crematorium example in mind, though, it seems evident that the selection of the architecture style underpinned the Cremation Society's desire to make cremation a commercial success before anything else. The project laid the foundation to make cremation accepted and eventually to become culturally normalised. The careful consideration was intended to strike a chord with the public at large and not only with a small social group or elite. The desire was not to keep cremation as a niche but rather to make it the main way of disposing of human remains in the years to come and throughout the twentieth century. Despite the complexities related to the technological aspects of cremation, Golders Green Crematorium was a success for the Cremation Society. Between its opening in 1902 and 1913, 3,556 cremations were carried out at Golders Green Crematorium—almost the same amount of cremations Woking had conducted since its opening in 1885. The figures for 1913 alone were 591, which made it by far the busiest of the 13 crematoria existing in England and Scotland at the time, followed respectively by Manchester with 149 and Woking with 125 cremations (The Progress Of Cremation 1913, 1279).

Hampstead Garden Suburb

> [...] we went off and looked at the Hampstead Garden Suburb (in which I have shares), and telephoned messages to the theatre, and bought books, and enjoyed ourselves generally. (Dent 1952, 74)

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust was initiated by Samuel Barnett and his wife Henrietta (philanthropists, social reformers, and members of the Fabian Society) in order to save Hampstead Heath from being exploited by commercial building speculators. Henrietta Barnett, in particular, had concerns about the provision of housing for the working classes, as well as a strong awareness of broader environmental

questions associated with the preservation of open spaces.[4] The Barnetts actively promoted and disseminated progressive urban planning ideas through the programme of lectures they ran at Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel, in which Shaw was also actively involved.[5] Hampstead Garden Suburb (see Image 5) was a pioneering experiment based on the theoretical principles of Ebenezer Howard's book *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (1898). The British urban theorist identified a new model of urban development that would bridge and combine urban and rural. There had been smaller-scale proposals by other philanthropists in Victorian London that attempted to test ideas in the emerging suburbs of the city in the second part of the nineteenth century.[6] However, the Hampstead Garden Suburb did not fully align with Howard's Garden City principles of detachment and independence. Raymond Unwin, the original architect and planner appointed to the project, aimed to "demonstrate that Garden City layout principles were equally valid for the suburban milieu." (Miller and Gray 1992, 46).

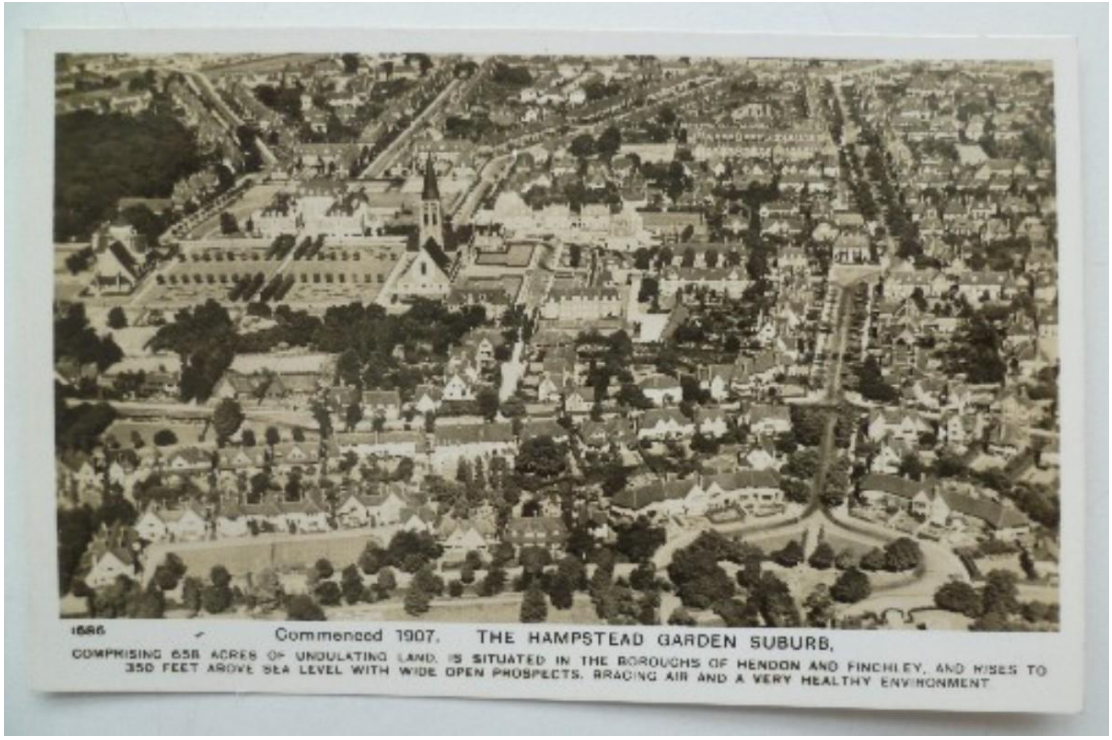

Image 5. Postcard: Aerial Photograph of Hampstead Garden Suburb. Hampstead Garden Suburb Archives Trust, *n.d.*

[4] This awareness emerged through her apprenticeship with Octavia Hill, one of the most influential Victorian women reformers that pioneered social housing in the second half of the nineteenth century (Miller 2002, 8).
[5] For example, in 1903 Shaw delivered a lecture as part of Toynbee Hall's 'Smoking Debates' entitled 'That the Working Classes are Useless and Dangerous and Ought to be Abolished' (Toynbee Hall Annual Report 1903, 24).
[6] Noteworthy examples include projects initiated by Octavia Hill (Southwark, Kensal Green), Sydney Waterlow (Highgate and various locations in East London) and the Artizans, Labourers & General Dwellings Company. The Artizans Company in the 1870s provided one of the largest numbers of new housing for the working classes living near the Kensal Green Cemetery and Kensal New Town, where laundries, small factories, and a large gas works plant were located (Amadei 2014, 96–100).

The novelty of Hampstead Suburb was how all the detailed aspects of its development were cohesively planned, from its architecture to the planting of trees and road layouts. Historically, London resisted any cohesive urban plans and, therefore, in the nineteenth century the growth of its metropolitan area was more organic and chaotic. Work on the Suburb's development started in 1906 and progressed in stages. However, the final results were far from the original ideals of providing a range of housing and street settings for people of all social classes, as the suburb instead proved to primarily attract the wealthy.[7]

The unprecedented growth of London through the nineteenth century urged a rethinking of its spatial arrangement and an upgrade of its infrastructures to accommodate these changes. The capital was the epicentre of cultural, intellectual, scientific, and technological life. However, along with material progress in the form of mechanical innovation, there was also social discontent and division. In his 1909 book *The Condition of England*, Charles Masterman denounced society for becoming more divided into rich and poor and for allowing material advances to supersede moral progress. He expressed his preoccupation for the complacent sense of security he perceived within society at a time when nations were gathering mechanised weapons of destruction for self-defence (Tuchman 1966, 382–83). It was in this tumultuous state of transition that the built environment of cities became a prominent stage upon which new modes of city life were redefining human relations, spatial arrangements, building typologies, transport, work environments, and public spaces. However, as Richard Dennis points out, "modernisation was not a straightforward replacement of the old for the new" but also involved a "revaluation of the old" as a counterpoint to the "truly modern" (Dennis 2008, 112).

[7] For example, the original philanthropic ideals that ignited the early development of the project were compromised by the economic uncertainties of the post-WWI period. The cohort of architects in the first phase included Edwin Lutyens, who contributed to the suburb with the design of the central square, which features both the church and institute by his design. The role of architectural consultant for the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust changed hands in 1915, when John Carrick Soutar took over from Raymond Unwin and kept Unwin's vision until his own death in 1951. Soutar contributed to the houses destined for the middle classes. These are the ones that give the suburb its identity in terms of street views and character in terms of materials and architectural features (Davidson 2015, 18).

The physical transformations that were taking place in London were affecting the psychology of urban dwellers. In his 1903 seminal essay "The Metropolis and The Mental Life," German sociologist Georg Simmel observed and contrasted the metropolis to the small town and rural life in order to understand the sensory foundations of psychic life. The experience of life in the metropolis in the early twentieth century was new and unprecedented and provided a powerful concoction of stimuli that influenced the psyche of urban dwellers. Simmel noted that, compared to individuals living in rural areas, city people developed a distinctive rationality and calculating character. This shift from emotional reactions to intellectualism was, in Simmel's view, "a way to preserve subjective life against the overwhelming power of metropolitan life" (Simmel 2006, 70). The combination of intellect, rationality, and money economy contributed to the formation of what he defined as the "calculating exactness of practical life" (Simmel 2006, 71–2). The technical precision of cremation processes suit the exactness of practical modern life that Simmel referred to in his essay. Cremation processes take place within a defined and controlled timeline, which is different from earth burial where the process is left in the hands of nature with less precise results.

Conclusions

Shaw's letter provides a rare and unusual written recollection of cremation by a writer and public figure. This record is a literary episode of social, anthropological and historical value. In Western cremation culture, witnessing the coffin being loaded into the cremation furnace—or seeing the remains being removed—is not common practice. Shaw's determination to experience the entirety of cremation processes provoked a series of emotional, intellectual and sensorial reactions that revealed his inner tensions in accepting cremation, as a new chapter in the history of death culture.

Through Shaw's letter, we see how the question of the dead is very much interlinked with the needs of the living. In his lucid and rational narrating voice, Shaw depicted in words a vivid sequence of images that punctuate his experience both of cremation processes and spaces (the journey by Underground, the crematorium, and a

visit to the suburbs). When examined in more detail, these images provide us with the opportunity to glance into Shaw's complex and multifaceted (objective, personal, rhetorical, rational, poetic) personality that we see emerging through his writing styles. His gaze had access to all spaces of the crematorium, from the public to the hidden. Whereas his attitude could be misunderstood as blasé or uncaring, his letter's rendering of the experience shows how deeply involved he was through his gaze and senses. Shaw superimposed his poetic narrative on to the rational functionality of the crematorium, which powerfully resonates with the complex questions of death. His description of what he saw has a vivid quality and, even with very few details, he captured the essence of space; as the actual cremation approaches, the description becomes even more minimal and precise and reaches its climax in the evocation of the cremation furnace. In a passage the playwright even imagined having a dialogue with his mother about her own ashes. The nature of the conversation bridged between the rational and the phenomenological, daydreaming and the supernatural.

Shaw's recollections are a testimony that change was indeed underway in early twenty-century London. The expansion of urban transport networks into the metropolitan areas, the crematorium, and the testing of some of the planning principles related to the Garden City Movement in the new suburban development at Golders Green,[8] give us a flavour of a new emerging connectivity between London's urban core and its suburbs. This condition was key to activate the development of London's metropolitan area and, by extension, redefined the experience of death and disposal in the context of the urban life of the city. Shaw's impressions also tell us that urban modernisation was increasingly facilitated by technology and mechanical processes that mediated life and death through order, precision and efficiency. Grasping the true nature and meanings of those innovative technologies was challenging, not only for Shaw, but more broadly for society.

[8] Hampstead Garden Suburb in 1914 was in the Borough of Hendon, Middlesex.

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ARTICLE

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Spiritual Care and the Artes Moriendi

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Abstract

Modern palliative care is holistic in its approach, aiming to assuage both the physical and emotional pain of the dying. Drawing on Dame Cicely Saunders's concept of "total pain," the NHS identifies four modalities of care: physical, social, psychological and spiritual. Of these, spiritual care poses a particular challenge. The bounds of spirituality are difficult to define in the modern world and it is well documented that healthcare workers are often reluctant to engage with patients on this level. This article draws on both medical and historical perspectives to see whether the historical literature of the *Ars Moriendi* (the Art of Dying) can furnish useful tools or frameworks for modern palliative medicine. Drawing on a selection of English examples from this tradition (mostly from the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries), it is suggested here that texts in this tradition often divided spiritual care into two, starting with a more palliative component, in which the fear of death itself was addressed, before moving on to a second, more positively religious stage, in which rituals and professions of faith were used to prepare the dying for their end. This, we suggest, may prove a useful distinction for modern medicine, helping to overcome reticence and clarifying the roles of different members of the care team in administering spiritual care.

Introduction

Acutely aware of their mortality, a "good death" has been the aspiration of humans throughout history. And it is no less the object of palliative care within the modern National Health Service. UK palliative care guidelines identify four areas of treatment central to obtaining the best possible result: physical, social, psychological, and spiritual (Department of Health 2008, 7). Of these, spiritual care remains one of the most challenging to administer. Unclarity in the definition of spirituality in a multicultural society and uncertainty respecting the responsibilities of different members of care teams has led to patchy administration of such care, as revealed by the *National Audit of Care at the End of Life* (NHS Benchmarking Network 2019, 49). This article offers some tentative suggestions based on an examination of how spiritual care was practiced in the past, specifically as articulated in some English examples of the late medieval literature of *Ars Moriendi* (the art of dying).[1] Examining these texts within the framework and through the objectives of modern palliative care, we suggest that a two-stage approach to spiritual care was a common feature of several medieval texts instructing readers on dying well. The first stage was a palliation of spiritual distress, which was a prerequisite for more specifically religious ministrations. This palliative stage made fewer religious demands of the dying, often drawing themes and material from classical and philosophical writing. This article makes the case that this two-stage or two-tier structure may help to clarify the role of healthcare operatives and facilitate more consistent coverage overall.

Though conceived of before the Covid-19 pandemic, this project gains urgency from the crisis within which it was written. *Prima facie*, a reflection on individual spiritual care in the midst of a crisis, the grievousness of which is conventionally expressed in terms of the mass of infections, recoveries, and deaths, may seem incongruous. At the time of writing, there have been, in the UK, 2,382,865 confirmed cases and 71,560 associated deaths (UK Government 2020). Yet, the scale of mortality combined with the exigencies of lockdown have led to a corresponding re-evaluation of how spiritual care

[1] For the purposes of this article, we will use the singular *Ars Moriendi* to refer to the tradition as a whole and the plural *Artes* to refer to the texts within it.

is provided. So many of the keystones of spiritual care, such as close contact with family and with chaplains are now highly restricted owing to the risks of infection transmission. In some cases, the disease has also required the adaptation of liturgy to the requirements of disease control; extreme unction must now be practiced with a cotton bud rather than a thumb (Mulgrew 2020).[2] With infectious disease opening up a gulf between the dying and the normal social avenues of spiritual care, and given the NHS commitment to providing spiritual palliation to the dying, it is more important than ever to reconsider the role of health-care providers and clinicians in its administration. This paper is emphatically not about spiritual care responses to the pandemic. However, it would be crass not to acknowledge the conditions under which such care must now (and almost certainly for many years hence) be practiced. The Covid-19 pandemic underlines the fact that spiritual care plans, like all forms of care, must be flexible and imaginative if they are to be effective.

There is a well-documented reticence among healthcare teams around exploring and engaging with patients' spiritual care (Department of Health 2008, 77). Spiritual care itself became part of the NHS's mission through the influence of the hospice movement, initiated in the 1960s by Cicely Saunders (1918–2005). Taking her inspiration from a religious institution, St Joseph's Hospice in Hackney, at which she worked in the 1950s and 60s, Saunders became convinced that hospitals could not provide the best end of life care. Since treatment and healing were at the core of hospital philosophy, the inevitability of death was frequently not accepted. Furthermore, the NHS, designed to deliver mass healthcare, was not set up to address the very individual spiritual and psychological suffering of the dying (Saunders 1963, 1346; Saunders 1964).[3] As such, her idea, which took hold in the 1960s, was to move terminal care to a different setting, the hospice, where treatment was built upon the pillars of the acceptance of death and

[2] This reworking of death liturgies recalls earlier reworkings of the last rites to manage the effects of disease. During the Black Death of 1348–50, the Avignon pope, Clement VI (1291–1352), granted remission of sins to all who died of plague, consecrated the river Rhone so that it could be considered holy ground (meaning, therefore, that bodies could be disposed of in it), and permitted confessions of the dying to be heard by laymen and women if a priest could not be found.

[3] Owing to the exigencies of lockdown, we were unable to secure a paper copy of this book. All references to articles in Cicely Saunders, *Dame Cicely Saunders: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) provide the 'location' number in the Kindle edition.

community support for the individual (Saunders 1965, 1700; Saunders 1967). Founding St Christopher's Hospice in 1967, Saunders revolutionised palliative care in the UK and the influence of her theories on the holistic diagnosis and relief of a patient's "total pain" is now felt throughout Europe and the world. Although the hospice movement, reacting against the depersonalising effects of modern medicine, initially broke away from the NHS, from the 1970s onward, the health service began to absorb hospice institutions and integrate the hospice movement's ethics into their own practice. By 1987, palliative care became a fully accredited speciality within the NHS (Lawton 2000, 17–18). The quadripartite definition of palliative care mentioned in the introduction—physical, social, psychological, and spiritual—was intended to summarise Saunders's own concept of 'total pain' (Saunders 1978). However, studies of patients and their families and anecdotal evidence tends to agree that while the first three modalities of care are well catered for, spiritual care is less clearly meeting patients' requirements. Surveys conducted as part of the first round of the government's *National Audit of Care at the End of Life* show that of all patient needs, spiritual and cultural wants were least well satisfied. A case note review of individual end of life care plans showed that spiritual needs were assessed only in 47% of cases, with 37% not assessed and 16% deemed not applicable for such assessment. Only 34% of respondents to the quality survey reported satisfaction with spiritual care.[4] The survey of terminal patients' families revealed a further gap in end of life care provision in the UK, with only 34% responding that their spiritual needs were taken into consideration (NHS Benchmarking Network, 2019, 43 and 49).

The reasons for this deficiency are manifold and mutually reinforcing. In the first case there is an inherent tension in integrating the highly individualised imperatives borrowed from the hospice movement with those of mass healthcare. In the UK, in 2016, only 5.7% of deaths occurred in a hospice setting compared to 46.9% in hospital; of the remainder, 23.5% took place at home and 21.8% in care homes (UK Government 2018). In spite of heroic efforts to do so, it is simply not possible to recreate the

[4] When asked whether "staff took into account his/her beliefs, hopes, traditions, religion and spirituality" 10% reported various degrees of patchy care, 8% none at all, 33% reported that the question was not applicable, and 14% responded that they were not sure.

conditions of hospice care where patient loads are so high (Lawton 2000, 20ff). Moreover, defining spiritual care is inherently difficult, as no uniform idea of its content exists, and the tendency to identify spirituality with religion frequently means that, apart from the chaplaincy team, most caregivers feel ill-prepared to administer spiritual care. Unlike physical care, which is methodical and follows established protocols, spiritual care and discussion is personal and fraught with uncertainty (O'Brien, Kinloch, Groves, and Jack 2019; Gijsberts, Liefbroer, Otten, and Olsman 2019). Furthermore, this type of care generally has less visibility than others—chaplains do not often work alongside the rest of the team in an integrated manner but instead operate in parallel with medical structures (Gijsberts, Liefbroer, Otten, and Olsman 2019, 13). Though it is widely accepted that nurses and healthcare assistants do much to spiritually support patients (by being present at the bedside, conversing about loved ones, expressing empathy) without their work being recognised as spiritual care *per se*, the lack of systematisation means that there remain gaps to be filled (Donesky, Sprague, and Joseph 2020).

The Ars Moriendi

In drawing on medieval and early modern literature, the so-called *Artes Moriendi*, for ideas about care of the dying, this article makes, emphatically, no claims about the relative merits of late medieval western Christianity as a system of belief. Nor does it subscribe to the nostalgia for premodern "tame death", as the French historian Philippe Ariès famously described it in his seminal 1977 work *L'Homme devant la mort*, translated into English under the title *The Hour of our Death*. For Ariès, in the medieval regime of "tame death", dying and burial were public and visible, eschatology, ritual and imagery combined to reconcile individuals with their mortality, and post-mortem rites of remembrance provided mortals with insurances against damnation (Ariès 1981). Ultimately, Ariès's judgement on the effectiveness of this "tame death" in taking away the fear and psychological stress of dying is more ambivalent than his critics have given him credit for. The association of death with original sin and divine judgement, he argued, meant that it:

> is never experienced [in the Middle Ages] as a neutral phenomenon... Resignation is not, therefore a submission to a benevolent nature of a biological necessity as it is today...rather it is the recognition of an evil inseparable from man (Aries 1981, 605).

Yet, his work is often taken as emblematic of an anti-modern longing for a golden era of safe or familiar mortality (e.g. Whaley 1981, 8). This nostalgic tone is certainly present in twentieth century efforts to reform palliative care. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, whose seminal work at the University of Chicago has informed palliative practice around the world, famously began her *On Death and Dying* with a childhood recollection of a farmer whose very traditionally managed death, surrounded by family and the village community, represented something of an idyll (Kübler-Ross 2019, 190ff).[5] Cicely Saunders likewise appropriated Ariès's work in support of the hospice movement (Saunders 1984, 3742ff). However, looking back on the medieval and early modern periods as eras of peaceful dying is misguided. There is plenty of evidence that efforts to subdue death through community involvement and religious ritual could result in a death that was anything but peaceful (Wunderli and Broce 1989, 268–9). Having a rigidly clear definition of the "good death" could be as painful and destructive as having none. The *Artes Moriendi*, therefore, are useful, not because they are exemplars of a period when death was disarmed but precisely because death was then (as now) perceived as frightening, difficult, and requiring coherent strategies to mitigate its most terrifying features. Though these strategies can never be reproduced in the present, they can, nevertheless provide points of departure and tools for reflecting on and informing modern practice.

Conventionally, *Ars Moriendi* or "the art of dying," refers to a loosely defined corpus of writings that instructed a reader on how to die well (see Beaty 1970; Atkinson 1992; Ruys 2014; Appleford 2015). The name itself probably derives from the title of the third part of the *Opusculum Tripartitum de praeceptis decalogi, de confessione et*

[5] References are to Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Scribner, 2019) Kindle edition location number.

de arte moriendi, written in the first decade of the fifteenth century by Jean Gerson (1363–1429), chancellor of the University of Paris (Rainer 1957, 65). This proved the inspiration for the anonymous Latin *Tractatus Artis Bene Moriendi*, compiled in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, which became one of the tradition's most popular and influential entries, and which was translated into English shortly after as *The Craft of Dying* (O'Connor 1942, 41ff; Comper 1917, 1–47). This was a text for those entrusted with the care of souls; it was essentially a commentary on the *Ordo ad Visitandum Infirmum* (the order for the visiting of the sick), a liturgy to be performed by a priest at the bedside of the dying (Duffy 2005, 313; Henderson 1874, 44*ff).[6] But *Artes Moriendi* are very diverse. Even among English examples, they range from texts closely linked to the formal worship of the church, like the *The Craft of Dying*, to manuals of private devotion like the *A Dayly Exercyse and Experyence of Dethe*, written by the Bridgettine monk Richard Whitford (c.1543). *Artes Moriendi* encompass a vast range of text genres, including, for example, dramatic dialogues set at the deathbed like the "dialogue with the vision of death" section, extracted from Henry Suso's (1295–1366) *Orologium Sapientiae*, and the anonymous English *Lamentation of the Dying Creature*, and epistles, such as Thomas Lupset's (c.1495–1530) *The Treatise of Dying Well*, ostensibly a letter written to his friend John Walker (Comper 1917, 105–124, 137–169; Lupset 1534).[7] Though the heyday of such writing was the fifteenth century, new *Artes* continued to be written well into the seventeenth century and beyond. Even the Reformation did not diminish the perceived utility of such manuals (Atkinson 1982). Protestant *Artes Moriendi*, such as William Perkins's (1558–1602) *A Salve for a Sicke Man* and Jeremy Taylor's (1613–1667) *The Rule and Exercises for Holy Dying*, continued to draw on the repertory of ideas established by the Catholic tradition even as they supplanted it in those areas where reform took hold (Perkins 1595; Taylor 1651). The longevity of some

[6] There were various forms of this service. The Surtees edition reproduces in its appendix the form that was current in most of the province of Canterbury during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which was printed in the 1506 edition of the Sarum *Manuale* (a handbook of services to be performed by priests).

[7] Lupset, incidentally, penned this letter just eleven months before his death from tuberculosis.

entries in the tradition was astonishing, with Christopher Sutton's *Disce Mori = Learn to Die*, originally published in 1600, reprinted as late as 1839 (Sutton 1839).

To discuss the *Ars Moriendi* inevitably means discussing texts, but to think it as simply a text genre is somewhat misleading. The themes and ideas of the *Ars* (such as the shortness of life, the immanence of divine judgement, and the need for spiritual preparation) suffused late medieval and early modern culture and society (Duffy 2005, 310ff.). The pre-eminence of prayer and liturgy, particularly the mass, as tools of intercession (by which a soul in purgatory could be relieved of its pains), led to a thriving marketplace for such intercessions, formalised in the very widespread institution of the chantry, in which a priest was endowed to perform masses on the behalf of one or more deceased persons. Virtually every parish had its religious guilds, which have been characterised (with some justice) as burial clubs (Daniell 2005, 19). Every church had its Bede Roll, a list of parish benefactors, read in its entirety four times a year so that parishioners could pray for dead (Duffy 2005, 334ff). This was a reciprocal transaction: the dead were expected, in their turn, to pray for the living. Indeed, the dead, so often present in the thoughts and practices of the living, with their own distinct rights and responsibilities, have been thought of by historians as constituting more an "age group" in medieval society than the permanently departed (Davis 1972, 332). The enthusiastic uptake of the aforementioned *Tractatus* across Europe may be demonstrated by the fact that it exists in more than three hundred Latin manuscript transcriptions, was translated into several European vernaculars, and was reprinted (under many names and with various abridgements) well over a hundred times across the continent, even before the close of the fifteenth century (O'Connor 1942, 1, 113ff and 133ff). Examples could be multiplied endlessly. In many ways, *Ars Moriendi* is better characterised as a tone than a genre of texts, and writers of potentially any kind could (and did) draw upon and engage with *Ars moriendi* themes. So, while drawing on the content of individual *Artes moriendi*, we must acknowledge the broader context of these ideas in the society in which they were formulated. They made sense as part of a culture where the discussion of personal death was not taboo. If there was any unifying message to the various *Artes*

Moriendi, it was that spiritual preparation should not be left until the deathbed. Borrowing from these texts with an eye to the care at the time of death alone means borrowing in quite a limited way. They were texts, in the main, for the living, rather than the dying.

The breadth of the *Ars moriendi* theme has a further consequence for this article: scale. There is simply too much and too varied literature for this short study to embrace it all. As sharp-eyed readers may already have guessed from the examples hitherto cited, our conclusions rest on a limited case study of English examples from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and will, therefore, reflect the particular inflections of the genre within the Anglophone world. This keeps the source base manageable, while still allowing us to identify patterns in the development of a particular branch of the tradition. While our conclusions may with further analysis prove true of other European *Artes moriendi* literatures, they cannot, for now, be said to be reflective of this genre *in toto*.

Modern Spiritual Care

The core questions of this study are, ultimately, shaped by a present-day imperative: Can *Artes Moriendi* offer useful frameworks for modern healthcare professionals thinking about the problem of "spiritual care"? As such, our objectives are structured by the necessarily nebulous, modern catch-all of "spiritual care." There is, inevitably, a risk of anachronism in applying such terminology to a period of relative (though certainly not absolute) religious uniformity. This is not, in itself, more of a problem than applying any other category from modern sociology. Yet it requires a self-reflexive approach to ensure that the answers remain historically valid. The patient-centred approach to care, expounded famously by Cicely Saunders and later by Kübler-Ross means that spirituality, effectively, has no content *per se*, other than what the patient chooses to admit (Saunders 1967 II, 2220). Though some tendencies can be identified, spiritual assessment can assume nothing about the patient in question.

The emphasis on individuality in modern, institutional conceptions of spirituality has led to a tension in thinking about palliative care: how can any definition of spirituality

balance this extreme individuality with the need to establish a working definition that, in turn, will permit the development of requisite competencies in healthcare staff? In an age of globalisation and multicultural societies, spirituality in a palliative care context must embrace a vast and dazzling panoply of human values, connections, and existential questions. A comprehensive, modern definition was formulated in 2011 by the European Association of Palliative Care (EAPC), a pan-European research and lobbying group founded in 1988:

> Spirituality is the dynamic dimension of human life that relates to the way persons (individual and community) experience, express and/or seek meaning, purpose and transcendence, and the way they connect to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, to the significant and/or the sacred (Nolan, Saltmarsh, and Leget 2011, 88).

The EAPC definition is slowly gaining traction as a European standard, appearing frequently in medical literature and being used by other medical research and policy bodies, such as the EU-funded EPICC Network, which ran from 2016 to 2019 and aimed to enhance spiritual care skills among nursing staff (See EPICC's Spiritual Care Education Standard). Yet, it is only one among many competing definitions with distinct emphases and functions. There is no space in this paper to summarise them, but a common thread running through these definitions is that spirituality must be thought to extend beyond religion to other sources of hope, values, and existential meaning. The inherent risk, however, is that a very inclusive definition of spirituality will lead to a kind of mission creep, in which spirituality becomes a catch all for everything that gives human life meaning or significance. Such a definition may prove unwieldy in practice. A 2020 EAPC white paper on multidisciplinary education for spiritual care added refinements to their model divided into existential considerations (such as questions of identity, suffering, and grief), value based considerations (the importance of family, work, nature, arts, and culture), and religious considerations (Best, Leget, Goodhead, and Paal 2020). What this reveals, perhaps more than anything else, is that modern spirituality is dynamic and cannot be thought of as fixed. It is an expanding and polymorphous arena of

discourse. The competencies, therefore, needed for spiritual care are much less prescriptive skills than they are values. As Carlo Leget (a leading member of the EAPC) argues, broad minded acceptance of diversity and acknowledgment of the multitude of imperatives structuring spiritual issues will be key to providing non-judgemental, patient-centred care (Leget 2017, 59ff).

It is ultimately, however, the integration of this theoretical work into care, as a whole, that matters. NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence), the public body responsible for issuing guidelines for medical practice in England and Wales, affirms the need for a "holistic needs assessment" with a spiritual component in its "End of Life Care for Adults" guidelines (NICE 2019), but no specific assessment tools or interventions are advocated. Elsewhere, there is more detail. A 2004 manual on end of life care for patients with cancer affirms the need for spiritual support in palliative care and advocates assessment of a patient's spiritual needs at key points in their journey, affirming patient dignity and adapting care to the patient's beliefs or philosophy. A multidisciplinary team including chaplains is recognised as being necessary to meet the breadth and complexity of spiritual requirements (NICE 2004, 95ff). Nevertheless, while objectives and responsibilities are clearly apportioned and recommended guidelines set out, the manual recognises the impossibility of completely formalizing spiritual care; much care, by its very nature, has to be informal and discursive (NICE 2004, 96). Full systematisation, the manual recognises, is neither possible, nor, in fact, desirable.

There is, moreover, a structural cause for variations in palliative care services. As mentioned, palliative care is itself a comparatively new speciality within the NHS. Though now made available to patients nationally (be it through community services, hospital specialists or hospices) palliative care services are (of necessity) not fully integrated into the health service. Death takes place in a variety of settings (hospice, hospital, care home or in the community). The health service, therefore, has only a limited capacity to prescribe or standardise its service provision in this area. Hospices, though relatively few people die in them, are a good example. Some are entirely funded by the NHS and integrated with other healthcare services, while others are partially or

fully charitably funded, allowing for some independence in their management. As such, though NHS palliative care aims to be standardised and able to provide for patients of all cultures and religious or secular backgrounds, more independent hospices may have a particular religious focus.

Creating tailored spiritual care packages requires spiritual assessment. Tools have been developed for use by medical practitioners. Two of the best known are the HOPE and FICA tools, both used in the NHS (Anandrajah 2001; Borneman, Ferrell, and Puchalski 2010). HOPE explores sources of **h**ope, engagement with **o**rganised religion, **p**ersonal spirituality or practices, and the **e**ffect of these beliefs on the individual's care or medical decisions. FICA is similar, exploring the individual's **f**aith or beliefs, its **i**mportance or influence in daily life, involvement in spiritual **c**ommunities, and preferences for how these beliefs should be **a**ddressed by the healthcare team. Both tools were developed for the teaching of medical students or training doctors with the aim of integrating the taking of a "spiritual history" which would fit alongside clinicians' other information gathering tools. They prioritise the information deemed important for the care of a patient and provide a route into a discussion about support systems. However, such tools are more commonly used in research than practice and there is some scepticism amongst UK physicians about their use with patients (Holloway, Adamson, McSherry, and Swinton 2011). Some of this resistance stems from concerns that spirituality is being 'medicalised' or boxed into categories, ignoring the importance of human connection between patient and carer in true spiritual care. This is indeed a challenge when aiming to deliver adequate spiritual care on a large scale alongside other health services. However, proponents would argue that the delivery of assessments through simple tools reduces the reticence of healthcare professionals and promotes widespread, standardised use by the whole team to ensure that patients have the opportunity to signpost their needs.

Fundamentally, however it is delivered, it is widely recognised that spiritual care must be responsive to patients' distress or their articulated needs and it must adapt to their particular backgrounds or beliefs. It cannot set out a "spiritual ideal" to guide

patients towards or a set of imperatives. Significantly, such treatment must be directed at the current episode of care. It does not attempt to advise individuals at any time prior to the palliative stage on how to optimise their "spiritual health" or to relate current practices to considerations of dying and the afterlife.

Modern Reinterpretation of the *Artes Moriendi*

Offering spiritual care in fifteenth and sixteenth century England, by contrast, meant something very different. The context for the care of the dying was not medical but religious. The role of the "carer," who might be a clergyman or a layperson, was to assist the dying person (or *moriens*) to fulfil their obligations, as mandated by ecclesiastical doctrine. These included practices such as the disposal of their estate, making peace with neighbours and family, performing a final confession of faith and receiving the last rites. Though such actions might take place in instances of modern spiritual care, the context was radically different. While *moriens* himself had some leeway in accepting or resisting certain aspects of the practice, the criteria for a good death were, notionally at least, fixed by ecclesiastical authority. This is not to say that there were no exceptions or that what we read about in the *Artes* accurately represents medieval and early modern dying. There is considerable evidence that popular opinions about death did not always match (and often conflicted) with those expressed in the *Artes* (Wunderli and Broce 1981). It is, rather, to say that the *Artes Moriendi* cannot speak directly to the universalism of spiritual care practiced by modern healthcare providers. They were rhetorical and instructional works in service of a particular theological system, with its own internal logic. Nevertheless, palliative care theorists have already begun to explore the possibilities of particular *Artes Moriendi* as a template for spiritual care and have already run up against this very problem (for a review of the literature, see Espi Forcén and Espi Forcén 2016). These explorations have, thus far, been few and tentative. Yet, some have shown promise, pointing the way to positive adaptations of palliative practice. Since 2003, Carlo Leget has developed what has become known as the AMM (Ars Moriendi Method) of spiritual assessment (Leget 2010 and 2017). This is based on a very popular abridged

version of the original *Tractatus Artis bene Moriendi*, which consisted mainly of its second chapter, on the temptations that afflict the dying (The first printed edition of this shorter version is reproduced in Rylands 1871). Rather than offering a framework of questions designed to elicit information on a patient's spiritual background, as is the case with most conventional assessment methods, the AMM method is looser, offering, primarily, a method for conceptualising spirituality and structuring a more spontaneous style of conversation. It envisages spiritual problems within a framework of five tension fields. These are autonomy, pain control, attachment and relations, guilt and evil, and the meaning of life (Leget 2010, 315–16). These Leget developed (and reordered) from the temptations (and the corresponding virtues needed to mitigate them) of the second chapter of the *Tractatus* (being the choice between doubt and faith, despair and hope, impatience and patience, complaisance and humility, and between avarice and charity). The aim is to develop an idea of an individual's spiritual landscape, which can provide directions for future care. Trialled in the Netherlands, the method has proven useful in overcoming healthcare professionals' reticence over provision of spiritual care; however, so far, trials have been limited and evidence of the method's effectiveness remains anecdotal rather than statistical (Vermandere, Warmenhoven, van Severen and de Lepeleire 2015, 299–300; Leget 2017, 191ff).

Leget's interest in the *Ars Moriendi* is structural, rather than contentual. For him, the strength of the *Tractatus* is the succinct clarity with which it pinpoints the themes of spiritual distress, reduced to five dyads within which *moriens*'s suffering is to be managed (Leget 2017, 43). Yet, in the *Tractatus* and its English translation, *The Craft of Dying*, each of those dyads is predicated on medieval soteriology. Take, for example, the third of the *The Craft of Dying*'s temptations, impatience, which may be thought of as the least theologically determined of the five, arising as it does from the pain of dying: "For they that be in sickness in their death bed suffer passingly great pain and sorrow and woe" (Comper 1917, 15). The author characterised *moriens*'s grudging of his suffering as a rejection of charity, which, as a theological virtue (as distinct from the practice of charitable giving), might best be characterised as the human reflection of God's

unconditional love. Impatience, here, is unwillingness to accept the theological necessity of suffering. Individual suffering was, in the end, God's will: whoever suffered willingly signalled his acceptance of divine judgement. The text's author, referencing an *exemplum* (a story used in sermons to illustrate a theological point) attributed to the thirteenth century friar, Albert the Great (c.1200–1280), states that "sickness before death is as a purgatory."[8] So, whereas modern palliative care is, above all, an exercise in controlling or, more exactly, mitigating suffering in this world, fifteenth and sixteenth century *Artes Moriendi*, dealt primarily with suffering in the next world. Physical and psychological pain at the end of life was not merely regarded as unavoidable, but in some instances, was represented as actually salutary. Thus, in separating the *Tractatus*'s themes (faith, hope, patience, humility, and charity) from their soteriological object, Leget is forced to de-contextualise them. He must extrapolate very abstract themes of spiritual care, based on modern spirituality and only remotely connected with those of the original text.

Yet, Leget perceptively identified that palliation, of a kind, absolutely is a component of these historic texts, albeit one that was instrumental rather than an end in itself. The *Artes Moriendi* were, fundamentally, rhetorical texts. Since there were few means of mitigating physical suffering, the only palliation that anyone could prescribe was attitudinal, convincing *moriens* to interpret their pain within a theological framework. Several authors of *Artes* examined in the course of this study, in fact, recognised and lamented the difficulty of even convincing people to start preparing for death (e.g. Comper 1917, 32–33; Whitford 1537, A3r; Lupset 1534, 13vff). Some, like the *Lamentation of the Dying Creature*, even dramatized the perilous results of this reluctance (Comper 1917, 137–168). Though perhaps more alert to the need to prepare for their dying, medieval readers did not necessarily find such preparations much less uncomfortable than their modern counterparts. As such, most *Artes* approached their theme accepting, as part of their task, the need to convince their readers both of the need

[8] In the exemplum referred to by Albert's colleague Thomas of Cantimpré (1201–1272) in his *Bonum Universale de Proprietatibus Apum*, a man is offered a choice between one year of sickness or three days of purgatory; upon choosing the latter, he very swiftly regretted his decision.

to consider their own death and, more pertinently to this article's theme, to accept and interpret their distress in a soteriologically salutary way. They had to write persuasively, that is to say rhetorically.

Rhetoric and Palliation

In Classical forensic rhetoric, i.e. legal rhetoric from which the subsequent medieval tradition derived, the orator's first task was to render his audience (usually a judge) apt to receive his arguments; the practice was called *captatio benevolentiae*, the seizing of good-will (see Cicero, *De Inventione*, I.15). The authors of the *Artes Moriendi* were manifestly not writing forensic orations, but they did envisage a similar initial stage, for spiritual ministrations. Before *moriens* could receive religious care, their spiritual distress had to be attended to: before a person could die well, they must first be taught to die freely.

The terminology this article uses, distinguishing between "dying freely" and "dying well," is derived from *Artes Moriendi* and from Seneca's *Epistle LXI*: "to die well is to die freely...he who takes his orders freely escapes the bitterest part of slavery, having to do what he does not want to do" (Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, 61.3). While it is not a terminology that these authors generally use, it describes a structure common to many of the *Artes*.[9] In essence, free dying was a philosophical acceptance of the fact of death and its attendant sufferings. Dying well entailed observance of religious rites and obligations. Since dying freely was not necessarily grounded in the religious comforts of the Church, it was, in fact, a highly syncretic virtue. As averred, authors frequently borrowed from the classical texts in their cultivation of free dying.[10] Some authors freely acknowledged that it was perfectly possible for non-Christians to die bravely or dispassionately (i.e. freely), even if dying well was particular to Christians, who alone could benefit from the Christ's sacrifice and the intercession of the Church (this is

[9] Lupset, taking his cue from Seneca, does use the terminology "dying gladly" (Lupset 1534, 12v).
[10] Seneca was among the more widely cited classical authorities, hence the use of his terminology in our article.

implied in the *Craft of Dying*, Comper 1917, 7, but is fairly explicit in the work of Lupset, 7vff, and Whitford 1537, B1r-v).[11]

It is in such a context, then, that the first two chapters of the *Tractatus* and its English translation, *The Craft of Dying*, should be understood. As mentioned, the text is an appendage to and commentary on the *Ordo ad Visitandum infirmum*. The emphasis on first palliating *moriens*'s emotional distress may in fact have been borrowed from the *Ordo*, where among the first things the priest is required to do is set up a crucifix in the sight of the dying (Henderson 1874, 44*).[12] Subsequently, the *Ordo* invites *moriens* to make a declaration of faith, which was then followed by shriving, a confession and absolution of sins (Henderson 1874, 45*ff). The *Ordo* underlines the importance of a good will. In the normal course of a confession (i.e. one performed during the years of health), a penitent would be assigned penitential activities (such as fasting) to perform in return for absolution (or forgiveness) of their sins. Since *moriens* could do no such penance, their unfeigned sorrow and honest willingness to perform penances, were they able to, was the only basis for the priest to pronounce absolution. As the Ordo put it: "without charity [i.e. loving acceptance of God's will], faith will gain you nothing" (Henderson 1874, 47*). The subsequent oration, which functions as a preparative to the confession of sins, covers many of the same themes contained in chapter II of *The Craft of Dying*, for example hope and despair, humility and charity. The palliative sections of *The Craft of Dying* mirror the preparatory sections of the *Ordo*, in function if not in ordering, and build from palliation to a declaration of faith and penitence in its third chapter.

[11] Even this was not a hard and fast rule. Occasionally pagans had the benefit of this. The pagan emperor Trajan, for example, was widely believed to have been saved from hell by the intercession of St Gregory the Great (540-604). In his *Comedia* Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) added the Roman, Cato, and the Trojan, Ripheus, to the number of Pagans in Heaven. Alexander of Hales (1185-1245) went so far as to argue that it would be inconsistent with the mercy of God to bar virtuous pagans, who had no knowledge of Christ's teaching, from Heaven. William Langland clearly held open the possibility of pagan salvation. Some otherwise fairly orthodox religious figures, such as the anchoress Julian of Norwich, evidently believed in the salvation of all virtuous souls, Christian or otherwise.

[12] That this was meant to comfort *moriens* may be illustrated by the mystic Julian of Norwich's account of her own near death, where she recalls the parson's words to her: "Daughter, I have brought you the image of your saviour. Look upon it and be comforted, in reverence to him that died for you and me" (Julian 1998, 5).

Whether in its full length or its abridged form, the *Tractatus Artis bene Moriendi* did not represent, by itself, all that was needed for a good death. The spiritual state of one who died having only observed the prescriptions of the abridgment would be doubtful. The purpose, therefore, of these early chapters was to bring *moriens* to a state where their spiritual distresses, their doubt, despair, impatience avarice or pride would not mitigate the salutariness of religious rituals to their soul either by diminishing the genuineness of their performance or increasing *moriens*'s burden of sin.

Several English *Artes Moriendi*, though generally more removed from the liturgical components of the good death, nonetheless, employed a similar structure. Both Lupset and Whitford affirmed that the fear of death and the love of life were natural, if immature, responses to one's mortality (Lupset 1534, 14rff; Whitford 1537 A2rff). Consequently, dying "freely", at least insofar as they presented it in the introductory passages of their texts, was much less about averting sin on the deathbed than it was averting this fear and ensuring one's own well-being. As Renaissance humanists (i.e. those trained in the classical humanities), the Classical world was a natural place to seek examples of fortitude in the face of death.

Lupset's *Treatyse* begins by addressing himself to his friend, John Walker, and, in a very traditional rhetorical move, he demonstrates his humility (and therefore his merits as a speaker) by protesting his unsuitability to tackle the matter of how "to lerne the way of dyenge well" (Lupset 1534, 3r). Listing authorities who might speak better on the subject (at the same time displaying his erudition), he at once points out that a pagan can never "declare thys thynge so trewly and effectually, as may he that is exercised in Christes philosophye." Yet, though he extols the learning of "Charterhouse monks" on the subject, he actually begins his oration with a narration of the death of the Roman aristocrat, Julius Canius, executed by the emperor Caligula in A.D. 40 (Lupset 1534, 5r–7v). This account he lifted virtually wholesale from Seneca's *De Tranquillitate Animi*, a letter in which Seneca tries to cure his friend Anneus Serenus of anxiety and worry (Seneca, *De Tranquillitate*, 14). Lupset presents Canius as a man who "playde with death", showing how it is possible, even without the comfort of Christian salvation, to

reconcile one's self with one's end (Lupset 1534, 7v). Though he goes on to predicate good death, unambiguously on Christian faith and the hope of salvation, his exordium emphasised that unsalutary and unreasonable fear must be rationally deconstructed before one can gain the full benefits of religious faith.

In his *Exercyse*, Whitford actually follows rhetorical (or Ciceronian) best practice almost to the letter (See Cicero, *De Inventione*, I.15–16). Addressing himself to "the judge", so to speak, in this case the abbess of Syon Abbey, where Whitford lived and worked (Bridgettine monasteries were double houses, with monks and nuns), he briefly sets out his theme, taking the Doctor of the Church, Augustine, for his authority: "the best meane to dye well: is well to lyve." In the best tradition of *captatio benevolentiae*, he humbly praises his reader ("that lesson [i.e. to live well] can you teche me better tha[n] I you.") He then establishes that the first thing to do in learning to die is to "avoyde, exclude, exyle and put ferre away: that chyldyssh vayne and folyssh feare and drede of deth" (Whitford 1537, A2v). In a move particularly reminiscent of classical, forensic rhetoric, he then moves to bring his opponent "into hatred, or into unpopularity, or into contempt" (Cicero, *De Inventione*, I.16), in this case an imagined interlocutor, defending the "fear of death". "Dethe," Whitford answers, "is terryble & fearefull...unto them alone...that doubt of any other lyfe after this present lyfe." Yet Whitford's authority is for this statement not the Bible but Aristotle, and the argument that follows, that death is natural, uses not a religious theme, but compares human life to the ripening of a fruit, dropping (and dying) in due time (Whitford 1537, A3r). In the rest of his prefatory argument, the Bridgettine monk intersperses excerpts drawn from various sources, both Classical (mostly Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*) and patristic (mostly from St Ambrose's *De Bono Mortis*). However, his thrust balances both the hope of salvation and resurrection, with a more stoic observation that to fear what cannot be escaped is irrational.

In essence, the writers of these *Artes* shared the premise that "spiritual care" of the dying was two-stage. There should be an initial, palliative stage in which the unserviceable fear of death should be addressed so that *moriens* could subsequently

benefit from more explicitly religious devotional and sacramental assistance (Ruys 2014). Crucially, while this palliative stage often included religious statements and arguments, it did not have to be religiously premised. This structure continued to be accepted even by much later writers, such as the Protestant clergyman, Christopher Sutton (1565–1629), whose *Disce Mori* expressed its rhetorical intent by taking a form reminiscent of a commonplace book (a collection of edifying excerpts grouped under thematic headings, which a reader might then use for personal edification or deploy in their own orations). Writing for a later and a Protestant culture that emphasised the importance of personal acquaintance with Scripture, Sutton's excerpts are, for the most part, Biblical. Yet, he reveals his adherence to a gradated approach to the good death by including a series of chapters containing arguments by which a dying person's indifference to or fear of death may be overcome. For example, the title of chapter XV is "How the sick, when sickness more and more increaseth may be moved to constancy and perseverance," and that of chapter XVI, "How they may be advertised [warned], who seem unwilling to depart the world" (Sutton 1839, 206 and 214).

The point to be made here is emphatically not that the arguments such as may be found in *The Craft of Dying*, Lupset's *Treatise,* Whitford's *Exercyse* or Sutton's *Disce Mori* should be used by modern healthcare professionals (though a more general review of the rhetoric used in the *Artes Moriendi* is among the future lines of research we hope to follow). The considerable perdurance of such ideas may suggest that they were as effective as any other line of argument, but the case to be made here is rather for the two-tier definition of good death: dying freely and dying well.

Modern Applications

The standard methods of spiritual assessment (the HOPE or FICA systems) start by approaching spirituality in terms of the quest for meaning. This is done, to begin with, by establishing what religious or philosophical system the dying belong to. While such an approach is a logical response to the imperative to care for an individual in a multicultural society, it is equally a potential source of alienation between the patient and

the caregiver, who is not a specialist in spiritual affairs. The ideal spiritual care is based on a human relationship between patient and carer (Mauksch 1975, 20). It is not hard to see that predicating spiritual care, in a medical context, on religious principles with which a carer is unfamiliar, might make that relationship harder, rather than easier to establish. Fundamentally, such religiously predicated care would implicitly represent the preserve of the chaplaincy team. It is, therefore, worth asking whether spiritual care can be administered on a basis that is less religiously determined so that healthcare professionals feel more able to participate in this important component of palliation.

The argument that basic spiritual needs must be met in order to make possible deeper or more specialised spiritual exploration is echoed elsewhere in psychology theory. Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs has been applied to various healthcare settings to optimise patient care (Maslow 1943). In palliative care, Maslow's theory is used as a framework for organizing and prioritising the needs which emerge at the end of life so as to help the patient to transcend their illness and attain self-actualisation and a 'good death' (Zalenski and Raspa 2006). In Maslow's theory, human motivation is expressed as a pyramid, with core survival needs (food, water) at its foundation, progressing through safety, love and belonging, and esteem before reaching self-actualisation at its pinnacle. He argues that basic needs must be satisfied before ascending to the higher needs. In palliative care, it is clearly important to address firstly a patient's pain or symptoms before addressing their anxiety or fears about death. Further up the pyramid are relationships with family and friends, and the extent to which the patient can feel valued by and able to communicate with them. The top of the pyramid, self-actualisation, is the potential to develop identity, explore existential considerations and to reach self-acceptance. Exploration of the *Ars Moriendi* in a palliative context echoes these human needs and their prioritisation. By accompanying the patient as they face their fears around dying, perhaps anxieties about the physical experience or worries about a situation they are leaving behind, spiritual caregivers can help the patient to "die freely", removing impediments to self-actualisation at the end of life. As such, palliative care steps closer to its initial aim as voiced by Dame Cicely Saunders: "We will do all we

can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die" (Saunders 1976, 2698).

Though holistic spiritual care remains the object of palliation, clarifying the responsibilities of health professionals as opposed to chaplains would be invaluable. As mentioned, it is understood that doctors, nurses, and healthcare assistants should aim to address spiritual distress in a general sense—perhaps through discussions about what brings patients meaning or hope in their suffering, using assessment protocols like the HOPE or FICA questions and referring patients with more complex spiritual needs to the chaplaincy team. Assigning to clinicians a more specific role in a gradated system, meeting spiritual "deficiency needs," could do much to obviate anxieties arising from the need to provide spiritual care. Distinctions of this kind do already exist within the health services, but they are not yet a formal part of departmental organization or teaching (NICE 2004, 101). Yet, a more formal circumscription of palliative, spiritual care objectives and coordination with the chaplaincy services could embolden care providers to draw on their experiences and engage with patients.

What might such generalist spiritual care look like in practice? A recent collaboration between nursing and chaplaincy professionals has highlighted a set of what are called "spiritual interventions". These have been grouped as primary (suitable for generalists) or specialist (to be carried out by the chaplaincy team) (Donesky 2020). Primary interventions include support while the patient is alone, affirmation of worth and values, supportive listening, and referring on to specialist teams. Specialist interventions include spiritual or theological reflection, offering legacy activities, or the provision of religious resources. There is, of course, overlap in some of these roles. A systematic review of the literature identifies the importance of self-reflection of caregivers in developing any spiritual competency: "being present" with patients is the most effective way of acquiring the experience necessary to perform this work. The same review also identifies European research suggesting the benefits of healthcare workers being familiar with religious ritual and the use of silence in spiritual interventions (Gijsberts, Liefbroer, Otten and Olsman 2019, 14). Simple practices by healthcare professionals such as those

outlined above are, for the most part, already carried out on a regular basis but perhaps not recognised as spiritual care. Highlighting their function as possible spiritual interventions in education and training of professionals would likely increase confidence and understanding of this field of care. Moreover, reflection on the medieval literature highlights another possible avenue of spiritual care. Much of what the medieval writers sought to do was to reconcile the dying with pain and suffering, since these things could not be medicated. Though modern physicians can now manage the pain of dying more effectively, the physicality of death, not only in terms of pain but also physical degeneration remains an inescapable part of the patient's experience of self. Julia Lawton points out that the inability to mitigate this remains an absolute impediment to the hospice movement's objective to help people "live until they die" (Lawton 2000). Healthcare workers and particularly doctors, with their specialist understanding of symptom care, may, in fact, also be best placed to address any spiritual crises arising from physical causes. Yet, this must remain, for now, a pointer for future research.

Conclusion

The aim of modern palliative care is, ultimately, not just to mitigate pain, but also to maximise personal agency on the deathbed, enabling the patient to feel that they can still make decisions about subjects that matter (Kubler Ross 2019, 126). Decisions, for example, about preferred place of death (whether at home or in a hospice), how much they want to know about the course of their illness, and how involved, or otherwise, they would like their loved ones to be in personal caregiving are given much weight in palliative care policy, research, and in practice. The selection of *Artes Moriendi* examined here sought to do a similar thing, albeit in an expressly religious mould. With their unserviceable fear of death assuaged, the *moriens* was enabled to carry out the pre-mortem procedures required by their beliefs. By incorporating the parallel care directed at both non-prescriptive free dying and more religiously conditioned dying well into palliative practice, it may be possible to address a widely accepted difficulty by better defining and integrating pastoral roles and practices across the care team. Yet, for all this,

it should not be forgotten that the spiritual component of palliative care is essentially grounded in a relationship between carer and patient. Though education and training in such interventions would benefit both professionals and patients, "spiritual competency" cannot be taught with protocols or curricula. Our abilities to recognise and act on spiritual needs depend both on the training given within a professional domain and on life experiences, our social connectedness, society, culture, and much more. There is a danger that promoting spiritual care interventions within existing healthcare structures simply squeezes it into the system, treating this domain as an add-on. As averred above, it must be considered part of the care of the whole person and be integrated with the treatment of physical symptoms. Above all, good spiritual care depends on broader societal engagement with end of life issues and with the values that enable individuals to find meaning as they die.

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Hope, Fear, Sorrow, and Rage: The Emotions of Death and Dying and the *Ars Moriendi* in Early Colonial New Spain

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Abstract

The well-known and supposedly "timeless" ludic Mexican attitude toward death exemplified by the Day of the Dead does not reflect the emotional and spiritual attitudes toward death prevalent in the colonial period. Scholars of New Spain have instead established the prevalence of an ideal of European origin rooted in the medieval literary tradition of *ars moriendi* and translated into Spanish lands in the early modern period: that is, the Catholic aspiration to "die well." Hegemonic among the colonial Spanish and colonized Indigenous elite, *buen morir* ("dying well") was also aspired to by plebeians. This article assays the hegemonic power of *and* ruptures within the Catholic ideal of "dying well," in particular through studying the emotions associated with selected deaths in early colonial New Spain (1520–1650). Drawing upon the scholarship of the "good death" ideal, Inquisition documents, and the biography (*vida*) of an early colonial mystic, the paper examines not merely good deaths, but bad ones. While folk saints and kings alike were said to have spoken instructive words, the dying in these cases are voiceless and often even nameless. In these cases, the *moriens* recedes as those around him or her experience, pray about, or debate death. With the focus off the *moriens*, it is possible to see both reflection and contestation of the ideals and emotions associated with the *ars moriendi* as those who were *not* dying gave voice to and embodied emotions and behaviours that were by turns licit and illicit. The paper finds that the emotions associated with death both confirmed and challenged the hegemony of the *ars moriendi*. Anger, shock, defiant grief, longing, and terror coexisted alongside the more appropriate emotions: sorrow and fear, certainly, but tempered by comfort, resignation, and love of

God. The cases discussed here demonstrate how in their emotional responses to death, ordinary people and the clergy alike contested elements of the *ars moriendi*. In that sense, the vignettes captured here may suggest the outlines of a death culture indebted to the *ars moriendi*, but nonetheless *sui generis* and even, perhaps, authentically Mexican.

A study of the emotions associated with death in New Spain may seem like an unnecessary contribution. After all, throughout the world (and in the view of many Mexicans themselves) Mexico is well known as a culture that accepts, laughs at, and even loves death. The emotional content of the "eternally morbid Mexican" (Brandes 2003, 134) stereotype is familiar: "Mexicans live side by side with death and are therefore able to confront death honestly and directly. They scorn death, they mock death, they are disdainful and irreverent in face of death" (Brandes 2003, 128).

The distinctively Mexican approach to death and dying is often traced to both pre-Columbian and Spanish precedents as fused in the colonial era. Evidence of this supposedly quintessentially Mexican response to death, however, tends to be more recent. Arguably the most venerable evidence can be found in the work of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century printmaker José Guadalupe Posada, who used *calaveras* (skull pictures) to lampoon Mexican culture and politics (Rothenstein 1989). Increasingly, however, global attention has been called to the cult of Santa Muerte, or "Holy Death." Focussed on an image of a feminized skeletal figure and notoriously associated with narcotraffickers, the cult is relatively recent, though its adherents and observers often trace its origins to the Conquest or earlier Indigenous antecedents (Chesnut 2018). Above all, however, the putative "Mexican" attitude toward death is seen in the spectacle of the Day of the Dead, a major festival whose ludic celebration of death has become a major focus of both international and internal Mexican tourism. As Nadine Béligand (2006) has pointed out, the Day of the Dead is a modern phenomenon despite its frequently cited roots in colonial Indigenous and Spanish traditions of death.

Moreover, as Stanley Brandes (2003) notes, the Day of the Dead is essentially a *national* celebration, articulated and amplified in the context of nation-building, and in particular, in dialogue with Anglo-American culture and its commercialized and widely exported Hallowe'en festival.

In his critique of the Mexican death myth, Brandes (2003) notes that the stereotype elides significant variations among Mexico's many Indigenous groups; moreover, he notes, Mexicans tend to be *less* in love with death than Americans if suicide rates are taken as the measure of desiring death. Indeed, Latin Americans' consistent representation at the top of contemporary global happiness surveys would also militate against a view that Mexicans are more lugubrious than others. The apparently ludic attitudes expressed by the Day of the Dead, then, coexist with Mexicans' extensive social connections and high social happiness rooted therein (Rojas 2018). Finally, Brandes points out that North American (Mexican and US) attitudes toward death both "pale" in comparison to "the obsessive concerns about mortality" found in Indonesian, Malagasy, and "other cultures remote from North America" (Brandes 2003, 132). The renowned Mexican love of death, it seems, is at worst a distortion and at best an exaggeration.

More significantly for this article, the attitudes associated with the Day of the Dead and other manifestations of modern Mexican death culture cannot be projected backward in time; nor were the material conditions of early colonial New Spain akin to those of modern Mexico. Notably, the modern and familiar Mexican attitude toward death has been elaborated in the presence of significant declines in mortality relative to historical norms (Brandes 2003). In contrast, it is difficult to imagine a time and place in which death was more ubiquitous than in early modern New Spain. Throughout the post-conquest sixteenth century, successive waves of epidemic disease facilitated by colonial mobility and dislocation shattered Indigenous society, killing as much as 90 percent of the population (Cook 1998; Hosselkus 2011). Though the devastation of the Indigenous population produced by far the most significant mortality in the colony, ocean crossings, childbirth, childhood, disease, and violence claimed the lives of many other colonial subjects. Given the combined effect of high mortality and the cultural

influence of the Catholic church in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, "dying well" was an urgent imperative and shared ideal, since death was the "consummate Catholic experience" (Eire 1995, 5), encapsulating the entire purpose of life and the profoundest cultural beliefs. Over the past thirty years, scholarship on death in New Spain has moved into study of the cultural practices associated with the experience and ideal of the "good death" and the degree to which such practices and beliefs were adopted and modified by Indigenous communities (Pescador 1992; Bastante 2006; Bastante 2013; Hosselkus 2011; Will and Achim 2011).

Most studies of death in New Spain have used either prescriptive sources, such as records of exemplary deaths, or the more "gritty, mundane" (Eire 1995, 10) materials to be found in the wills dictated by the dying. Wills, funerary rituals, and prescriptive and exemplary texts, however, may exaggerate the power of the *ars moriendi*, or at least elide the stories that suggest a more complicated emotional terrain. Seeking to complement rather than supersede studies of such materials, this article assays the hegemonic power of *and* ruptures within the Catholic ideal of dying well, in particular through studying the emotions associated with selected deaths in early colonial New Spain (1520–1650). Drawing upon the scholarship of the "good death" ideal, this paper studies Inquisition documents from the National Archive of Mexico, which have been much used over more than three decades to study everyday life and the cultural history, mentalities, and regional history of colonial New Spain (*inter alia,* Chuchiak 2012; Boyer 1995; Alberro 1988; Corteguera 2012; Nesvig 2018). Indeed, Inquisition records constitute the most robust and complete body of documentation for the early colony. Nonetheless, of course they must be utilized with keen attention to the circumstances of their production, and particularly with an eye to the relative power of the institution and the individuals whose words it recorded in such voluminous detail. However, previous views of the monolithic power of the Inquisition(s) have ceded place to more nuanced understandings of the Holy Office as merely one of many colonial institutions, and one whose power was by no means absolute (Chuchiak 2012; Boyer 1995; Nesvig 2018). New Spain's vast number of denunciations judged unworthy of follow-up, the number of cases left

hanging, the massive and poorly policed colonial territory, and the small number of death sentences issued all suggest the limitations on the ability of the Holy Office to control thought and deed in New Spain.

Individuals who appeared (willingly or under compulsion) before the Holy Office framed their narratives consciously and unconsciously, as human beings do in any number of situations for which we have records. Therefore, one should not take at face value the testimony of anyone, witness or accused, who testifies in a given case. At the same time, Inquisition records are rich in detail extraneous to religious orthodoxy but valuable for the historian. Moreover, even witnesses' framing of narratives offers relevant information about what individuals believed they were supposed to believe or how they believed they were supposed to behave. As a result, Inquisition records are a rich source for the study of daily life. They have been used less as a source for the study of death. Relatively few scholars of colonial Spanish America have used Inquisition records to study modes of and attitudes toward death and dying (Tortorici 2011; Schaposchnik 2011). This lesser attention to death in Inquisition-based histories likely results from the topic's sporadic rather than systematic presence in the archives of the Inquisition and from the relatively few (approximately 50) death sentences carried out by the Mexican tribunal over more than two hundred years. With Tortorici (2011), Schaposchnik (2011), and others, I argue that the records of the Holy Office, whose *raison d'être* was to monitor and scrutinize compliance with religiously hegemonic conceptions, form an ideal source for the study of the entirety of human life, including its terminus. The cases studied here are all ones in which minor punishment, no punishment at all, or no action beyond receipt of a denunciation ensued. They are thus less dramatic cases than exemplary punishments or treatment of suicides, and they constitute in most cases the only window on humble deaths.

This paper also considers the biography (*vida*) of an early colonial woman mystic which is today held by the University of Texas Library. Like the Inquisition records, religious biographies, often produced in obedience to the order of a confessor, represent both the hegemonic gaze of church authority and the tensions between orthodoxy and

everyday emotional engagement with death. In assessing these sources, this article finds that the emotions associated with death both confirmed and challenged the hegemony of the *ars moriendi*. Therefore, this paper examines not merely good deaths, but bad ones that were brought to the attention of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. While folk saints and kings alike were said to have spoken instructive words, the dying in these cases are voiceless and often even nameless. In these cases, the *moriens* (or dying one) recedes as those around him or her experience, pray about, or argue over death. With the focus off the *moriens*, it is possible to see both reflection and contestation of the ideals and emotions associated with the *ars moriendi* as those who were *not* dying gave voice to and embodied emotions and behaviours that were by turns licit and illicit. Thus this paper hopes to address both the cultural power and the limitations of "the good death."

The "Art of Dying" in New Spain

The "art of dying" or *ars moriendi* was, of course, an ideal with origins in European medieval literary traditions (Chartier 1976), in contrast with what have been seen as the "authentically Mexican" expressions of modern Mexican death culture. Originating in medieval concerns with the fate of souls in times of heightened mortality (O'Connor 1942), *ars moriendi* texts proliferated in the fifteenth century to become one of the most popular late medieval genres (Nissi 2014; O'Connor 1942). Translated into various tongues, such texts gave Europeans clear instructions on how to die well as a faithful and repentant Christian and thus earn a place in heaven while minimizing one's stay in Purgatory (Eire 1995). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these medieval roots were significantly reshaped by the work of Desiderius Erasmus and in particular three of his works that engaged most with death and the emotions that accompanied it (Raeburn 2020). His *De preparatione ad mortem (Preparing for Death,* 1534), a text twice the length of most medieval *ars moriendi* tracts, ran through multiple editions (twenty in Latin alone) within a few years of its publication and informed the subsequent development of the genre in various confessional traditions (Vogt 2004).

The literary manifestations of the art of dying, however, were slow to enter Spain, for reasons that remain unclear. Despite the near-simultaneous (1534–1535) Spanish and Latin publication of Erasmus' *De preparatione ad mortem* and the success of the volume in other languages, the circulation of the two Spanish editions was slow. Still, Alonso Vanegas' contemporary text *Agonía del tránsito de la muerte* (The Agony of the Death Crossing, 1537) went through ten editions, superseded only by the proliferation of other Spanish *ars moriendi* texts in the later sixteenth century (Eire 1995). The increasing public appetite for *ars moriendi* texts was evidenced by the success of the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine's *The Art of Dying Well* (1619), a lengthy text published in 56 editions and multiple languages including Spanish (Vogt 2004). All of these texts promoted the idea not only of dying well, but perhaps even more of *living* well, principally by treating one's entire lifespan as a "good, constant preparation for death" (Eire 1995, 26; Chartier 1976; Vogt 2004; Bastante 2006).

Ars moriendi literature was explicitly emotional. On one hand, the heightening of certain emotions was part of the experience of dying well in early *ars moriendi* texts (Ruys, 2014); on the other, the natural and healthy emotions of fear, anger, and anxiety that accompanied and facilitated the process could also hinder it if excessive or unmanaged, leading to an increasing focus on emotional control in later texts (Raeburn 2020). Good Christians contemplating death and their own sinfulness could expect to be afraid, and the heightening of such fear was a goal of medieval *ars moriendi* literature (Ruys 2014); but the early-modern literature of dying well was also designed to give comfort, to assure faithful Christians that God's mercy and love awaited the repentant. Today, the *ars moriendi* is often mentioned alongside the *danse macabre*, an allegorical visual representation of the "dance of death," but this may misrepresent the emotional tone of "dying well." The grotesque, excessive, and ludic qualities of the *danse* were not part of the *ars moriendi*, whose emotional register emphasized love, grace, and forgiveness (Eire 1995), and in which the control of emotions formed a "central motif" (Raeburn 2020, 159).

Texts on "dying well" circulated widely in Spain after 1550 (Eire 1995), precisely as the Spanish Empire was itself being extended and elaborated. The broadening of the early modern Hispanic world thus coincided with the development of Spanish cultures of *buen morir* (dying well). In the late sixteenth century, the exemplary deaths of St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) and King Phillip II (1527–1598) served as exempla for those of less exalted religious or social status (Will de Chaparro and Achim 2011; Eire 1995). After many near misses, St. Teresa died in 1582 after several hemorrhages caused by tuberculosis or perhaps uterine cancer. Hagiographical and monastic reports of her death emphasized that she died "as the result of a fatal [mystical] ecstasy, so forceful that it thrust her soul out of her body" (Wilson 1999, 219). Her final illness was widely regarded a testament to her faith, her recorded last words asserting her status as a daughter of the Church and welcoming her holy bridegroom.

For his part, Philip II died in 1598 at age 71, suffering terribly in his final illness, which confined him to bed for the last two months of his life. While Spain's imperial competitors saw the misery of Philip's demise as a judgment of God, Spanish observers saw the opposite. During the final months of his life, the famously pious king completed pious exercises, bore his suffering with stoicism, and finally uttered his own edifying last words: that he was dying a Catholic, in the faith and obedience of the Holy Roman Church. By 1610, at least 41 separate works circulated through the Spanish world, describing the death and funeral honours of Philip and making him, in James Boyden's words, "a model of perfection" in the *ars moriendi* (Boyden 2000).

While St. Teresa and Philip II exemplify the European origins of the Hispanic model of "good death," the model appears to have been transmitted effectively and almost seamlessly to colonial New Spain: first to Spanish settlers, but soon to all colonial subjects. While the manual written by Fray Juan de Zumárraga, first bishop (and archbishop) of Mexico, was primarily aimed at the colony's Spaniards, Friar Pedro de Gante's Nahuatl *Doctrina Christiana* (1547) contained the first *ars moriendi* manual produced in that Indigenous language (Hosselkus 2011). In 1611, when Fray Martín de León published his own manual, he clearly anticipated a broader colonial audience and

a more syncretic faith (Bastante 2006). Scholars such as Antonio García-Abásolo (1993) have documented the persistence of the "good-death" ideal not only in such manuals, but also in Mexican sermons, wills, and many other sources, particularly though not exclusively those associated with the elite. At a less rarefied level, the cult of St. Joseph (San José) also became associated in New Spain with the saint's intercession "above all" to ensure a "good death" (Rubial 2006, 51). Thus, while the *ars moriendi*'s origins may have been European, the associated modes and ideals of death were evidently adopted widely in the colony by 1600, including by Indigenous people. Such adoptions occurred in part because of consonance between the European notion of a "good death" and central Mexican Indigenous conceptions of the same, and in part because evangelizing friars consciously inculcated the Christian idea of "dying well." Other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century publications emphasized the importance of giving extreme unction to Indigenous people, provided model testaments (including religious bequests), offered techniques for explaining Purgatory in Indigenous terms, and even commenced an Indigenous martyrology (Hosselkus 2011; Bastante 2006).

Certainly, broader Indigenous adoption of the *ars moriendi* can easily be overstated. Citing the work of Eugenio Maurer Avalos on Tzeltal (Maya) religion, Brandes points out that Tzeltal conceptions of death are fundamentally opposed to the concept of "dying well." The Tzeltal and Tzotzil insistence on death as a calamitous finality rather than the commencing of a (better) afterlife even leads today to the avoidance of the sacrament of Extreme Unction (Brandes 2003). Moreover, the attempt to inculcate a "Catholic" manner of dying confronted differences in death practices. For example, traditional Nahua childbirth practitioners would, when a woman's death in childbirth was inevitable, seal her inside a *temazcal* (sweat lodge) (Sousa 2017). However symbolically appropriate given the association of the *temazcal* with both womb and tomb, such a solitary death was not consistent with Spanish mores that prioritized accompaniment at death (Rubial 2003).

That said, the Spanish conception of "dying well" nonetheless blended well with at least some Indigenous customs and beliefs, as did the concept of living with a constant

eye on death. Moreover, the centrality of death as a rite of passage was meaningful to many Indigenous people, as is evidenced by the fact that wills make up approximately half of all colonial Indigenous documents (Hosselkus 2011). By the mid-sixteenth century, Indigenous testaments demonstrated awareness and adoption of the Catholic mode of death. Numerous scholars, studying Indigenous wills, have found compelling evidence of the same attention to a good death that marked the wills of colonizers. For example, the Tehuitzco widow Catalina Papan made her will in December 1571 as she lay dying of *cocoliztli,* a disease responsible for several devastating colonial epidemics. Like other Indigenous notables, Papan left not only real properties to her heirs, but a substantial list of donations for the good of her soul: one peso "so that the singers from the main church will come here to my home to get me," and more substantial pious bequests:

> Two *reales* will be my offering that I give to Our Lady of the Rosary; and I make an offering of two *reales* for the [confraternity of] the Holy Communion; likewise I make my offering of two *reales* for the home of Holy Saint Francis; likewise I make my offering of two *reales* for the home of the Holy Apostle James; two *reales* for the bells to be rung in the main church; two *pesos* so that I will be buried wherever possible inside the main church. And I am making an offering for two high masses to be said for me; twelve pesos are to be delivered to the home of my Lord God, for which I request two high masses. And I order masses to be said for me for two years. (Olko, Sullivan, and Szeminski 2018, 138)

While such wills represent a complex mix of individual and social interests—including but not limited to ensuring a suitable afterlife, acceding to the suggestions of local clergy, and asserting social status—testaments clearly demonstrate the power of *buen morir*.

The Spanish and colonial churches took "dying well" seriously indeed. Even those who died what Boyden (2000) calls "cautionary deaths"—those punished most severely by the state, for example, sodomites whose bodies were burned after execution—were interred with dignity and sometimes even with pomp (Pescador 1992). In Madrid, the interring of executed criminals was a zealously kept privilege of the Brotherhood of Peace and Charity, a sodality with its seat in the parish of Santa Cruz. In addition to

recovering, cleansing, clothing, and burying the often-dismembered corpses of murderers, counterfeiters, and highwaymen (among others), the brotherhood sometimes intervened with authorities to prevent, for example, the ultimate punishment of burning followed by dispersal of ashes to the winds (Carbajo Isla 2007). The sole exception to this carefully kept duty occurred in the rare case of impenitence, in which case a criminal could expect his remains to fall under the less solicitous care of civil authorities (Carbajo Isla 2007). The same was true of suicides, who were in theory to be accorded only profane burials, though Tortorici (2011) found evidence in New Spain of sacred burials of suicides involving ordained priests and those who had given signs of penitence.

As pious attention to criminals and suicides demonstrates, accompanying the unattended dead was considered a sacred duty and an important act of charity, to the extent that it was the calling of many colonial sodalities. The rich might go to their graves accompanied by tens or even hundreds of people, but even the poorest and most forsaken could count on four or five. Juan Javier Pescador (1992, 285) enumerates cases in which bodies were left or discovered unattended in one seventeenth-century Mexico City parish. He argues that the rarity of these discoveries and the attention paid by parishioners to them demonstrates the general adherence to communitarian norms of death. Solitary death was an exception, the dead formed part of the web of community, and the good death was striven for by all.

Scholars have therefore established that in New Spain, then, the Spanish ideal of the "good death" was hegemonic: modelled by the elite but adopted by the middling and even yearned for by subalterns. The colony, moreover, was not without its own exempla. Antonio Rubial has studied colonial Mexicans' hunger for folk saints, a hunger that constantly sought not only exemplary lives but exemplary deaths, the working of miracles, relics, and evidence of the incorruptible body (Rubial 1998; 2016). Throughout the colonial period, the beliefs and practices associated with dying well changed little, though the eighteenth century brought significant changes to attitudes regarding the appropriate place of the dead themselves within the urban complex, leading eventually to the expulsion of the dead from the city (Béligand 2006). Perhaps the pinnacle of the

aspiration to *ars moriendi*, the late-colonial religious sodality "Congregation of the Good Death" was founded as late as 1710 (Bastante 2013).

Longing and Resistance:
Madre María Magdalena's Mystical and Bodily Deaths

The power of the "good death" and the influence of its Teresian version are evident in the manuscript autobiography of Madre María Magdalena Lorravaquio Múñoz (1576–1636), a professed nun who was confined to bed for virtually her entire adult life. Her 160-page autobiography, written at the command of her Jesuit confessors and transcribed into its extant form in 1650, evinces both fear of and longing for death (Lavrin 2005, 26; University of Texas 1636). Madre María Magdalena entered the convent at the age of fifteen after importuning her apparently reluctant parents, and immediately dedicated herself with particular zeal to mortifications. She remembered being particularly influenced by the Jesuit Padre Gaspar Loarte's book concerning the death and passion of Christ. While Madre María's spiritual practices continued to grow, her bodily health soon declined, and she began suffering various illnesses not much more than a year after her profession. Her illnesses and the treatments she endured to cure them were welcomed by her as gifts from God that mapped onto the sufferings endured by Christ in his Passion (though others in her convent viewed her visions, illnesses, and incurable tremor as signs of faking or demonic possession).

It can therefore be said without too much exaggeration that Madre María Magdalena, at least from her own retelling, spent 44 years and three months dying, making her biography something of an extended meditation on death. First, she reported numerous experiences in which she nearly died, only to be told that her death was not yet God's will. "Being another time in a very grave illness," she stated, "at the end of my life, awaiting the hour of my death, and perceiving and resigning myself in the hands of God, that he do in me His will, I heard an interior voice that said, 'It is not yet time; you still have much to endure.' And later I began to get better" (University of Texas 1636, 16). This experience was repeated through her illnesses, as she obediently attempted to

render herself to God, "as my true Father and husband" (18) only to be repeatedly told (by a voice that she believed to be God's) that it was not yet her time. In these recurring encounters with death, Madre María recounted an emotional process typical of the "normal" Christian effort to die well: contemplation of her sins, fear, and finally resignation to the will of God.

Interestingly, however, Madre María reported a later experience in which her illness was so severe that the doctors gave up on her and she was given the Viaticum. Strangely, perhaps, after her frequent experiences of near-death, this time she felt a "strong resistance to dying, so that she could not subject or conform herself to what His Majesty ordered" (University of Texas 1636, 51); instead, still profoundly ill, she spent a day and night praying in a suspended state before God, once again, decided that it was not yet her time to die. María's relationship to death was therefore highly ambivalent. On one hand, she had reason to believe that the afterlife would be a place of joy, as many of her visions of other dying and deceased persons suggested—not to mention a relief from the miserable and incurable illnesses that dogged her throughout her adult life. Longing for death and identifying with the death of Christ were consistent themes in her biography. On the other hand, she was fearful of death and her soul's possible damnation. Christians' fear in the face of death was regarded as completely natural and acknowledged as such in the formulaic language of testaments (Eire 1995), but the dangers of excessive fear in the face of death were repeatedly acknowledged in the *ars moriendi* literature (Ruys 2014). Madre María, it seems, experienced excessive fear, portraying herself as unable to emotionally conform to God's will, and reporting her temptation to doubt God's mercy. Thus, even for a faithful believer, the hope of salvation and joy in the afterlife could be alloyed with fear and doubt. The aspiration of "dying well," however hegemonic, thus coexisted with unruly emotions that even among the most saintly could derail a good death.

Another aspect of Madre María's dance with death was that, even when healthy, the nun experienced her spiritual exercises as proximal to death: that is, she experienced a form of "mystical death" (Gálik, Tolnaiová, and Modrzejewski 2020), in which she

identified so deeply with the passion of Christ that she experienced a complete suspension of her own living body. In St. Teresa's terms, this was "delicious death" (Gálik et al. 2020). In one of Madre María's early visions, she reported, she "remained like a dead body, without feeling any power, and after this great suspension when her soul came back it was like a dead woman came to life" (University of Texas 1636, 28v–29). In another vision, she described herself as having spent much time "without seeing or feeling anything, as if she were dead" (30). The experience of being "like a dead woman" (34) was frequently repeated throughout the biography, but generally presented as a state experienced without fear. Indeed, Madre María associated her "dead" state of mystical suspension with pleasure, delight, joy, peace, and tranquility. After her actual death, the editor of Madre María's biography added a striking note: that "because she feared death so much, His Majesty conceded that she die in suspension and prayer" (81). That is, God took her in the peaceful and fearless "delicious death" provided by mystical contemplation to spare her the terror that marked her conscious brushes with mortality. This unusual acknowledgement seems to suggest the challenges of establishing an "uneasy equilibrium between dread and hope" (Eire 1995, 78), and Madre María's tendency to swing between these two emotional poles rather than balancing them.

While her illnesses and spiritual practices provided an intimate relationship with death, Madre María also recounted much time in prayer and visions related to the illnesses and deaths of others, a theme that consumes much of her autobiography. There is, of course, nothing unusual about such a spiritual practice, since holy people customarily spent much time praying for ill and dying people. In Madre María's case, however, the nature of the outcomes she achieved through prayer presents yet more evidence of her ambivalent relationship with death. Frequently, she reported, she sought to intercede with God on behalf of the dying. For example, she documented her success in preventing the death of "a certain person who was suffering a grave illness" (University of Texas 1636, 17). Similarly, when a nun whom Madre María loved very much was on death's door, she experienced much anxiety and prayed for the nun's recovery, happily to be told by God, "she will not die" (75v). On the other hand, sometimes Madre María

prayed for someone who was dying and experienced joy even though the person died. For example, while praying for the soul of a priest who was dying, she saw him lifted into the heavens, clad in a white garment embroidered with gold, green, and silver and "very resplendent and beautiful" (21v). Madre María understood thereby that she had seen the priest at the point at which God had plucked him from mortal life to enjoy the eternal one. Similarly, after prayer for another nun who was dying, Madre María had the similar satisfaction of knowing that God had lifted the nun into heaven (49v). Finally, she prayed for a man's recovery only to be told by God that it was better that the man die so that his salvation could be attained, whereupon she successfully prayed for the man to be taken out of Purgatory (55v–56). In this manner, Madre María achieved victories over death through prayer, often receiving messages that made clear that her intercessory prayers had prevented death, shortened a stay in Purgatory, or helped someone enter heaven, and experiencing the comfort of seeing with her own (mystical) eyes the mercy of God and the beauty of the afterlife.

In some cases, however, Madre María's prayers for the dying rendered more troubling results that demonstrated the mysterious workings of God's providence and, in some cases, the suggestion that *someone's* death was required to balance the spiritual ledger. For example, Madre María recounted a case involving the illness of a nun who was very ill and "like a dear one and daughter" to her. After days of prayer, God conceded the nun's life, but advised Madre María that he would take another nun in place of the "dear one" (78–78v). In a sense, then, Madre María had bought the life of the beloved nun with the death of another whose identity she discovered only after the fact. Madre María also narrated her efforts for the soul of a man whose spiritual standing was evidently in some peril. Apparently, the man had left his wife behind some years before when he travelled to New Spain. While the particular danger to the man's soul was never specified, it may have arisen from bigamy, since the problem was solved when Madre María had a vision in which God informed her that for the good of the man's soul, it was best that his *wife* die (28). On another occasion, Madre María prayed for the wellbeing of someone who was not sick at all, only to learn from God that it was His will

that the person die; eight days later, the person sickened, and three days after that was dead (74). In a disturbing case, a person of high status for whom Madre María prayed was the subject of a frightening vision that made it clear to her that the *moriens* had passed and been sentenced to "eternal suffering" (23v). These mysterious workings of God's will and proofs of His punishments, however instructive, illustrate the ambivalent emotional relationship of this holy woman with death. On one hand, her visions of "good" deaths could fill her with joy, while the death of "substitutes" for beloved people in spiritual or physical peril could bring relief. On the other hand, visions of eternal torment and the pure mystery of providence could elicit fear and confusion.

On Land and at Sea: Emotions and the Obligation to Help Others Die Well

A good death, then, was a complicated business even for the most faithful. Moreover, while the emotions associated with "dying well" were generally reckoned to be those of the *moriens*, the emotions of others were enmeshed in the process too. Others, moreover, had an important role to play in the *ars moriendi.* The ideal death involved dying attended by the clergy in all "good-death" manuals. The role of lay onlookers was viewed with some ambivalence by authors of medieval and early modern manuals. While some valued the presence of friends and family, non-clergy were also seen as potentially distracting and even dangerous, as they might incite the *moriens* to avarice (Nissi 2014); many manuals emphasized the need for private conversations between the clergy and the *moriens* (Nissi 2014; Bastante 2006). Still, Erasmus regarded sitting with the dying a salubrious practice for the living (Vogt 2004), while other writers (and common practice) recognized the role of non-clerical onlookers in assisting the *moriens*. Friends, relatives, and neighbours thus had a profound and sombre communal obligation: first, of course, they were the ones who determined when it was time to call clergy (Nissi 2020); moreover, it was their task to exhort, pray with, assist, and encourage the dying, which was noted in the instructions given in many manuals of *buen morir* (Eire 1995). The resultant communal culture of death appears to have been relatively uniform, at least from northern to southern Europe (Nissi 2020). Moreover, onlookers' duties continued

after death, when they were obliged not only to deal appropriately with the body, but more importantly to continue to pray for the soul. However, their own emotions were secondary. Nonetheless, it is clear that the spectacle of death could yield emotional trauma for those around the *moriens*. For example, in the 1650s, a young woman appeared before the Holy Office to denounce the midwife Isabel Hernández. The woman described how Hernández had helped her mother die well, only to climb upon the dead woman and wrench out her teeth for relics shortly after the death. The young woman described how she and her sister wept as they watched helplessly, "stunned by this evil" (*aturbido por el mal*). The "evil," however, was ironically occasioned at least in part by their mother's dying so well: that is, by her stoicism and sanctity and the desire of others for contact with such saintly individuals (Archivo General de la Nación [AGN] 1652). Again, then, traumatic deathbed experiences could coexist, however uneasily, with the edification and hope produced by an ideal *moriens.*

The cultural power of "dying well" was also evident in a minor scandal that erupted in Chiapas in August 1626, following the preaching of a sermon by Fray Juan Baptista during the celebration of the funeral rites (*obsequias y honras*) for the Bishop of Chiapas, Don Bernardino de Salazar. The Dominican bishop's tenure was short; Thomas Gage suggested that he fell victim to poisoning by his unruly parishioners, who refused to abstain from drinking chocolate during Mass (Gage 1658, 102–103). Don Bernardino's service took place at the Dominican convent in Ciudad Real (today San Cristóbal), Chiapas.

According to Fray Pedro Mártir, who denounced Fray Juan several months later at the urging of a local notable, Fray Juan's sermon veered off course when he appeared to question a cherished belief associated with the *ars moriendi*: that anyone, no matter how sinful, could achieve and find redemption within a good death. Fray Juan, in contrast, told his audience that "to show how one who has lived badly dies badly, [note that] in all the gospel one finds only one who having lived badly, dies well—and that was the good thief" (AGN 1626, 276). The Good (or Penitent) Thief, as the sermon's audience would have known, was the second of the two criminals crucified with Jesus

Christ; as a result of his penitence, he was promised Paradise. An example of the power of repentance in the face of death and a saint in the Catholic church, the Good Thief was presented by Fray Juan as far from typical. Warming to his theme, the friar continued to discourse upon the deaths of evil-doers. He told his audience, "when you see one of these sinners at the hour of his death moaning and crying, don't believe it or heed his tears" (AGN 1626, 276).

On one hand, Fray Juan was simply stating the axiom *como vive muere* (in death as in life), a standard aphorism of Spanish death culture (Eire 1995) and echoing the well-known precept of Erasmus that one who prepares for death on the deathbed is too late (Vogt 2004). Moreover, his hectoring of the gathered parishioners could be read as an attempt to induce the kind of salutary fear that was viewed as necessary for a good life (and death) (Ruys 2014). Nothing he said, therefore, was heterodox. Nonetheless, the audience apparently received the message quite differently, suggesting some gap between clerical and lay understandings of death and dying. According to his denouncer, Fray Juan "scandalized and disquieted" his audience with these statements, which seemed to them to deny the mercy of God—and which suggested that as a confessor, Fray Juan would be cold deathbed comfort indeed. The listeners were even more offended when Fray Juan reflected upon how God had sent "such a holy and chaste" bishop to a city "so fallen into sensuality and lust, fornications, rapes, incests, and adulteries" (AGN 1626, 276v).

Up until this point, one might assume that Fray Juan was simply trying to inculcate the proper fear and awe of death and God's judgment. However, his *own* passions appear to have been stirred inappropriately by a rumour that the bishop had died alone. According to his denouncer Fray Pedro, Fray Juan had given full vent to his emotions in discussing this offensive rumour, accusing his listeners thus: "Devils, devils! Knaves who go around saying and writing to Guatemala that the Bishop died alone: thieves, thieves! The thief thinks that everyone is like him. Insolent people, I hope to God to see you hanged, and those who support and defend such people punished!" (AGN 1626, 276) These intemperate words, Fray Pedro reflected, showed the "great anger, choler, and

indignation of [Fray Juan's] mood," introducing the emotional excess that was at odds with the controlled emotions characteristic of a healthy and hopeful Christian attitude toward death (Raeburn 2020).

This vignette, simply filed without investigation in the archives of the Holy Office, displays the power and limits of widespread adherence to the ideal of the "good death," possibly varying interpretations among the clergy and between clergy and laity, and the mixed emotions death could engender. On one hand, the gathered parishioners were outraged that a cleric would question the possibility and value of "dying well." They chose to believe instead that in achieving a good death, even the most unreconstructed sinner could achieve salvation. On the other, Fray Juan himself was disgusted by rumour-mongering suggesting that the "saintly" Don Bernardo had died alone, which would imply in turn that the friars had abandoned their duty to give the bishop a "good death." The fury on both sides—each positioning itself as defender of "dying well"— disrupted the proper emotional tone of the bishop's funeral service, given that rage, unlike fear, was inconducive to "dying well" both for the *moriens* and for those left behind. Not surprisingly, the mood in the city was apparently embittered by this incident for some months.

Anger was recognized as a natural emotion in the face of death (Raeburn 2020), but excessive anger also disrupted a death on the ship *El Angel Bueno*, bound from Spain to Veracruz after a brief stop on the island of Hispaniola (AGN 1564a). The Holy Office of Mexico City looked into the case in 1564, presumably at least a year after the incident, since *El Angel Bueno* was lost at sea in 1563.[1] When the narrative commenced, Manuel, a young Portuguese sailor, was dying, or "wanting to die" (*queriendose morir*), as many of the witnesses stated, in a phrase often repeated in these documents. While the document is terse about the cause of his death, there is no suggestion that the death itself was abnormal or accidental. "Helping him die well," as witnesses put it, was another sailor, a gunner (*lombardero*) called Nicolás de Mosquera. According to witnesses,

[1] *El Angel Bueno* wrecked on 10 September 1563 after leaving Havana Harbour. Thirty-five crew members were rescued six days later. See, Singer, 2019, 150–151.

Mosquera was assisting at the youth's deathbed when a cleric called Vergara arrived, and immediately also began to "help the youth to die well." Given the ideals expressed in the *ars moriendi* manuals, Mosquera should then have stood aside to play the prescribed role of a deathbed onlooker: praying, exhorting, and supporting the *moriens* in coordination with (and subordination) to the clergy, whose role in guiding and assessing the sincerity of the *moriens* was "crucial" (Bastante 2006, 32).

Instead, what had been a peaceful and supportive deathbed scene altered. Rather than standing aside for the ritual specialist, Mosquera attempted to silence the other onlookers, telling them (according to some witnesses) that there was no need for so much praying, and that he alone would suffice. Later, he claimed that he wanted to hear the words of the dying youth, attempting to justify his actions in a manner that suggests he was fulfilling the interlocutory role usually granted to a cleric. Perhaps sensing this ambition, one of the other sailors reportedly told Mosquera that "the father" (that is, the priest) knew well what to do, whereupon Mosquera replied blasphemously "I'm a father too, and all of us are fathers of sows!" (AGN 1564a) According to witnesses, Mosquera then rose from the dying sailor's side and extinguished the candle burning there, a deeply offensive act given that the candle was symbolic of the *moriens'* soul and was only to be extinguished after death. Mosquera then spoke again, asking "am I not a man?" (AGN 1564a) Finally, witnesses claimed, he struck the priest in the face, first with his hand and then with the crucifix, hitting him again and again until the cross shattered, scandalizing the onlookers even more than the act of violence itself did. A man already lame in one leg, the priest was badly injured in the head and face, apparently remaining in bed for twelve days following the attack.

All witnesses who testified agreed that Mosquera had interfered with the priest's duties, violently attacked him, and shattered the crucifix; Mosquera himself could only defend his actions through a vague claim that he did not know the man was a priest and therefore reacted in a typically masculine fashion, as one man might to an insult from another. In the end, after marshalling an impressive list of witnesses who testified to his good character and Christian devotion, Mosquera was fined six pesos and ordered to

hear Mass in the Amor de Dios hospital with a candle in his hand. But why did Mosquera behave in such an intemperate manner? His rage-filled, possessive response to the priest's interference might have resulted from a personal relationship to the youth, but none is hinted at in the document. Or perhaps his rage arose from something else contained in the phrase "Am I not a man" (AGN 1564a), also translatable as "Am I not a human being"? That is, Mosquera, a seasoned seaman accustomed to maritime death, might simply have been contesting the priest's primacy at the youth's deathbed. Neither of these emotional responses would have been licit but suggest once again possible tensions between clerical and lay understandings of death and the primacy of the clergy at the deathbed. Mosquera's anger, whatever its source, unsettled what otherwise might have been if not a "good death," at least a "good enough death." Rage was not an acceptable response to a deathbed scene, nor was interfering with the central role of the clergy in the drama of the passage from life to death. Mosquera's behaviour, however, demonstrates that at least some early modern subjects rejected the hegemonic ideal of the good death.

An even less licit emotional response can be seen in a suicide case, the most cautionary type of death imaginable. In 1564, 28-year-old Francisca de la Anunciación, a professed nun in La Concepción in Mexico City, was denounced to the Holy Office for heretical propositions (AGN 1564b; Tortorici 2011). Interviewed by the inquisitors, Francisca provided a harrowing story about a death and her part in it—a part that set her against the judgment of her coreligionists and her church. She described finding a young nun who had hanged herself, but whose body was still trembling. Francisca took her in her arms, released her, and pleaded with her to repent of her sins and beg God's forgiveness. At this, Francisca said, the nun lowered her head three or four times, "giving Francisca to understand" (AGN 1564b) that she had indeed repented. Moreover, the other nun sank to her knees, presumably before giving up the ghost. Despite Francisca's attempt to help the other nun "die well," the death was judged a suicide and the young nun was buried in a dung heap; she thus became officially ungrievable.

Francisca, however, would not leave her grief alone. She told the other nuns that Scripture says that on the Day of Judgment, many who lay in dung heaps would be raised to heaven, while some buried in cathedrals would be raised only to be sent to hell. And she warned them that the judgments of God are quite different from those of men. Other nuns interviewed claimed that Francisca's mental state had deteriorated since the death; some even perhaps helpfully suggested that Francisca was occasionally "crazy" (*loca*). Francisca's actions, though, were completely intelligible. Finding a nun alive, she attempted to guide her from the worst death imaginable to a "good enough death" by reading the signs of the dying nun's body. Moreover, Francisca firmly believed that she had succeeded. A cautionary death like this one could become exemplary, as was sometimes demonstrated by those sentenced to die by the state (Boyden 2000). In addition, suicides—even by clergy—were sometimes later exonerated by the evidence of devotion they had left behind (Tortorici 2011). But where others had succeeded, Francisca failed. Her responsibility thereafter was to accept the judgment of the convent's male clergy and the ignominious burial of the nun; instead, she unsuccessfully contested the will of the church and the judgment of her coreligionists. Like Mosquera, she did not overtly reject the concept of "dying well" but rather claimed for herself a central role in the process, something more characteristic of male clergy than of onlookers.

Non-exemplary and contested deaths such as these, along with the ambivalent evidence to be found in at least some religious biographies, show both the hegemonic power of the *ars moriendi* in New Spain and the degree to which its acceptance could be tempered by the emotional and affective responses of those who watched and helped others die. Anger, shock, defiant grief, longing, and terror coexisted alongside the more licit emotions: sorrow and fear, certainly, but tempered by comfort, resignation, and love of God. The cases discussed here do not diminish the magisterial studies that have found in hundreds of wills and exemplary texts evidence of the power of the church and its definitions of the "good death." Indeed, with those studies, this one serves to acknowledge the hegemonic power of Catholicism in early colonial New Spain, whose death culture likely had more in common with those of contemporary Europe than with

today's ludic national celebrations. However, these cases and others like them demonstrate how in their emotional responses to death, ordinary people contested elements of the *ars moriendi*, such as the primacy of clergy and, perhaps, the limits to the ability of a good death to reform a bad life. In that sense, the vignettes captured here may suggest the outlines of a death culture indebted to the *ars moriendi*, but nonetheless *sui generis* and even, perhaps, authentically Mexican.

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POEM

Excerpts from *Daqsxejn ta' Requiem lil Leli / A Modest Requiem for Leli*[1]

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Introductory Note by Immanuel Mifsud

A Modest Requiem for Leli is a work I was commissioned to write in 2016 for All Souls Night, recited during an event organised by Heritage Malta, which took place in the former Palace of the Inquisition, an eerie and chilling place that housed the Roman Inquisition in the 16th and 17th century (Heritage Malta 2016).[2] The event was meant as a counter to the recent enthusiasm with Halloween, a phenomenon that has swept through many European countries, including Malta. In response to what many refer to as "the Americanization of our calendar," there has been a rise in the organization of initiatives and events that include old and long-time defunct traditions, which are more indigenous, even if less familiar (Ġużè Gatt, Email to author, June 13, 2020).

The idea for the poem about death came when I visited my late, last uncle, who was already in a coma shortly before his passing. Lying almost lifeless in a shining white bed, in the corner of a white hospital room, watched by his wife and daughters sitting motionless beside the bed, my uncle set my mind into pondering what might be going on in the head of a man in pre-death, irreversible coma. As it happens, there are various

[1] Published by Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2018.
[2] Heritage Malta. 2016. "L-Għid tal-Erwieħ – A Thematic Supper On All Souls' Day at the Inquisitor's Palace." Accessed September 15, 2019. https://heritagemalta.org/l-ghid-tal-erwieh-a-thematic-supper-on-all-souls-day-at-the-inquisitors-palace/

common tenets about what happens when a person is nearing their end. One of these goes on to surmise that a person retraces the significant events of their life, resuscitating life's experiences just like a film clip, scores their autobiography starting from childhood to the recent past. This is the *Requiem*'s central notion, as the dying man, who is the protagonist of the work, relives his distant past.

Throughout the *Requiem*, there are frequent references to childhood as the dying man becomes the child who visits the funfair and spends his pocket-money on a merry-go-round; the little boy who has a crush on his female teacher; the child who plays with teddy bears and toy trains, and the child whose face is smeared with chocolate. The references to childhood also include the traditional Maltese children's play *Onġì Onġì Onġella*, where children pretend a knight comes to pick a girl from their group. Another children's game, much more morbid, is *Ara Ġejja l-Mewt Għalik* (Hark, Death is Coming to Get You), in which Death (a feminine noun in Maltese and usually personified as an older woman) comes to get a blindfolded player to fry and roast them.

Photo 1. Arnold Böcklin, *Die Toteninsel* (1880). Oil on canvas. Kunstmuseum Basel [Wikimedia Commons].

The finale of the poem makes a distinct reference to Arnold Böcklin's 1880 painting, *Die Toteninsel* (The Isle of the Dead). On the "other side" (another euphemism for Death), there is the whole *dramatis personae* of the protagonist's last thoughts. The cast list in his drama, introduced to us through his delusion, wait to welcome him warmly in his new abode: the mother who gave him the penny for the funfair, the father, the sensuous teacher, and his first love Kristina are all there with arms wide open to welcome him now that the ordeal is over. Indeed, in many people's imagination Death is a re-encounter with lost ones.

A year after the event on All Souls Night, I contacted music composer Kris Spiteri, who accepted to compose a musical commentary to the poem. He composed an arrangement for strings (two violins, viola and violoncello), a bassoon, and percussionists. We then took on board a theatre troupe, *Theatre Anon,* to adapt the piece for the stage with six performers and a life-size puppet, and finally a visual artist who composed a series of visual images projected on the background. The performance's duration is just under one hour, and it purports to chronicle the very last thoughts of a dying man, lying in a coma in a hospital bed. The performance premiered on 4th July 2018 at Fort St Elmo, Valletta.

What have I actually done when I wrote this poem? Was it my foolish attempt to understand that which is impossible to comprehend simply because this something is beyond our experience? Did I voice my fears? Or my wishes, aspirations, hopes? What do I mean by this "all", whispered twice in the final line? The paradox in the last line is, in itself, evidence of the incapacity to treat Death itself, to put forth rational conclusions. It points towards an inconclusive conclusion. Probably the outcome of all this is the realization that we cannot talk, write, compose, sing, act about Death, and that, again paradoxically, we can only speak of life and life experiences when we think about Death.

V[3]

Dying man, what is it you dream of now?
This is my deathbed that they've laid me on.
This morning they administered last rites.
Out in reception I could hear their laughter.
They came in droves, they all came here together.
They laughed, they split their sides, they laughed so much!
They told me as they laughed, they said to me:
Death's coming to take you away, she's coming,
she'll drag you with her to the flames, she's coming![4] *
They kept laughing. I snivelled. They kept laughing.
To drag you to the flames. Look out, she's coming!

Knock knock, knock knock, onġì onġì onġella.[5]
Knock knock, knock knock? Who's at the door O Knight?
Who's there? Who's there? Who's there? Onġì onġella.
Who's there? Who's there? Who's there? Who's there O Knight?
It's the woman in black, onġì onġella.
It's the woman in black, it's her O Knight.
Whatever could she want, the woman in black?
What does the woman in black want, O Knight?
She's come for you today, onġì onġella.
She's come to take you away today, O Knight.
Who's the woman in black? Onġì onġella.
Who is she, the woman in black, O Knight?
I have never seen her, onġì onġella.

V

Raġel qed tmut, x'int taħseb bħalissa?
Middewni fuq is-sodda biex immut.
Ġew dalgħodu jagħtuni s-sagramenti.
Hemm, fid-daħla tas-sala, bdew jiddieħqu.
Kienu kollha, ġew flimkien, kienu kollha.
U bdew jidħqu, mgħoxxijin, kemm bdew jidħqu!
Bdew jgħiduli f'nofs id-daħq, bdew jgħiduli:
Ara ġejja l-mewt għalik, biex taqlik,
biex tixwik. Ara ġejja, ara ġejja!
Huma jidħqu. Jien nibki. Huma jidħqu:
Ara ġejja l-mewt għalik, biex taqlik,
Biex tixwik. Ara ġejja, ara ġejja!

Bumm bumm il-bieb, onġì, onġì, onġella;
bumm bumm il-bieb, onġì o Kavallier.
Min ġie? Min ġie? Min ġie? Onġì, onġella;
min ġie? Min ġie? Min ġie? O Kavallier.
Ġiet dik liebsa l-iswed, onġì, onġella;
ġiet dik liebsa l-iswed, o Kavallier.
Xi trid dik tal-iswed? Onġì, onġella;
xi trid dik tal-iswed? O Kavallier.
Ġiet ħa tieħdok magħha, onġì, onġella;
ġiet ħa tieħdok magħha, o Kavallier.
Min hi dik tal-iswed? Onġì, onġella;
min hi dik tal-iswed? O Kavallier.
Ma nafx – qatt ma rajtha, onġì, onġella;
Ma nafx – qatt ma rajtha, o Kavallier.

[3] English translation by Albert Gatt (Klabb Kotba Maltin 2018).
[4] This is a reference to a traditional rhyme in Maltese.
[5] This is a reference to a traditional nursery rhyme in Maltese, with the refrain *onġi onġi onġella.*

I don't know – I've never seen her, O Knight.
Lie down and sleep with her, onġì onġella.
Lie down and sleep with her, go on, O Knight.

'mtedd ħa torqod magħha, onġì, onġella;
'mtedd ħa torqod magħha, o Kavallier.

VII

Dying man, what is it you dream of now?
Lately I can hear this train, a choo-choo
that dates all the way back to nineteen eighteen.
It's come to take me from a tiny station,
nestling among white beds arranged in rows,
transparent rubber tubes, bags filled with gore;
along the wards that reek of pus and urine,
a smell of grilling mackerel and bogue;
between the beds of nan Marì and Pawla,
my mother's scattered with garlic and onion,
my father's with the sheets all drenched in sweat;
my sister sat at her machine, bent over
sewing dresses and black armbands for mourners;
past a bed whose mattress has been folded,
where last I saw Kristina with no hair
and Ġulja scrawls my name on a marble slab.
A two-kilometre ride, then there are yards
where arum grows, and wooded fields with hundreds,
thousands of trees teeming with butterflies;
the most beautiful women smile at me –
they smile as they dangle from the branches,
they smile as they break the water's surface.
Walk faster, faster now. You're nearly there.

They're waiting for you on the high-ridged island:
they'll take you out there on a little boat.
Forget about the white beds and the needles,
transparent rubber tubes flowing with gore.

VII

Raġel qed tmut, x'int tistħajjel bħalissa?
Ftit ilu bdejt nisma' dil-ferrovija
ċuċù mill-elf disa' mija u tmintax.
Ġiet biex tiġborni minn stazzjon daqs naqra,
qalb ringieli twal ta' sodod bojod,
tubi trasparenti, boroż bid-dmija;
qalb swali riħa t'awrina w materja,
riħa ta' vopi u sawrell jinxtewa;
bejn sodod in-nanniet Marì u Pawla
u s-sodda t'ommi kollha tewm u basal,
ta' missieri bil-lożor kollhom għaraq;
tgħaddi minn ħdejn oħti mgħawġa fuq il-magna
tħit l-ilbiesi u l-mustaxiji suwed;
maġenb soda bis-saqqu mitwi tnejn
fejn rajt l-aħħar 'il Kristina bla xagħar
u Ġulja tħażżeż ismi fuq irħama.
Żewġ kilometri kollox, imbagħad btieħi
bil-buqari, għelieqi kollha siġar –
mijiet, eluf ta' siġar kollha friefet;
l-uċuħ tal-isbaħ nisa jitbissmuli,
imdendla minn mal-friegħi jitbissmuli,
ħirġin minn taħt wiċċ l-ilma jitbissmuli.

Ħaffef il-pass, isa. L-aħħar ftit baqa'.
Qed jistennewk fuq gżira bil-blat għoli:
jgħabbuk fuq dgħajsa żgħira u joħduk.
Insihom is-sodod bojod, il-labar,

Forget the frosty glances at your side.
Forget your bones that suddenly protruded.
Forget the uniform of navy blue.
And the merry-go-round. There are no currents
and no waves in this blue sea that you'll sail on.

it-tubi trasparenti jġorru d-dmija.
Insiha l-ħarsa kiesħa ta' maġenbek.
Insih dak l-għadam li spuntalek f'daqqa.
Insiha 'l dik tal-uniformi kaħla.
Anki l-ġostra. Dan baħar bla kurrenti
li se tbaħħar fuqu – bla ebda mewġa.

You'll see, they'll shout out when they see you coming!
Your mother will be smiling, father too;
and nan Marì, and Pawla. They'll approach,
Kristina with her dangling plait, Miss Grima –
they'll all be standing eager on the shore –
they'll wave to you, they'll call out when they spot
your little boat afloat on the horizon.

Issa tara kemm se jgħajtu la jarawk!
Ommok tidħaqlek, missierek ukoll;
in-nanna Marì, in-nanna Pawl. Tersaq
Kristina b'malju mdendel u Miss Grima –
se jkunu kollha fuq ix-xatt, bix-xwiek –
se jibdew ixejrulek u jsejħulek
kif jilmħu d-dgħajsa żgħira fl-orizzont.

Now look, they've disconnected all your tubes.
They're dismantling it all. Aren't you glad?

Ara, it-tubi kollha neħħewhomlok;
qed iżarmaw l-armar fti ftit. Mhux tajjeb?

VIII

It's fresh out. Wrap yourself in the white sheet.
Get swathed. Enwrapped. Get swaddled. Board the boat.
Just listen as the boatman dips the oars
into the water. Hear the hush. Hear nothing.
Nothingness. Hear nothing. Hear only nothing.
At nothing's end – one hopes – it all begins.
It all begins when all shall come to nothing.

VIII

Ftit tal-frisk. Tleffef sew fil-liżar abjad.
Tgeddes. Tgeżwer. Tkeffen. Itla' fid dgħajsa.
Oqgħod isma' biss il-barklor ibill
l-imqadef fl-ilma. Isma' s-skiet. Ix-xejn.
Ix-xejn. Tisma' xejn. Isma' biss ix-xejn.
Għax wara x-xejn – għandu mnejn – jibda ko kollox.
Kollox jibda kif kollox isir xejn.[6]

[6] Mifsud, Immanuel. 2018. *Daqsxejn ta' Requiem lil Leli/A Modest Requiem for Leli,* (Bilingual Maltese-English), translated by Albert Gatt, Malta: Klabb Kotba Maltin (pp. 26–29, 34–39).

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