

A LOSS FOR WORDS: RESIGNATION AND THE VICTORIAN CEMETERY

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Towering obelisks, pensive angels, stately mausoleums – the Victorian cemetery remains a collective cultural monument to the bourgeois obsession with death. And both during the nineteenth century and today, the visitor to these “gardens of the dead” was and is struck by a medley of austere and quirky memorials: from the Beer mausoleum in Highgate to Wombwell’s sleeping lion, from the massive, black granite slab, commemorating the Duke of Sussex in Kensal Green to Andrew Ducrow’s Egyptian fantasy, with its four sphinxes guarding the base and the horse-head handled urn perched on the roof. The cemeteries celebrated individuality and idiosyncrasy and provided a space to pay, through public subscription, monumental and epitaphic tributes to popular heroes: Hill, the founder of the penny post; Coombes, the champion rower; and Hood, whose tomb reads, “He Sang the Song of the Shirt.” The exceptional monuments, strategically placed along the central carriage-ways or at intersections of the cemetery paths, dominate the impression the cemetery leaves, but nonetheless their ostentation and self-assertion were exceptions when it came to nineteenth-century commemoration. Though today often overtaken by creeping ivy in spite of the efforts of “Friends” societies to rescue them from the ravages of time and urban neglect, most burial markers feature what can only be identified as monumental modesty. They bear simply names and dates or, at most, sentimental refrains and biblical verses that strive to alter the reader’s attitude toward the dead. Aggressive individualism yielded to class conformity.

The cemetery movement – that is, the closing of city churchyards and the opening of the large suburban cemeteries during the middle decades of the nineteenth century – permitted an increasingly larger sector of the population to erect monuments, and it may not be surprising that their memorials to the dead ceded to generic convention, if not cliché. Set on public display were private tributes to spouses, parents, children, and friends, and their epitaphic reticence seems almost a reaction to the monumental grandeur and ambition on neighbouring paths. On one hand, this form of commemoration coincided with the mass production of monuments and a firmly established consumer culture: the stonemason’s catalogue with its inviting display of tasteful memorials standardised the expression of individuality on tombs. On the other, the epigraphic resignation that characterised the cemetery raises a curious paradox: the assertion of individuality that erecting tombstones implies took the form of *not* distinguishing one’s self, a voluntary submission to the silence of the grave.

The result was monumental shorthand: abbreviated statements that directed the reader to the contradictory, unarticulated responses to death, that anticipated and corrected the cemetery visitor’s musing over epitaphs, and that depended on the reader’s recognition of certain emotions and ability to decode the message of the

tomb. The euphemisms and testaments of continued devotion to loved ones functioned to commemorate not the goodness of the deceased, but the hope, grief, sorrow, and sense of loss felt by a particular set of survivors, the bereaved, who recognised this goodness. Scodel identifies this effect in relation to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century epitaphs, “the sense of a fundamental division between a small group of intimates, who can truly mourn the deceased, and all other members of society, who cannot” (316). Far from making the dead accessible to the living (Douglas 209), the epitaph, like the grave and the new cemeteries, became exclusionary and exclusive. While asserting the continuity of the family unit and establishing the social status of both the deceased and their survivors, the Victorian domestic monument simultaneously invites and resists readerly intrusions into the private realm of the family.

Part of the trend toward reticence was the result not solely of a conforming middle class, but a campaign by self-designated epitaph reformers. As early as 1791, John Bowden published his *Epitaph Writer*, which was soon followed by additional commentaries and epitaph collections, published with the purpose of guiding, if not controlling, the epitaphic writings of “the middle and lower ranks” (1). During the nineteenth century, hundreds of collections, tracts, and epitaph manuals were available that guided Victorian epigraphy. Indeed, what most distinguishes nineteenth-century commemoration from that of earlier periods was that most Victorians did not write epitaphs, but selected them. “Personalising” the tomb meant choosing from already composed standard texts, available from funeral directors, clergymen, and stonemasons, who provided the bereaved with a choice of appropriate sentiments. Epitaphs culled from churchyards across the country, suitable literary quotations, and scriptural verses were readily available in epitaph manuals and handbooks. Originality and invention were not the issue in Kensal Green. The poetry of the tomb reflected a middle-class readership, not anonymous authorship, a deference, even resignation, to pre-existing linguistic and literary models to memorialise the dead.

These collections railed against egotism, excessive sentimentality, and messages that “countervened” religious doctrine. They also established clear guidelines – to cite but one example, Nash Stephenson’s *Selection of Texts for Tombstones* (1865):

As a rule, a simple record of birth and death of the departed, and a brief text of Scripture, suggestive of hope and of the Saviour’s all sufficiency, and of the need of watchfulness, would most fitly express all that should be said. In the rare cases in which the departed have shone out as bright and burning lights, it is a duty to outline the salient points of character, so that others, seeing their good works, may glorify our father which is in Heaven. (4-5)

Tracts like Stephenson’s demonstrate the concern over the secularisation of death and commemoration brought about by the cemeteries, in which commercial interest and municipal authorities wrested from the Church its monopoly on the disposal of the dead. Although freeing would-be commemorators from the restraints of the clergy,

the cemetery companies themselves endorsed compliance to certain epitaphic norms. Their guidebooks, which were published shortly after their openings, extol the appropriateness of unassuming inscriptions. In his guide *Abney Park*, Thomas Barker praises the effect of only the name and dates on a tombstone: "Two ladies passing at this moment exclaimed, 'There, I do like that – I do like something plain!'" (34). And Laman Blanchard intones, "Simplicity always wins us," in his *Visit to Kensal Green* (185). Elaborate epitaphic statements were associated with vulgarity and self-promotion, easily equated with transgressing class boundaries. Certain outrageous monuments – the Ducrow mausoleum and the self-vindicating epitaph on John St. John Long's monument, as Kensal Green's most notorious examples – were repeatedly attacked, just as were the excesses of the funeral industry, a reminder that not every Victorian accepted uncritically what James Steven Curl has identified as the age's "celebration" of death.

The epitaph's limited range of expression, the physical restrictions of space, and financial considerations all worked against elaborate attempts at articulating individual responses to death. As a result, many Victorian inscriptions relied on single-line sentiments or a series of verbal phrases, familiar and in circulation, to provide the message of the tomb. The most popular of such epitaphic gestures was, of course, "Gone, but not forgot." Two past participles – poeticised, taking into account the phrase's consonance and internal rhyme – declare both the death of the individual and the commemorative function of the tomb: the very existence of the monument proves that the particular individual has been remembered. Similar sentiments were repeated throughout the nineteenth-century cemetery: "To live in the hearts we leave behind/is not to die." Not to be forgotten (appropriately, tombstones often omit the verb "to be"), however, also asserts that the memory of the deceased continues among the living. Remembrance occurs outside of the cemetery gates and has a transforming, preserving power that challenges the finality of death. These testaments of twofold consolation, to both the dead and to the bereaved, work against not only the separation brought about by death, but also the effective segregation of the dead from the living that resulted from cemetery interment.

These mottoes also demonstrate the corrective strategy of many Victorian epitaphs, especially those that turn on the conjunction "but." "Gone," of course, is a euphemism for "dead," though the more direct "Dead, but not forgot" also appears. As a Victorian epitaphic trademark, euphemisms on their own challenge the cemetery visitor's assumptions about the dead, but the two verbal phrases make the revision explicit. Their correction results from their combination: together, they position the dead in relation to the living. Thus, "Not Dead, but Gone Before" illustrates a similar version of corrective formula, with its second phrase resolving the paradox of the first's denial of death at the graveside. Though less emphatic, "Not Lost, but Gone Before," revises the sentiment even further: one euphemism replaces another. These epitaphic statements suggest a Victorianised *memento mori* motto, prompting the reader to anticipate his or her own death. While Christian hopefulness prevents a stark reading, the ambiguous "Gone Before," the dead somewhere vaguely ahead of the reader, serves to reposition both the deceased and the reader's assumptions about

the location of the dead. "Gone Before" privileges the deceased: death is figured as something positive, the ultimate position in a culture acutely conscious of social class and precedence. Victorian epigraphy's attempt to correct the reader's attitude towards those interred – that they are elsewhere, in a better place, inaccessible, even not dead – transforms the gravestone's commemorative function. Rather than marking, and thus memorialising, the physical remains of the dead, they signal the dead's absence from the living.

In addition to challenging assumptions about the location of the dead and about death, these consolatory addresses emphasise the reader's position outside the dialogue established between the dead and their surviving relations. Epitaphs advertise the solace the bereaved take: a patent confirmation of Ariès' "death of the other." A different, though nonetheless popular, corrective motto is the gospel verse, "She is not dead, but sleeping" (Luke viii.52). Christ's declaration not only reminds the reader that the dead await the resurrection, but also poses as a hopeful, consolatory message to the bereaved, here to parents both in the scriptural text and at the site of the tomb. This personalising aspect of the scriptural epitaph becomes more apparent in its countless alterations: "Weep not for me, my parents dear; / I am not dead, but sleeping here." Here, we have the biblical verse transformed into what Wordsworth, in his first "Essay" on epitaphs, calls a "tender fiction," granting the dead a voice. Rarely do the voices in the Victorian cemeteries address the chance passer-by, as in the "Pause, Traveller" epitaphs of antiquity and the eighteenth-century churchyard. Instead, Victorian epitaphs establish an intimate communication in the impersonal, public arena of the cemetery. Outside of the privileged group of mourners, the general reader can at best identify with the sorrowing intimates of the deceased, who themselves are inaccessible and inevitably follow those who have "gone before" to the grave.

Epitaphic mottoes, then, while correcting the reader's attitude toward the dead, simultaneously beckon and deflect sympathetic engagement. Not all domestic monuments rely solely on such compact, preset inscriptions; many, of course, venture more complete, though nonetheless fragmented, tributes to the deceased. Invariably, though, the additional elements – preamble, genealogy information (names and dates), and, if included, personalising verses or scriptural quotations – also participate in this corrective aspect of epitaphs. They displace the dead, assert living memory beyond the tomb, and appeal to those survivors who value the deceased. The Pearce epitaph in Abney Park, a sampler of these Victorian lapidary conventions, illustrates how distinct components of an individual tombstone inscription work together:

In Affectionate Remembrance
of
FRANCES ALICE,
THE DEVOTED AND LOVING
WIFE OF EDWIN PEARCE,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
FEBRUARY 26TH 1878

AGED 27 YEARS

A DUTIFUL DAUGHTER,
FOND SISTER,
SINCERE AND TRUSTED WIFE, AND
AN AFFECTIONATE AND LOVING MOTHER.

*DEEPLY REGRETTEED AND LAMENTED
BY ALL THAT KNEW HER.*

From the start, the adjective “affectionate” qualifies the tenor of the “memory,” drawing the reader’s attention not to the commemorated, but the commemorators. The preambles on tombs – in their dozen or so versions, “To the Memory of” and “*In Memoriam*” (though rarely the literal “Here Lies” in the Victorian cemetery) – are formulaic phrases that announce the epitaphic occasion. Nineteenth-century monument catalogues, for example, Trendall’s *Monuments, Cenotaphs, Tombs, and Tablets* and Trollope’s *Manual of Sepulchral Memorials*, include them as part of the design of uninscribed monuments. Though after 1850, the Latin phrase no doubt acquired additional force with the publication of Tennyson’s famous elegy, these introductory texts do little more than establish the monument’s function as a memorial: the survivors of the deceased have fulfilled their obligation to memory of the dead by inscribing his or her name in stone.

As far as identifying the dead, this epitaph does so almost aggressively. The young woman’s social roles, her familial relationships, each are qualified with separate modifying phrases. Indeed, the adjectives – “dutiful,” “fond,” “sincere and trusted,” “affectionate and loving” – both trace and idealise the domestic career of Frances Alice Pearce; the qualities praised encompass each stage of the young woman’s biography – “daughter,” “sister,” “wife,” and “mother.” The adjectives publicise the distinguishing traits that characterise her in relation to other family members, qualities she possessed as well as those she inspired, since “trusted” reflects an attitude her husband had toward her. For women, at least, identity in the cemetery is defined through the domestic role. In the Pearce epitaph, as was conventional before the Victorian era, only the woman’s Christian name or names are inscribed, which strictly binds her identity to that of her husband. This emphasis on the woman’s first name also contributes to establishing an intimacy with the dead: domestic ties – and the emotions attributed to them – gain precedence over her social identity as Mrs. Edwin Pearce, whom the epitaph, instead, introduces on a first-name basis. The variety of the general qualities is also potentially suggestive. One wonders whether the seductive alliteration of “dutiful daughter” determined the selection of this particular apposition. One sees how “loving” qualifies “affectionate” as maternal ideals, just as three of the four adjectives praising wifely qualities – “devoted,” “loving,” and “trusted” – betray the unintentional egotism of the husband, while “sincere” seems to imply a very different character trait. The distinct and different

phrases praise without sounding boastful or over-idealising, while still emphasising the goodness of the deceased.

Inevitably, epitaphs must speak well of the deceased. This was the most restricting aspect of the genre, and not only for the Victorians. Lapidary exaggerations of goodness and worth received harsh criticism both before and throughout the Victorian era. Wordsworth himself, at the start of his second "Essay" on epitaphs, cites the anecdote current throughout the nineteenth century, which tells of a young girl asking, "Where are all the bad people buried?" (337). In his essays on epitaphs, the Romantic poet, however, champions readers who find pleasure in believing "the delusion of those flattering recitals" (338). The "writer of an epitaph," he explains, "is not an anatomist, who dissects the internal frame of the mind; he is not even a painter, who executes a portrait at leisure and in entire tranquillity: his delineation, we must remember, is performed by the side of the grave; and, what is more, the grave of one whom he loves and admires" (332). Wordsworth emphasises precisely what Victorians embraced: epitaphic truth rests in neither an accurate depiction of character nor even emotional responses to a character recollected in tranquillity, but the combination of the actual worth and the emotions felt by survivors in immediate response to death. Epitaphs present "truth hallowed by love – the joint offspring of the worth of the dead and the affections of the living!" (333). It is precisely the relation between the dead and the bereaved that validates the epitaphic praise. Goodness is a matter of attribution, and the idealising of the dead is an understandable measure of the sense of loss felt by their survivors.

While it is difficult to measure the effect of Wordsworth's extraordinary essays later in the century, they certainly were in print, even included as a preface to one of the more notable collections, Joseph Snow's 1847 *Lyra Memorialis*. Middle-class widows and widowers, bereaved parents, and surviving children had at their fingertips a seemingly endless variety of preset sentiments to help them articulate their praise of or sorrow for the recently departed: "He left the world a pattern to mankind" or "Think of what a wife should be and she was that." Most collections are decidedly Christian in tone with the overt aim to promote appropriate, religious sentiments that befit the tomb. They set before potential commemorators either appropriate scriptural texts (catalogued according to the age, sex, and social position of the departed) or verses derived from Christian teaching: "We have sought him and he has given us rest"; "Their hope was fixed on nothing less / Than Jesus' blood and righteousness"; "With Christ, which is far better." These collections designed to be perused during times of grief, were a form of consolation for the bereaved in their own right. As the cemeteries themselves bear witness, epitaphs promoting Christian faith by far outnumber others, whether straight from the Bible, Watt's hymns, or original Victorian conceits – "In the Sunshine of God's Love."

The Pearce monument features such preset sentiments. Its genealogical information and truncated eulogy are accompanied by two additional, more fully articulated responses to the death of this young woman, which complicate voices on the tomb: two couplets of verse – that of a bereaved husband – and a scriptural quotation (Job 14.2), slightly altered so that the personal pronoun suits the occasion.

*MY LOVELY DARLING, THOU WERT GATHERED VERY SOON.
NOT IN THE FRESH AND DEWY MORN, BUT IN THE SUNNY NOON.
THE SAVIOUR SENT HIS ANGELS TO BEAR THEE HENCE, MY OWN,
AND THEY'LL PLANT THEE IN THAT GARDEN WHERE DECAY IS NEVER KNOWN.*

“SHE COMETH FORTH AS A FLOWER AND
IS CUT DOWN.”

Both verse and scriptural quotation translate the body of Frances Alice Pearce into a unspecified flower, which the verse transplants to a celestial garden, “where decay is never known.” In contrast to the testament of regret and lament inscribed above it, the lyric offers solace through a metaphorical assurance that the deceased is in a better place, even better than the beautifully gardened cemetery. Once again, the tomb epitaph insists on not locating the dead, but placing her elsewhere.

Such religious sentiments also participate in the general effect to exclude the reader, attributing to the dead a voice and a position utterly inaccessible to the cemetery visitor. The verse on the Pearce monument appears in various versions throughout the cemeteries and epitaphic literature. Its four lines encompass a number of favourite Victorian epitaphic motifs: angelic occupation with dead; God’s will in action – “the Saviour sent”; the analogy between a lifetime and a single day; and the flower and garden images that abound in the new suburban cemeteries. What gets altered from version to version are the voices of the speaker, the kinds of flower, the times of day the flower is “gathered” – at times “nipped,” at times “torn away.” The Pearce monument features the voice of a husband, thus we have a phrase of endearment, “My lovely darling,” replacing, for example, a “lovely lily,” which would have symbolised childhood innocence. Similarly, the angelic host arrives at the “sunny” midday, signifying the age of the deceased, rather than the “morn” for a child. These alterations signal how a generic stanza becomes personalised, and, while doing little to improve the literary merit of the lyric, the modifications demonstrate the readiness with which the Victorians adapted a standard refrain to suit the epitaphic occasion.

What is remarkable about this particular inscription, though, is precisely the juxtaposition of two related texts: the scriptural verse set beneath the lyric resists its sentimentality and seemingly contradicts the latter’s fantasy of consolation. Any number of the many epitaph reformers would have found the Pearce monument theologically suspect, since it commits the error of “assurance,” that is, assuming the dead are in heaven. The inclusion of the scriptural text almost anticipates such criticism by providing the sacred source for the secular, figurative flower. Job’s words refute the consolation of a new heavenly blossom, limiting the analogy between mankind and nature to an earthly perspective. While the scriptural narrative as a whole upholds the promise that the suffering righteous will ultimately be rewarded, Job’s utterance belies any attempt at comprehending a divine scheme that permits the

death of a young mother, wife, sister, and daughter. After standard expressions of praise, sorrow, and hope, the Pearce epitaph, then, grants the final word to the Bible.

Inscribing biblical verses on tombstones seemed imperative to Victorians championing Christ's victory over death amid what often appeared as an alarmingly secular cemetery. And the ultimate position of scripture is critical here, suggesting how the Bible interposes between the living and the dead; it mediates, offering the eternal truth, the living word, in the repository for the dead. To a degree, citing the Bible directly is one of the most personalising aspects of nineteenth-century epigraphy. It delivers the direct message to the reader that not only did the dead and the bereaved hold the Christian faith, but they read the Bible, took certain passages to heart, and felt compelled to publish the consolatory text or eternal truth for both the relative visiting the graveside and the "heedless stranger" that epitaphs seek to address. Nonetheless, there is an erasure of the personal in the use of scriptural verses as well. The voices of the dead and the bereaved surrender to the divine word, and, even more curious, impersonate both Old Testament prophets or New Testament teachings: "I know my redeemer liveth" or "Thy will be done." Even when set in quotation marks, as if to prevent any potential misattribution, the biblical quotations are transformed into individual utterances. This theological ventriloquism, while accepted as eminently appropriate throughout the nineteenth-century and even today, grants the dead a superior position, an understanding and even ownership of the truths inaccessible to the living reader. The domestic tomb participates in a missionary campaign, subordinating individuality to offer consoling reminders to devout Christians and to speak truths to the unthinking or unconverted.

There is, however, in the Pearce epitaph, an immediacy established through the composite inscription of different epitaphic statements and their distinct modes of articulating the sense of loss brought about by the death of this young woman. The clumsy alteration of the standard verse – the intimate, though unmetrical "lovely darling" and "they'll plant thee in that garden" – grants a glimpse into the more individual epitaphic occasion. This intimacy interweaves with the other less personal voices of the inscription, from the appositive identifying phrases to the dire scriptural quotation. While the personal has been generalised, a dialogue has been established, as the voice of bereaved addresses the dead. They were inscribed with an awareness that readers will intercept the private conversation and perhaps reconstruct the emotional intensity that motivated the bereaved to make public their sense of loss and need for consolation. Yet words on tombs also represent the impossibility of such communications: their texts cannot be uttered by their implied speakers, nor can they be heard by those to whom they were addressed. The biblical verse, though, offers a correction, a surrendering of the epitaphic voice. What is genuine is its attempt to articulate the personal, while conforming to the conventions of epitaphic language.

One of the few innovations to sepulchral iconography contributed by the Victorians is the image of clasped hands. Second only to the partly veiled urns, which themselves

symbolise how the cemetery both exposes and hides death, these bas-relief hands are at times exquisitely detailed: cuffs distinguish the sexes; fingernails and veins make them disturbingly lifelike. The recurring image in the cemetery captures an ephemeral moment, one that implies both the joining and release of the hands, intensifying the loss of such contact and evoking its absence. That they are fully fleshed out shows a wilful rejection of the macabre iconography of earlier ages – no death's heads horrors here. The physicality of the hands, like the materiality of the monument itself and the carved or raised lettering of its inscription, reasserts the importance of the site of the tomb, which marks the physical remains of the dead and serves as a poignant reminder that the site of burial is the closest point in this world at which the bereaved can, or can attempt to, come in contact with the dead.

The popularity of this particular sepulchral image sheds important light on the public nature of the private monument, for the hands, of course, symbolise the reunion after death among loved ones, a future meeting that will be permanent and incarnate. There is in these hands a defiance of the separation death brings about, testified by the banners often suspended from each wrist, which bear statements such as "We Shall Meet Again" or "Until We Meet Again." What characterises both versions of the motto is the confidence they boast: the future meeting is assured. A revision of the *memento mori* messages of the eighteenth-century churchyard – "We Shall All Die" – this motto is intended to do more than alert the indifferent stranger to the universality of death. Emphasising the intimate nature of commemoration, the inscription speaks to a distinct individual or a distinct group of survivors who knew the deceased, who miss the sound of the voice or the touch of the hand, and who also, inevitably, will join the ranks of the dead. The clasped hands juxtaposed with the severe accompanying motto situates the reader as an outsider, an interloper, at best a witness excluded from the reunion itself.

The Allder monument, also in Abney Park, shows how this exclusionary effect carries over into the epitaphic statement. The inscriptions record the deaths of a nineteen-year old son, his mother, whose death occurred on the same date – March 8 – the following year, and, on a different face of the tomb, a spinster daughter and her married sister, who died about a generation later. Each inscription is particularised and personalised by a single epitaphic verse, an identifying sentiment, in addition to the names and dates of the deceased:

[East Face]
 Sacred to the Memory
 ----of----
 HENRY ALLDER,
 WHO DIED MARCH 8TH 1873,
 IN HIS 19TH YEAR.

*SLEEP DEAR SON AND TAKE THY REST,
 FOR GOD TAKES THEM THAT HE LOVES BEST.*

ALSO M^{RS} EMMA ALLDER,
MOTHER OF THE ABOVE,
WHO DIED MARCH 8TH 1874,
AGED 46 YEARS.

*WEEP NOT FOR ME, MY LIFE IS PAST,
MY LOVE FOR YOU WAS TO THE LAST,
THEN DO NOT GRIEVE, BUT COMFORT TAKE,
IN CHRIST MY SAVIOUR FOR MY SAKE.*

WE SHALL MEET AGAIN

[South Face]
In Loving Memory
----of----
LYDIA ALLDER,
WHO DIED AUGUST 1ST 1889.
AGED 41 YEARS.

*GONE FROM US BUT NOT FORGOTTEN,
NEVER SHALL THY MEMORY FADE.
SWEETEST THOUGHTS SHALL EVER LINGER
ROUND THE SPOT WHERE THOU ART LAID.*

Also EMMA,
THE BELOVED WIFE OF
GEORGE SALMON,
AND SISTER OF THE ABOVE,
WHO FELL ASLEEP
FEBRUARY 26TH 1890,
Aged 38 years.

The personalising of the monument is highly conventional, indeed, cliché-ridden, but nonetheless collectively the verses show how epitaphic sentiments work off each other, a medley of different emotions. Each verse responds to a specific death, following the clause introduced by “who died”; the exception is Emma, whose inscription identifies her with the most detail – “Sister of the Above” and “The Beloved Wife of George Salmon” – and who, perhaps due to the absence of a consoling verse of her own, is distinguished by the euphemistic “who fell asleep” instead of the parallel, unifying, and more direct “who died” of the other three family members.

As in the Pearce monument, the reader of these verses seemingly intercepts and overhears a conversation among the living and the dead. Both Henry Allder’s couplet and his mother’s quatrain direct the reader’s attention to the consolations of Christian

faith, while Lydia's quatrain extends the standard "Gone, but not forgot" sentiment. The shifting speakers of each verse, however, complicate these comforting words. First, Henry Allder's parents reassure him to take his rest – though the assurance of divine preference, undoubtedly, is as much intended for their own sakes as for his. His mother's verse, no longer the voice of the bereaved, post-mortemly bids her surviving daughters – and, no doubt, her husband – not to grieve. The immediate mourners of Lydia bid her to take comfort in, curiously, the effect of the very lines they have inscribed, which, along with the sentiments on the monument's east face, prompt "sweetest thoughts." Just as the living console the dead, the dead console the living. Indeed, the dead console each other – the epitaph preserves Mrs. Allder's voice, that of Henry's mother, even though she follows him to the grave.

Unlike the two religious sentiments, the verse below Lydia Allder's epitaph charges the site of burial with special implications, an effect of nearly a century of graveside reveries after Gray's "Elegy." What hallows the ground is not a minister's consecration, nor is it the site of the physical remains of the dead. Indeed, like the Pearce epitaph, the Allder monument emphasises that the dead are somewhere else, just as the gaze of the angel above its inscription directs the reader's attention away from the ground. Nor does the sanctity of the spot derive from its identification of the dead, but rather from the sentimental reveries of the living, here, wilfully projected into the future, beyond the life span of the immediate survivors of Lydia. While those who loved the individual dead have "sweetest thoughts," even strangers, upon reading the epitaphic verse, have a similar emotional response, or, at least recognise and thus revive, the emotions of the survivors – emotions distinctly characterised as not sorrowful, but hopeful. The very act of reading this particular verse, if not all intimate epitaphs, invents the properly disposed reader. Recognising, or even identifying with, the deeply felt emotional responses of the immediate family to the dead constitutes the reader's own emotional response.

As Scodel points out, this sort of sentiment calls "upon the reader to show proper responsive feeling" (315), a gesture that takes on especial urgency during the Victorian period. As the cemeteries filled, the vast number of identifying monuments made any distinction brought about by the grave impossible, potentially creating indifference and disregard for the dead, rather than effecting solemn respect or evoking sweet thoughts. This epitaphic verse, almost in anticipation of this potential indifference, then, invokes indefinite graveside reveries, those attributed to Lydia Allder's intimate acquaintances as well as limitless later readers who encounter the verse on the tomb. The "ever"-lingering sweet thoughts also suggest that the monument itself serves as the locus of such thoughts, whether or not readers are present. The emotions are already assured; commemoration, as well as consolation, persists without human agency.

While each of the Allders received brief epitaphic tributes, part of their effect is disjointedness. Though complementing each other, the individualised sentiments draw attention to the death's sundering of familiar ties. "We Shall Meet Again," after all, implies a separation, and the tomb, in effect, advertises the absence of other family members. In order to preserve the family unit after death, many Victorian monuments

present inscriptions that solely contain the genealogical information of the deceased – a record of name and dates. Part of this absence of sentiment resulted from practical reasons: the difficulty of fitting more than only the essential information on a tablet that must commemorate more than one individual. The Victorian cemeteries advertised their innovative modes of interment: brick-lined vaults could accommodate up to forty individuals. Other causes can be identified – for example, Prior’s Foucaultian argument, that the disciplinary order produced by the bureaucracy surrounding death serves as coping mechanism in itself (117-18). Scodel relates the absence of sentimental verse to the “inexpressibility trope” – that nothing can be said, that grief is too great and personal, that attempts at articulating the goodness of the deceased or the grief felt by the survivors would only serve as a barrier to the actual, intensely felt emotions (344). Such tombs also relate, to an extent, to what Ariès identifies as the “anti-epitaph,” a gesture of pride in humiliation and humility (228-29). The humility, though, is not so much resignation to the fact that death ends all social distinctions; rather, the resistance of epitaphic sentiment betrays the Victorians’ own awareness that poetical sentiments were subject not only to misinterpretation, but smacked of middle-class sentiment, religiosity, and excess. Thus, those who could afford to do so erected memorials, but resisted individualising them with anything more than names and dates.

Whether traced to changing tastes or social pressure, family monuments came to resemble tables of death, lists of the deceased along with their dates of birth and death, as if excerpts from the burial register were inscribed on the tomb. The Fraser monument illustrates:

TO
THE MEMORY OF

	DIED	AGED
JOHN FRASER....	5 June 1857	76
ISABELLA FRASER	18 August 1870	82
	DIED	AGED
JANET <i>Daughter....</i>	5 Aug 1852	25
JAMES <i>Grandson....</i>	23 Aug 1856	14
CHARLOTTE AUGUSTA	2 Dec 1856	39
<i>Wife of James, Eldest Son</i>		
HAROLD <i>Grandson</i>	30 Mar 1862	3
ADELINE ELLIE CARIOCH		
<i>Great Granddaughter</i>	3 Jan ^y 1872	5 WK ^s
JOHN <i>Son</i>	4 Feb ^y 1874	61 YR ^s
ROBERT <i>Son</i>	18 Mar 1882	64 YR ^s
	<i>INTERRED AT LIVERPOOL</i>	
WILLIAM MATHESON	2 Oct 1883	30 YR ^s
<i>Grandson</i>		
JOHN <i>Grandson</i>	Jan 1884	40 Yr ^s

JAMES <i>Son</i>	20 th Sep ^r 1893	34 Yr ^s
MARY WILSON <i>Daughter</i>	1 st May 1889	67 YR ^s
<i>INTERRED AT NORTHAMPTON</i>		
MARGARET <i>Daughter</i> (<i>Widow of Donald Matheson</i>)	7 July 1898	82 Yr ^s
ISABELLA <i>Daughter</i> (<i>Widow of Richard Capell of Wendon</i>)	26 Mar 1903	83 YR ^s
ALEXANDER... <i>Son</i>	3 Nov ^r 1909	86 YR ^s
<i>INTERRED AT HOVE</i>		

The columns of names, relationships, dates of death, and ages preserve genealogical data only. The record of the dead takes the form of an account book, a ledger neatly recording familial transactions; the valuable dead, their physical remains, are securely deposited in the cemetery vaults – the economic metaphors for cemetery interment, here, are the Victorians’.

Essentially a public display of family solidarity, the Fraser monument sets forth a pragmatic assertion of a specific set of relations that champions genealogy over any attempt to commemorate the personal and intimate through lyric or eulogy. Like stately row houses protected by wrought-iron rails, the tombstone, often railed in itself, guards both the idiosyncratic and the intimate from public scrutiny through a conforming silence. The Fraser inscription, though, is not altogether devoid of narrative interest. Until 1909, there was space on the tomb; even upon its erection, blanks betray the inevitable deaths to follow. The reader can reconstruct the sorrow brought about by the death of the great-grandchild, Adeline Ellie, whose infant death changes the anticipated pattern of how the age of each individual is recorded on the monument. The monument’s inscription also emphasises the importance of maintaining the family unit – twelve adults and one infant were buried in the vault below. Married daughters buried elsewhere return to the bosom of their parents through the cenotaphic record, which suggests that it is not burial, but inscription that assures family unity. Just as the heavy slab of granite covers the cemetery vault, the Fraser epitaph, through its inexpressive propriety, prevents any prying into the private and personal family space.

The Fraser monument displaces and further privatises grief, consolation, faith, and hope – indeed all epitaphic assertions. Its only overt sentiment is the preamble “To the Memory of,” which here refers not so much to the assembled dead, but their progenitors. Domestic values, emotional turmoil, and even Christian faith surrender to a testament of a patriarchal responsibility and regulation in the secularised landscape of the cemetery. Indeed, many of these impersonal monuments pay tribute only to the husband and father’s name, repeated on the base of the tomb, a massive granite block that underscores paternal authority. All other interments are set in relation and in turn pay tribute to the purchaser of the cemetery plot. An investment in a cemetery monument guaranteed the preservation of familial ties after death, and the lengthy list of descendants and dependents demonstrates the extent of an individual’s sphere of influence as well as economic foresight.

Poetic statement surrenders to efficiency and decorum. The Fraser monument and thousands like it imply that inscription of names and dates alone offer the most effective means of commemorating the dead. Those who knew the deceased recognise their true value without additional sentiments; strangers, while excluded, may either sympathise, attempt at re-reading the epitaph and projecting a narrative, or simply pass by, disregarding the monument and leaving the family unit undisturbed and intact in the increasingly crowded Victorian cemetery.

The effect of domestic epitaphs in the nineteenth century, however, was a collective one. The decades of accumulated monuments heightened the awareness that epitaphs written during this period were not to be read in isolation. Like the refrain of a song, as Fried argues (625), or a petition, the messages of the tomb are inevitably similar, if not the same. The monuments work together, and the impression they leave on the reader is a result of this collaboration. The repetition of standard sentiments and corrective messages affects the cemetery visitor's response to those monuments that lack epitaphs and stand as a stern rebuke to the more ostentatious monuments, those that vaunt the importance of the deceased and resist the indiscriminate levelling of the grave. These self-censored, consciously conforming monuments form the most enduring message of the Victorian cemetery. While some, like the Fraser monument, signal the inadequacy of epitaphic language and the submission to social expectation, others, like the Pearce and Allder monuments, do venture to articulate the emotions felt in response to death, but nonetheless assert that voices, silenced, represented only through inscription, can only struggle to console and preserve memory. Nowhere is it more apparent that commemoration paradoxically locates only the absence of the deceased and that love and hope, sorrow and suffering, are shared human experiences.

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