



SERRC
Social Epistemology
Review & Reply Collective

<http://social-epistemology.com>
ISSN: 2471-9560

Embodying 'Necro-Waste': On Toxic Discourse

Mark D. West, Independent Scholar, westinbrevard@yahoo.com

West, Mark D. 2022. "Embodying 'Necro-Waste': On Toxic Discourse." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 11 (3): 1-12. <https://wp.me/p1Bfg0-6zS>.

In previous discussions of necro-waste, I think that social epistemology has taken an important step by discussing what seems to be a constellation of concepts (“corpse”, “cadaver”, “remains”, “body”, “necro-waste”) which serve to describe, more than anything else, a set of attitudes toward the remains of the no-longer animate human, and in a larger sense to death as a whole. One of the most interesting aspects of this, to me, is that the terminological aspects of this matter seem to clearly indicate that in speaking of the dead and the epiphenomenon thereof, we have touched upon one of the most interesting and underexamined aspects of postmodernity, and in particular of transhumanism: the fear of death and the resultant teleological inversion.^{1,2}

The ‘Difficult Dead’

Robins and Smith, in a discussion of the travails that befall the mortuary workers who attend to the corpses of notorious criminals, offer the following definition of the ‘difficult dead’:

The term ‘difficult dead’ is understood as deceased individuals whose criminal acts defiled an ‘ideal victim’; those person(s) intertwined with sacredness; the vulnerable, often young victim of a violent crime. Due to the perpetrators’ defiling of the vulnerable in life, the remains are difficult to classify alongside other sets of human remains. They must be kept distinct from these as an ‘other’, a status that stems from their actions which undermine not only legal codes, but threaten and disrupt moral codes, too. As a consequence, the remains of the difficult dead and their epiphenomenon (gravesites, grave markers, etc.) are labelled and handled as identifiably different to other human beings.³

In the case of Lee Harvey Oswald, for example, Harvey’s corpse was inhumed on November 25, 1963, three days after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Oswald was buried at Shannon Rose Hill Funeral Chapel and Cemetery at Fort Worth, Texas. The funeral itself was grim; none of the clergy present would offer any last rites until the head of the local council of churches offered a perfunctory two-sentence comment. There were only three family members present, so the director of the funeral home (who had told the morticians and grave-diggers that they were attending to the remains of a man named ‘Bobo’, for fear that they would have left had they known that they were attending to Oswald) called the reporters at hand to transport the coffin to the grave. The gravestone was stolen four years later; once it was returned to the Oswald family, Oswald’s mother placed the stone in the crawl-space of the house in which she lived. When she died, the new owner

¹ Matías Quer. 2020. “Fear of Death as the Foundation of Modern Political Philosophy and Its Overcoming by Transhumanism.” *Postmodern Openings* 11 (4): 323-333. doi:10.18662/po/11.4/238.

² Robert Spaemann. 1991. “Teología Natural y Acción.” *Anuario Filosófico* 24 (2): 273-288.

³ Daniel Robins and Rosie Smith. 2021. “Hidden Labour in Funeral Directing: Providing Care to ‘Difficult’ Dead Bodies.” *Mortality* 26 (1): 2.

retained the grave marker until it passed into the possession of his step-cousin, and when he died, the family sold the stone. As described in an article in *Texas Monthly*:

Ragan's family reportedly sold the stone to a roadside museum in Illinois for the bargain price of less than \$10,000, where it lived alongside mannequins depicting President Kennedy and the First Lady, the seal from the birthday cake presented to Kennedy the year he was serenaded by Marilyn Monroe, and a small collection of Batmobiles.⁴

Oswald's corpse itself was exhumed itself on October 4, 1981 at the behest of Michael Eddowes, a writer of a book entitled *The Oswald File*, in which he contended that Oswald had been replaced by a Soviet operative during his time in the U.S.S.R. The exhumation and examination demonstrated conclusively, through dental x-rays taken during Oswald's time in the U.S. Marine Corps, that the exhumed body was the same one that had been enlisted in the U.S. armed forces, and the body was reburied.⁵

This did not end the saga of this most toxic of necro-waste; the coffin in which Oswald had been buried had become unfit for use, and the funeral home sold the old coffin after providing the family (and, by extension, the corpse) with a new one. The brother sued, and after a number of years was paid damages and received the coffin.⁶

While the discussion of toxic necro-waste herein has primarily included corpses of individuals who have engaged in heinous activities such that social opprobrium has attached to their remains, corpses can also become toxic due to pre-mortem injection with a radiopharmaceutical or brachytherapy seeds or the transmission of less-familiar diseases such as the Nipah zoonotic virus.^{7,8} While the risks from novel viral agents is difficult to assess, the risk from radiopharmaceuticals is much less than is commonly assumed; as Gowing and DeAmici suggest, even the largest doses of radioactive agents (an injected 150 mC dose of Au^{198}), after 15 days, will emit only 3 mC of radiation,⁹ and within a buried cadaver is unlikely to cause harm—suggesting that much of the panic concerning 'radioactive corpses'

⁴ Dan Solomon. 2015. "The Long, Strange Journey Of Lee Harvey Oswald's Gravestone Back To Texas." *Texas Monthly* August.

⁵ Linda E. Norton, et al. 1984. "The Exhumation and Identification of Lee Harvey Oswald." *Journal of Forensic Science* 29 (1): 19-38.

⁶ Jack Douglas and Billy Sexton. 2015. "After a Half Century, Lee Harvey Oswald's Casket Gets a Final Resting Place." January 30. <https://dfw.cbslocal.com/2015/01/30/after-a-half-century-lee-harvey-oswalds-casket-gets-a-final-resting-place/>.

⁷ J.A. Gillanders, S.D. Woods, and P.H. Jarritt 2003. "Radiation Protection Implications of a Patient's Death Shortly after High Activity Radiopharmaceutical Treatment." *Nuclear Medicine Communications* 24 (3): 341.

⁸ Hossain M.S. Sazzad, et al. 2013. "Nipah Virus Infection Outbreak with Nosocomial and Corpse-to-Human Transmission, Bangladesh." *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 19 (2): 210-217..

⁹ Russell F. Gowing and Egilda DeAmicis, 1954. "Suggested Procedure for Performance of Autopsies on Radioactive Cadavers." *New England Journal of Medicine* 251 (10): 380-382.

represents some variant of a moral panic, in the same way that the question of nuclear energy often engenders panic in local communities.¹⁰

Neutral Necro-Waste

A focus on the most outré cases, however, obscures the fact that the vast majority of once-animate bodies have little or no impact upon either the environment or upon society, and as such can be seen as ‘neutral necro-waste.’ Neutral necro-waste would be corpses which have no normative moral lesson to teach, contain neither radioactivity nor deadly bacteria, corpses whose epiphenomenal lessons (hortatory grave markers and the like) are gone or are incomprehensible. Such necro-waste has no impact upon the social realm; it simply exists, its agency gone.

I suggest as an example of such ‘neutral necro-waste’ the dog cemetery of Ashkelon.¹¹ Ashkelon itself was established by the Canaanites, inhabited later by the Philistines, and rebuilt after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar by the Persians, then coming under Tyrian control. During this era of Phoenician occupation, at least 1200 dogs were buried in a systematic manner near the sea and a large warehouse.¹² The western end of the dog cemetery had eroded into the sea, so the total number of animals which were buried could not be determined. The individual dogs were found to have died of natural causes (or of some mode of death, such as poisoning, that at this far remove left no marks) and the dating of the burials and the lack of mummification or cremation indicated to Stager that the Phoenicians were the most likely population to have enacted the burials.¹³

Wapnish and Hesse argued that,¹⁴ while the dogs were buried with some care, the graves themselves were haphazardly chosen, and, like Dixon,¹⁵ argues that the burials were an aspect of human interaction with feral dogs. Stager,¹⁶ by contrast, concurs with Schmitt and Nettin concluding that a therapeutic cult,^{17, 18} perhaps dedicated to Astarte or to the healing goddess Gula, in which the dogs had been trained to lick the wounds of the afflicted, was

¹⁰ Kehan Shen, et al. 2013 “The Study of Panic to Nuclear Energy on Psychological and Sociological Issues.” *International Conference on Nuclear Engineering* vol. 55829: American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

¹¹ Lawrence E. Stager. 1991. “Why Were Hundreds of Dogs Buried at Ashkelon?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17 (3): 26-42.

¹² Paula Wapnish and Brian Hesse. 1993 “Pampered Pooches or Plain Pariahs? The Ashkelon Dog Burials.” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 56 (2): 55-80.

¹³ Stager. “Why Were Hundreds of Dogs Buried at Ashkelon?”

¹⁴ Wapnish and Hesse. “Pampered Pooches or Plain Pariahs? The Ashkelon Dog Burials.”

¹⁵ Helen Dixon. 2018. “Late 1st-Millennium BCE Levantine Dog Burials as an Extension of Human Mortuary Behavior.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 379 (1): 19-41.

¹⁶ Stager. “Why Were Hundreds of Dogs Buried at Ashkelon?”

¹⁷ Rudiger Schmitt. 2013. “Astarte, Mistress of Horses, Lady of the Chariot: The Warrior Aspect of Astarte.” *Die Welt des Orients* 43 (2): 213-225.

¹⁸ Seraina Nett. 2021. Nett, Seraina. 2021 “The Dogs of the Healing Goddess Gula in the Archaeological and Textual Record of Ancient Mesopotamia.” In *Fierce Lions, Angry Mice and Fat-Tailed Sheep: Animal Encounters in the Ancient Near East* edited by Laerke Recht and Christina Tsouparopoulou. McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research. doi.org/10.17863/CAM.76190.

the source of the canid population which gave rise to the burials. Smith instead contends that the dogs were raised for sale for the hunt throughout the extensive trade routes of the Phoenicians.¹⁹ At this point, barring the location of further archaeological data, we can draw no further conclusions.

What we *can* say, though, is that the dog cadavers in the canid cemetery at Ashkelon are neutral necro-waste. Outside a small circle of scholars, the remains are almost entirely unknown; the cult or business that buried them is long gone, and now indecipherable. We might, and as scholars have, speculate as to the reasons for the burials, but it seems safe to say that at this point in time they have little social or affective impact. They are, at this point, neutral.

Beneficial Necro-Waste

We might consider that necro-waste, being a social artifact, could be put to beneficent uses. Consider, for example a recent trip that I took with my partner throughout the midwest United States. The trip involved a drive of about twenty-five hundred miles total, and so to break the tedium we visited historic sites of interest along the way. Some of these were recommended by friends, some appeared on tourist sites, and some were of personal interest. The sites included Springfield Illinois (the law offices, home, and burial site of Abraham Lincoln, the US president who abolished slavery); the grave and monument to Mother Jones (the union organizer and founder of the International Workers of the World), which is located among the graves of the miners who died in the 1898 labor Battle of Virden; the CANDLES Holocaust Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana, and the nearby home of Eugene V. Debs, American socialist and unionist.

All of this sounds perfectly normal, I suppose, and I imagine it paints my partner and me as old-school Jewish liberals. But what it is, like so much tourism (going to the Louvre to see the sarcophagi and mummies of the Pharaohs, going to St. Denis or the Invalides or the Pantheon in Paris) is what we might call *necro-tourism*. So, I suppose, is my hunt for my ninth-great-grandfather's burial site in Barbados, whence he fled during the Inquisition. I don't think my wish to say Kaddish over his grave would count as 'dark tourism',²⁰ with its implications of both ghoulishness and of the brutish mechanisms of supply and demand;²¹ but it certainly would fall under the rubric of 'necro-tourism': tourism motivated by death and the epiphenomena thereunto. 'Dark tourism',²² such as traveling to the grave of Lee Harvey Oswald and the entire phenomenon of assassination tourism would fall under the

¹⁹ Anne Marie Smith. 2015. "The Ashkelon Dog Cemetery Conundrum." *Journal for Semitics* 24 (1): 93-108.

²⁰ Philip R. Stone. 2006. "A Dark Tourism Spectrum: Towards a Typology of Death and Macabre Related Tourist Sites, Attractions and Exhibitions." *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal* 54 (2): 145-160.

²¹ Anna Farmaki. 2013. "Dark Tourism Revisited: A Supply/Demand Conceptualization." *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*. 7 (3): 281-292

²² Stone. "A Dark Tourism Spectrum: Towards a Typology of Death and Macabre Related Tourist Sites, Attractions And Exhibitions."

broader rubric of necro-tourism;²³ and so would, I suppose, heritage travel of a variety of sorts.²⁴

What I mean to suggest by describing a trip which involves seeing the burial site of a revered labor leader is that not all necro-tourism is for ghoulish purposes; some necro-waste inspires not morbid thoughts, but thoughts which we might well construe as socially beneficial. Clearly, having discussed difficult and neutral corpses, what might we define as the ‘beneficial dead’? Following the outline provided by Robins and Smith for the difficult dead, we might (attempting to follow the language of Robins and Smith closely) propose the following:

The ‘beneficial dead’ might be understood as deceased individuals whose acts while living define them as an exemplary human, a person whose life was intertwined with sacredness; their remains are (like those of the ‘difficult dead’) difficult to classify alongside other sets of human remains. They must be kept distinct from these as an ‘other’, a status that stems from their actions which reinforce moral codes, and thus, the remains of the beneficial dead and their epiphenomenon (gravesites, grave markers, etc.) are labelled and handled as identifiably different to those of other human beings.

An example of the ‘beneficial dead’ might be St. Margaret of Cortona. Born in Laviano in Tuscany in 1247, Margaret’s father remarried after her mother died, and her step-mother is reported by her hagiographer, Iunctae Bevegnatis, to have been cold and distant. As a result, Bevegnatis reports, Margaret came to live without marriage to a young cavalier, who promised to marry her but failed to do so. Her lover died, and Margaret turned to the Franciscans. After many struggles with temptation during a three-year probationary period, Margaret became a tertiary of the Franciscans, and lived a life of asceticism and piety; her faith was such that she was rewarded with visions of Jesus. Margaret prevailed upon the city of Cortona to build a hospital for mendicants, and she instituted an order of tertiaries in that city. She shamed Bishop Guglielmo Ubertini Pazzi for the lavish lifestyle he enjoyed as bishop of the diocese in which Cortona was situated. Upon her death she was beatified, and was made a saint in 1728.²⁵ Her hagiographer, Bevegnatis, appears to have based his narrative on a set of *laude* from the Confraternity of Santa Maria delle laude in Cortona.²⁶

Doyno details the complexities of the relations Margaret had with the Franciscan

²³ Malcolm Foley and J. John Lennon. 1996. “JFK and Dark Tourism: A Fascination with Assassination.” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 2 (4): 198-211.

²⁴ Yaniv Poria, Richard Butler, and David Airey. 2003. “The Core of Heritage Tourism.” *Annals of Tourism Research* 30 (1): 238-254.

²⁵ Fortunato Iozzelli, et al. 1997. *Iunctae Bevegnatis Legenda de Vita et Miraculis Beatae Margaritae de Cortona*. Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii san Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas.

²⁶ Mattia Zangari. 2019. “Saint Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297) and the Laudario of the Confraternity of Santa Maria delle Laude in Cortona.” *Confraternitas* 30 (1-2): 44-56.

order,²⁷ which are elided in sources such as Leopold de Cherance,²⁸ which are more intended to present Margaret as a holy individual worthy of imitation. What we can say with some certainty of Margaret's remains is that they became the center of reputed miracles in the 1300s, and San Basilio, the church where the beatified Margaret was buried was rebuilt and renamed Santa Margherita. A marble funerary monument was constructed behind the high altar in which Margherita's remains were (and are) displayed, allegedly incorruptible; and a now-gone fresco cycle by Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti depicting events in her life complemented a smaller panel by an unknown artist. The purpose of such display, characteristic of such confraternities in thirteenth-century central Italy, is the veneration of the iconography of the sufferings of Christ,²⁹ and of Margaret herself as a desexualized woman who could be venerated as a 'second' Mary Magdalene within a generalized model of social control of behavior or as a model penitent,^{30,31} depending on the perspective of the viewer.

Necro-Waste and Agency

Traditionally, an agent "is one who acts voluntarily, consciously and intentionally," as Khazaei has argued.³² But the consideration of 'necro-waste' seems to me to be better served by a broader conceptualization of agency; as Dennett suggests in his example of the thermostat,³³ one can construe an inanimate object as having intentions or internal states or agency in ways which are useful; in particular, some objects might best be seen as having what Dennett calls 'derived intentionality:'

Consider an encyclopedia. It has derived intentionality. It contains information, but only insofar as it is a device designed and intended for our use. If we "automate" it on a computer, and equip it with a natural-language-processing front end so that it "answers" our questions it is still just a tool, and whatever meaning or aboutness we vest in it is still derived. A chess-playing computer has slightly more autonomy (since it is designed to try to defeat us), but still—according to this line of reasoning—since it is our tool or toy, its intentionality is just derived.³⁴

²⁷ Mary Harvey Doyno. 2015. "The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint: Margaret of Cortona and her Legend." *Past & Present* 228 (1): 57-91.

²⁸ Father Leopold de Cherance, et al. 1888. *Sainte Marguerite de Cortone, 1247-1297*. E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie.

²⁹ Zangari. "Saint Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297) and the Laudario of the Confraternity of Santa Maria delle Laude in Cortona."

³⁰ Alyssa Perez. 2007. "Margaret of Cortona: The Second Mary Magdalene, A Model for the Sexual Female Rendered Sexless." Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Religion, Haverford College.

³¹ Alison More. 2012. "'Plantula Francisci, Plantula Mei': Margaret of Cortona as a Model Penitent." In *Her Bright Merits: Essays Honoring Ingrid J. Peterson, OSF*, edited by Mary Meany and Felicity Dorsett, 157-172. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press.

³² Zahra Khazaei. 2019. "Agency and Virtues." *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research* 21 (3): 119-140

³³ Daniel C. Dennett. 1987. *The Intentional Stance*. MIT Press, 29-32.

³⁴ Daniel C. Dennett. 1988. "Precis of the Intentional Stance." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 11 (3): 503.

In “A Gradualist Metaphysics of Agency,” Aguilar and Buckareff propose an account of agency in which causal power,³⁵ rather than some future-oriented mental state, is the primary attribute necessary for agency. Aguilar and Buckareff describe agency as existing on a continuum from quasi-agency to full-blown agency, with quasi-agents, as entities which possess causal powers, whilst an agent *per se* possesses intentional mental states as well as causal powers. To this, rational agents add to these conditions add the human capability of responding to normative forces.³⁶

Corpses, then, are quasi-agents. Some, like the remains of Maimonides or Saint Margaret, have a social ‘derived intentionality’; here, I speak of ‘derived intentionality in the sense that Dennett uses the phrase. There is no information intrinsically present causally *in* the remains themselves; rather, the remains have been socially *endowed* with sanctity, and hence those remains receive special treatment. Some, like the remains of Lee Harvey Oswald or Ian Brady, have been socially defined as ‘toxic’, leading to toxic social ramifications which inhere in the disposition of the remains.³⁷

Other corpses, however, are quasi-agents with a ‘derived intentionality’ which is not social, but rather derives for the actual material content of the corpse. The individual whose remains are contaminated with radioactive materials pursuant to therapy for cancer or due to processes in embalming has (most likely)^{38,39} committed no act leading either to sanctity or to notoriety; but their remains are nonetheless perceived as toxic.⁴⁰ We might similarly construe the corpses of non-royal individuals in the royal cemetery of Ur as of value due to the gold with which they were buried,⁴¹ although the argument could certainly be made that their cultural and historical value of such remains far exceeds that of any metals with which they were buried.

Conclusions

Gille, in her discussion of Hird,⁴² says that “[t]o know waste is to make this indeterminate object determinate,” and argues that what is needed is more, not less, determinacy about

³⁵ Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei Buckareff. 2015 “A Gradualist Metaphysics of Agency.” In *Agency, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility* edited by Andrei Buckareff, Carola Moya, and Sergi Rossell, 30-43. Springer.

³⁶ Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff. 2022. “Agency and Causation.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Agency*, edited by Luca Ferrero, 27-36. Routledge.

³⁷ Daniel Robins. 2017. “Toxic Necro-Waste.” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 6 (10): 39-42.

³⁸ Gillanders, Woods, and Jarritt. “Radiation Protection Implications of a Patient’s Death Shortly after High Activity Radiopharmaceutical Treatment.”

³⁹ Philip R. Olson. 2016 “Knowing ‘Necro-Waste’.” *Social Epistemology* 30 (3): 326-345.

⁴⁰ Nabil Azar Khouri. 2012. “Management of Chemical Health Hazard Fumes Emitted During and after Embalming Procedure and Its Impact on Medical Students and Embalmers.” *Civil and Environmental Research* 2: 32-41.

⁴¹ Aubrey Baadsgaard, Janet Monge, Samantha Cox, and Richard L. Zettler. 2011. “Human Sacrifice and Intentional Corpse Preservation in the Royal Cemetery of Ur.” *Antiquity* 85 (27): 27-42.

⁴² Myra J. Hird. 2012. “Knowing Waste: Towards an Inhuman Epistemology.” *Social Epistemology* 26 (3-4): 453-469.

necro-waste.⁴³ The question of what we mean, specifically, when we talk about the *social meanings* of human remains, animal remains, and the like, are of importance. The corpses themselves, with only a few exceptions, are indeed waste (in the sense that their one-time owners no longer need them). What the corpses represent for those who are still living is indeed a social matter, and deserving of our continued interest. Considering the manner in which corpses seem to instigate panic (the perceived risk of moral hazard from the corpses of the notorious, the perceived risk of embalming fluids on the environment, the perceived harm from minute amounts of radiation, the perceived moral risk of ‘dark tourism’), it may be that the most pertinent way to consider necro-waste is within what Miller calls the ‘society of moral panic’.⁴⁴

Regardless, there can be no question that the topic of necro-waste, as Hird suggests,⁴⁵ opens numerous avenues for inquiry and consideration. I think that the authors cited here have offered interesting, and in some cases provocative, ideas concerning necro-waste. I would propose another following Sneddon,⁴⁶ we ourselves are on our way to becoming necro-waste, and we (one hopes) will leave behind directives for the disposition of our own necro-waste.

By considering the *memento mori* which is, or at least ought to be, an aspect of thought concerning necro-waste, and thus determining how the disposal of our own remains might best fulfill our responsibilities to the environment and society, we can avoid what Ernest Becker described as the ‘thanatophobia’ of modern society in its futile longing for eternal life through ‘superfoods’,⁴⁷ illusory robo-technologies, and the like.⁴⁸ The idea in much transhumanist writing that the utopian solutions of infinite space, life-span, and resources through technical advances would obviate political problems does more than create a utopia; the quest for such immortality changes the human experience in a manner which would make of us something *yet more modern*, as Blumenberg suggests, the most critical characteristic of modernity is the Spinozan abandonment of any dependence upon a deity and the act of taking upon ones’ self the task of creating immortality by the preservation of the body.⁴⁹ This insistence upon self-preservation is the body through various ‘self-improvement’ schemes and technology is part of the never-ending critique of the

⁴³ Zsuzsa Gille. 2013. “Is There an Emancipatory Ontology of Matter? A Response to Myra Hird,” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (4): 1, 6.

⁴⁴ Toby Miller. 2006. “A Risk Society of Moral Panic: The US in the Twenty-First Century.” *Cultural Politics* 2 (3): 299-318.

⁴⁵ Myra J. Hird 2017. “Planetary Messmates: Engaging with Elizabeth Mazzolini and Philip Olson on the Topic of Waste.” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (10): 52-57.

⁴⁶ Karen J. Sneddon. 2014. “Memento Mori: Death and Wills.” *Wyoming Law Review* 14: 211.

⁴⁷ Ernest Becker. 1997. *The Denial of Death*. Simon / Schuster.

⁴⁸ Quer. “Fear of Death as the Foundation of Modern Political Philosophy and Its Overcoming by Transhumanism.”

⁴⁹ Hans Blumenberg. 1983 “Self-Preservation and Inertia: On the Constitution of Modern Rationality.” In *Contemporary German Philosophy* Volume 3 edited by Darrel E. Christensen, Manfred Riedel, et al., 209-256. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Enlightenment, which itself becomes myth, myth which Horkheimer and Adorno describe as taking the form of “animistic magic.”⁵⁰

As regards death, the telos of this myth is the religion of cryonics,⁵¹ in which a few wealthy individuals (including Ted Williams, the US baseball player, and Dick Clair, the writer of the “Facts of Life” television series) believe that the future will hold technologies that will both enable the unfreezing and reanimating of their frozen corpses—and that their interesting lives will motivate the people of the future to do so. Cryonics is a fringe science, which is well beyond current capabilities, and the tissue destruction inherent in freezing is such that the technologies involved in recreating lost tissues would likely be able to recreate such tissues from DNA; as such, cryonics, like expensive spa treatments, health-food scams, and the like, is yet another aspects of the Enlightenment’s bourgeois concern for vitality and longevity,⁵² and another aspect of a broader trend in which a broadening of the impact of global capitalism is taken as a transformation from ‘modernity’ to ‘postmodernity.’⁵³

A likely outcome is that the frozen corpses of the wealthy, stored here and there, will be like the Pyramid of Cestius near the Porta San Paolo in Rome, the tomb for Gaius Cestius of the Epulones religious corporation. Of Cestius, Thomas Hardy wrote in his *Rome: At the Pyramid of Cestius near the Graves of Shelley and Keats*:

Who, then, was Cestius,
And what is he to me?
Amid thick thoughts and memories multitudinous
One thought alone brings he.
I can recall no word
Of anything he did.⁵⁴

Regardless of the glittering promises held forth by the techno-wizards of the day, we will die, and most likely we will be forgotten as Gaius Cestius. Perhaps in attending to our own eventual status as necro-waste, we can avoid becoming among the ‘difficult dead.’

References

- Aguilar, Jesus H. and Andrei A Buckareff. 2022. “Agency and Causation.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Agency*, edited by Luca Ferrero, 27-36. Routledge.
- Aguilar, Jesus H. and Andrei Buckareff. 2015. “A Gradualist Metaphysics of Agency.” In *Agency, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility* edited by Andrei Buckareff, Carola Moya, and Sergi Rossell, 30-43. Springer.

⁵⁰ Peter M.R. Stirk. 1992. *Max Horkheimer: A New Interpretation*. Rowman & Littlefield.

⁵¹ Simon Dein. 2021. “Cryonics: Science or Religion.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 1-13. doi: 10.1007/s10943-020-01166-6.

⁵² Michael Hendricks. 2015. “The False Science of Cryonics.” *MIT Technology Review* September 15.

⁵³ Ellen Meiksins Wood. 1997 “Modernity, Postmodernity or Capitalism?” *Review of International Political Economy* 4 (3): 539-560.

⁵⁴ Thomas Hardy and James Gibson. 2001. *Thomas Hardy: The Complete Poems*. Springer.

- Baadsgaard, Aubrey, Janet Monge, Samantha Cox, and Richard L Zettler. "Human Sacrifice and Intentional Corpse Preservation in the Royal Cemetery of Ur." *Antiquity* 85 (27): 27-42.
- Becker, Ernest. 1997 *The Denial of Death*. Simon / Schuster, 1997.
- Blumenberg, Hans. 1983 "Self-Preservation and Inertia: On the Constitution of Modern Rationality." In *Contemporary German Philosophy* Volume 3 edited by Darrel E. Christensen, Manfred Riedel, et al., 209-256. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Cherance, Father Leopold de, et al. 1888. *Sainte Marguerite de Cortone, 1247-1297*. E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie.
- Simon Dein. 2021. "Cryonics: Science or Religion." *Journal of Religion and Health* 1-13. doi: 10.1007/s10943-020-01166-6.
- Dennett, Daniel C. 1988. "Precis of the Intentional Stance." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 11 (3): 495-505.
- Dennett, Daniel C. 1987. *The Intentional Stance*. MIT Press.
- Dixon, Helen. 2018. "Late 1st-Millennium BCE Levantine Dog Burials as an Extension of Human Mortuary Behavior." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 379 (1): 19-41.
- Douglas, Jack and Billy Sexton. 2015. "After a Half Century, Lee Harvey Oswald's Casket Gets a Final Resting Place." January. <https://dfw.cbslocal.com/2015/01/30/after-a-half-century-lee-harvey-oswalds-casket-gets-a-final-resting-place/>.
- Doyno, Mary Harvey. 2015. "The Creation of a Franciscan Lay Saint: Margaret of Cortona and Her *Legenda*." *Past & Present* 228 (1): 57-91.
- Farmaki, Anna. 2013. "Dark Tourism Revisited: A Supply/Demand Conceptualization." *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 7 (3): 281-292.
- Foley, Malcolm, and J. John Lennon. 1996 "JFK and Dark Tourism: A Fascination with Assassination." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 2 (4): 198-211.
- Gillanders, J.A., S.D. Woods, and P.H. Jarritt. 2003. "Radiation Protection Implications of a Patient's Death Shortly after High Activity Radiopharmaceutical Treatment." *Nuclear Medicine Communications* 24 (3): 341.
- Gille, Zsuzsa. 2013. "Is There an Emancipatory Ontology of Matter? A Response to Myra Hird." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (4): 1-6.
- Gowing, Russell F. and Egilda DeAmicis. 1954. "Suggested Procedure for Performance of Autopsies on Radioactive Cadavers." *New England Journal of Medicine* 251 (10): 380-382.
- Hardy, Thomas and James Gibson. 2001. *Thomas Hardy: The Complete Poems*. Springer.
- Hendricks, Michael. 2015. "The False Science of Cryonics." *MIT Technology Review* September 15.
- Hird, Myra J. 2017. "Planetary Messmates: Engaging with Elizabeth Mazzolini and Philip Olson on the Topic of Waste." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 2 (10): 52-57.
- Hird, Myra J. 2012. "Knowing Waste: Towards an Inhuman Epistemology." *Social Epistemology* 26 (3-4): 453-469.
- Hossain, M.S. Sazzad, M. Jahangir Hossain, Emily S. Gurley, Kazi M.H. Ameen, Shahana Parveen, M. Saiful Islam, Labib I. Faruque, Goutam Podder, Sultana S. Banu,

- Michael K Lo, et al. 2013. "Nipah Virus Infection Outbreak with Nosocomial and Corpse-to-Human Transmission, Bangladesh." *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 19 (2): 210-217.
- Iozzelli, Fortunato, et al. 1997. *Iunctae Bevegnatis Legenda de Vita et Miraculis Beatae Margaritae de Cortona*. Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii san Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas.
- Khazaei, Zahra. 2019. "Agency and Virtues." *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research* 21 (3): 119-140.
- Khouri, Nabil Azar. 2012. "Management of Chemical Health Hazard Fumes Emitted During and after Embalming Procedure and Its Impact on Medical Students and Embalmers." *Civil and Environmental Research* 2: 32-41.
- Miller, Toby. 2006. "A Risk Society of Moral Panic: The US in the Twenty-First Century." *Cultural politics* 2 (3): 299-318.
- More, Alison. 2012. "Plantula Francisci, Plantula Mei': Margaret of Cortona as a Model Penitent." In *Her Bright Merits: Essays Honoring Ingrid J. Peterson, OSF* edited by Mary Meany and Felicity Dorsett, 157-172. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press.
- Nett, Seraina. 2021 "The Dogs of the Healing Goddess Gula in the Archaeological and Textual Record of Ancient Mesopotamia." In *Fierce Lions, Angry Mice and Fat-Tailed Sheep: Animal Encounters in the Ancient Near East* edited by Laerke Recht and Christina Tsouparopoulou. McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research. doi.org/10.17863/CAM.76190.
- Norton, Linda E, James A Cottone, Irvin M Sopher, and Vincent JM DiMaio. 1984. "The Exhumation and Identification of Lee Harvey Oswald." *Journal of Forensic Science* 29 (1): 19-38.
- Olson, Philip R. 2016. "Knowing 'Necro-Waste'." *Social Epistemology* 30 (3): 326-345.
- Perez, Alyssa. 2007. *Margaret of Cortona: The Second Mary Magdalene, A Model for the Sexual Female Rendered Sexless*. Ph.D. dissertation Department of Religion, Haverford College.
- Poria, Yaniv, Richard Butler, and David Airey. 2003. "The Core of Heritage Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 30 (1): 238-254.
- Quer, Matías. 2020. "Fear of Death as the Foundation of Modern Political Philosophy and Its Overcoming by Transhumanism." *Postmodern Openings* 11 (4): 323-333. doi: 10.18662/po/11.4/238.
- Robins, Daniel. 2017. "Toxic Necro-Waste." *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective* 6 (10): 39-42.
- Robins, Daniel and Rosie Smith. 2021. "Hidden Labour in Funeral Directing: Providing Care to 'Difficult' Dead Bodies." *Mortality* 26 (1): 100-111.

- Schmitt, Rudiger. 2013. "Astarte, Mistress of Horses, Lady of the Chariot: The Warrior Aspect of Astarte." *Die Welt des Orients* 43 (2): 213-225.
- Shen, Kehan, Chao Fang, Changzhou Lei, and Xiaoye Wang. 2013. "The Study of Panic to Nuclear Energy on Psychological and Sociological Issues." In *International Conference on Nuclear Engineering* vol. 55829: American Society of Mechanical Engineers.
- Smith, Anne Marie. 2015. "The Ashkelon Dog Cemetery Conundrum." *Journal for Semitics* 24 (1): 93-108.
- Sneddon, Karen J. 2014. "Memento Mori: Death and Wills." *Wyoming Law Review* 14: 211.
- Solomon, Dan. 2015. "The Long, Strange Journey Of Lee Harvey Oswald's Gravestone Back To Texas." *Texas Monthly* August.
- Spaemann, Robert. 1991. "Teologia Natural y Action." *Anuario Filosofico* 24 (2): 273-288.
- Stager, Lawrence E. 1991. "Why were Hundreds of Dogs Buried at Ashkelon?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17 (3): 26-42.
- Stirk, Peter M.R. 1992. *Max Horkheimer: A New Interpretation*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Stone, Philip R. 2006. "A Dark Tourism Spectrum: Towards a Typology of Death and Macabre Related Tourist Sites, Attractions and Exhibitions." *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal* 54 (2): 145-160.
- Wapnish, Paula and Brian Hesse. 1993. "Pampered Pooches or Plain Pariahs? The Ashkelon Dog Burials." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 56 (2): 55-80.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 1997. "Modernity, Postmodernity or Capitalism?" *Review of International Political Economy* 4 (3): 539-560.
- Zangari, Mattia. 2019. "Saint Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297) and the Laudario of the Confraternity of Santa Maria delle Laude in Cortona." *Confraternitas* 30 (1-2): 44-56.