Funerary heritage tourism: definitions and principles

Turismo del patrimonio funerario: definiciones y principios

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Abstract
In many major cities, the 'first' nineteenth-century cemetery is increasingly the focus of cemetery tourism. This paper recognises 'funerary heritage' as an associated but separate development. It indicates that there can be an uneasy relationship between cemetery tourism and funerary heritage, in part resting on unwillingness directly to associate cemetery visits with death. Poorly framed cemetery tourism can actively undermine both the tangible and intangible heritage of cemeteries. Many cemeteries are still in use, and this paper regards these sites as 'living heritage'. In these circumstances, interpretation should acknowledge the bereaved as relevant stakeholders; interpretation needs to be more confident in the ways in which it talks about the various aspects of mortality; foregrounding how the cemetery 'works' presents an under-explored narrative frame; and there is a need to be aware of the ways that interpretation can skew conservation effort. Ethical issues also pertain. Here it is suggested that, at the very least, that interpretation should demonstrate how –across all times and cultures– humanity has striven to come to terms with mortality.

Key words
Cemeteries, cemetery tourism, funerary heritage, dark tourism.

Resumen
En muchas grandes ciudades, el 'primer' cementerio decimonónico es cada vez más el núcleo del turismo de cementerios. El texto considera el 'patrimonio funerario' como un desarrollo relacionado pero diferente. Señala la posible relación incómoda entre el turismo de cementerios y patrimonio funerario, en parte debido a la falta de voluntad de asociar directamente las visitas a los cementerios con la muerte. Un turismo de cementerios mal planteado puede socavar el patrimonio tangible e intangible de los cementerios. Muchos cementerios siguen en uso y, por lo tanto, deben considerase como 'patrimonio vivo'. En estas circunstancias, la interpretación debe reconocer a los afectados como partes interesadas relevantes, mientras

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que los sistemas de interpretación deben comunicar con más firmeza los diversos aspectos de la mortalidad. Poner de relieve las dinámicas de 'funcionamiento' del cementerio es un marco narrativo poco explorado y es necesario ser consciente de que las formas de interpretación pueden sesgar el esfuerzo de conservación. Asimismo, se pueden plantear cuestiones éticas. En el texto sugerimos que, como mínimo, esa interpretación debería demostrar cómo la humanidad, en todas las épocas y culturas, se ha esforzado por aceptar la muerte.

Palabras clave
Cementerios, turismo de cementerios, patrimonio funerario, turismo oscuro.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thanatourism –journeys taken with the specific intention to visit sites associated with mortality– has a long history. Tourist visits to cemeteries have been associated with these sites from the very point of their inception, and in recent years they have been recognised as a specialist heritage offer. These 'open air museums' contain artistic monuments in a pleasant landscape setting, with linkages to national and local history. Many cities actively encourage tourists to visit their principal cemetery where interpretation boards, paper or digital tomb trails and/or guided walks offer explanatory material. This paper acknowledges the growth of cemetery tourism, and considers its relationship to an allied specialist area of tourist interest: funerary heritage. Funerary heritage is perhaps a less familiar concept in the realms both of specialist heritage interests and tourism studies. Every society is compelled to make arrangements for the disposal of human remains, and in each society those arrangements reflect a complex interaction of religion and broader social and cultural development, the melding of ethnic identities, the interplay of national politics and local governance and the influence of the commercial market. Funerary practices are reflected in tangible, material objects –grave, stones, coffins, hearses, wreaths– but also intangible practices and rituals such as wailing, wakes, particular music, processions and food consumed at the grave on feast and saint days. A recent UNESCO decision has acknowledged

that, in Germany, intangible traditions in tending graves and other associated practices were as important as any particular monument assemblage in defining funerary heritage.

This paper addresses the task of defining funerary heritage with a specific focus on the importance of cemeteries as a locus and expression of that heritage, and considers some of the challenges associated with developing funerary heritage tourism. In the last thirty years, and with increasing intensity, cemeteries have emerged as a valid and valued tourist destination. However, the relationship between cemetery tourism and funerary heritage is not necessarily symbiotic: there are themes within cemetery tourism which actively aim to obscure and 'other' death within the cemetery landscape, and some cemetery interpretive practices might operate to the detriment of funerary heritage, broadly defined. This paper explores this tension and goes on to consider a range of issues and principles that frame the presentation of funeral heritage for leisure visitors to the cemetery. A key principle is to acknowledge that continued burials and on-going commemorative activity defines cemeteries as living heritage, where the principal purposes of the site are still being engaged in by a local population. These users comprise a largely overlooked stakeholder group. Cemetery tourism does have a role to play in protecting and interpreting funerary heritage, but current academic debate indicates ambivalence about the willingness to take on that role. Where ambivalence shades into a lack of concern for funerary heritage, then there are real dangers that cemetery tourism might damage and distort the stories that cemeteries tell about how different societies come to an accommodation with mortality.

This paper's debate takes place in highly contested academic space, where many of the terms used –including 'cemetery', 'heritage', 'tourism' and 'interpretation'– have garnered substantial energy in proposing competing definitions. In part, this paper contributes to the task of defining what is meant by some of these terms, and is structured in three principle sections. The first defines cemetery tourism, and indicates that this is a growing activity with an increasingly sophisticated and well-organised support network. The second section considers the notion of 'funerary heritage', and the unique status of cemeteries as 'funerary heritage assets', which encompass both tangible and intangible elements. Despite the evident demand for death-related tourism destinations, funerary heritage tourism is perhaps rather less well developed. These two sections highlight some of the tensions that exist between the con-

cepts of cemetery tourism and funerary heritage tourism. The third section progresses from these basic definitional tasks and reviews some challenges associated with the presentation of funerary heritage, and ways in which poor interpretive practice in cemetery tourism might undermine a cemetery's funerary heritage value.

2. CEMETERIES, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

This paper begins with the need to be very clear about the use of the term 'cemetery'. 'Cemetery' is, within the realms of tourism studies, a malleable construct where definition becomes so elastic as to encompass all types of sites in which burial has ever taken place. Here, it is important to deploy an exact definition, to concentrate on issues relating to cemeteries particularly. This paper will be focusing on Westernised and largely Christian countries, and uses the word 'cemetery' exclusively to refer to a new kind of burial site that emerged from the second half of the eighteenth century. Cemeteries were a consequence of expansion in urban population, advances in scientific knowledge, demand for burial space that paid due respect to familial integrity, and interest in the consolatory potential of landscape (Rugg, 2018). The cemetery is a very particular landscape/infrastructure form, evident in all Westernised settlements, distinguishable from churchyards in terms of chronology of establishment, design intent, ownership and management, layout and use. Across much of Europe, the US and Australia, cemeteries are present in almost all settlements of any size, and their creation represents a key moment in urban development.

In this paper, the term 'cemetery' does not include reference to war cemeteries or other burial grounds associated with mass death or atrocity (Rugg, 2000).This is not to devalue the substantial heritage importance of these sites. Rather, the exclusion of those sites from this paper recognises that these are places where the pattern of use is highly atypical and extreme, the purpose of the site differs substantially from that of the cemetery, and a different set of parameters pertains as to meaning-making and interpretation.

The first cemetery established in any town or city could often be a grand civic statement of intent, and was generally opened in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at a time of nascent nation-building, self-conscious urban expansion and industrialisation (Etlin, 1994; Fischer, 1996; Malone,

2017; Sloane, 1995). Cemetery design uniquely combined landscape, architecture and engineering, where attention paid to aesthetics had to be balanced with a scientific understanding of sanitary principles with regard to possible pollution (Rugg, 2020). The passage of time has meant that these sites, originally at the settlement's periphery, have been overtaken by urban expansion. Now this first generation of leading cemeteries lies relatively close to the city centre. Many sites acquired more functional and grid-like extensions by the end of the nineteenth century. A new, second generation of cemeteries emerged in the twentieth century as towns and cities expanded, unabated. These sites were often again rather more functional and less concerned with rhetorical expression in design and intent although new concepts of for cemetery landscapes emerged during the twentieth century (Constant, 1994; Heathcote, 1999). For the most part the passage of time has generally reduced investment in cemetery infrastructure. Generally speaking, when cemeteries are being discussed as visitor attractions, it is this leading generation of eighteenth/nineteenth century cemeteries that tends to be the focus. The majority of Westernised cities of any size will have a first or leading cemetery which has a role to play in the history of that place, not least as the burial place of individuals of major cultural importance. This history frames and is framed by community identity at local or national level, and presents an intriguing narrative to visitors with an interest in heritage.

The concept of heritage is by no means unproblematic, and its meaning has changed over time. Originally, 'heritage' was discourse framed and practiced by elite national and international defining organisations (Smith, 2006). Certainly, it was the case that, in the early 1990s, listing processes were rather more focussed on examples of material heritage that were regarded as 'fine' or in some way exceptional. Since that time the fate of leading cemeteries within national frameworks for designation and protection has been variable across nations. There has been by no means universal agreement that leading cemeteries specifically comprise a distinctive heritage asset. The UNESCO/WHO world heritage listing includes over 1,100 sites. The list includes over fifty areas, settlements and complexes that include burial spaces but in almost all these cases, these sites pre-date the medieval period. The one relatively modern cemetery that does have world heritage status –the Skogskyrkogården, Stockholm– dates from 1917, and was placed on the list

as late as 1994.[1] Nevertheless, at individual country level, principal designating authorities generally recognise the importance of first generation cemeteries within the broad spectrum of different types of burial space: in the US in 1992, additional guidance was produced on the addition of graves and cemeteries generally to the National Register of Historic Places (Potter and Boland, 1992); in Australia in 1981, National Trust Australia (NSW) began a process of logging all its publically accessible burial spaces and to date has listed over 2,500 separate sites;[2] and in Spain cemeteries are logged as Assets of Cultural Interest (Tarrés Chamorro, 2018). By contrast, in the UK, cemeteries have no separate listing designation, and have –rather– been included in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Significance. There has been no active inventory programme, and in 2017, this listing included just 116 cemeteries (White, 2018). Similarly, in Belgium, attempts to co-ordinate conservation have been fractured as a consequence of delegating conservation responsibility to regional level (ICOMOS Belgium, 2015).

However, the reasons why leading cemeteries create such compelling landscapes are also the very reason why those landscapes are remarkably difficult and expensive to protect. Each cemetery may contain many hundreds of memorials, and individual memorials may in themselves constitute a substantial conservation challenge in terms of complexity. They are constructed from materials that degrade over time, and may cost thousands of pounds to restore. Leading cemeteries generally have infrastructure buildings including chapels and lodges which require on-going maintenance and, over time, capital investment to replace –for example– roofs, ideally in keeping with the original materials and design. A single site may have miles of pathways and walkways with a similar restoration need, and complex landscaping which over time requires careful management to retain original planting intent. The Morelia Charter, issued in that Mexican city in 2005, recognised multiple threats to sites, including urban redevelopment and insufficiencies in regulatory protection, management, safeguarding and financial support (2005). Cemetery conservation effort has expanded with scholarly appreciation of the historic value of leading cemeteries, reflecting renewed interest in nineteenth-century aesthetics. The imperative to protect leading cemeteries creates a

1 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/syndication>. [Accessed: 14/05/ 2020].

2 <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/services/cemetery-conservation/>. [Accessed: 30/05/ 2020].

massive economic burden, and it has always been the case that investment in conservation has been justified, and in part financed, by visitor footfall.

Cemetery conservation effort has developed in close association with increasing visitor interest in cemeteries. Indeed, cemetery tourism has emerged as a new 'special interest tourism', nested within the broader frame of heritage tourism. Again, like many of the concepts in this paper, definitions are contested but here heritage tourism will be taken as visits taken away from the home environment with the intension of gathering experiences and information to satisfy cultural interests. Scholarship has advanced substantially in this area of study, and has progressed from describing site types and visitor demographics to understanding, for example, how it might be possible to define experiential engagement with heritage (Timothy, 2018). The rapid growth of this element of tourism and the search for new experiences has created an industry that is hungry for new kinds of offer: 'traditional heritage tourism products' are expanding out to include 'objects, places, events, persons and phenomena not heretofore considered to be traditional heritage tourism products' (Timothy, 2018: 178).

Leading cemeteries are in many ways well adapted to meet common heritage tourism desiderata. New cemeteries were often designed as spectacles and it was fully intended from the outset that tourists would and should want to come. Each city proudly declared its own 'Père Lachaise' (Linden-Ward, 1989). In the UK, the opening of a city's first cemetery was regarded as a highly newsworthy civic achievement that evidenced a city's sophistication. Soon after their opening, guidebooks frequently directed visitors to the site, and grandiose claims could be made: for example, J. Glasby's 1838 *A Guide to the City of York* commended the views from the cemetery and the chapel's portico entrance, 'the general proportions of which are taken from the temple of Erectheus at Athens' (Glasby, 1838: 150). For visitors with an interest in the past, cemeteries can serve a remarkably broad array of interests. In art historical terms alone, visitors can enjoy a unique combination of designed natural landscape, spectacular infrastructure architecture including grand formal entrance gateways, chapels and promenades often offering views out of the site, and a panoply of individual memorials, closely packed and presenting an attractive bricolage of statuary and headstones of varying styles. In addition, cemeteries can also carry historic importance as the last resting place of individuals with broader historic significance, and as a facet of local and national history. Many leading cemeteries are styled as 'pantheons', with higher prestige afforded to

sites containing the graves of figures that are regarded to be globally significant in the arts or in politics: visitors from across the world still travel to London's Highgate Cemetery, the resting place of Karl Marx. Indeed, discussion cemetery tourism invariably includes a kind of 'who is buried where' league table (Rojek, 1993: 187).

Interest in cemetery visits for leisure purposes appears to have grown substantially in the last twenty years, and is supported by an increasingly sophisticated industry infrastructure. A number of in international associations now serve to promote cemetery visits. Covering many Spanish-speaking countries, particularly in Latin America, the Red Iberoamericana de Valoración y Gestión de Cementerios Patrimoniales has been in operation for over twenty years. Similarly, the Association for Significant Cemeteries in Europe was established in Bologna in 2001. The ASCE regards cemeteries as a 'fundamental part of the heritage of humanity' (Seaton, 2015). Both organisations have been strongly oriented towards marketing cemeteries for tourist and educational consumption. ASCE members span more than twenty European countries, and over 100 cemeteries are included in a European Cemeteries Route. Owners of cemeteries in the route are actively committed to crafting a visitor offer, and each year participate in the 'Week for Discovering European Cemeteries' by creating a programme of festival-style events to further encourage tourist footfall.

Cemetery tourism is generally succeeding in securing an interested international clientele, and tourist visits to the cemeteries is starting to attract academic interest. It has always been the case that pilgrims have visited the shrines of saints or cultural icons, and latter-day visits to 'celebrity' graves have their apogee in tours arranged at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery in Los Angeles (Brown, 2015; Levitt, 2012). However, this kind of pilgrimage or fandom is not necessarily the same as cemetery tourism, where the site itself is the focus of attention. Papers in tourism journals have very recently started to consider cemetery visits as a particular type of tourist experience. These studies are early forays and, in some senses, still reflect the 'special pleading' that was evident in Seaton's 2002 paper which strove to make a case for cemetery visits as a valid heritage activity. This tone is further reflected in extensive writing by Tanás on cemeteries and other deathscapes in Poland (Tanás, 2006, 2008, 2013; see also Sobotka and Długozima, 2015). Academic writing that seeks to promote cemetery tourism is remarkably international: for example, Pécsek discusses the national graveyard in Budapest (2015), arguing that the

cemetery makes an 'experience-rich, complex tourist attraction'. The Mirogoj Cemetery of Zagreb, Croatia is deemed to have particular significance: 'since Zagreb, as capital of Croatia, is the city where most artists and many other significant persons from Croatian culture and public life […] lived and where many of them found their final burial place, buried at the Mirogoj' (Babić and Bingula, 2015: 186). Particular interest in cemetery tourism has been shown amongst Spanish scholars. This interest reflects the strength of Red Iberoamericana and ASCE. For example, eighteen Spanish sites are included in the ASCE European route. Millán *et al.* (2019) indicates that visitors to cemeteries in Córdoba 'can wonder along the paths of the graveyard discovering the artistic, architectonic, historic and landscape heritage which cemeteries treasure' (165). Thus, 'cemetery tourism' clearly comprises one of the very many types of special interest tourism which can be listed alongside many dozens of others (Tomašević, 2018).

A principle theme within this academic literature is the economic gain to a city or region that might follow the development of cemetery tourism. Seaton argues that cemeteries can contribute to 'critical mass aggregation', of attractions for a destination with no single world-class draw (Seaton, 2002: 78). Having a portfolio of sites and activities expands the time and money spent by tourists in a given city; and further investment in the nascent specialist interest of cemetery tourism can in itself drive visitor footfall. Indeed, Millán *et al.* pointedly indicates the value to the Andalusian region of pulling together its 'dark tourism' offer of cemetery visits and ghost tours (Millán *et al.*, 2019). Discussion of cemetery tourism invariably hints that this activity has largely untapped economic potential: as Tomašević asserts, 'Further research could be aimed towards practical implementation of the cemetery concept as tourist attraction and focused on travel agents and local authorities to enhance their understanding of cemeteries as great tourist product, which would enable them to create new programs and find new markets' (2018: 22).

3. FUNERARY HERITAGE

Cemeteries constitute a valuable heritage asset and conservation effort has developed in step with the need and desire to develop a tourist offer which meets demand for heritage experiences, broadly defined. This paper argues that leading cemeteries also –uniquely– comprise *funerary* heritage

assets. Few papers have as yet given detailed consideration to the concept of funerary heritage. It has been indicated, above, that conceptions of heritage have changed over time. The idea of 'funerary heritage' is rather more attuned to recent configurations of heritage as an inclusive practice that focusses less on elite representations and gives greater emphasis to evidences relating to commonplace or quotidian traditions and experiences in the past.

Interest in funerary heritage is relatively new, reflecting the fact that academic interest in death, society and culture is itself a relatively recent phenomenon. In defining funerary heritage it is necessary first to observe that every society has to arrive at an accommodation with mortality. That accommodation will generally include specific rituals or practices that are enacted when a member of that society dies. The rituals and practices are framed by formal theology expressed overtly in organised religion, by more diffuse informal spirituality reflected in highly personalised beliefs, and by legislative and market frameworks which construct boundaries about what is permitted, and the choices made available within those permitted frameworks. Further, funerary practices will have evolved through the melding of cultures as patterns of migration shift and alter how a nation refines its identities. Within some larger global religions –Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Christianity– certain practices and presumptions are more commonplace than in others and have become infused in certain preferences, such as a tolerance or intolerance of cremation. When each individual dies, funerary practices and rituals extend in time and in space: they include actions undertaken from point at which a death is expected to be imminent, at the deathbed, in guiding treatment of the dead body, practices in preparation for any formal funeral service and the funeral service itself, and commemoration after the body has been committed to its final resting place either as full-body interment or as cremated remains.

The Morelia Charter recognised a number of major elements in funerary heritage, and these included all types of funeral site, where the morphology of monuments, vegetation and symbols were expressive of specific values according to time, space and culture; and funeral customs and uses, which each give 'different testimony to the cultural wealth and spirituality of the people' (2005, own translation). Every country will have unique funerary heritage which will have changed over time and which will continue to change, and in every place funerary heritage will include both tangible and intangible elements. For example, in many Christian countries, commemorative

practices associated with All Soul's Night are often associated with everyone in the community visiting the cemetery, and with families meeting and sharing particular types of food at the grave.

Spaces designed as final resting places constitute a substantial component of funerary heritage, and are perhaps the principal material element of funerary culture. Within largely Westernised cultures, any settlement of any size will have a history of burial provision stretching backwards in time to the point at which that settlement was established. Nineteenth-century cemeteries will have been one further phase of development, and cemeteries will often operate in cities that might well include churchyards still in use alongside burial grounds owned and operated by minority religious or cultural groups. All these sites reflect funerary heritage and need to be understood as a wider assemblage. Indeed, the US guidelines for evaluating and registering cemeteries and burial places recognised the particular importance of including all types of burial sites as expressions of variety in mortuary customs evident across all the cultural groups in US society (Potter and Boland, 1992). However, this paper focuses on the nineteenth-century cemetery as being perhaps the most visible funerary heritage asset at the same time as being the likely object of cemetery tourism.

4. ISSUES IN INTERPRETING FUNERARY HERITAGE

In summary, a position has emerged in which leading cemeteries are increasingly being recognised as having substantial heritage significance; there is agreement that that these sites merit conservation; visitors are willing and often welcome at sites which are increasingly attuned to developing their tourism offer; and multiple players in the tourism industry have recognised a niche market that clearly merits further exploration. Reference to funerary practice specifically tends to be absent or marginalised in the promotion of cemetery tourism. Interpretive material invariably declares that cemeteries are 'living places', not just 'for the dead'. For example, Pliberšek and Vrobon argue that interpretation can elevate a cemetery so that it is not 'merely a burial ground', intimating that this element of the site is its least important feature (Pliberšek and Vrobon, 2019: 24). For Assunção, the introduction of heritage interpretive material in the still-used municipal cemetery at Loures effected a 'profound transformation of the cemetery, from non-relevant and dead, to a

living place, full of stories' (Assunção, 2019: 55). In cemetery interpretive material aimed at leisure visitors, death is often kept at safe distance, is far in the past or 'othered' by the simple fact that the cemetery is in a different country with a different aesthetic. The final part of the paper discusses challenges inherent in the protection and promotion of funerary heritage, and its uncertain relationship with cemetery tourism.

5. RESPECTING STAKEHOLDERS

Perhaps the principal evidence of an unwillingness to engage with mortality in cemetery interpretation is the conspicuous absence of key stakeholders from the production of interpretation strategies. Many leading cemeteries are also working environments that in many instances are still serving their primary function. Tanás charts a progression where, over time, cemeteries shift from being 'exploration space' where there is limited tourism interest and burials continue to be the main function, to 'urbanisation space' where the site has become a tourist attraction and facilities supporting tourism have developed. In these circumstances, burials become limited or stop entirely (Tanás, 2004). Conspicuous examples where this has taken place are the Jewish burial ground in Prague or the Greyfriars kirkyard, Edinburgh. Both are highly visited attractions that are well-established on tourism itineraries and new burials have ceased in both sites. This is not the case in the vast majority of leading cemeteries. Many were established in counties that practice a system of grave re-use, and the majority of sites have modern extensions. In these circumstances funerals are continuing to take place and grieving relatives will still be visiting graves. Indeed, even in the Hollywood Forever Cemetery, where visitors are free to bring picnic blankets and alcohol to evening film shows and enjoy a Segway ride through the site, it is warned that routes may change in the event of a funeral.[3]

It may be appropriate to create a new paradigm for understanding cemeteries and heritage, and reference to sites being part of 'living heritage' is apposite. A 'living heritage' approach stresses the concept of continuity of the original function of the heritage and the community's connection to that

3 <https://www.viator.com/en-GB/Los-Angeles-attractions/Hollywood-Forever-Cemetery/d645-a8248>.

heritage (Poulios, 2014: 21). Within the literature on 'dark tourism', a great deal of emphasis has been placed on capturing the visitor experience of tourism sites. However, no attention has been paid at all to capturing the views of the people routinely visiting the cemetery to tend graves. The exclusion of this group from the wider debate is surprising, and would not be tolerated in cases where the equivalent stakeholder was, for example, a First Nation community where there is a Westernised presumption that tourists should have access to sacred land. In heritage studies more widely the presumption of participatory and inclusive approaches is taken as a given (Babić *et al.*, 2019). There has been limited acknowledgement that cemetery tourism should be guided by a 'moral code so that harmony wouldn't be disturbed' (Babić and Bingula, 2015: 192), however little concreted suggestions have been proposed as to how engagement should be effected. Stakeholder engagement can create certainty about what is regarded as desirable and acceptable (Nielsen and Groes, 2014), and contribute to resolving some of the ethical issues that arise from cemetery interpretation, as will be seen.

6. FUNERARY HERITAGE: FINDING THE LANGUAGE

Part of the difficulty in funerary heritage interpretation as it relates to cemeteries in particular is a lack of uncertainty about what it might be possible to say about death in the cemetery. For Seaton, cemeteries are 'inherently associated with death and no visitor can be unaware of the fact' (Seaton *et al.*, 2015: 89). Nonetheless, few commentators have given active consideration to what the cemetery says about death, and how that information can be conveyed to the interested visitor. Tanás is exceptional, in seeing the visit to the cemetery as a stimulation to 'consider our approach to death', 'to move from primeval fear and disgust to an understanding and preparation for it' (Tanás, 2013). Death is a multifaceted phenomenon, and contemplation of many aspects of mortality are provoked by a cemetery visit. For example, epitaphs and symbolism on memorials express belief in the afterlife, including formal theological belief systems and folk culture, and are indicative of a diffuse cultural spirituality. The cemetery evidences attitudes towards the dead body: the importance ascribed to proper treatment of remains, and how practices may have changed over time, shifting from unmarked communal interment in the sacred space of the churchyard, to guaranteed family plots in the cemetery,

the introduction of cremation and decisions around the treatment of cremated remains (Rugg, 2018). The cemetery also contains material evidences of –as Tanás terms it– 'ways of expressing emotion in the face of death' (Tanás, 2013: 24). Memorials and epitaphs express grief and sorrow but also demonstrate love and hope. Responses to death are invariably a search for consolation, and the cemetery landscape, cemetery memorials and epitaphs demonstrate the universality of that search. Further, visiting cemeteries in other countries provides a primary opportunity to explore cultural difference, and to understand how all these responses to mortality have been framed by different societies and at different times.

Locating this kind of evidence of death in the cemetery and then interpreting that evidence to a tourist audience can be challenging both to the interpreter and the audience. Stone claims that 'dark tourist' sites operate as institutions that deliver 'mortality mediation' for societies 'divorced from the reality of death and dying' (Stone, 2012, 1582). Paradoxically, many of the dark tourist experiences included in Stone's 'dark tourism spectrum', if anything, describe a death that is exceptional: these are deaths that result from mass disaster or atrocity, or that relate to exceptional individuals, or which look at death through damage to the body in prisons and dungeons. These sites place death at a distance, in the realms of the 'other'. Similarly, cemetery tours generally focus on the exceptional individuals, the grandest memorials and the quirkiest stories. These narratives marginalise the contribution of the site to understanding funerary heritage, and perhaps lose an opportunity to engage in open conversations about typical death and the consolation of quite ordinary commemorative practices.

It is possible to frame an appropriate funerary context for cemetery visits. Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin was opened in 1831 as the first major cemetery in the city. The troubled political history of the Republic of Ireland is reflected in the cemetery, which remains the principal burial place of Dublin. Following a successful lottery application, Glasnevin Museum was opened just within the gates of the cemetery and treads a delicate path of political neutrality at the same time as educating visitors on the funerary heritage of Ireland and how that funerary heritage has been reflected in the site's changing landscape. The museum operators recognised the challenge of 'integrating a visitor attraction within a working cemetery', providing 'historical information in an interactive and entertaining way while still maintaining the dignified atmosphere within the grounds for mourners attending funerals'

(Doyle, 2016: 151). Again, routinely returning to bereaved stakeholders would ensure that the site continues to retain an appropriate balance.

7. CEMETERIES AS 'INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY'

One way in which it might be possible to introduce and explore death-related interpretation in the cemetery is more direct discussion of the site as a working environment. As a discipline, industrial archaeology walks in step with special interest heritage groups which include –for example– railways or canals. Cemeteries are often regarded as having a material culture that is more readily explored through archaeology, particularly with its emphasis on monument recording. Industrial archaeology asks a different set of questions which focus on the fact that a site is or has been a working environment, set in a particular context. For example, a key primary question for industrial archaeology is to question the purpose, chronology and use of a particular site. The fact of a cemetery is often taken as a given, when in actuality the purpose of its establishment and the particular moment in which the decision is made to establish a site is a highly significant indicator that bears extensive scrutiny and more detailed interpretation. During the nineteenth century, laying out cemeteries was a highly religious-political act which in some parts of Europe challenged the dominance of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches (De Spiegeleer, 2019; Rugg, 2019). In each locality, the decision about where to lay out the cemetery and how it would be owned and managed often depended on how that town or city responded to centralised legislation and in many instances there could be resistance to the closure of churchyards (Lassère, 1991). These are narratives that underline how funerary culture is framed by religious politics and belief.

In addition, regarding the cemetery as a place of work encourages the creation of stories that relate to the people who work in the cemetery. Industrial archaeology 'illuminates the context of people working in the past' (Palmer & Neaverson, 1998: 3). Those narratives are often framed in terms of scientific endeavour and technological breakthrough. Cemetery management, as a profession, emerged during the course of the nineteenth century as a very particular amalgam of bureaucratic administration, landscape management and scientific understanding of the impact of decomposition on the environment and in particular soil types. Over time, cemetery managers have developed as

a group whose control of the cemetery landscape is rarely acknowledged. For example, in the early twentieth century in the UK, the National Association of Cemetery (and later Crematorium) Superintendents developed the concept of the lawn cemetery, as a modern and more socially just response to what was regarded as insincere Victorian status obsession (Rugg, 2006). Telling these stories demonstrates the ways in which the cemetery governs 'grievability' or who has the right to grieve and in what way. Again, these are questions that illuminate what society holds to be central to the human response to mortality.

8. THE TEMPTATIONS OF BIOGRAPHICAL RECOVERY

'Tomb trails' constitute the principal interpretive mode for cemetery tourism. Guided walks through the cemetery can highlight stories that connect the visitor with an understanding of mortality in the past, but it is entirely more likely that trails will present a series of potted biographies of the people buried at the site. Websites relating to particular cemeteries generally include pages dedicated to recounting those narratives, and volunteer effort at many cemeteries is focussed on the task of 'rescuing' individuals from obscurity to tell their stories (Rugg, 2017). To talk about 'the dead' is not the same as talking about death. Rather, the stories that are told generally aim to create an overarching narrative that celebrates the remarkable past achievements of a particular locality and significant moments in that community's history. Trails might group the stories into themes that aim to be entertaining and amusing. At the less educative spectrum are 'macabre' or 'murder' tours which trail the cemetery telling stories of untimely and unusual deaths. In these circumstances, the cemetery is more akin to what Stone refers to as a 'dark fun factory' (Stone, 2006), a not necessarily appropriate transformation for a site where funerals still take place.

What is here termed 'biographical recovery' sits at the heart of a great deal of interpretation, and marries well with societal interest in family history and genealogy as a mode of looking at the past. Interpretation based on biographical recovery is a useful way of underlining the heritage importance of a cemetery but is not necessarily a frame that illustrates funerary heritage. Biographical recovery can in some instances threaten the material integrity of a site, by focusing conservation effort on the memorials where a 'story' might be told. Headstones without a 'story' are allowed to degenerate and become vulnerable to removal or re-use. Perhaps the worst case outcome is the creation of sites in

Figure 1. Dick Turpin's grave in St George's churchyard, York (UK).

which all that remains are the memorials deemed to be important. For example, in York in the UK, tourist buses routinely pass by St George's churchyard, where a memorial stands to Dick Turpin (1705-1739), a highwayman and highly romanticised folk hero whose story has been embroidered by popular cultural imaginings. Little remains at this site to give any indication that it was once a packed urban churchyard: Turpin's memorial sits in open green space (see figure 1). The churchyard has become a site of heritage, but not necessarily funerary heritage.

Furthermore, biographical recovery is often supported through use of interpretation boards. As yet there has been no academic debate on the impact of this kind of board on the visitor experience. Poorly placed and intrusive interpretation can create a barrier between the visitor and the site, giving the impression that the cemetery is a static museum exhibit rather than a working environment.

9. CHANGE OVER TIME

Regarding the cemetery as a working site prompts a return to the site's primary function and the continuing development of the site as a location for funerary practice. There is a tendency for cemetery tourism to create a static 'bubble' around a particular landscape. There are two problems with this approach. First, it locates death in the past and in the world of 'other' experiences and contributes to presumptions that death is somehow done 'well' in some eras but not in others. Second, these approaches again skew conservation strategies, towards prioritising the preservation of what might be regarded as 'iconic' past evidence of funerary activity; modern cemetery landscapes are regarded as being relatively unimportant. For example, White –writing on England– declared that post-war cemetery landscapes hold no value: 'death being expressed as merely a problem of disposal' (White, 2018: 5). This attitude can encourage the destruction of parts of the cemetery deemed to be insignificant. By the end of the twentieth century in the UK, cemetery management had again shifted its emphasis, this time in favour of protecting now-fashionable Victorian cemetery landscapes, but destroying monuments dating from the first half of the twentieth century. No attempt was made to respect temporal continuity (Rugg and Dunk, 1994). 'Funerary heritage' is not a set of monuments that happen to date from a particular era. Rather, funerary heritage is a whole series of decisions taken by communities over time, and which have a dynamic range of material evidences, 'subject to a process of constant transformation, which reflect social and cultural exchanges' (Tarrés Chamorro, 2018).

10. INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Funerary heritage is not entirely material. Tarrés Chamorro outlines the wide diversity of practices and rituals which comprise elements of intangible heritage as it relates to funerary culture. Here it is argued that the atmosphere of cemetery spaces is an important component of their heritage significance. All burial sites can be places of high emotion, but the creation of leading cemeteries took place at a time when it was considered that creating the right environment for burial could be consoling for mourners and morally uplifting for visitors (Sears, 1989). In 1831, *Necropolis Glasguensis*, by John Strang,

proposed a new cemetery for Glasgow and supported his case through extensive reference to the emotional and moral virtues of a cemetery such as Père Lachaise. Strang makes this appeal, fully aware that visitors to the site would expect to feel these emotions:

> «Amid the green glades and gloomy cypresses which surround and overshadow the vast variety of sepulchral ornaments of Père la Chaise, the contemplative mind is not only impressed with sentiments of solemn sublimity and religious awe, but with those of the most tender and heart-affecting melancholy. Vain man is recalled form the distracting turbulence and folly of the world, to the salutary recollection "of that undiscovered country from which no traveller returns." The gay and the giddy are reminded that their "gibes and jokes" must ere while for ever cease, and are led to reflect that they too must die; and as "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better", the religious man, instructed on the narrowness of the boundary which separates him from those who were the "sun and centre" of his nearest and dearest regards on earth, looks forward not only without fear, but with joy and exultation, to the period when, that boundary being forever broken down, they shall, in their happy experience , find that, as they were loving and beloved in lives, "in their death they were not divided". In the mazes of Père la Chaise, we feel walking as in the porch of eternity, and our heart is at once impressed with a sense of the evanescence and the value of time» (Strang, 1831: 29-30).

Strang indicates that that walking in the cemetery can be a metaphysical experience which provokes contemplation of mortality, and this facet of cemeteries has not changed. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to describe this aspect of cemeteries as 'intangible heritage', which is generally interpreted as traditions, practices or beliefs which do not necessarily have a material component. Germany has recently recognised the intangible importance of its cemeteries, 'as a place of reflection, which initiate an intensive examination of the central questions of human existence' (*Initiative Kulturerbe* Friedhof, 2020: own translation). Cemeteries were designed to be sites of affect that provoked particular feelings. Indeed, they remain a 'landscape composition brimming over with sadness, melancholy, and reflections on passing away' (Michalowski, quoted in Sobotka and Długozima, 2015: 68). These feelings may well be experienced by visitors perhaps despite the intervention of interpretive material which in some ways could be construed as a policing of those emotional reactions (Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010).

However, there has been little research exploring how tourists experience cemeteries as places of reflection and emotion. Within cemetery tourism research, structured surveys or semi-structured interviews have gauged 'satisfaction' or

pushed visitors to select from options rather than use their own language to describe their experience or how the visit has affected them (eg Millán *et al.*, 2019, Pécsek, 2015). Ashworth and Isaac have attempted to describe a spectrum of possible emotional responses but have not tested this framework (Ashworth and Isaac, 2015). Environmental psychologists have recently explored the restorative value of cemeteries for visitors to graves and leisure visitors (Yan Lai, Sarkar *et al.*, 2020), and this kind of study suggests that it may be possible to examine in more detail the less easy-to-articulate emotional responses that might follow a tourist's unmediated exploration of cemetery space and the value they place on that experience.

11. ETHICS AND EXPLOITATION

Elements of the foregoing discussion indicate that ethical issues pertain to interpretation at funerary heritage sites. Questions of taste, appropriateness and exploitation have not been resolved in debates relating to dark tourism (Light, 2017). Tourism can be regarded as a form of travel that focuses on entertainment and self-gratification; 'dark tourism' can be judged by some commentators as little more than facilitated rubber-necking (Rojek, 1993). Conflict hinges on long-standing debates defining dichotomies between authenticity and commodification. However, it appears ethically correct to assert that stakeholder communities should control how their funerary culture is represented and how that representation is organised, particularly when those sites are still in use. This issue is particularly relevant where cemetery tourism includes an international element. For Tarres Chomorro, funerary heritage and intangible practices ran the risk of being presented as stereotypical folklore, 'highlighting the more "exotic" traditions as anecdotes or "oddities"' (Tarrés Chomorro, 2018: 77). Seeking elements of extreme difference undermines any attempt to represent funerary heritage as a common story of humanity coming to terms with mortality.

It is also appropriate to ask questions about the ethics of interpretation where there is no relevant stakeholder community: for example, where new burials have not occurred at a site for some time and where graves are no longer visited. The dead are not in a position to argue about issues of disrespect. Within philosophy, a considerable debate has arisen as to whether harms can be experienced by the dead (eg Fischer, 2001); this author concurs with views that

the dead are insensate and that the notion of posthumous harms is not tenable. Arguably, neither the dead nor their living relatives can be offended by late-night horror movie screenings. However, it might be asserted that such showings do visit harm on society that might itself become desensitised through routinized lack of respect. Tanás recognised that a key problem in tourism at cemeteries is lies in 'the way they are exploited so as to keep the *sacrum* element intact' (Tanás, 2006: 149). Activities that undermine the sacredness that might be afforded to cemetery space also undermines their intangible heritage.

12. COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE OUTCOMES

This latter point is re-asserted in the final issue that relates to cemetery interpretation, and that is the fact that increased visitor footfall and a heavy schedule of events might very well compromise the very features of the site that are valued by visitors. The 2008 ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites (the 'Ename Charter') recognised that interpretation could threaten site authenticity. The Charter's fourth principle indicated that sites should be protected from 'the adverse impact of intrusive interpretive infrastructure, visitor pressure, inaccurate or inappropriate interpretation' (ICOMOS, 2008). Enthusiasm for cemetery tourism and the development of the visitor offer may well be problematic in this regard. Tomašević is particularly assertive in arguing for leading cemeteries to have a programme of activities and calls for the organisation of 'cemetery tours on regular basis, concerts of classical music (not only for religious holidays) […] an information centre with coffee shop, souvenirs, and brochures and plan extensive marketing activities' (Tomašević, 2018). However, this approach does not necessarily marry with the tranquillity often associated with visiting a cemetery: 'entering Green-Wood's campus (ie Green-Wood Cemetery, New York) causes an immediate physical and emotional change. For me, there is a sudden silence as my ears adjust to the sounds of nature. Spring is almost at its peak, with shocks of color from the fresh blooms of magnolia trees. The winding paths are largely empty. As the city disappears behind green hills, worries and concerns fade away' (Kensinger, 2020). Any evaluation of interpretive activity needs also to include assessment of the unmediated visitor experience, and possible impacts of organised group events on other, more solitary, site users.

13. CONCLUSION

Cemeteries 'mean' different things. Here, attention has been focussed on the heritage importance of leading cemeteries. These are sites that can comfortably be included in listings of international attractions, and where it is thought appropriate to create a tourist offer. Cemetery tourism is a rapidly emerging concept. At present, attention is being paid to defining that concept, particularly in relation to heritage tourism more generally, and how cemetery tourism might relate to the concept of 'dark tourism' as a particular activity. This paper contends that cemetery tourism is rarely 'about' death. There has been recent recognition of funerary heritage as a largely overlooked but important aspect of cultural expression and which merits protection and careful interpretation. This is particularly the case where funerary heritage tourism might seek to draw visitors to working sites, to talk about the evolution of funerary practices over time. This paper has recognised elements of conflict between the cemetery tourism and funerary heritage tourism. Cemeteries are regarded, comfortably, as heritage assets. However, there can be some discomfort in emphasising the importance of the cemetery as a distinctively funerary heritage asset particularly if such a strategy threatens visitor footfall and undermines the contribution that the cemetery might make to the tourism offer of a city or region. Association with conceptions of 'dark tourism' –however defined– can be unhelpful, since the very idea can carry negative connotations. In agreement with the Morelia charter, this paper looks to encourage 'the proper use of funeral spaces and sites, particular when they are incorporated into cultural routes or tourism development programmes' (2005, own translation).

This paper aims to provoke recognition of the challenges attached to identifying, presenting and promoting funerary heritage. There has, as yet, been limited acknowledgement that bereaved community stakeholders should drive interpretive strategy; interpretation needs to be more confident in the ways in which it talks about the various aspects of mortality; foregrounding how the cemetery 'works' presents an under-explored narrative frame, particularly with regard to establishing the dynamic nature of funerary heritage; and –as with all interpretation– there is a need to be aware of the ways that interpretation can skew conservation effort. In all this, there is a desire to be clear about how funerary heritage can be represented and what there is to say. Here it is suggested that, at the very least, that interpretation

should demonstrate how –across all times and cultures– humanity has striven to come to terms with mortality. Interpretation also needs to pay attention to intangible heritage. Cemeteries are places where unmediated wandering might in itself constitute a meaningful experience, and engagement at a metaphysical level is not necessarily a group activity. Everyone should be able to find space in the cemetery for quiet solitude. This paper calls for the creation of effective strategies to ensure careful integration of cemetery tourism and respect for funerary heritage.[4]

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