BDes Dissertation

Objects of death, Mourning and the Digital Age

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Synopsis //

This dissertation is an investigation into our material and visual relationship with death, the value of including death or grieving related objects in our lives and the social, political or economic factors which could effect their use and appearance. Moreover, I will research how these objects have changed with the introduction of the internet. This text explores examples of these objects from the eighteenth century to the present day. The objects in this dissertation vary from memento mori jewellery worn during the Victorian period to contemporary online ‘gravescapes’. Chapter One begins by examining what defines a death or mourning object and how mourning objects can support the grieving process, furthermore I researched different mourning practices in order to investigate how mourning objects and rituals vary around the world. Chapter One concludes with research into death and mourning in a historical context, in this section I will gather most of my research from the Victorian period and compare it to contemporary mourning rituals. Chapter Two also starts with the Victorian period. Objects explored in this chapter include fabrics, lockets, monuments, clothing and other items connected to mourning practices. This Chapter investigates why specific mourning objects were popularised and how these objects have changed over time as our relationship with death and dying has evolved. This dissertation with conclude with an evaluation of current death objects such as the ‘coffin chair’ designed by Yeyang Liao, ‘Leaves’ by Shaina Garfield and ‘urns for living’ designed by Aleksander Skworz. By researching these objects, their relevance today in contrast to previous centuries and what the future of death will look like both physically and digitally. Additionally, by bringing the subject of death related objects up to date this work will review ‘digital death’. This section will investigate how our use of social media and our growing online presence has altered our relationship with death and mourning. In conclusion, this dissertation aims to acknowledge the physical manifestation of grief.

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Introduction //

When a loved one passes away, the items they leave behind take on an entirely new purpose. What was once a necklace, photograph or even a lock of hair acquires a deeper meaning. To the bereaved, these objects tether memories of the deceased to the material world. Mourning objects can act as an important visual reminder in place of the person you can no longer see. Historically, humans have represented the mourning process in clothing, textiles or jewellery. Even today, the colour black has more powerful connotations around it than any other colour. By understanding the context surrounding these visual reminders I hope to understand why people displayed their relationship with grief and death in these distinctive ways. Throughout this dissertation, I will be asking, what causes people to want to display their grief visually? How have people in the past used visual culture to express their relationship with death? Why were certain mourning materials, styles, or objects popularised throughout history? How are these objects being altered along with our increasingly digitalised society?

The inspiration for this dissertation came from my studio practice. In my third year of study, my final project was a self-directed 'Manifesto'. In this project, we were asked to create a brief around a subject that was important to us, to which I responded by designing a funeral home. My interest in this topic is well encapsulated by the words of Ivor Williams, a Scottish designer and founder of 'Being and Dying', a death positive design group: 'Humans should apply their creativity and innovative power to redesigning the inevitable, not futilely inching away from it.'[1] Viewing death and grief as a taboo subject may initially feel like a more comfortable choice than talking about it. However, avoidance of the subject perpetuates a culture of silence around death which can be incredibly damaging. This interest has evolved into my final year project where I am designing a 'Momento Mori' space. This space is centred around breaking the taboo nature of death and starting up healthy conversations about our own mortality. Another aspect of this site would be surrounding 'eco death' which is a death positive movement that aims to provide ethical and environmentally friendly burial options.[2] This dissertation has enriched my knowledge on death and grief through learning about how historically, we have attempted to make tangible our thoughts and feelings surround this subject.

The objects in this dissertation will mainly be from around the nineteenth century. Death was an integral part of Victorian society due to higher mortality rates. However, they

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[1] Williams, I. (1025). The Latest Challenge in design? Create a Better Way to Die. [online] Quartz. Available at: https://qz.com/368257/can-we-redesign-death-to-be-as-innovative-social-and-tech-savvy-as-life/ [Accessed 5 Mar. 2021].

[2] Doughty, C. (2017). ECO-DEATH TAKEOVER: Changing the Funeral Industry. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWo2-LHwGMM [Accessed 11 Sep. 2020].

seemed to experience a cultural shift towards an obsession with death, modelling elaborate death practices inspired by Queen Victoria's mourning of her husband Prince Albert. This meant I was able to collect an abundance of information and accounts from that time, which are still relevant in some aspects to the way we mourn today.

I have gathered information from a wide selection of sources. For Chapters One and Two, I predominately used books, online articles, lectures, and TED talks. In particular, I obtained a lot of information from 'Death in the Victorian Family' by Patricia Jalland and 'Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History' by Lou Taylor. When amassing information on contemporary death objects and the future of grieving practices I accumulated research from multiple TED Talks, specifically those by Caitlin Doughty and Jae Rhim Lee. When researching digital death I watched the 'Black Mirror' episode 'Be right back' as well as read books such as 'Your Digital Afterlife: When Facebook, Flickr and Twitter Are Your Estate, What's Your Legacy?' The key topic discussed in Chapter One is the reasoning behind keeping mourning objects. To do this I will begin by researching contemporary reports made on the value that mourning objects have in processing grief and remembering their loved ones. Subsequently, this chapter will explain how and why death and mourning practices materialise in different social classes, time periods, and contexts. The second chapter focuses on the different forms mourning objects can take on. I will be looking at the importance of including specific materials or textiles into mourning objects. To begin with, I will document different examples of death-related objects, these include mourning clothing, textiles, accessories, and monuments. I will be talking about what they are, how we used them, and their relevance in that time period. I will compare and contrast these objects with ones from different periods to understand how our relationship with death has changed throughout history. Furthermore, I will use my research to speculate on the future of death and grieving objects. I will be looking at how contemporary artists merge traditional objects with modern technology. I will be discussing modern death objects and how they are relevant today in contrast to previous centuries. In addition, I will be considering their similarities and differences to digital death spaces. To conclude, I will be investigating the intersection between death and technology. I will be looking at how digital death technology and design can shift our understanding of death and bereavement. I will begin by discussing what a digital death consists of and what the effects of death in digital spaces are. Digital death has many logistical, ethical, and cultural factors which need to be evaluated. In this section I will be asking the questions, do we ever really die online? How can you control your digital legacy? How can you navigate a digital footprint after death? This section will consider whether the internet can be considered a death or mourning object in itself. To research this I will be looking at memorialised accounts, digital graveyards, and other traditional death objects which have been translated into an online format.

Defining mourning practices and how they vary

Mourning is an intangible yet natural process of life and death and mourning the loss of a loved one is the unavoidable repercussion of having relationships with other people. Acknowledging and processing this grief is crucial as it allows the bereaved to let go of the history and memories we associate with that lost person, object, or experience—so that we might re-invest our energy elsewhere.[3] Mourning objects help process grief when the loss is new and they can also act as an object of remembrance.[4] The following quote is from a participant of a study reporting how families who have lost a child to cancer engage in remembering them:

> I have two big crates of her stuff in there. Schoolbooks that she's written in, notes that she's written, her favourite coat...the hat, things she would wear.... her pencils. Just every little belonging that I could keep, I kept. Having her belongings with me, it makes me feel much better.[5]

Nearly all participants (97%) reported engaging in purposeful bonds with deceased children, this includes visual reminders such as teddy bears, videotapes, and photographs. Furthermore, 36% of participants reported keeping or wearing personal belongings.[6] This demonstrates that remembering the deceased through physical keepsakes is important as they offer a sense of comfort for the bereaved, evoking a physical and emotional connection to the memories of that person.[7]

Death and how people mourn are influenced by the social, political, or cultural issues or inequalities that existed during their time. There is a wide variety of causes as to why certain groups use different techniques in mourning. Mourning is a universal experience

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[3] NEIMEYER, R.A., PRIGERSON, H.G. and DAVIES, B. (2002). Mourning and Meaning. American Behavioral Scientist, 46(2), pp.235–251.

[4] Gibson, M. (2008). Objects of the Dead : [Mourning and Memory in Everyday life]. Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, pp.1–11.

[5] Foster, T.L., Gilmer, M.J., Davies, B., Dietrich, M.S., Barrera, M., Fairclough, D.L., Vannatta, K. and Gerhardt, C.A. (2011). Comparison of Continuing Bonds Reported by Parents and Siblings after a Child's Death from Cancer. *Death Studies*, 35(5), pp.420–440.

[6] Foster, T.L., Gilmer, M.J., Davies, B., Dietrich, M.S., Barrera, M., Fairclough, D.L., Vannatta, K. and Gerhardt, C.A. (2011). Comparison of Continuing Bonds Reported by Parents and Siblings after a Child's Death from Cancer. *Death Studies*, 35(5), pp.420–440.

[7] Gibson, M. (2008). Objects of the dead : [Mourning and Memory in Everyday Life]. Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, pp.1–9.

however, it varies from culture to culture.[8] These cultural differences and beliefs significantly influence our relationship with death itself. In some cultures, a person is considered dead as soon as their heart stops, in other cultures a person is not truly dead until they have been given a respectable funeral. This is the case for the Eastern Indonesian Tana Toraja clan, whose deceased are mummified and are considered to be 'sleeping' or 'sick' until they save up the money for a funeral. [Figure 1] The deceased can then pass on in a celebration that can last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks.[9] These funerals cost around 1 billion rupiahs (£52,286) and involve the entire village. It is important to them to repay the deceased for the care and support they gave them in life through their death ceremony.[10]

Figure 1 // A daughter breaks down moments before a group of men carry her mother to her grave. Ester Patiung died ten months earlier, at age 62; her body was kept in the family home as decisions were made about her funeral ceremony.

The way we mourn is also affected by our beliefs of the afterlife. While some people believe that death is the final end with no afterlife, others such as Hindus and Buddhists believe that death is just a transitional period for a new reincarnation.[11] Tibetan Buddhists believe that once the person has died, the body is a hollow shell, their spirit having moved on to be reincarnated. 80% of Tibetan Buddhists practice sky burials.[12] Sky burials are an ancient

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[8] Hayslip, B. and Peveto, C.A. (2005). Cultural Changes in Attitudes toward death, dying, and Bereavement. New York, Ny: Springer, p.

[9] Bennett, A. (2016). When Death Doesn't Mean Goodbye. [online] Nationalgeographic.com. Available at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2016/04/death-dying-grief-funeral-ceremony-corpse/ [Accessed 12 Dec. 2020].

[10]TED TALKS. (2013). Kelli Swazey: Life That doesn't End with Death. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCRC5_0kfiw&t=620s [Accessed 9 Nov. 2020].

[11] Nichols, S., Strohminger, N., Rai, A. and Garfield, J. (2018). Death and the Self. Cognitive Science, 42, pp.314–332.

[12] Anon (2005). *Buddhist Channel*. [online] www.buddhistchannel.tv. Available at: https://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=1 [Accessed 1 Mar. 2021].

funeral practice in which a human corpse is placed on a mountaintop to decompose while being eaten by vultures.[13] Family members and relatives do not attend the funeral, instead they stay home and pray. Although this may seem macabre to some, this practice aligns with the Buddhist faith. By choosing not to be buried they are preserving the natural land and offering themselves to the vultures as a form of gratitude.[14] It is also a final test of their faith as vultures would not eat the body of a person who committed evil deeds.[15] All social, political, or economic issues that exist in life will be reflected in death and grief. Although the feeling of grief is common in everyone regardless of gender, how we respond to those emotions can be steeped in gender roles. Women are more likely to be handed the role of carer of the dying, in both paid and unpaid positions, as well as being victims themselves. In the eighteenth century, women were expected to bathe and clothe the dead.[16]

Figure 2 // Hyper dense graveyards of Hong Kong

Our geography can also affect how we mourn, the sheer size of land in a country can affect funerals, burials, and therefore how we mourn. In Hong Kong the oldest Christian cemetery 'Happy Valley' which dates back to 1845, is now full. [Figure 2] There is a severe scarcity of places to bury the dead in Hong Kong, this issue is recognised by the government which

[13] O' Bush, R. (2016). Sky Burials: Tradition Becomes Controversial Tourist Attraction | Short Film Showcase. (2016). YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BreEms4m_6U [Accessed 3 Sep. 2020].

[14] O Bush, R. (2019). Vultures of Tibet: Sky Burial Tourism Threatens a Tibetan Buddhist Ritual. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=240_5W_0GGg [Accessed 16 Jun. 2020].

[15] O Bush, R. (2019). Vultures of Tibet: Sky Burial Tourism Threatens a Tibetan Buddhist Ritual. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=240_5W_0GGg [Accessed 16 Jun. 2020].

[16] Field, D., Jennifer Lorna Hockey and Small, N. (1997). Death, gender, and ethnicity. London ; New York: Routledge, pp.8–10.

estimates that there are 200,000 human remains waiting to be buried.[17] There is such a demand for a space for burial that a plot is on average more expensive than a place to live in the city. A plot large enough to permanently contain a relative's ashes can cost families as much as HK$1.8 million (Dh842,000) — enough to buy an apartment in the UAE.[18] This affects how the people of Hong Kong mourn for their dead, much like the families of the soldiers lost in the World Wars, these families do not have a physical grave to mourn until they can afford it.

There are multiple types of grief, disenfranchised grief is described as 'Grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned or publicly mourned.'[19] This type of grief is common throughout history as it is a reflection of the restrictions and stigma of society at that time.[20] During the AIDS epidemic of the '80s, the LQBTQ+ community was having to deal with the loss of friends and family as well as potentially their own life. From 1981, when AIDS was first recognised, through 1990, more than 100,000 people in the United States have died from AIDS.[21] The highly homophobic social context that surrounded AIDS/HIV stigmatised gay people and disease in general. This affected how the gay community grieved as they could only mourn with those that knew about their identity and were accepting of it. The artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres's artwork 'Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)' is an art installation consisting of 175 pounds of candy, representing the 175-pound body of Ross Laycock, Gonzalez-Torres's boyfriend.[22] [Figure 3] The viewers are encouraged to take the candy and consume it as they see fit, this consumption represents the AIDS virus depleting Ross' body, piece by piece taking it away until there is nothing left. Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who dedicated his artwork to the one he loved and lost, died in 1996 of AIDS. Gonzalez-Torres used art to represent this love and loss he felt personally from the loss of his boyfriend, in a time when the AIDS virus was a taboo subject in mainstream media. This installation is very

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[17] Keegan, M. (2019). Hong Kong real estate now more expensive for the dead than the living. [online] the Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/apr/23/dead-pricey-hong-kong-burial-plots-now-more-expensive-than-living-space [Accessed 12 Jan. 2021].

[18] Lee, Y. (2014). Grave shortage: in HK, it costs more to house the dead than the living. Reuters. [online] 3 Jun. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/hongkong-death/grave-shortage-in-hk-it-costs-more-to-house-the-dead-than-the-living-idUKL3N0IC2D020140603?edition-redirect=uk [Accessed 9 Jan. 2021].

[19] Litsa Williams (2019). *Disen-whaaaat?? Understanding Disenfranchised Grief*. [online] What's Your Grief. Available at: https://whatsyourgrief.com/disenfranchised-grief/ [Accessed 11 Sep. 2020].

[20] Doka, K.J. (1999). Disenfranchised Grief. Bereavement Care, 18(3), pp.37–39.

[21] HIV.gov (2019). A Timeline of HIV and AIDS. [online] HIV.gov. Available at: https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/history/hiv-and-aids-timeline [Accessed 11 Sep. 2020].

[22] Gonzalez-Torres, F. (1991). Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.). [Candies individually wrapped in multicolor cellophane, endless supply] Available at: https://www.artic.edu/artworks/152961/untitled-portrait-of-ross-in-l-a [Accessed 10 Feb. 2021].

successful, appearing in twenty-three museums since 1991.[23] This leads to the observation that mourning objects can have a large impact on many generations and represent the collective grief felt by a marginalised community.

Figure 3 // 'Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)'

1.2 Death and mourning in a historical context

The Victorians are often remembered for their intense ritualistic approach to death. They assigned a strict code of conduct relating to clothing, funerals, and ceremonies. The catalyst for this cultural obsession came from the resurgence in popularity of Evangelicalism during the nineteenth century. The Evangelical movement revitalised the belief of a 'good death', drawing inspiration from the medical book 'Ars Moriendi' which demonstrates the 'art of dying' and highlights the difference between a good or bad death.[24] This knowledge was important for the Victorians who saw dying as a performed battle against damnation.[25] To the Victorians, dying was the moment when a divine judgment was carried out and

[23] The Art Institute of Chicago. (n.d.). 'Untitled' (Portrait of Ross in L.A.). [online] Available at: https://www.artic.edu/artworks/152961/untitled-portrait-of-ross-in-l-a. [Accessed 26 Jan. 2021].

[24] Duclow, D. (n.d.). *Ars Moriendi - body, life, history, beliefs, time, person, Fifteenth-Century Beginnings*. [online] www.deathreference.com. Available at: http://www.deathreference.com/A-Bi/Ars-Moriendi.html. [Accessed 26 Jan. 2021].

[25] Jalland, P. (1996). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.5–6.

where the dying person could have a conversation with God.[26] Victorians would idealise slow deaths, which were common in the time of Cholera and Tuberculosis, as they saw it as a lengthy ‘conversation' with God and a way to prepare themselves spiritually for their final moment.[27] Magazines and journals such as the *Evangelical magazine, Christian Guardian, and Church of England Magazine* were produced during this period, all of them containing memoirs of pious Christians and their deathbed scenes at the start of every month.[28] The memoirs in these journals usually documented the final hours of devout clergymen as they attempted to triumph over the sufferings of the deathbed by declaring their faith.[29] These deathbed scenes were often highly edited, idealised, and designed for moral instruction, with the undesirable features of dying edited out.[30] The symbolic importance of the deathbed and the invention of photography in 1826 gave rise to deathbed portraits. Louis Daguerre, one of the fathers of photography, developed his eponymous Daguerreotype in 1839.[31] Daguerreotype images were produced on treated silver-plated copper sheets, protected by glass. The process was expensive and time-consuming – it could take up to 15 minutes to develop an exposure, and the images created were fragile.[32] The first post mortem photograph was taken in 1841[33] and as the production of photographs advanced, the cost reduced, making post-mortem photographs available to different classes.[34] One method of photography which was more affordable for the lower class came in 1850 with the Ambrotype method.[35] The deathbed portrait aimed to portray the dead as sleeping peacefully as any sign of struggle or strain during or after death was a sign of interference from the devil. This meant that the deceased subjects were often arranged to give this

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[26] Jalland, P. (1996). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.21

[27] Jalland, P. (1996). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.5–6.

[28] Memoir of the Late Charles Emilius Bagot. (1812). *The Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine*, [online] p. Available at: https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=r_oDAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA2&lpg=PA2&dq=Memoir+of+the+Late+Charles+Emilius+Bagot.&source=bl&ots=483dma2BHe&sig=ACfU3U1UKWb_efql5_CqksbmAHFIY8PCFQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjRvsP27MzvAhX4Q0EAHT5hDJUQ6AEwAXoECAEQAw#v=onepage&q=Memoir%20of%20the%20Late%20Charles%20Emilius%20Bagot.&f=false [Accessed 5 Jan. 2021].

[29] Jalland, P. (1996). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.22

[30] Jalland, P. (1996). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, p.7.

[31] Administrator (2019). Daguerreobase - What is a daguerreotype? [online] Daguerreobase.org. Available at: http://www.daguerreobase.org/en/knowledge-base/what-is-a-daguerreotype [Accessed 12 Jan. 2021].

[32] Administrator (2019). Daguerreobase - What is a daguerreotype? [online] Daguerreobase.org. Available at: http://www.daguerreobase.org/en/knowledge-base/what-is-a-daguerreotype [Accessed 12 Jan. 2021].

[33] Drew Gilpin Faust (2012). This Republic of Suffering : Death and the American Civil War. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p.157.

[34] Bell, B. (2016). Taken from life: The unsettling art of death photography. BBC News. [online] 4 Jun. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-36389581 [Accessed 28 Dec. 2020].

[35] Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. (2015). *Ambrotypes and Tintypes*. [online] Available at: https://www.loc.gov/collections/liljenquist-civil-war-photographs/articles-and-essays/ambrotypes-and-tintypes/. [Accessed 25 Jan. 2021].

impression, or in some cases, as if still alive [Figure 4].[36] On some occasions, make-up or paint was applied to the face of the deceased to conceal the classic signs of death – sunken-eyed, hypostasis, sallow skin – to enhance the illusion of life [Figure 5].[37] This contrasts with our use of photography in mourning today. Nowadays we document our entire life through the lens of a cellphone or camera, whereas in the Victorian period it was common that the only photo taken of the deceased was post mortem, this is especially true in children and babies.[38] Our current model of documentation means there is less of a need to take a deathbed portrait because the family already has many photos from happier times. We have also moved away from dying in our home to ending life in a hospital.[39] This has caused us the be increasingly unfamiliar with what the process of dying entails and therefore we feel uncomfortable documenting it.

Figure 4 // Victorian Daguerreotype, in this family photo the youngest child on the left had died and has been propped against a stand for the picture.

[36] Lastinger, M. (2005). Confrontations: Politics and Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century France (review). Nineteenth Century French Studies, 33(3), p.12.

[37] Bunge, J., Henger, S., And, N. and Thanatos Archive (2014). Beyond the Dark Veil : post-mortem & Mourning Photography from the Thanatos Archive. San Francisco, Ca: Grand Central Press & Last Gasp.

[38] Lenora (2017). *Memento Mori…Victorian post-mortem Photography*. [online] The Haunted Palace. Available at: https://hauntedpalaceblog.wordpress.com/2017/02/07/memento-mori-victorian-post-mortem-photography/. [Accessed 27 Nov. 2020].

[39]NHS Digital. (2019). Summary Hospital-level Mortality Indicator (SHMI) - Deaths associated with hospitalisation, England, January 2018 - December 2018. [online] Available at: https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/shmi/2019-05/shmi-january-2018---december-2018#key-facts [Accessed 12 Jan. 2021].

Figure 5 // Two Victorian deathbed photographs, eyes have been painted on top of the closed eyelids of the woman on the left to make her appear more lifelike, whereas the woman on the right has not.

Rich families in Victorian Britain had different options available to them compared to the less wealthy. There was an increase in the middle and upper-class population and with that lower mortality rates, especially in children.[40] This increase in disposable income meant that elaborate funerals were available to a wider population. Historian Lou Taylor argues that the royal and aristocratic circles in Britain influenced the growing middle class, who wanted to cement their new status in society by holding grander funerals. 'A whole new section of society threw itself with enthusiasm into the previously forbidden delights of aristocratic mourning etiquette'.[41] There was also the introduction of the funeral director as a business. Funeral directors capitalised on this need for recognition by adding frivolous accessories to ceremonies, as a way to distinguish the wealth of the deceased and their family.[42] Objects such as ostrich feathers, wands, and flowers to mask the smell were all common in funerals of this class.[43] [44] Furthermore, James Stevens Curl in 'The Victorian Celebration of Death' published in 1972, claimed that 'ostentatious displays of grief were very much required by Victorian Society … [with a funeral] the wealth and power of a family could be publicly displayed'.[45] This explains why ornamentation and decoration were commonplace in upper and middle-class Victorian funerals and mourning rituals, as it was seen as the proper and

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[40] Bbc.co.uk. (2000). *BBC - History - British History in depth: the Rise of the Victorian Middle Class*. [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/middle_classes_01.shtml [Accessed 28 Dec. 2020].

[41] Lou Taylor, Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History (1983), ch. 1.

[42] Jalland, P. (1996b). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.2–5.

[43] Jalland, P. (1996b). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.195.

[44] Friends of Oak Grove Cemetery. (2008). Victorian Funeral Customs and Superstitions. [online] Available at: https://friendsofoakgrovecemetery.org/victorian-funeral-customs-fears-and-superstitions/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

Morley, J. (1978). Death, Heaven and the Victorians. Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Pr., Ca.

most desirable way to mourn the deceased, highlighting the position of the departed and their family in society. The lower class, however, couldn't afford the luxurious additions to funerals that were afforded to their social betters. Death rates among the poor remained high, especially children, and families had to plan ahead in order to save money to meet the inevitable costs.[46] Many members of the lower class couldn't afford the costs of a funeral and had to rely on the jurisdiction of the City of London Poor Law Union which was implemented in 1834.[47] The union addressed the condition of the poor in Britain, such as those living in the workhouses. It allowed the poor to add what they could to the basic paupers grave, which consisted of an unadorned plain pine coffin, forebears, and rental of a pall made of rough woven cloth.[48] The most popular extra provided by the union was an inscribed coffin plate, followed by the addition of two men; the first a mute to attend and look sorrowful and the second to cover the coffin.[49] For those who were buried in a paupers grave, these small additions were comforting as they offset the anonymity of a common grave.[50] In each of these situations, it is clear regardless of class, how important the inclusion of ritual objects in funerals was in the Victorian era. By grounding this otherworldly experience in material objects they were able to remember who the person was, with varying levels of superficiality. These objects, depending on their wealth varied from feathers and carriages to furniture and coffins.[51] The industrial revolution not only increased the population of the middle and upper classes who could afford these additions to funerals, but it also made available new materials for use in mourning.[52] Funerals became a lucrative business that had each area of Britain producing their own unique mourning objects and funeral decorations. Coffin furniture and decorative metal, for example, became a staple of the Birmingham metal trades beginning in 1769.[53] In addition, the seaside town

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[46] Vance, S. (2014). Victorian Mourning & Funerary Practices. [online] Victorian Monsters. Available at: https://victorianmonsters.wordpress.com/victorian-funerary-practices/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[47]Laqueur, T. (1983). Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals. [online] University of California Press, pp.116. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3043762?seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[48] Laqueur, T. (1983). Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals. [online] University of California Press, pp.114. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3043762?seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[49] Laqueur, T. (1983). Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals. [online] University of California Press, pp.114–115. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3043762?seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[50] Strange, J.-M. (2002). 'She cried a very little': Death, grief and mourning in working-class culture, c . 1880-1914. Social History, 27(2), pp.143–161.

[51] Jalland, P. (1996b). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.195.

[52] Monet, D. (2019). History of the Mourning Dress: Black Clothing Worn During Bereavement - Bellatory - Fashion and Beauty. [online] bellatory.com. Available at: https://bellatory.com/fashion-industry/FashionHistoryMourningDressBlackClothingWornDuringBereavement [Accessed 12 Nov. 2020].

[53] Laqueur, T. (1983). Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals. [online] University of California Press, pp.114. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3043762?seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

of Whitby had over 1500 people working with jet[54] faceted mourning jewellery by 1870. [55] The importance of funeral objects and having something physical to mourn a loved one is still as popular however, the ritual extravagance of a Victorian funeral would be seen as excessive and morbid today. The introduction of funeral directors and funeral care as a profitable business by the Victorians is something which has continued on into modern-day Britain. The funeral industry in the UK is currently estimated to be worth around £1billion annually, with over 600,000 funerals taking place each year and an estimated 4,000 funeral directors at present offering services.[56]

This Chapter shows the historical influences on death and mourning and how they have changed over time. The Victorians introduced a strict code of conduct surrounding death which we are still influenced by today. Their use of deathbed portraits has lead us to use photography as a means to remember the deceased's physical attributes and recollect memories of them. However, with a change in death comes a change in mourning. The industrial revolution and the money that came with it showed that mourning could also double as a means to prove one's social standing or accomplishments in life. It is interesting to see how we are still influenced by the Victorians' way of mourning even with the introduction of technology.

[54] Jet mourning jewellery was a hard stone which was usually black but could also be a dark brown colour. It was made from fossilised driftwood similar to coal, and found primarily in Yorkshire, England, Spain, France's Aude region, Germany, and other parts of northern Europe, Asia, and North America. The pliable nature of jet allows it to be carved, faceted, and polished to a soft warm sheen.

[55] Laqueur, T. (1983). Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals. [online] University of California Press, pp.114. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3043762?seq=6#metadata_info_tab_contents [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[56] Uk-funerals.co.uk. (2019). *The UK Funeral Industry*. [online] Available at: http://www.uk-funerals.co.uk/funeral-industry.html [Accessed 2 Oct. 2020].

Chapter Two // The Materiality of Death

After investigating the significance of death and mourning throughout history, it is important to highlight how cultures express death through physical objects. This was observed by American sociologist and Professor Clifton D. Bryant in his book 'Handbook of Death and Dying', stating:

'Death and dying are universal human experiences, no matter the historical era or cultural context, and those oriented toward visual representation have always attempted to articulate the experience of death in whatever medium was available.'[57]

Black, crepe and other features of mourning wear

Mourning clothing was important to Victorian society as it allowed them to align the sobriety of their clothing to their inner feelings and through clothing express those feelings to the world. Barrister, writer and philanthropist Basil Montagu recognised this in 1840, stating:

> In the mourning dress, the outward sign of sorrow, we call for the solace of compassion, for the kind words and looks of friends and for the chastened mirth of strangers, who, unacquainted with the deceased, respect our grief and recognise in silence the suffering that has been or will be theirs, the common lot of all the children of mortality.[58]

With the widespread use of mourning clothing came a complex code of etiquette often published in manuals that acted as a guideline, detailing the most appropriate ways to mourn.[59] These rules also sought to portray a sense of taste, respectability, and propriety as well as social status and economic standing; the burden to meet these requirements fell disproportionately on women. There was a lot of societal pressure to comply with these standards as those who didn't were subject to harsh judgement, highlighted by author and Historian John Mark Hinton in 1967:

> During mourning the instinctive withdrawal from conviviality is fostered, with an expectation that social engagements will be limited. If not dressed in the black of deep mourning, the bereaved are expected to choose sombre garments which reflect their mood. Gay clothes which enhance the appearance would seem disrespectful or adjudged so symptomatic of human vanity as to be callous or near to wickedness.[60]

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[57] Bryant, C.D. (2003). *Handbook of Death & Dying*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, p.989.

[58] Montagu, B. (1840). The funerals of the Quakers,. London, W. Pickering, pp.39–40.

[59] Mitchell, R.N. (2013). DEATH BECOMES HER: ON THE PROGRESSIVE POTENTIAL OF VICTORIAN MOURNING. Victorian Literature and Culture, 41(4), p.599.

[60] John Mark Hinton (1979). Dying ... 2nd ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p.186.

Women of this time were expected to reflect all of these attributes as well as the family's collective sense of grief and desire to honour the deceased through their mourning wear.[61] The strict dress code of the nineteenth century was applied most rigorously to widows, who were required to wear full black mourning for two years. [Figure 6] After this they were to wear black silk trimmed with crape for nine months and then three months in full black with no crape.[62] Half-mourning was worn after a year and nine months, for a period of three months. During this time, widows slowly swapped out black for small amounts of colour such as grey, lavender, mauve, and white.[63] By contrast with the rigid, formalised code for widows, men's clothes were not substantially altered by mourning requirements; in addition to their usual sombre suits, until about 1850 men had only to wear black mourning-cloaks, while black gloves, hatbands, and cravats were sufficient thereafter.[64] This inequality is highlighted by fashion and design historian, and professor, Lou Taylor in her book 'Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History':

Figure 6 // Full mourning ensemble, circa 1870

[61] Taylor, L. (2010). Mourning Dress a Costume and Social History. Abingdon Routledge, p.56-59

[62] Crape is a matte, gauze-like fabric that was very uncomfortable to wear. The dull appearance of this textile was emphasised when it was dyed a deep black. After dying, the material was then crimped using heat giving it a distinct crisp appearance.

[63] Jalland, P. (1996b). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.300.

[64] Jalland, P. (1996b). Death in the Victorian family. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, pp.301-302.

> The difference is symbolic of the whole social position of women in the second half of the nineteenth century. Women were used, albeit willingly and even eagerly by most, as a show piece, to display their family's total respectability, sense of conformity and wealth. Amongst the 'respectable' classes, the whole way of life of women was built on these foundations and with these goals in mind. Mourning dress was perhaps still the most perfect vehicle for this purpose as it had been in the past.[65]

This shows how mourning clothing can be affected by the gender roles of that period and therefore enforce a very different mourning experience between males and females.

The general opinion of mourning wear during the Victorian period was somewhat conflicting. Mrs. John Sherwood author of the 1984 magazine '*Manners and Social Usages',* maintained that wearing black was beneficial for women as it afforded protection from unwanted intrusion on private grief: 'A mourning dress does protect a woman while in deepest grief against the untimely gayety of a passing stranger. It is a wall, a cell of refuge.'[66] In contrast to this, the agnostic Doctor Keith Norman Macdonald wrote a pamphlet in 1875 '*On Death and How to Divest it of its Terrors',* in which he criticises the Victorian mourning rituals perpetuated by the Christian belief system, calling the wearing of mourning dress 'a silly custom' which 'adds to the embarrassment' of mourners.[67] These examples demonstrate the varying opinions British citizens had of mourning during the Victorian period. I think the physical boundary that mourning wear has when distancing the bereaved from society is a helpful visual cue to remind the public that that person is grieving, however I think the strict expectations surrounding mourning clothing could also be harmful to the grieving process as it no longer becomes a natural expression of grief, but rather an obligation.

The materials used by women during the first year of deepest mourning were non-reflective black paramatta and crape. [Figure 7] Paramatta was a fabric of combined silk and wool or cotton. Black mourning crape was a textile used only in the context of mourning and was an immediate signifier of a recent bereavement.[68] The process of making this fabric was perfected by English manufacturers in the 1930s, the fabric was a harsh matte black gauze silk with a crimped appearance produced by heat.[69] Black textiles were originally

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[65] Taylor, L. (2010). Mourning Dress a Costume and Social History. Abingdon Routledge, p.103.

[66] Sears, J. (2018). Wearing a 19th-Century Mourning Veil Could Result in — Twist — Death. [online] Racked. Available at: https://www.racked.com/2018/3/29/17156818/19th-century-mourning-veil [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[67] Keith Norman Macdonald (1875). On Death and How to Divest It of Its Terrors : with Some Remarks on the Final Disposal of the Animal Organism. Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart.

[68] Tchevalier.com. (2019). Victorian mourning etiquette. [online] Available at: https://www.tchevalier.com/fallingangels/bckgrnd/mourning/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[69] Sears, J. (2018). Wearing a 19th-Century Mourning Veil Could Result in — Twist — Death. [online] Racked. Available at: https://www.racked.com/2018/3/29/17156818/19th-century-mourning-veil [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

associated with aristocratic usage, which meant they could be sold for a relatively high price compared to other fabrics.[70] The high price meant this was fabric was unavailable to the working and lower class, creating a demand for cheaper imitations to be produced.[71] 'Crape cloth' was an example of this, this material was a fabric which that woven to imitate the crimped pattern of mourning crepe. Both of these mourning fabrics could be worn plainly or moulded into the ornate forms which were on-trend during that period. These imitation fabrics show how mourning wear varied between the classes and highlights the desire for the lower and working class to imitate the trends of the middle and upper class which weren't available to them.

Figure 7 // Close up image showing silk taffeta, mourning crepe and covered buttons

The Industrial revolution shaped the textile industry making mass-produced, brand-label mourning wear available. As the textile industry was increasingly mechanised, a steadily

[70] Wallace, T. (2019). Mourning Dress and Attire That Makes Grief Visible. [online] eterneva.com. Available at: https://eterneva.com/resources/mourning-dress [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[71] Tchevalier.com. (2019). Victorian mourning etiquette. [online] Available at: https://www.tchevalier.com/fallingangels/bckgrnd/mourning/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

growing variety of textiles were produced becoming readily affordable, and retailers rose to take advantage of these conditions.[72] From the 1840s in fashionable cities like London and Paris, large-scale retailers specialised solely in mourning goods developed.[73] Known as mourning warehouses in England, these establishments offered a vast array of textiles considered suitable for mourning, along with a full selection of accessories, shawls, bonnets, parasols gloves, stockings, veils all in shades of mourning black.[74] Jay's mourning warehouse of London, founded in 1841 is the first and one of the grandest mourning warehouses.[75] These shops emphasised convenience, rather than having to purchase fabric from a draper's shop and bring it to a dressmaker and make a separate trip to a milliner for headwear, all good could be made up in one place, or the goods brought directly to you.[76] They published richly illustrated catalogs detailing the latest fashions, available in materials appropriate for mourning. [Figure 8]

Figure 8 // Jay's Manual of Fashion / The London General Mourning Warehouse', paper, published by W C Jay & Co, London, England, c. 1865

[72]CNN, A.A. (2015). Glamour and grieving: How the Victorians dressed for death. [online] CNN. Available at: https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/death-becomes-her-exhibition/index.html [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[73] Dilara, S. (2018c). Mourning Warehouses and where to shop. [online] Lilac & Bombazine. Available at: https://lilacandbombazine.wordpress.com/2018/08/03/mourning-warehouses-and-where-to-shop/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[74] Hamey, B. (2013). Jay's Mourning Warehouse. [online] London Street Views. Available at: https://londonstreetviews.wordpress.com/2013/09/12/jays-mourning-warehouse/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[75] Kate (2019). Jay's Mourning Warehouse. [online] Burials & Beyond. Available at: https://burialsandbeyond.com/2019/11/05/jays-mourning-warehouse/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[76] May, T. (2011). *The Victorian Undertaker*. Princes Risborough: Shire, p.20.

During the Victorian era, the wearing of mourning garments became widespread throughout society. One of the most iconic displays of Victorian mourning wear was none other than Queen Victoria herself. After the death of her husband, Prince Albert in 1861, Queen Victoria wore black clothing until she died in 1901.[77] [Figure 9] This became a central part of her personal image and public identity and had a strong influence on mourning fashion at the time. Many contemporary Historians criticise the Queens prolonged display of grief and question its legitimacy. Queen Victoria was described by Lou Taylor to be 'the middle-class ideal of Christian widowhood' who turned her mourning for Albert 'into a cult which dominated most of the rest of her life. Her example was admired, respected and copied … by many Victorian ladies.'[78] Additionally, historian David Cannadine supported this view in his book, 'War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain', saying:

> The excessive concentration of [Victorian] mourning did not so much help the bereaved to come to terms with their loss and make a new life for themselves, but actually robbed them of the will to recover, and condemned them to spend their remaining years more obsessed with death than was either necessary or healthy—as exemplified most spectacularly in the case of Queen Victoria.[79]

In contrast to this, Historian Pat Jalland stated that Cannadine's comments are 'sweeping claims'[80], Jalland defended the legitimacy of Queen Victoria's grief, saying:

> There is no doubt that Victoria suffered intensely during the dozen or so years after her bereavement. She experienced chronic and prolonged depression which left her afraid for her sanity. She was quite literally crippled with grief.[81]

These quotes highlight the contrasting opinions on the honestly and validity of Queen Victoria's mourning. It is hard to fully comprehend now her intentions when wearing mourning clothing for so long. On one hand, she could be wearing it to partially to appeal to the ideals of the devoted wife in Christian society, however I think it is more likely that Queen Victoria was experiencing 'chronic grief'; a form of grief in which the bereaved experiences extreme grief over a long period of time without getting better.[82] However, regardless of the intentions behind Queen Victoria's mourning wear, the influence it had on society is undeniable.

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[77] Rappaport, H. (2019). Prince Albert: the death that rocked the monarchy. [online] HistoryExtra. Available at: https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/prince-albert-the-death-that-rocked-the-monarchy/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[78] Taylor, L. (2010). Mourning Dress a Costume and Social History. Abingdon Routledge, p.61, 122, 154–5.

[79] Cannadine, D. (1981). War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain. Joachim Whaley, pp.190–1.

[80] Jalland, P. (1999). Death in the Victorian Family. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. 319.

[81] Jalland, P. (1999). Death in the Victorian Family. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. 319.

[82] Moeller, S. (2015). *Chronic and Prolonged Grief*. [online] The Grief Recovery Method. Available at: https://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/blog/2017/09/chronic-and-prolonged-grief [Accessed 13 Jan. 2021].

Historically, black has often been tied to nobility as it was also commonly worn by the Spanish aristocracy.[83] These connotations of both the sobriety of mourning and the luxury of aristocracy remained elements of the perception of black in the 19th century, even though it was already firmly established as a colour of mourning.[84] The colour black suggested a sense of worldly elegance and grandeur, in part due to the expensiveness of black dyes. In addition to this, mourning wear was increasingly cleaving fashionable forms during this period.[85] To wear smart elegant mourning attire was a display in status, not only through the expense required, but it was also a reflection of refinement, a demonstration that one was able to negotiate conflicting advice to arrive at a tasteful, respectful form of mourning. This series of contradictions was a concern for many Victorians who saw the fashionable forms and elaborate designs of mourning wear as ostentatious and disrespectful to the process of grief.[86] Furthermore, there was concern from those who wore mourning dress to reflect genuine sorrow that mourning attire worn by other people was purely performative and easily disguised a lack of genuine grief. The effects of the popularity of mourning wear during the Victorian period can be seen today in the 'little black dress'. [Figure 10] Historian and professor Jill Fields writes:

> The move to vamp black became possible because of the growing presence of black outerwear for women in the nineteenth century due to extensive mourning rituals merged with the growing sensibility that dressing in black was fashionable.[87]

This explains how the prevalence of Victorian mourning wear in trend-setting cities like London has paved the way for our perception of the colour black today outside the context of mourning, that it not only is a colour that symbolises bereavement but also elegance and luxury.

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[83] Monet, D. (2019). History of the Mourning Dress: Black Clothing Worn During Bereavement - Bellatory - Fashion and Beauty. [online] bellatory.com. Available at: https://bellatory.com/fashion-industry/FashionHistoryMourningDressBlackClothingWornDuringBereavement [Accessed 12 Nov. 2020].

[84] Wallace, T. (2019). Mourning Dress and Attire That Makes Grief Visible. [online] eterneva.com. Available at: https://eterneva.com/resources/mourning-dress [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[85] Dilara, S. (2018d). What to wear? Living in Mourning. [online] Lilac & Bombazine. Available at: https://lilacandbombazine.wordpress.com/2018/08/02/what-to-wear-living-in-mourning/ [Accessed 5 Jan. 2021].

[86] Mitchell, R.N. (2013). DEATH BECOMES HER: ON THE PROGRESSIVE POTENTIAL OF VICTORIAN MOURNING. Victorian Literature and Culture, 41(4), p.601.

[87] Fields, J. and Ebrary, I. (2007). An intimate affair : women, lingerie, and sexuality. Berkeley: University Of California Press, p.144.

Figure 9 // Queen Victoria in mourning dress, 1873

Figure 10 // Coco Chanel wearing her iconic black dress, mid-1920s

By the 19th century, the most rigid styles of mourning attire were already beginning to loosen. Taken from an article in Vogue in 1908, this excerpt describes the changes in mourning wear which was predicted:

> From year to year mourning fashions are sure to undergo some change however slight, which never fails to indicate a growing tendency to lessen all former rigid severe styles as well as to break away from the old style conventional rules.[88]

The First World War accelerated the abandonment of strict codes of mourning etiquette. The great casualties of the war and women's changing roles in society prompted a re-evaluation of the practicalities of elaborate mourning rituals.[89] Widows' mourning was reduced to eighteen months. As women were increasingly joining the workforce and contributing to the war effort out of the home, periods of seclusion tied to traditional forms of mourning no longer seemed compatible with modern life.[90] In the August 18, 1915 issue of The Sketch, fashion columnist Carmen of Cockayne considered the question of mourning 'one of the most prominent dress problems of the day.' He further recognised that 'elaborate mourning is in the worst of bad taste, [and] a morbid exaggeration of dolour is equally so.'[91] This highlights the changing opinions of mourning wear and a desire for

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[88] Vogue. (1908). [online] 6 Jul. Available at: https://archive.vogue.com/issue/19080716 [Accessed 26 Nov. 2020].

[89] Lou Taylor (1983) Mourning Dress (London: George Allen & Unwin), p. 266.

[90] Mendes, V.D. and De, A. (1999). *20Th Century Fashion*. London: Thames & Hudson, p.52.

[91] Holl, E. (2014). Mourning in Edwardian and Post-War England. [online] Edwardian Promenade. Available at: https://www.edwardianpromenade.com/etiquette/mourning-in-edwardian-and-post-war-england/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

women's mourning dress to move towards more practical forms and better represent their new position in society. Furthermore, in cities with exceptionally high mortality and casualty rates such as London, many people suggested that widespread wearing of mourning would have a negative effect on morale.[92] This was explained by Lou Taylor:

> It was partly a question of morale, both for the troops on leave from the trenches and the public at large remaining at home. The sight of millions of women of all ages shrouded in crepe would have been too much to bear. As made clear by Lady Duff Gordon, a great many women of every class were involved in war work and were far too busy to retire into periods of seclusion demanded by the old etiquette of mourning. As well as running charity and nursing organisations, women were taking on every kind of job left unmanned by the departing troops….the fashion magazines continued to give their sartorial advice but they commented frequently on the changes so evident in society.[93]

This example demonstrates that there are benefits to not wearing mourning clothes as they were a reminder of the magnitude of grief experienced during the war which would result in an increased volume of grief rather than act as a comforting outlet. Fabric shortages increased the price of mourning attire and even dyeing proved to be costly.[94] This meant that even fewer people would be able to afford the full black mourning that was customary before the war. After the war fashion coverage of mourning diminished yielding to an increasing sense of freedom regarding how or whether to publicly display grief.

Mourning, monuments and memorialisation

When looking at the effects of war on mourning wear, it is important to mention the effects it has on graves, monuments, and other important physical destinations for grief. During wartime, there was a dramatic shift in how people could mourn. There were too many bodies to be able to return them to their family and the deceased were often unidentifiable due to the wounds they endured.[95] Families were denied a body and therefore a grave to mourn. As a result, new funerary customs and mourning practices developed. Since they did not have anything of their own to mourn, they instead turned to the bodies of other soldiers which symbolised the collective lives lost in the war. In 1920 tombs 'of The Unknown Soldier' were constructed in London and Paris, as a response to the popularity of

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[92] Gorer, G. (1987). Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain. London: Cresset Press, p.6.

[93] Lou Taylor (1983) Mourning Dress (London: George Allen & Unwin), pp.267-8.

[94] woostersauce2014 (2016). Women in Black: Mourning Fashion and Etiquette, 1870-1939. [online] Enough of This Tomfoolery! Available at: https://enoughofthistomfoolery.wordpress.com/2016/07/17/women-in-black-mourning-fashion-and-etiquette-1870-1939/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[95]Jelland, P. (2014). *Bereavement and Mourning (Great Britain) | International Encyclopedia of the First World War (WW1)*. [online] encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net. Available at: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/bereavement_and_mourning_great_britain [Accessed 27 Nov. 2020].

this form of mourning.[96] Symbolically significant sites such as these, along with countless war memorials across the belligerent countries, proved popular focal points for mourning and continue to serve as commemorative sites to this day.[97] This shows how we can project our communal feelings of grief onto symbolic objects when we do not have our own objects to help us mourn.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission sought to commemorate fallen soldiers of the world wars.[98] Each of the headstones was to commemorate the soldiers by name, with no distinction in race, creed, or rank.[99] Furthermore, the designs of the headstones were to be uniform but distinct from their civilian counterparts. The design and build of war cemeteries were reflective of the nations that commissioned them.[100] For example, the British cemeteries in France included information about where the soldier was from, what unit they served in as well as their date of birth and the date they died.[101] There was also the opportunity for the fallen's family to have a quote engraved; if they had no close relations one would be chosen by the military. The rounded shape of the British headstone was intended to be neutral, allowing for the commemoration of all faiths and nationalities. [Figure 11] This contrasts with the American cemeteries in France which were more uniform in comparison. The American graves were labeled only with the soldier's name, regiment, state of enlistment, and date of death.[102] Furthermore, there were only two religions represented in the headstones in which each soldier could identify under, a cross for Christianity or a Star of David for Judaism. [Figure 12] This means that there was an opportunity for misrepresentation for soldiers that didn't identify with either religion.[103] Furthermore, cemetery workers will remove anything placed at the headstones once a week to maintain the graves' neat and uniform appearance. German cemeteries in Belgium had a

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[96] Cacciottolo, M. (2010). The unknown soldier's journey from trench to tomb. BBC News. [online] 11 Nov. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-11710660 [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[97] OpenLearn. (n.d.). *The First World War: Trauma and Memory*. [online] Available at: https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=27348§ion=1.1 [Accessed 8 Mar. 2021].

[98] www.cwgc.org. (n.d.). Our History | CWGC. [online] Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/who-we-are/our-history/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[99] Shaping our Sorrow. (n.d.). Competing designs. [online] Available at: https://shapingoursorrow.cwgc.org/denial/competing-design-visions/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[100] Todman, D. (2014). Remembrance and Memorials. [online] The British Library. Available at: https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/remembrance-and-memorials [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[101] Lee (2014a). Design and Structure of Commonwealth War Cemeteries. [online] One Trip at a Time. Available at: https://www.onetripatatime.com/design-and-structure-of-the-commonwealth-war-cemeteries/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[102] Bayeux Museum. (n.d.). Military Cemeteries in Normandy - American Cemetery and German and British Cemeteries. [online] Available at: https://www.bayeuxmuseum.com/en/memorial-museum-battle-of-normandy/historic-sites/normandy-ww2-cemeteries/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[103] Parveen, N. (2016). Graves of Muslim Sailors Who Joined Allies in WWII Are Rediscovered. [online] The Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/11/graves-second-world-war-muslim-sailors-allies-rediscovered-liverpool [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

similar level of standardisation, with only small square grave markers laying flat on the ground that simply dictated the soldier's name and dates of birth and death; this was due to restrictions placed on German cemeteries as standing headstones were not allowed.[104] [Figure 13] These different forms of mourning represent the different morals and beliefs of the countries they represent. The design choices of these objects pay tribute to the national culture of the country just as much as they pay tribute to the soldier themselves. In leaving out details of the soldiers' life such as hometown or date of birth, these countries are deciding what is worthwhile being remembered. In the quest for a uniform cemetery, they are rejecting the opportunity for a space that honours each individual life and instead are opting for a space that feels more like a wartime monument. This shows how governments and countries can have more power over headstones than the families themselves. These monuments were not restricted by their function as a burial place for those who had died in battle but obeyed certain administrative and diplomatic constraints, answering to complex political and religious notions. I will be discussing how memorials have been translated into a digital format in Chapter Three.

Figure 11 // British war grave in Bayeux

Figure 12 // Jewish and Christian American War Graves in Normandy

Figure 13 // Langemark German War Graves in Belgium

With the introduction of television, radio, and social media, we are now more than ever aware of the tragedies occurring around the world as well as in our own country. Additionally, due to the internet, we can see memorials all over the world and recreate them. An example of this is the 'Ghost bike memorial project' an international project started in St. Louis American in 2003.[105] Ghost bikes are junk bicycles which are painted white and usually have a sign attached to them saying 'cyclist killed here', the aim of these bikes is to raise awareness for the cyclists who were killed in road accidents as well as to

[104] Welle (www.dw.com), D. (2014). The German Soldiers That History Forgot | DW | 10.04.2014. [online] DW.COM. Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/the-german-soldiers-that-history-forgot/a-6218386 [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[105] Leeds Bikes. (2016). Memorializing Cyclists: The Ghost Bikes Project | Leeds. [online] Available at: https://leedsbikes.com/bicycle-interests/memorializing-cyclists-ghost-bike-project/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

remind motorists to drive carefully. [Figure 14] There are currently over 630 ghost bikes that have since appeared in over 210 locations throughout the world.[106] These international acts of memorialisation would not be possible without the media to spread the word. Media allows for communal grief outside of just the family and friends meaning that even strangers must come to terms with the tragedy.[107]

Figure 14 // A ghost bike dedicated to Hoyt Jacobs at the intersection of Vernon Boulevard & 41st Avenue, New York

This has led to the increase of makeshift memorials, which allow both the survivors of the event and the general public to come together and express sorrow following a major disaster. These usually materialise at the place of the incident and consist of whatever objects those who wish to commemorate either has in the house or can buy locally.[108] This means that they usually consist of makeshift materials such as cards, flowers, drawings, and candles. An example of this is the public memorial made for the passing of Kobe Bryant and his daughter [Figure 15]. This highlights the varying materiality a monument can take on. As small mementos are added by individuals, the memorial will expand into a makeshift monument resulting in police placing a fence around it. This is an example of the power of communal grief. Furthermore, although these monuments will eventually be

[106] ghostbikes.org. (n.d.). Ghost Bikes | ghost bikes. [online] Available at: http://ghostbikes.org [Accessed 30 Jan. 2021].

[107] Durbin, J.L. (2003). EXPRESSIONS OF MASS GRIEF AND MOURNING. The Material Culture of Makeshift Memorials, [online] (35), p.26. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/29764188?seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents [Accessed 29 Mar. 2021].

[108] Durbin, J.L. (2003). EXPRESSIONS OF MASS GRIEF AND MOURNING. The Material Culture of Makeshift Memorials, [online] (35), p.27. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/29764188?seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents [Accessed 29 Mar. 2021].

dismantled and discarded, certain memorials in the past have led to the design and form of permanent memorials being erected.[109]

Figure 15 // Memorials for Kobe Bryant at the Staples Center

Paint it black - Mourning jewellery and the adornment of death

When discussing visual forms of mourning it is important to consider mourning jewellery. The tradition of wearing mourning jewellery goes back to the middle ages.[110] Mourning jewellery as we know it today is the offspring of memento mori which translates to 'remember death'.[111] Memento mori jewellery was worn to urge the wearer to live life fully by reminding them of their mortality, as written by the famous author Leo Tolstoy:

> Memento mori - remember death! These are important words. If we kept in mind that we will soon inevitably die, our lives would be completely different. If a person knows that he will die in a half hour, he certainly will not bother doing trivial, stupid, or, especially, bad things during this half hour. Perhaps you have half a century before you die-what makes this any different from a half hour?[112]

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[109]Durbin, J.L. (2003). EXPRESSIONS OF MASS GRIEF AND MOURNING. The Material Culture of Makeshift Memorials, [online] (35), p.26-28. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/29764188?seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents [Accessed 29 Mar. 2021].

[110] GIA 4Cs. (2016). Antique Jewelry: Mourning Jewelry of the Victorian Era. [online] Available at: https://4cs.gia.edu/en-us/blog/antique-victorian-era-mourning-jewelry/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[111] Daily Stoic. (2018). History of Memento Mori. [online] Available at: https://dailystoic.com/history-of-memento-mori/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[112] Tolstoy, L. and Cote, M. (2002). Path of life. New York: Novinka Books, p.209.

This quote highlights the impact that wearing death confronting jewellery can have, by reminding you of your own mortality it urges you to live your life to the fullest. [Figure 16] Although mourning jewellery and Memento mori jewellery are both related to death, they represent different narratives. Memento mori confronts the idea of the wearer's own mortality, whereas mourning jewellery is supposed to be a source of comfort and remembrance worn by the bereaved.[113] These different narratives are represented in the distinct symbolism and motifs seen in the jewellery. The macabre style of Memento mori jewellery which was popular in the Georgian period depicted skulls, coffins, and skeletons, whereas mourning jewellery at the height of its popularity in the Victorian period often depicted winged cherubs, clouds, and weeping willows.[114] The differing symbols used by these societies reveal much about the morals and philosophy of that era. This softer and more sentimental imagery of the Victorian era reflects their gentler view on death compared to the Georgian era. That said, where the Victorians were more subtle with symbolism, they made up for with stark colour choices. One of the most popular materials used was jet, a shiny black fossilised coal.[115] Onyx, black enamel, and French jet were also popular.[116] These black stones were especially popular as coloured stones and jewels were frowned

Figure 16 // The 'Torre Abbey Jewel' - a sixteenth century memento mori pendant

[113] Gray & Davis: Antique & Custom Jewelry. (2015). Memento Mori vs. Mourning Jewelry. [online] Available at: http://www.grayanddavis.com/blog/2015/10/16/memento-mori-vs-mourning-jewelry [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[114] Graff, M. (2014). The History Behind ... Victorian mourning jewelry. [online] National Jeweler. Available at: https://www.nationaljeweler.com/independents/2058-the-history-behind-victorian-mourning-jewelry [Accessed 1 Aug. 2020].

[115] Antique Jewellery University. (n.d.). Jet | Antique Jewelry University. [online] Available at: https://www.langantiques.com/university/jet/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[116] Graff, M. (2014). The History Behind ... Victorian mourning jewelry. [online] National Jeweler. Available at: https://www.nationaljeweler.com/independents/2058-the-history-behind-victorian-mourning-jewelry [Accessed 1 Aug. 2020].

upon during the mourning period.[117] For the lower middle and working class, a cheaper alternative to jet included gutta percha, stained horn, and Irish bog-oak.[118] This shows that much like Victorian mourning clothing, mourning jewellery was also used as a way to distinguish themselves between classes.

Designers are now blending the concept of mourning jewellery with digital death. An example of this is the digital locket ‘forget’ created by the English designer Jayne Wallace.[119] Wallace used digital technology to extend the function of the locket, by incorporating an element of interaction. Each time the user opens the locket, it decays a little until it eventually fades away. [Figure 17] I think this is an interesting way to add value to a digital experience as each time you open it, you are aware of the ‘damage’ you are causing it. The finite nature of the photograph makes the user memorise the photo and the memories attached to it more and the historical context associated with the locket signals to the user straight away that the photograph inside is of great personal value. This locket both confronts and accepts death. The confronting aspect is created in each interaction with the locket as the user recalls the life and eventual death of the person in the photograph. It also accepts death by interacting with the lockets as it is participating in its decay and eventual disappearance, the user is actively choosing the ‘kill’ the image.

Figure 17 // Wallace, J., (2010) ‘Forget’ digital locket, part of the Unpicking the Digital series. A series of four digital lockets exploring notions of memory, loss and our relationship to digital technologies.

[117] woostersauce2014 (2016). Women in Black: Mourning Fashion and Etiquette, 1870-1939. [online] Enough of This Tomfoolery! Available at: https://enoughofthistomfoolery.wordpress.com/2016/07/17/women-in-black-mourning-fashion-and-etiquette-1870-1939/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[118] Steele, S. (2020). Whitby Jet: a Discussion of Its Simulants. [online] The Gemmological Association of Great Britain. Available at: https://gem-a.com/gem-hub/gem-knowledge/whitby-jet-rings-necklace-jewellery-simulants [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[119] Wallace, J. (n.d.). Who Am I. [online] Jayne Wallace’s Portfolio. Available at: https://www.jaynewallace.com/me [Accessed 18 Mar. 2021].

Hair jewellery was also popular during the Victorian era. [Figure 18] The use of hair was important to Victorians as it was an extremely personal physical remnant of their loved one in a time where portrait photographs were scarce, especially in the working and lower classes.[120] A small part of this sentimentality has remained today when mothers keep their children's first lock of hair. The use of hair as an accessory in the home as well as jewellery would be seen as macabre today however, due to the high mortality rates during the Victorian era, people were far more acquainted with dying and dead bodies and therefore the negative connotations we have towards dead bodies didn't exist to them.[121] This shows that when our relationship with death and dying changes, so will the mourning objects we use to represent them. Another reason why hair jewellery was so popular was that it could be worn with both mourning wear and normal clothes which was ideal for Victorian women who spend large chunks of their lives in full mourning due to high mortality rates. Hair given by a family member or friend was viewed as sentimental whereas hair from a deceased loved one was appropriate for mourning. Women could find the patterns for hair bracelets and wreaths in shops and in women's magazines.[122] As the popularity of mourning jewellery increased there wasn't enough hair from the deceased to keep up with the trends and by the mid-1800s England was importing 50 tons of hair a year to keep up with demands.[123] This demonstrates that fashion can be influenced by and incorporate mourning wear.

Figure 18 // Brooch woven from human hair. A metal charm hangs from a leaf-like decoration in the centre

[120] Little, B. (2016). Trendy Victorian-Era Jewelry Was Made from Hair. [online] National Geographic News. Available at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/02/160211-victorian-hair-art-work-jewelry-death-history/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[121] Antique Jewellery University. (n.d.). Jet | Antique Jewelry University. [online] Available at: https://www.langantiques.com/university/jet/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[122] Little, B. (2016). Trendy Victorian-Era Jewelry Was Made from Hair. [online] National Geographic News. Available at: Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[123] GIA 4Cs. (2016). Antique Jewelry: Mourning Jewelry of the Victorian Era. [online] Available at: https://4cs.gia.edu/en-us/blog/antique-victorian-era-mourning-jewelry/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

Rather than portraying Victorian femininity, hair art was later created as a political act. In the 1980s and 90s feminist artists incorporated women's hair into art to make statements about their position in society.[124] This shows how the gendered mourning practices of the Victorian period have been analysed and reinterpreted to open up conversations about inequality. An example of this is the sculptural portraits created by the artist Loren Schwerd. [Figure 19] Her work 'Mourning Portrait' merges traditional Victorian hair work with African American hairstyling techniques fashioned from hairpieces discovered in the 2005 wreckage of Hurricane Katrina. Her work commemorates the individual and collective lives of the female evacuees affected by the Hurricane.[125] Economically disadvantaged African Americans in New Orleans were disproportionately impacted by the storm and its aftermath compared to white people.[126] By incorporating the mainly white upper-middle-class technique of Victorian hair mourning with African American hairpieces, she introduces the historical connection between the racial injustice faced in the aftermath of the hurricane and the racism that was prevalent at the height of hair work's popularity in nineteenth-century western culture.

Figure 19 // Schwerd, L. (2007). The corner of St Maurice and Chartress St.

[124] Little, B. (2016). Trendy Victorian-Era Jewelry Was Made from Hair. [online] National Geographic News. Available at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/02/160211-victorian-hair-art-work-jewelry-death-history/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[125] Dailey, C. (2008). Loren Schwerd: Mourning Portraits. [online] DAILY SERVING. Available at: https://www.dailyserving.com/2008/12/loren-schwerdmourning-portraits/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[126] Arcgis.com. (2005). Aftermath of Katrina: a Time of Environmental Racism. [online] Available at: https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=2106693b39454f0eb0abc5c2ddf9ce40 [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

In conclusion, the main difference between the past and today is that we are no longer obligated to follow a strict code of etiquette when mourning outside of the funeral day itself. But what has not changed is the fact that mourning and our relationship with death is a reflection of the society we live in.

Chapter Three // The Future of Death

Having researched why certain mourning materials, styles, or objects were popularised throughout history, it is important now to investigate contemporary mourning designs and why their styles and materials are relevant to today's society. Digitalisation has had a strong impact on our lives, therefore I will be researching the effects it has had on our relationship with mourning.

Contemporary death objects

Death related objects and materials are constantly changing along with the different societies and cultures which demand them. Although everyone has access to mementos and mourning objects, much like in the past, certain designs are reserved only for the rich. In the past decade, funeral costs in the UK have risen by 80% meaning that most families can not afford to purchase more than what is necessary for a funeral.[127] This means that purchasing mourning objects such as flowers, a new black outfit, or a more expensive urn isn't possible. However, these concerns do not apply to the wealthy. There is growing popularity in the UK for turning deceased loved ones' ashes into diamond rings. Memorial diamonds are created by heating human ashes in a crucible until the carbon turns to graphite, placing the graphite in a core with a metal catalyst, placing the core in a diamond press, and then removing it to use faceting tools to cut the crystal. [Figure 20] The entire process can take anywhere from six to eight months[128] and for a UK company such as Heart in Diamond, the diamond alone costs anywhere from £1,295 to £8,745, not including jewellery settings.[129] This experience contrasts heavily with families in the UK who can not even afford a funeral and shows the opposing experiences mourners have based on their wealth.

In the UK, the culture of elaborate burials and funerals has been diminishing in popularity since the First World War. Contemporary artists are now re-designing the remaining funeral and mourning items such as urns and caskets to be more sustainable. A form of 'eco death', sustainable death design has been gaining in popularity as people are beginning to

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[127] Foster, D. (2015). *Too Poor to die: How Funeral Poverty Is Surging in the UK | Dawn Foster*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/09/poor-die-funeral-poverty-costs-uk [Accessed 19 Feb. 2021].

[128] www.lonite.co.uk. (n.d.). Ashes to Memorial Diamonds UK - Swiss LONITÉTM. [online] Available at: https://www.lonite.co.uk/ [Accessed 30 Jan. 2021].

[129] Heart In Diamond. (n.d.). This is how much a cremation diamond costs. [online] Available at: https://www.heart-in-diamond.co.uk/cremation-diamonds/cost.html [Accessed 30 Jan. 2021].

Figure 20 // Lonité AG, Swiss memorial diamond in casing

realise how harmful our current burial methods are to the environment.[130] Artists are replacing heavy wooden caskets ornamented with metal fittings popularised by the Victorians with bio-degradable materials which are beneficial to the surrounding environment. An example of this is 'Leaves' by Shaina Garfield who creates caskets using natural cotton, pine wood, and woven rope laced with fungal spores. The fungus multiplies, decomposing the body faster which in turn fertilises the surrounding soil.[131] Artists are also combining memento mori and mourning objects into one design, designer Aleksander Skworz designs 'urns for living' which can be purchased before your death and used as homeware serving as a reminder to live life to the full, and then after you pass away the urn can be kept by your loved ones as a source of comfort.[132] Similarly is the 'coffin chair' designed by Yeyang Liao. [Figure 21] The coffin chair can be used as a regular piece of furniture whilst the user is alive. After they die, family members can transform the seat into a casing for the deceased's body before cremation. The moulded wood mimics the curvature of a traditional coffin and contains no metal parts so it can be fully cremated.[133] All mentioned examples show that the need to create mourning objects has been proven throughout the ages and that the forms and materials they take on are influenced by the society around them.

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[130] Kalia, A. (2019). A Greener Way to go: What's the Most eco-friendly Way to Dispose of a body? *The Guardian*. [online] 9 Jul. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jul/09/greener-way-to-go-eco-friendly-way-dispose-of-body-burial-cremation [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[131] Designboom | Architecture & Design Magazine. (2019). Shaina Garfield Redesigns Death with eco-friendly Macramé Coffin. [online] Available at: https://www.designboom.com/design/shaina-garfield-leaves-eco-friendly-macrame-coffin-03-03-2019/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[132] FOTO STUDIO FLUSSER. (n.d.). Urn for Living | Aleksander Skworz. [online] Available at: http://studioflusser.com/en/projects/design/urn-living-aleksander-skworz/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[133] Springwise. (2019). *Graduate Designs Chair That Transforms into Coffin*. [online] Available at: https://www.springwise.com/design-innovation-coffin-chair-yeyang-liao [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

Figure 21 // Coffin chair with personal mementos surrounding it

Digital death and online afterlife

Our digital presence is becoming a second life, so it makes sense that once we die it is like a second death. Digital death is is a relatively new concept which acknowledges this fact and encourages people to organise their online information and assets and take control of their digital legacy. Organising your digital death means sharing your password with a loved one who can access and manage or delete your account after you are gone. This includes online banking, social media, cloud storage, purchased digital content, and email accounts.[134] There has been an emergence of online companies looking to provide digital estate planning such as 'Final Security' who uses state-of-the-art artificial intelligence to clean and transfer your digital information after your death.[135] This is beneficial because it relieves the family of the bereaved from the task of cleaning up and organising their online clutter, giving them more space and time to grieve. The implications of death and our digital remains is an increasingly important topic to discuss as we are constantly adding to our digital footprint, with the average British person spending twenty-four hours a week on their phone.[136] It is when our digital footprint is left abandoned and unchecked after we have passed that issues can occur. An example of this was Esther Earl, a 16-year-old internet blogger who passed away on the 25th of August 2010, after a four-year-long battle with

[134] Digital Death. (n.d.). Digital Death – Digital Death. [online] Available at: https://www.digitaldeath.com/digital-death/ [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[135] finalsecurity.co. (n.d.). Free Digital Estate Planning. [online] Available at: https://finalsecurity.co/index.php [Accessed 26 Jan. 2021].

[136] editor, J.W.M. (2018). Britons Spend Average of 24 Hours a Week online, Ofcom Says. *The Guardian*. [online] 2 Aug. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/aug/02/fifth-of-britons-feel-stressed-if-they-cant-access-internet-ofcom-report [Accessed 27 Dec. 2020].

cancer. Six months after her passing on the 18th of February 2011,[137] a tweet was posted on her Twitter account:

> It's currently Friday, January 14 of the year 2010. just wanted to say: I seriously hope that I'm alive when this posts.[138]

Due to the fact her account was running as normal, a tweet Ester had scheduled on a secondary account was posted onto Twitter. Her mother did not know of this and was not able to find and delete the secondary account which sent the message. Instances like this show how traumatising an unorganised digital footprint can be to the bereaved. To summarise the work of authors Evan Carroll and John Romero in their book 'Your digital afterlife: when Facebook, Flickr and Twitter are your estate, what's your legacy?', the result of digitalising our lives is that we have largely removed physical objects from our personal lives, leaving us with only the digital representations. This transfers value of physical mementos into an online format will increase as our digital dependency grows.[139] Although we still have photographs and letters, our means of experiencing and sharing them has completely changed. Social media has become a digital memory box of sorts where people can relive memories of shared experiences with those that have passed away. In response to this, there has been an increase in the popularity of memorialised profiles, with Facebook being the first big social media platform to allow such accounts.[140] It is a possibility that memorialised accounts will be a standard feature on this social media platform in years to come, as it is estimated that by 2100, there could be 4.9 billion dead users on Facebook alone.[141] The average Facebook user will add 1080 updates to their profile.[142] Memorialising an account means preserving this visual timeline of their life, which is full of personal comments, photos, and videos. 'Memories' is a digital legacy service used in 206 countries and territories around the world.[143] The difference between Facebook and Memories is that Memories is an ad-free, paid service in which you can curate your

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[137] Tait, A. (2019). What Happens to Our Online Identities When We die? *The Guardian*. [online] 2 Jun. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/jun/02/digital-legacy-control-online-identities-when-we-die [Accessed 27 Dec. 2020].

[138] Earl, E. (2011). Esther. [online] Twitter. Available at: https://twitter.com/crazycrayon/status/38450467994337280 [Accessed 5 Feb. 2021].

[139] Carroll, E. and Romano, J. (2011). Your Digital Afterlife : When Facebook, Flickr and Twitter Are Your estate, what's Your legacy? Berkeley, Ca: New Riders ; [London, p.Chapter 2, Physical to Digital section, paragraph 1 [Accessed 26 Jan. 2021].

[140] www.facebook.com. (n.d.). About Memorialised Accounts | Facebook Help Center. [online] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/help/1017717331640041/about-memorialized-accounts [Accessed 12 Feb. 2021].

[141] Cantour, M. (2019). *Facebook Could Have 4.9bn Dead Users by 2100, Study Finds*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/apr/29/facebook-dead-users-2100-oxford [Accessed 3 Feb. 2021].

[142] Uhrmacher, A. (2011). TEDxGallatin - Aaron Uhrmacher - Digital Death, Online Afterlife - YouTube. [online] www.youtube.com. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNNoeIWFeoE [Accessed 26 Jan. 2021].

[143] memories.net. (n.d.). https://memories.net/about. [online] Available at: https://memories.net/about [Accessed 26 Jan. 2021].

story with the sole purpose of it being there for your loved ones after you are gone. This includes scheduling future messages to loved ones after you are gone and collaborating with friends to complete stories with their perspectives.[144] This active participation removes the important ethical concerns attached to memorialising Facebook accounts without the persons' explicit consent. These accounts act as a digital destination for grief in the same way a gravestone would be a physical one. Communications researcher and professor Scott H. Church tested this by analysing a number of Facebook memorials and identified them as 'an aesthetic identity gravescape whereupon future members of the community may come to observe traces of that presence'.[145] Church deduces that the public nature of online memorials creates a sense of community.[146] A more literal example of a digital gravescape is the UK company Stillpeace.[147] [Figure 22] Stillpeace is an online memorial website which acts as a literal digital graveyard, providing a fully customisable, personalised, and permanent e-plot or memorial. This access to a community means we are able to communicate and receive support from online networks on a larger scale, exposing us to conversations surrounding death and mourning practices which would not be available to us in our local area, it is also important for those who live far away from the deceased and therefore can not physically visit the headstone. After researching the geographical and spacial issues facing cities like Hong Kong, I think these digital graveyards could end up being a standard experience as we will eventually run out of room for the dead to be buried. However, these digital death spaces are paid for, so much like physical mourning objects,[148] digital death is only available to those who could afford it.[149]

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[144] memories.net. (n.d.). Memories.net | Where Memories Keep Living. [online] Available at: https://memories.net/ [Accessed 5 Feb. 2021].

[145] Church, S.H. (2013). Digital Gravescapes: Digital Memorialising on Facebook. The Information Society, 29(3), p.188.

[146] Church, S.H. (2013). Digital Gravescapes: Digital Memorialising on Facebook. The Information Society, 29(3), p.184.

[147] WebboyCMS, W. net (n.d.). Stillpeace. [online] stillpeace.com. Available at: http://stillpeace.com [Accessed 5 Feb. 2021].

[148] WebboyCMS, W. net (n.d.). Create an e-plot. [online] stillpeace.com. Available at: http://stillpeace.com/buy/ [Accessed 5 Feb. 2021].

[149] memories.co.uk. (n.d.). Memories.co.uk | Where Memories Keep Living. [online] Available at: https://memories.co.uk/?_gl=1 [Accessed 5 Feb. 2021].

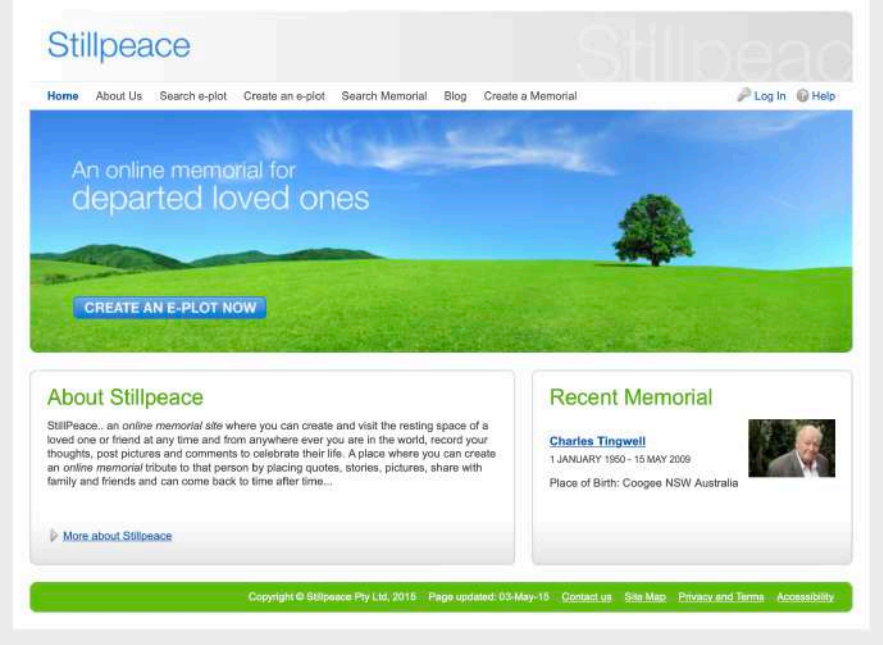

Figure 22 // Stillpeace home screen

There are many social and ethical concerns about people's experiences with mourning online which are beginning to be acknowledged. It is when people carelessly interact with the deceased online profiles that it becomes uncomfortable and verging on unethical. This is the case for writer Claire Wilmot, who wrote about her experiences online after her sister Lauren passed away from a rare form of neurological cancer. Wilmot describes her anger when Lauren's close friends and family found out about her death through Facebook because a distant friend from high school who had not spoken to Lauren in over three years posted on her page mourning her loss.[150] She then goes on to write about the performative and 'syrupy' nature of the posts, saying that:

> The majority of Facebook posts mourning Lauren's death were full of 'silver linings' comments that were so far removed from the horror of the reality that I found them isolating and offensive. Implicit in claims that Lauren was no longer suffering, or that 'everything happens for a reason' are redemptive clauses—ones that have a silencing effect on those who find no value in their pain.[151]

This shows that the ease with which one can post a comment on social media can dilute the sincerity of these public expressions of grief. These posts clearly did more harm than good for Lauren's family and friends. This lack of etiquette contrasts with the fully formed codes of conduct in the Victorian period. Although the etiquette from that period was heavily tied to gender roles, wealth, and class, this instance shows that whatever format grief and mourning are expressed through, it is necessary to introduce codes of etiquette so as to protect the bereaved when they are at their most vulnerable.

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[150] Wilmot, C. (2016). What Online Culture Needs to Learn About Grief. [online] The Atlantic. Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/06/internet-grief/485864/ [Accessed 26 Jan. 2021].

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Our relationships with death technology is being pushed with the introduction of companies like Eterni.me. Inspired by Bladerunner, Black Mirror,[152] [Figure 20] and The Final Cut, Eterni.me is a dystopian service which hints at our complicated future with digital death technology.[153] Eterni.me creates a 3D avatar of you which analyses and replicates how your face moves when you speak, it also adopts your vocabulary and sentence patterns. The more you use it, the more accurate the Siri-version of you becomes. Using data from Facebook, Twitter, e-mails, photos, and whatever you deem fit to supply it, Eterni.me can create a speculative online profile based on what your life could have been, had you not passed away.[154] Experiences provided by eterni.me may become standard if services like digital graveyards and memorialised profiles begin to leave people unsatisfied. This makes me question, what type of relationships can we form with digital platforms, especially when they seek to replicate the deceased? The aims of most of the previous objects mentioned was to facilitate the expression of grief so that the bereaved can then move on with their lives. However, I think the realism that eterni.me is aiming for could hinder the grief process because it would be harder to accept that they're gone if you were able to communicate with an exact replication of them online. Companies like eterni.me, that aim to extend life through digital technology have been criticised by many, notably Caitlin Doughty, a death positive author and funeral director. In her book 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: And Other Lessons from the Crematory' she discusses the type of people that demand these digital ghosts, saying:

> It is no surprise that the people trying so frantically to extend our lifespans are almost entirely rich, white men. Men who have lived lives of systematic privilege, and believe that privilege should extend indefinitely.

This is shown through the fact that all the large companies in the life longevity industry such as Age x Therapeutics[155], Human Longevity Inc,[156] and resTORbio[157] are founded and managed by white men. This demonstrates that the privileges given to you in life will affect your relationship with death and therefore how you use death technology to your benefit.

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[152] Black Mirror : Be Right Back, (2013). [TV series episode] Netflix. 11 Feb. Available at: https://www.netflix.com/watch/70279173?trackId=14277283&tctx=-97%2C-97%2C%2C%2C%2C [Accessed 5 Oct. 2020].

[153] Marius Ursache (2015). The Journey to Digital Immortality. [online] Medium. Available at: https://medium.com/@mariusursache/the-journey-to-digital-immortality-33fcbd79949 [Accessed 5 Oct. 2020].

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[156] Human Longevity, Inc. (n.d.). About Human Longevity, Inc. - DNA Sequencing & Health Intelligence. [online] Available at: https://humanlongevity.com [Accessed 1 Feb. 2021].

[157] Crunchbase. (n.d.). resTORbio - Employees, Board Members, Advisors & Alumni. [online] Available at: https://www.crunchbase.com/organization/restorbio/people [Accessed 1 Feb. 2021].

Extending or artificially recreating life through digital means seems like torture as you are constantly reliving what could have been but never will be. This highlights the need for a balance between digital recollection and emotional release.

Figure 23 // Black Mirror: Season 2, Episode 1 ‘Be right back’

Conclusion //

This dissertation analysed the use of visual culture when mourning and the external factors which affect the forms they take on. By showcasing the various forms that mourning objects can take on and how they have altered throughout time, this dissertation proves that mourning objects are a reflection of the society's traditions and culture they are created within. The evidence stated throughout this dissertation proves that due to our increasingly digitalised lives, our life online can experience a 'digital death' in itself and therefore is becoming an increasingly popular vehicle for mourning.

The three main points which consistently emerged through each chapter are:

First, it is clear that due to societal gender roles, the experience of mourning has always varied between men and women. While women were expected to be 'angels of the house' and represent their families' collective feelings of grief through their clothing, men were expected to be stoic and experienced very little alterations to their clothing. This is still the case today as often women are expected to be more emotionally supportive whilst grieving whereas men, although they feel grief just as strongly, are more likely to bottle it up. Furthermore, it can be seen throughout history that mourning clothing reflects a women's position in society. For instance, during the first world war, women's role in society had taken a dramatic shift, many were gaining more independence, joining the workforce as nurses, translators, or ammunition testers. Many of these same women had lost their husbands, fathers, or brothers and the year-long periods of seclusion were no longer compatible with their new lives. Although women are expected to take up the role of carer of the sick, women and men are expected to mourn for the same length of time.

Second, a lot can be learned about society and the economic situation of an era by understanding what people could afford to use to mourn. Differences in wealth are evidenced in mourning clothing during the Victorian period when the lower class made cheaper fabrics and jewellery which replicated ones popularised by the upper classes. This shows many material forms of mourning were only reserved for the upper class, a modern example of this can be seen in Chapter 3.2 with the popularisation of the diamond cremation rings. Furthermore, in Chapter 1.2, the lower classes experienced higher mortality rates and could not afford the costs of a funeral which lead to paupers' graves. The importance of tangible visual reminders was highlighted by the way in which families would scrape together any money they had in order to personalise these anonymous graves. People still experience paupers graves today. However, unlike in the past, the government will provide a headstone.

Third, it can be stated that people's relationship with death is a very crucial component in how they mourn. During periods of high mortality rates such as the Victorian period, the population were used to people dying at a much younger age, and in their homes. This meant that they were comfortable spending time in the same space and documenting their loved ones who passed on. Due to the medicalisation of death, people today are not used to seeing dead bodies, are therefore not comfortable with end of life and are less likely to receive closure or comfort from a deathbed.

Additionally, it can be concluded that the objects we have to mourn can be out of our control. This is the case during World War One and Two when families often didn't have a physical body to focus on. Today people are still using the same communal graves and monuments used by families in the world wars to mourn for their loved ones who have passed in more recent conflicts. This shows how powerful and therapeutic communal memorials are in expressing collective grief.

This leads me to the future of death. Since the concept of digital death is a relatively new one, it can be speculated that people will need to start including their digital lives in their will so they can either die alongside them or live on as a memorial. In addition these new codes of etiquette, similar to the Victorian era, may need to be implemented to ensure that these online sites are respectful to the memory of the deceased.

In order to design new ways to support and represent the process of mourning, it is important to look at objects from the past and acknowledge their advantages and disadvantages. I think this information has given me a better understanding of the value of mourning objects and how important understanding grief is. The abundance of research on the topic of mourning shows me how many people are fascinated with this topic. Further, I feel I have learned a great deal about death and mourning, which has helped inform design choices I have made in my fourth-year studio project.

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