Library of Stone: Cemeteries, Storytelling, and the Preservation of Urban Infrastructures of Death and Mourning

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Abstract
This article examines cemeteries as repositories for vernacular literary culture, in the form of epitaphs, and as the inspiration for literature that brings necrogeography into tension with programmes of growth. It starts in the early nineteenth century, when Romantic period notions of individuality, intertwined with the novel, gave birth to modern cemeteries. These spaces have, in the interceding centuries, grown old and been threatened by expanding cities, infrastructure, and changing modes of memorialisation. As sprawling cities encroach on cemeteries, 'perpetual rest' has been challenged and headstones have been removed or consolidated, to make way for parks and amenities that benefit the living. Literary depictions of cemeteries in the twentieth century have both reinforced, and troubled the notion, that cemeteries are 'archives in stone' that must be protected at all costs.

Keywords
Death, memorialisation, cemeteries, archives

Tolstoy's 1886 story 'How Much Land Does a Man Need?' sees Pahom, a peasant, develop an insatiable thirst for land. His greed leads him to overexert himself while staking claim to a new property, and he drops dead.[1] The two-metre grave in which he is deposited presumably answers the question posed in the title. For cultures that bury their dead, these dimensions have stayed more or less the same, but the landscape and material world of burial has shifted dramatically – from small churchyards honeycombed with graves, to sprawling park-like surrounds that borrow their design cues from golf courses and pleasure gardens.[2] The contemporary cemetery is not a prototypical use of land, like the burial ground, but a shared space that is the product of social imaginaries, including idealised notions of landscape, memory and storytelling.

The space of the cemetery is inextricably linked with the power of literature to project visions of place, particularly the novel. Novels and romantic paintings of the late-eighteenth century helped to bring modern cemeteries into being, by advancing new notions of landscape, and by shifting the established cultures of death and mourning. The world's first designed cemetery, Paris's Père Lachaise, opened in 1804. Its creation was inspired by the confluence of Romantic Period notions of individuality, English landscape gardening, and Sanitary Movement reformers concerned with miasmic fumes. While burial grounds, churchyards and crypts had been around for millennia, the grounds at Père Lachaise represented a new form of

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urbanised nature, dotted with memorials. The ledgers and 'death's head' gravestones of the eighteenth century gave way to more dimensional tombs, obelisks and sculptures.[3] These were placed in highly designed forests and meadows, synthetic evocations of 'Elysium, the place of the blessed dead' known as 'rural' cemeteries to their early adherents because of their greenery.[4] New cemeteries represented an opportunity for a visible improvement in the emergent field of public health (albeit one based on a later-discredited theory of contagion). They also posited a new kind of idealised nature, accessible via new omnibus and suburban rail lines that proved incredibly popular. These planned and heavily maintained versions of nature, would, in turn, inspire twentieth-century landscape imaginaries, including garden cities and cul-de-sac suburbs.

Beyond creating a space that was manicured, well drained, and safely outside the city, Père Lachaise – and the garden cemeteries that followed its model – promised that those buried within its gates would be remembered with stone markers and that these gravesites would be protected in perpetuity. This marked a departure from the churchyard burials that dominated Europe and its colonies for over five hundred years, where graves went unmarked, and land was routinely turned over to reset supply. 'The nineteenth century saw an expansion of the franchise of memory', led by cemeteries.[5] At the close of the eighteenth century, burial in a churchyard with a wood cross was the norm for all but a thin sliver of elite merchants and nobility; by the beginning of the twentieth century, even citizens from a lower-middle-class background were buried with permanent stone markers.[6] This was aided, in part, by a surge in literacy that allowed for a greater proportion of society to read (and chisel) deictic signs to mark the graves of their forefathers; and it was affirmed by the new, novelistic understanding of individuals as protagonists in their own lives. These forces allowed cemeteries to take shape and quickly supplant churchyard burial. Within their walls, the stories of everyday people – like those conveyed by literature – could be condensed into epigraphs. At Père Lachaise and its cemetery descendants, these formed a new community held together by text.

While cemeteries created a framework for literature-inspired memorialisation, literature has also helped us to understand the cultural heritage of the cemetery: as a place for mourning, as a city in miniature, as an expression of idealised nature, and as an open-air archive that catalogues the names of the dead and, indeed, inscribes them on the landscape. Novels, with their broad timelines, help us to imagine spatial futures and changing cityscapes. The cemeteries of the nineteenth century were imagined as perpetual landscapes containing stories that could be read over and over, to 'cultivate the intellect' and serve as 'historical records'.[7] In the twentieth century, many novelists revisited the cemetery as a space that stands outside time (or at least the timelines of the everyday) and used them as settings for moments of contemplation and revelation.

Novels and cemeteries are both repositories for knowledge and memory. In novels, the characters' exploits are used to explore larger ideas, providing a record of the human experience. Similarly, cemeteries serve as a physical record of the lives of those who have died, preserving their memory for future generations. Some literary works put record-keeping and memorialisation in tension, such as José Saramago's *All the Names,* in which a low-level clerk at a Central Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths expands his office's purview into the neighbouring cemetery, mixing the living and the dead. The novel's focus on names highlights the intersection of mortality, record-keeping and regimes of power – what the historian Thomas Laqueur calls the 'necronominalism' of cemeteries and twentieth-century memorials.[8] The clerk tests his bureaucracy's ability to hold onto names, as he attempts to pry one loose, an act that has profound implications for the system as a whole.

In other works of fiction, cemeteries serve as both 'untouched' preserves of tranquillity and solemnity in chaotic cities, and as a synecdoche for the city itself. Sections of cemeteries are presented as distinct neighbourhoods that respond to the changes occurring outside their walls. This article appraises the deeply reciprocal relationship between cemeteries, landscapes that hold human remains and memorials, and books, repositories of the written word that, through their binding, cataloguing, and preservation in libraries, take on their own sacredness. Both forms are examples of shared heritages, where disparate worldviews and perspectives are held together in the interest of preservation. By collecting memorials in cemeteries, and books in libraries, these individual objects stand a better chance of preservation and use.

In this article, the relationship between books and cemeteries is examined in the European-influenced world, with a particular emphasis on 'Anglosphere' countries – understood here as the UK, North America, and Australasia – where cemeteries are primarily defined as eternal spaces and families purchase interment rights in perpetuity. The infinite time horizon of perpetual burial arose with rural cemeteries of the early nineteenth century, was codified by the British Burial Reforms of the 1850s, and reaffirmed in the twentieth century, when urban renewal projects cut cemeteries off from surrounding communities, but largely spared demolition.[9] Rather than reusing existing plots – as is the norm in many countries – space for new burial was provided in newer memorial parks, built at the expanding edge of car-based suburbs.[10] Memorial parks further

expanded the scale of cemeteries and pushed them further into the urban periphery. This article pays special attention to the Victorian Era cemeteries 'rediscovered' as remnants of the pre-automotive city, which appealed to mid- and late-twentieth century writers. It is informed by a larger PhD project that investigates changes to historic cemeteries in the UK, US, and Australia and the introduction of grave-reuse programs.

Both novels and cemeteries illuminate the past via word-based culture, telling stories about power and influence, as well as resilience, in changing cities. This piece takes as its starting point the increased focus on the individual in the Victorian era. I assert that cemeteries, as a built form, arise from a novelistic understanding of humans as protagonists in their own lives. The language of headstones speaks to this, acting simultaneously as storytelling device and as graven record. Moving into the twentieth century, I address the relationship of cemeteries to rapidly shifting urban peripheries. For mid-century novelists cemeteries are often used to explore conventions of memorialisation, identity, and communities' claim on urban space. A prime example is to be found in the novels of Philip Roth, who deploys cemetery scenes as a way for his protagonists to explore their own mortality, and the lifespan of a particular community. For Roth, cemeteries achieve a form of emplacement that extends communities, acting as a remnant in the ever-changing urban landscape of the United States. The final section leaves the North American context to focus on the previously-mentioned novel *All the Names* by José Saramago, a work that troubles the notion of the cemetery as an eternal archive, the Portuguese Catholic norms around burial in perpetuity, and record keeping.

Because I focus on cemeteries in twentieth century novels, this article makes some notable exclusions, leaving out two more recent works, Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and George Saunders's *Lincoln in the Bardo* (both published in 2017).[11] These novels are set in a heterotopic graveyard in Delhi and a historic cemetery in Washington, DC, respectively. In Sanders's novel, the recently deceased come alive to tell their stories via an experimental shuffling of narrative; in Roy's work those who have died a social death outside the cemetery's gates remake their lives with the protection afforded by an overlooked and highly stigmatised space. These books present opportunities for a future study of cemeteries that exist outside of the imaginaries of the rural cemetery movement and European-infected necrogeography. In concluding, I ask how future cemeteries might exist as hybrid spaces, with physical and digital markers intertwined, and I hint at how storytelling and narrative in cemeteries might shift the way built environment practitioners think about the relationship between these two types of archives.

Carved in stone, 'writ in water'

Before discussing the cemetery in novels, it is worth noting the writing that appears in cemeteries. This consists primarily of names, dates and epitaphs. Epitaphs are, simply put, inscriptions written in memory of a person who has died. Often chiselled in stone and placed above the grave, they are one of the oldest forms of writing in the built environment. In many cases these phrases are workaday, such as 'here lies'. Their brevity was the product of the labour required to produce them. In contemporary burial grounds, an economy of words is often still a requirement, but unrelated to the labour, as headstones are now rarely carved, but instead pneumatically sandblasted and lasercut. Many military cemeteries use only a surname, first initial, and the years spanning birth and death. In other locations, the language of graves is routinised, and mainstays like 'dearly departed' and 'forever in our hearts' are generic enough to gain little notice, but slight alterations, like an epitaph that says 'we miss you' in all caps, have the capacity to bring the sting of an untimely death to the fore. [Fig. 1]

Epitaphs are left behind for coming generations to interpret, so while they reflect on the life of an individual, they posit future viewers and assume some degree of cultural, linguistic and religious continuity. In honouring the dead, they also 'glorify the living' and create a 'place for the periodic assemblage of kin… a rallying point for members of a group, a focus for their solidarity.'[12] Those who come across a headstone are assumed to be literate in the same language and schooled in its symbols and conventions of the same religious community. The experience of interpreting epitaphs is shared, and it extends well beyond descendants to include other community members, local historians and passers-by. Epitaphs express private sentiment for a core audience of close family members, but unlike other receptacles for memory that focus on the family, they exist in the public eye. While not meant for the public, these engravings are read by the public, collected as rubbings, and used as wayfinders in the cemetery. This paradox of audience is time-constrained; after three or four generations all of those who visit the grave can be assumed to be relative strangers to the deceased.

Epitaphs are often 'picture stories' that pair a handful of words with a stock image. These images have changed significantly over time. Botanical and embroidery-inspired patterns began to appear on British memorials as early as the tenth and eleventh centuries, but most headstones remained exceedingly simple.[13] This changed in the eighteenth century, with more complex designs (often making use of pre-carved 'blanks') that feature the angel of death, floral patterns, complex crosses and animals. Inscriptions also grew longer, including many that elaborate on cause of death and on the kinship relationship of stacked, or

Fig. 1: ‘We Miss You,’ an epitaph on a 1960s grave in the Melbourne General Cemetery, Melbourne, Australia. Photo: author.

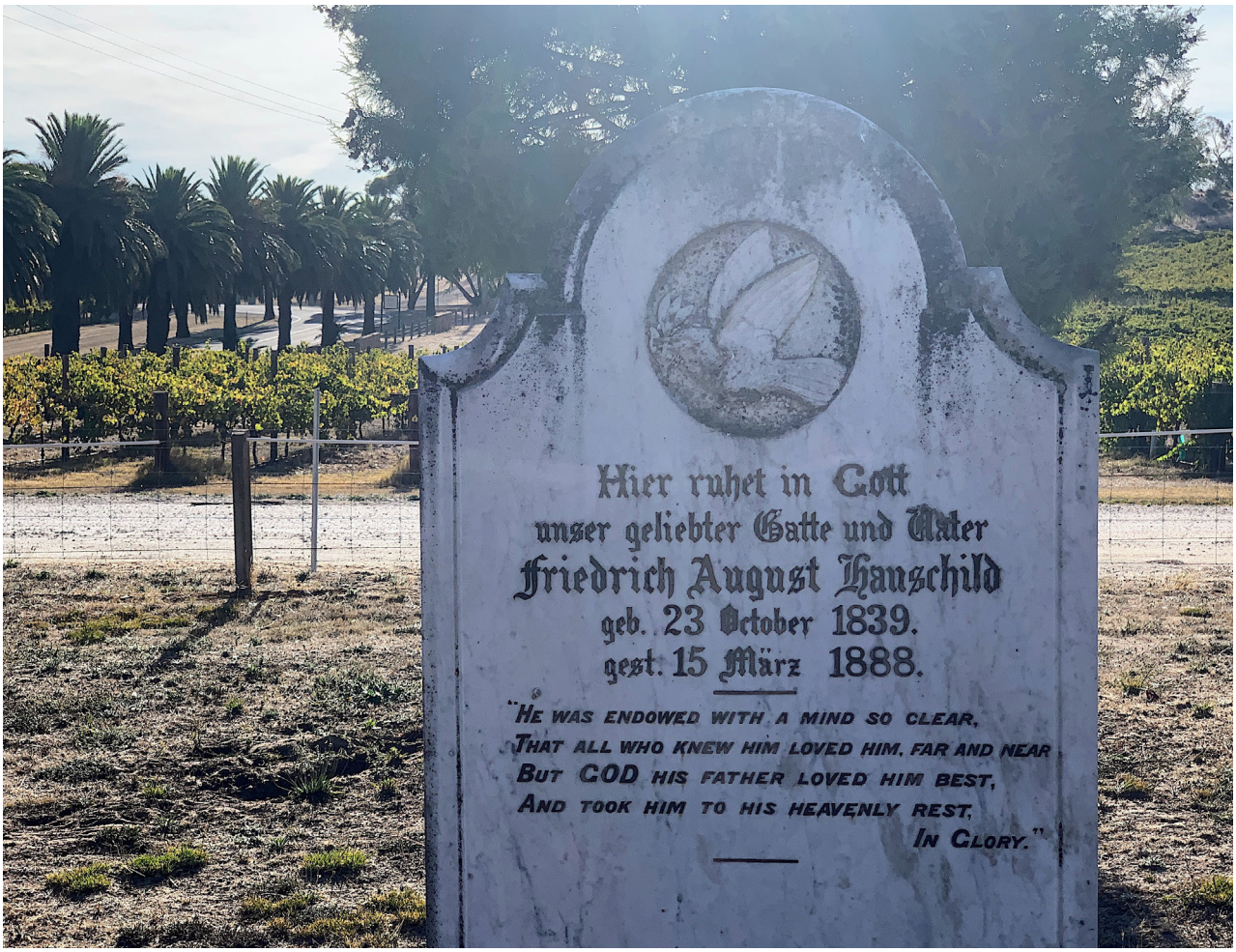

Fig. 2: A headstone from the 1880s in German and English at the Gnadenfrei Lutheran Church burial ground in South Australia. Photo: author.

adjacent, burials (the most common being 'Wife', a description that did not always come with an individual's name). Often, birthplaces were noted and sometimes they contained notes on marriage and migration. At a cemetery in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia, an epitaph begins in German, and, as if thinking better of it, switches to English in honour of the settler's new homeland and resting place. [Fig. 2]

In the early nineteenth century, the Romantic movement profoundly changed the way that Western Europeans memorialised their dead and understood death, particularly in Britain, where conceptual metaphors for death appeared, namely that 'death is a journey' and 'death is sleep'. These stock phrases were frequently used to describe the state of those who had died too soon, notably children who died in infancy, and they were often paired with imagery of lambs and budding trees.[14] This metaphorical understanding of death marks a shift from early-modern familiarity with death to an increased distance between the departed and the living in the modern era.

Philippe Ariès, the French medievalist who turned to the subject of death in the last decade of his own life, traced the shift in the marking of death in early modernity, when it went from a 'familiar and tamed' event that occurred in the home and was every bit as 'banal as seasonal holidays', to a great sorrow, borne 'by survivors… [with] a new intolerance to separation'.[15] This obsession defined the Romantic movement, with an impact on the built environment as new cemeteries appeared:

> Beginning with the eighteenth century, man in western societies tended to give death a new meaning. He exalted it, dramatized it… [this] inspired in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the new cult of tombs and cemeteries and the romantic, rhetorical treatment of death.[16]

The dramatisation of death found new and eloquent form in the memorial landscape of cemeteries themselves. These surroundings hinted at an Arcadian afterlife in pastoral calm: an environment created at the edge of cities as an antidote to increasingly hectic urban life. Within their gates, cemeteries created an idealised and urbanised nature – a landscape that could be brought into 'service to soften the keener emotions of mourners'.[17] Within these garden-like surrounds, elaborate tombstones spoke to the individuality and merit of those who had passed on and, it was hoped, would someday rise up from their positions.

The classic example of a Romantic epitaph is John Keats's tombstone in Rome, a trend-setter in the genre, and, within a decade of its creation, a place of pilgrimage for fellow poets, painters and English gentlemen on the European Grand Tour.[18] [Fig. 3] The inscription contains over four typographical styles, starting with an introduction, a large cursive 'This Grave'; sitting above a tightly kerned 'YOUNG ENGLISH POET', his early death already adding to his posthumous reputation; before moving to Keats's own specific request: 'Here lies one whose name is writ in water.' The full text reads:

> This grave contains all that was Mortal of a Young English Poet Who on his Death Bed, in the Bitterness of his Heart at the Malicious Power of his Enemies Desired these Words to be engraven on his Tomb Stone: Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water. Feb 24th 1821.

Two hundred years later, the meaning of 'writ in water' is still disputed. Was it, perhaps, 'an angry protest against the unfairness of a fate that appeared to have deprived him of a chance of immortality, or an almost zen-like statement of resignation and of the impermanence of all existence?'[19] The grave can be seen as a first entry in a long line of wry headstones that protest against the injustice of a young person taken too soon.[20] The irony is, of course, that Keats's naked display of feeling – his fear that his legacy will wash away – helped to ensure its survival. Keats's burial place, Rome's Cimitero Acattolico (sometimes called the Protestant, or English, Cemetery), served as a model for many of the rural cemeteries being developed in Northern Europe. It was a cosmopolitan space, far removed from the closed community of the churchyard. At Acattolico, idiosyncratic headstones were placed in leafy surrounds. In the first half of the nineteenth century, civic leaders in the UK, France, the US, and Canada moved to replace churchyard burial and the gridded 'reform' cemeteries of the late eighteenth century with rural cemeteries at the urban periphery. In this way they created hybrid landscapes that would join city and country and create sanitary, lasting spaces for memorialisation.[21]

Cemetery as remnant in the changing city

Just as the success of rural cemeteries in the mid-nineteenth century helped them to almost completely replace churchyard burial within the space of a few decades, the rise of automobility and suburban memorial parks made the first generation of cemeteries redundant by the mid-twentieth century. Cemeteries established in the Victorian era became moribund spaces, notable for tilting funerary columns, groves of trees and sooty angels. Many were largely forgotten by neighbouring communities, surrounded as they were by high stone walls and opaque fences.[22] Memorial parks began to replace cemeteries, both for the interment of bodies and cremated remains. Indeed, cremation grew in popularity in the second half of the century and was approved for Catholics as part of the 1960s Vatican II

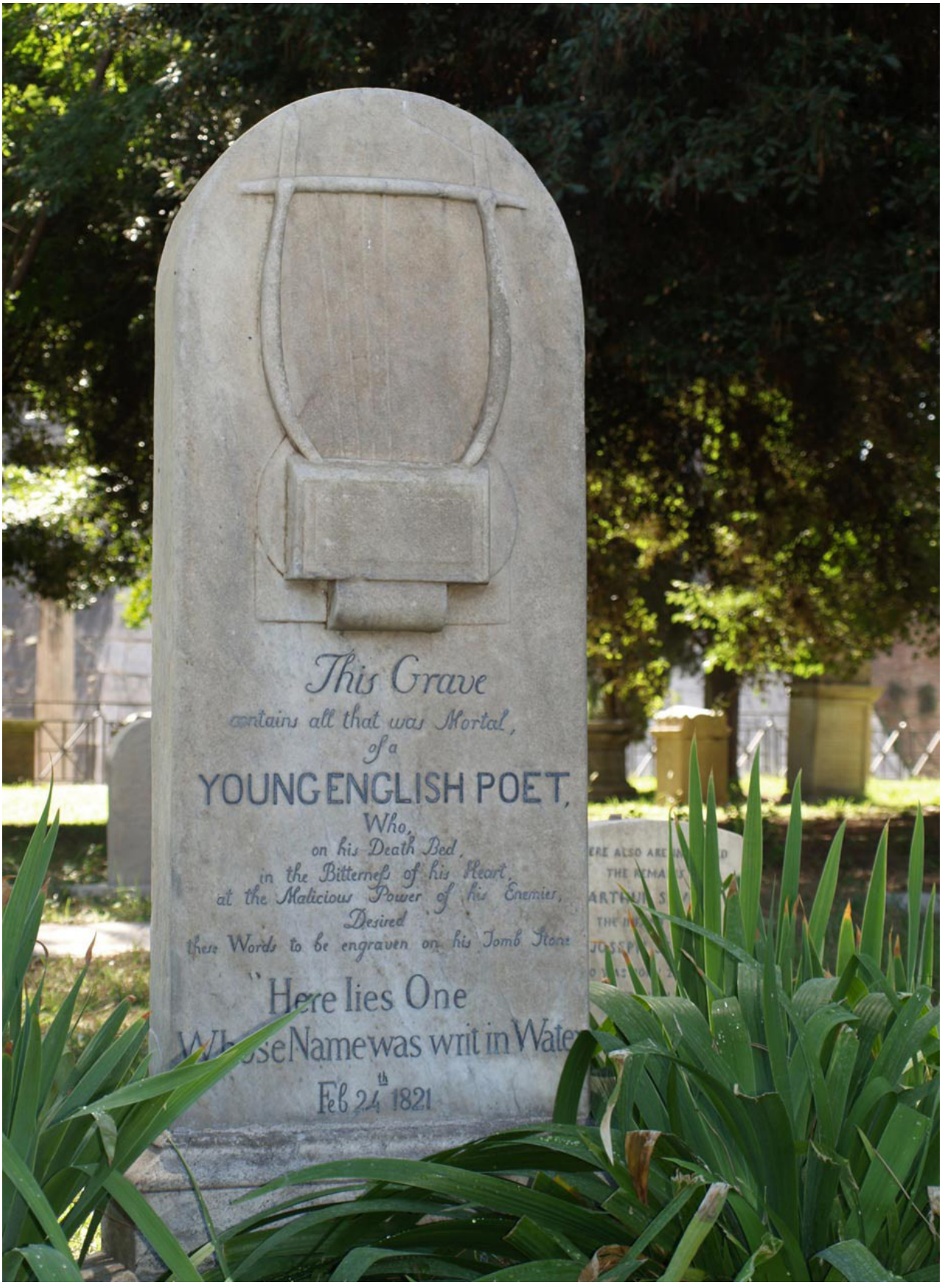

Fig. 3: The tombstone of John Keats in Rome. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

reforms.[23] While the Catholic Church still forbids ash scattering, members of other Christian groups, especially those who embraced a back-to-the-land ethos, took up the practice, the new rituals for the disposition of the dead making cemeteries redundant. In an effort to attract new groups to memorial parks, many created special environments and structures for the interment of cremated remains, including columbaria, rose gardens and rock gardens. These spaces often reflect forms of urbanised nature popular with a new suburban, upper middle class, such as country clubs, golf courses, rock gardens and arboreta.

Rural cemeteries, so radical in their inception, contained the sprawl and ambition of nineteenth-century novels, but like Victorian novelists, only a handful are well known today. For all the immaculately-maintained rural cemeteries – like Boston's Mount Auburn, Brooklyn's Green-Wood, and London's Magnificent Seven – there are dozens that struggle to care for listing obelisks and spires. In most cases, only the direct descendants of interment right holders can make changes to a gravesite, but incomplete records and migrating populations make it difficult to track those people down. Like the books of novelists threatened with obscurity, a great number of cemeteries are officially 'maintained' but largely forgotten. While cemetery land is protected from redevelopment, together with chapels, gates and fences often listed as heritage at the local level, few individual headstones are protected. In most cases, headstones are treated as the property of descendant families, and the state can only intervene to stabilise them – frequently by laying them flat on the ground – but not to restore them. In Commonwealth countries, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains soldiers' headstones in local cemeteries, and in recent years, government and not-for-profit groups in the US have raised funds to support the preservation of African American Burial Grounds.[24] The heritage advocacy of the 1970s helped to kickstart preservation efforts in the largest and most charismatic cemeteries, as well as volunteer-led 'friends of' groups in smaller cemeteries, but the massive scale of burial-in-perpetuity means that many are passed over. Victorian cemeteries, in particular, became appealing in their melancholic disrepair, a natural foil to the sameness of strip mall suburbs and 'rationalised' city centres.[25]

In post-war North American literature, the cemetery became a talismanic place, not just a setting – a place where things happen – but as a place where things are supposed to happen. This impulse is most clear in the work of Philip Roth, whose novels contain half a dozen scenes in cemeteries, including a drunken brawl in a blizzard-bound Chicago cemetery in *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) and an autoerotic interlude at an ex-lover's grave in *Sabbath's Theater* (1995).[26] Roth is not alone in situating his characters' stories in the inter-generational composition of headstones. Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) also uses the 'tilted, pockmarked' graves of a New England burial ground as a kind of fulcrum in the novel, allowing the protagonist's everyday life to switch into a wilder series of events that examine the 'power of the dead' and our fear of dying.[27] Unlike DeLillo, Roth is less interested in an individual's mortality and more in the continuity of community, not least in the rise and fall of his beloved Newark, New Jersey, a symbol of upward mobility in his youth, and of rioting and urban collapse by his middle age. The deindustrialisation and white flight of the 1960s and '70s left husks of formerly habitable rowhouses and rusting factories – urban graveyards.

In *The Anatomy Lesson,* Roth's alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman, is afflicted by a mysterious pain and spends most of his days lying flat or reading through a pair of prism glasses. This gives him a great deal of time to contemplate his past romances, novels, and the dramatic transformation of his hometown. Entering middle age, his parents have died and 'the Jersey side of the Hudson' has become 'his West Bank, occupied now by an alien tribe.'[28] He had imagined the community that he grew up in – that of 'pioneering [Ashkenazi] Jewish fathers bursting with taboos' and 'sons boiling with temptations' – was going to last forever, but its existence was confined to just two generations.[29] For perhaps fifty years Jewish migrants who had escaped the Pale of Settlement at the turn of the century, were emplaced in Newark's tight-knit South Ward, a place Roth successfully mythologised in many of his novels. While suburban development, deindustrialisation and lucrative jobs in the sunbelt had already loosened the community by 1967, when racial unrest boiled over, it is the five days of rioting that he sees as the definitive moment of scattering. When Zuckerman meets Dr Kotler, a 'white-haired gentleman… [with] the mildest Old Country accent' who offers to help him with his mysterious pain, the doctor bemoans the loss of 'our dear Newark. Large enough to be big-time, small enough to walk down the street and greet people you knew. Vanished now.'[30] To Kotler, Newark is like his 'birthplace, Vilna, decimated by Hitler, then stolen by Stalin.' He is now a 'man in exile', having moved across the river to Manhattan, to begin 'life anew in… [his] eighth decade.'[31] Roth offers up this story of double displacement with a tongue-in-cheek nod to the trope of Jewish 'wandering' and the implied racism of the 'riot' narrative perpetuated by an older generation, but beneath this there is a real hurt for what the former residents of his city have left behind.[32]

Once outside of their co-ethnic community in Newark, Jewish families 'assimilated, to be respectable, to be detached like the Wasps.'[33] They changed their

appearance, changed surnames, and took on new identities. Roth cannot reconcile these changes, even within his own family, preferring to remember his mother before the 'Florida retirement and the blond hair'.[34] The cemetery is where the undiluted, unassimilated Jewish community of his youth in the 1930s lives on for Nathan Zuckerman. It is a heterogenous city in miniature where 'gravestones… [are] inscribed with Hebrew but that in some cases also bore words in Yiddish, Russian, German, even Hungarian.'[35] These disparate communities came together to form the South Ward, but soon spread apart, with Newark serving as a jumping-off point, not as an end destination. To Roth, the Newark of the early-2000s is an alien land that must be traversed quickly and cautiously to visit the one site he is still interested in: the cemetery.

In a 2006 interview after the publication of *Everyman* in the same year, the author spoke about cemeteries with the radio host Terry Gross, saying he was 'rather glad that his parents were buried in the ground, in a box, and not cremated, their ashes scattered somewhere.'[36] Even the tumble-down cemetery in Newark, where his parents were interred (that serves as a referent for a similar Jewish burial ground in the highly autobiographical book), 'gave [him] a place to go.' Roth continues: 'I don't believe they are present – I know they are dead – but somehow the place has a significance, it focuses your thinking, it allows you to be alone and uninterrupted in your thinking about the past with them.'[37] When Gross counters that:

> cemeteries are… almost outdated because people and their friends are so scattered geographically, they're not tied together in a physical community anymore and cemeteries… it's as if you bought this home for somebody and [you don't know] is it a nice neighbourhood? Is the neighbourhood being kept up?[38]

Roth disagrees, saying: 'my attention is focused by virtue of those gravestones and those dates that I see, they are very powerful… those dates that you see are very powerful, it's just four numbers and hyphens and four more numbers, but they pack a punch.'[39] Even with Newark's Jewish community spread out to neighbouring suburbs, inland cities and Florida retirement communities, their cemetery remained as a 'neighbourhood' within the changed city.

Roth sees the small Jewish cemetery 'off the Jersey Turnpike' where his parents are buried as a significant remnant of his community as it once was, but he does not excise the possibility of others also finding meaning in that space. In *Everyman*, Roth ends the novel with his protagonist (the nameless 'everyman') visiting the cemetery and striking up a conversation with a gravedigger. Family visitation has dwindled and the cemetery is in disrepair. The only person who appears to care for the grounds is the digger, a fifty-eight-year-old Black man, who the everyman speaks with at length. The everyman asks him if he knows some of the people buried around his parents, and the gravedigger points to headstones, rattling off stories:

> this guy here fought in World War Two. Prisoner of war in Japan. Helluva nice guy. Know him from when he used to come visit his wife… There's a boy here, seventeen. Killed in a car crash. His friends come by and put beer cans on his grave. Or a fishing pole. He liked to fish.[40]

The stories of the Jewish dead have been kept and retold by someone outside the community. The everyman is touched, realising that this man 'might someday soon be digging a hole for him'.[41] He feels a kinship with the man but the only way he can express it is in pecuniary form; he slips him two $50 bills, they briefly touch bands, and with that their communion ends. The exchange, between two men from the same city separated by a generation and a colour line, represents a continuity of stories, aided by headstones as mnemonic devices. On the next page the everyman dies, and presumably, the gravedigger will bury him. In *Everyman*, one of Roth's last novels, the cemetery moves from a stage where his characters project their voices (and other bodily secretions) to a space of patrimony. The terse words on stones, he intimates, may last longer than those printed in books.

The most dogged defenders of cemeteries have presented these spaces not just as heritage landscapes, protected by grave tenure, but as brick-and-mortar archives, perpetually protected by both church and state. They argue that, while paper-based archives are flammable and computer-based systems are fallible, the 'stone libraries' of cemeteries provide a time-tested form of record keeping and an open-air gallery of vernacular sculpture.[42] As cities have grown and spilled over greenbelts, annexed suburbs, and have been radically transformed in their ethnic and socio-economic makeup, cemeteries preserve original villages and districts via the 'neighbourhoods' created by their tiny street networks and co-religious sections (the cemetery is, since its inception, multi-denominational, if not always multi-religious). The efforts of cemetery preservationists have been reappraised in recent years as fights over grave tenure and urban land pressures have expanded, and as the nature of memorialisation on colonised land has been contested. They have also been tested by a postmodern scepticism of state authority and its tendency towards quantification. The following section moves away from rural cemeteries influenced by English landscape gardening, to examine a sprawling cemetery in an anonymous, Mediterranean country, where burial is also in perpetuity. The cemetery's creep into surrounding

neighbourhoods disturbs the figure-ground relationship between urbanisation and memorialisation.

The stone archive

In José Saramago's *All the Names,* the chief tenets of record keeping and memory are probed by Senhor José, a clerk in the Central Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths. He works 'without cease from morning to night… [in a] continual state of agitation' at the bottom of a pyramid of officialdom.[43] Eight clerks in the front row do the lion's share of work, sorting through card indexes and chasing down slips of paper; their superiors above them do little to no work; and at the top of the pyramid, a god-like Registrar peers down. The majority of the novel takes place in this massive municipal archive where Senhor José, much like Sam Lowry in Terry Gilliam's film *Brazil*, labours increasingly hard to appease his superiors. Eventually, he runs afoul of the bureaucracy, 'goes rogue', and creates his own counter archive.

The Central Registry, in which the novel is set, extends beyond the clerks' desks so far that they are made to use an 'Ariadne's thread' system to find their way back. The files of the living give way to a much larger expanse dedicated to the dead, and one unfortunate researcher disappears into the 'labyrinth catacombs of the archive' and is 'discovered, almost miraculously, after a week, starving, thirsty, exhausted, delirious, having survived… [by] ingesting enormous quantities of old documents.'[44] José, who is afraid of heights but cannot tell his superiors, goes into the archives of the dead only when he has to. If he enters, he is doubly bound, with Ariadne's thread wrapped around his ankle, and his belt lashed to the ladder that provides access to the upper shelves. When the record of an unknown woman catches his attention, José develops an obsession and begins a series of secret, after-hours visits to the archive to dig up information. After many twists and turns, his quest leads him to the cemetery where the unknown woman, alive at the novel's start, has been buried in a far-flung section reserved for suicides. He is devastated, but resolved to complete her entry in his records and goes into the cemetery to certify her death.

Saramago presents the cemetery as the 'twin sister of the Central Registry', with the same façade, the 'same enamel lettering', the same 'arrangement of staff, in a triangle, with the eight clerks in the first row', the only addition being the 'guides' sitting at benches 'on either side of the entrance door… gravediggers'.[45] Senhor José's trip to the cemetery comes at the novel's climax, and he goes with the hope that the ill-management and senseless practices he observed at the Central Registry will be set right by death and the order it imposes. He is sorely disappointed. The cemetery is the victim of 'an urban demographic explosion', its historic walls have been demolished and the graves have gained ground 'like floodwaters… snaking along valleys and then, slowly, creeping up hillsides… skirting orchards, wheat fields… within sight of houses, and, often… right next door.'[46] It is a living organism 'like an enormous felled tree… [with] a leafy crown in which death and life are mingled.'[47] José sets out into the cemetery in search of the unknown woman, departing in late afternoon; by the time he reaches (what he thinks is) her grave night has fallen. Exhausted, he decides to sleep there. He is woken up the next morning by a chimerical shepherd, who tells him that 'none of the bodies buried here corresponds to the names you see on the marble stones', because the plot numbers have been swapped and the memorials were erected over the wrong bodies.[48] The shepherd knows because he switched them. As a clerk, José is incensed but the shepherd explains that, in this way, the dead can get their fair share of mourning.

The novel ends when José's secret pursuit of the unknown woman is discovered by the Registrar, but rather than being disciplined for his actions, he precipitates a change in the institution's practice of archiving. The Registrar announces that there will be a mixing of the files of the living and the dead, previously separate sections of the building. This change in protocol mirrors the mixing of the General Cemetery, the archive's sibling, with the streets and houses around it. Both forms of archiving are shown to be unruly; while they help to define and enact the ordering practices of the state, their very materiality threatens to overwhelm those who work in them, and live adjacent to them. The need to keep paper, and gravestones, in perpetuity threatens growth. The cemetery, 'in symbiotic union with the development of the city and its increased population' will not obey the 'strict bounds' of its 'quadrilateral of high walls' and instead takes the form of a 'vast octopus'.[49]

All the Names is preoccupied with space: the towering shelves of the archive, the Central Registry's long counters and tight, triangular hierarchy, and the secret door that gives Senhor José access to the stacks at night. More precisely, the book explores the allocation and the limits of space. The archive is not Borgesian, but very much of this world, and while Saramago finds the cemetery's tendrils reaching into neighbourhoods poignant, he also lets out a note of contempt: 'In civilised countries, they do not have this absurd practice of plots in perpetuity, this idea of considering any grave forever untouchable, as if, since life could not be made definitive, death can be.'[50] Saramago, a lifelong anarcho-communist and critic of the Catholic Church, shows his pessimism, not about the state's capacity to archive but about the project of archiving in general, particularly the need for individuals to inscribe their names on the land and the church's counting of souls. As other

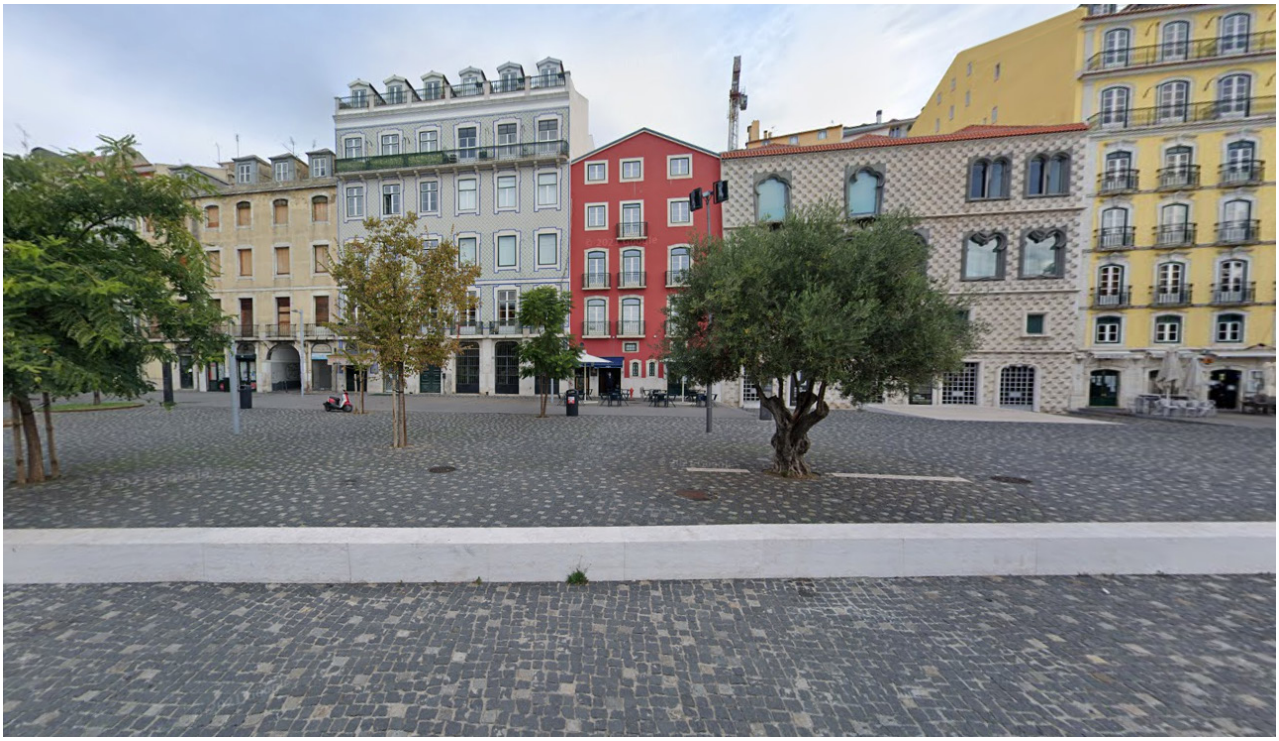

Fig. 4: The Lisbon tree (far right) where the ashes of José Saramago were deposited in 2011. Photo: Google StreetView

countries moved towards cremation and the scattering of ashes, he perceived his native Portugal as profoundly stuck in its ways. The dead and the living could, he thought, mix more freely, liberated from the artifice of headstones and identity cards. After his death in 2010, his ashes were buried at the base of a tree in front of the cultural foundation named after him on the Lisbon waterfront.[51] [Fig. 4]

If *All the Names* is a critique of our ordering impulse it is a gentle one, positing that archiving is a form of power and storytelling and that those who wield power, like the Registrar, need sensitive, and disobedient, subordinates to hold them in check. Saramago juxtaposes the rigid hierarchies of the record keepers with the chaotic environs of their records: the twisted passageways made of shelving in one and the octopus-like expansion of the other. What Saramago seems to argue for with his own choice of ash disposition is a pointillist network of memorials that run through the city. This very much reflects a change to traditional burial practice that has grown in the early twenty-first century with new notions of rhizomatic webs and memorials that could be accessed not (just) by reading a plaque but also through new communications technology. While *All the Names* might point to an alternative network of knowledge and cataloguing, it also argues for the importance of forgetting, shuffling, and knotting information. Released in English translation in the very last months of the twentieth century, it undercuts the giddy boosterism of the first iteration of the World Wide Web, and the rise of information technology in schools and institutions. Senhor José learns that just as papers in his archive become faint and illegible, the link that binds headstones – and their graven names – with the bodies below them will, sooner or later, come undone. The position of the individual in our cities' shared futures becomes blurry, yielding, in death, to the collective that is fiercely resisted in life.

Storytelling and cataloguing

This article starts by introducing modern cemeteries as a discreet approach to memorialisation that differed markedly from the churchyards and burial grounds that preceded them. This new land use was informed by public health concerns and by Romantic period sensibilities expressed in novels, landscape painting and grand-scale gardening. Born in early nineteenth century Europe, this form of memorialisation spread, due to the period's colonisation and trade, to most of the world. An emergent middle class that was lettered and in possession of some leisure time could enjoy cemeteries as spaces of recreation, contemplation and memorialisation. Visitation at cemeteries was also aided by new transport technologies like the omnibus and tram, which could move larger numbers of city-dwellers to peripheral suburbs in relative comfort. Yet, Victorian cemeteries were also cut off, as automobility expanded the footprint of metro areas in the twentieth century, looping around them and sealing in the overfull and under-maintained spaces that had lost much of their appeal for strolls and family outings.

Large numbers of Victorian buildings were razed as a result of mid-century urban renewal processes, yet cemeteries were spared because of their status as perpetual spaces protected by municipalities and hallowed by assorted religious groups. Even as attendance waned at weekly services, and cremation began to shift bodily disposition away from burial, the cemetery retained its status as a set-apart land use, where only epochal changes could occur. The narrative possibility of epitaphs, and of headstones with styles of different periods clumped together, made cemeteries an interesting subject for writers, in particular, post-war novelists who perceived an authenticity in stone and lichen that was missing from a world they saw as increasingly defined by polymers and plastics. In this era, cemeteries were also presented as a form of co-ethnic community that authors like Philip Roth saw as waning due to the breakup of geographically bounded neighbourhoods. Roth thought that the fixity lacking in the lives of the on-the-move professional classes might be remedied in death, where they would be re-concentrated in eternal communities. He also suggests the possibility of a cultural transfer, by which cemeteries might serve as didactic tools that teach newcomer communities about those who came before them. These protected remnants could speak to longer periods of urban settlement and to the accretive layers of community life in the surrounding neighbourhoods. On headstones passers-by can read 'deictic signs – signs that depend on where they are', that carry text such as 'here lies', and that work with numbers bounded by a dash to tell stories about lifespans, marriages, and religious values.[52] While these works of vernacular sculpture come from the past, they speak to future publics. The juxtaposition of different languages, ethnic groups, and religions in municipal cemeteries speaks to a cosmopolitan mix that is constantly being remade.

While this article speaks particularly to the Anglosphere, where burial in perpetuity is so normalised as to be taken for granted, it also offers insights for other cultures where grave tenure is assumed to be eternal, often based on religious grounds. In the last section it examines the 'necronominalism' of an imagined Southern European city set forth by José Saramago. In this urban context, the names of the dead and the living are of paramount importance; their maintenance in the appropriate categories is the life's work of scores of civil servants. Yet, the index of names is only flimsily held together, with few safeguards in place to ensure its longevity. When one functionary chooses to

lean upon this edifice it all comes tumbling down, not just the catalogue that tracks the living, but also the wall that bifurcates the worlds of the living and the dead. Here, the act of cataloguing is shown to be not so different from that of storytelling, and archives chiselled in stone are revealed to be as fallible as those set down on paper.

A novelistic view of people, as individuals with narratives deserving of long-term commemoration, helped to give rise to the cemetery; the novel also redefined the cemetery in the twentieth century. In an increasingly secular era, these greenscaped burial grounds were no longer waiting rooms for the second coming, but repositories for the preservation and care of memory. Post-war novelists subverted the grandiose charge of cemeteries, but never actually called for their dismantlement. Their conspicuous use of urban land could be dismissed as old-fashioned, yet they could not be removed. This paradox meant they could remain situated and grow unkempt, but in a manner that harkens back to entropic currents that informed early nineteenth century landscape gardening. While falling into disarray the cemetery can, perhaps, be even more itself.

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Notes

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Biography

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