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Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals

THE POOR, OF COURSE, had always been buried with less splendor than the rich, and the very poor had, since the sixteenth century if not before, been buried at the expense of the parish. Yet no special meaning seems to have been attached to these burials until the middle of the eighteenth century. Then, however, the funerals of the poor became pauper funerals and pauper funerals became occasions both terrifying to contemplate oneself and profoundly degrading to one's survivors.

This essay is an investigation into how, between about 1750 and 1850, the commemoration of the soul's departure from the body and the body's return to dust became an occasion to represent, with unrivaled clarity, the possibility of social worthlessness, earthly failure, and profound anonymity.

For the same reasons that the well-appointed funerals of the wealthy and prominent came to signify their pre-eminent position in society, the ignominious funerals of the poor came to signify the opposite—their absolute exclusion from the social body. Social standing came increasingly to depend on acquired rather than on inherited attributes, on earned wealth, on membership in a variety of voluntaristic organizations, on one's philanthropic or entrepreneurial prominence. In a world of this sort, where public standing had become intimately linked with the importance one had earned in the eyes of one's fellow men, no man's reputation could be finally assured until the moment of his death. Funerals thus became the ritual occasions for definitively marking social place, and the imaginative vehicle for contemplating one's ultimate fate in the public eye. For the rich and successful, for those with social ties, the funeral could be anticipated with equanimity. Not so for the poor and friendless; it haunted them as the specter of failure.

"Nothing," said the essayist Charles Lamb in 1811 tended "to keep up in the imaginations of the poorer sort of people, a generous horror of the workhouse more than the manner in which pauper funerals are conducted." To be "put away on the parish" in late nineteenth-century Salford was for the survivor's family to bear a "life-long stigma," wrote Robert Roberts in his account of that "classic slum." And, as one mother in London at about the same time told a social investigator, she would rather have her dead child picked up by a dust-cart than have it carted through the neighborhood by the "Black Mariar" of the parish. The pauper funeral became a symbol of great power even to those in no danger of ever being subject to it. Of all

the horrors that the future Earl of Shaftsbury must have seen as a boy in London it was, he reports, the sight of drunken bearers unsteadily conveying a pauper to his grave that pierced his sensibilities and converted him to a life of reform.¹

The power of the pauper funeral is also apparent in the efforts made to avoid it. “The poor would deprive themselves of the necessities of life for the sake of paying respect to the bodies of their departed friends,” explained a witness to one of the many Parliamentary inquiries which for one reason or another investigated their burial practices. Indeed, beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century the poor began systematic efforts to insure a respectable funeral. By 1874 two and a quarter million people, mostly men, belonged to friendly societies which provided both death and sickness benefits; to this figure must be added their spouses who were insured for a funeral only. Six hundred and fifty thousand men and women belonged to local burial societies registered with the government and hundreds of thousands more must have belonged to the many thousand small burial clubs which remained unregistered. In addition more than a million belonged to so-called collection societies, commercial ventures which were founded to insure primarily women and children not covered in other ways. These societies took their names from the collectors who went door to door, mostly on Saturdays after wages were paid, to collect the weekly premium of a few pence per head. Much to the consternation of middle class observers who thought there were better uses for hard-earned surplus income, if the Victorian working class saved for anything, it saved for death. As one West Country woman said, justifying her membership in a burial society, “What did a poor woman work for, but in hopes she should be put out of the world in a tidy way.” “Most illogical, inconsequential and light hearted, this, but travellers in the valley of the shadow of death are apt to be light hearted,” as Dickens said of Betty Higden in *Our Mutual Friend*.²

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when one’s niche in a hierarchic order was more or less given, the funeral had quite different meanings. For the elite—for those with a claim to have their actions, words, and ritual express “the order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern society”—the funeral made manifest with great specificity their relationship to that hierarchy.³ For others, it represented their unquestioned membership in the local community. Thus, because in principle at least social standing was assured, the funeral was not a locus of anxiety: God’s judgement of the soul was beyond human influence and one’s earthly reputation was too deeply grounded in the world order to be susceptible to human judgement.

The College of Arms—itsself an institution of the Tudor chivalric revival—prescribed the content of funerals for those with any claim to heraldic identification, from the king to citizens and burgesses who were “free within the city.” It specified and arranged in the appropriate order the number of mourners, the number and nature of flags, and the heraldic devices (escutcheons, helmets, gauntlets, swords) suitable to each grade of the social hierarchy that mattered. Thus, from the funeral

procession the precise rank of the deceased could be read. A king, for example, was allowed fifteen mourners, an earl or a viscount nine, a knight five, a gentleman two. A knight's funeral had all the regalia of a baron's with the exception of "bannerols"—extra wide banners on which were represented the relationship of the dead to his ancestors. (The Duke of Norfolk required over a dozen to display his pedigree.) A "citizen" could expect everything a knight received with the exception of a sword. In short, the College and its officials insured that the funerals it arranged were at once a mirror of hierarchy and a specific mnemonic device reminding both viewers and participants of the deceased's place in the world order.⁴

This dual purpose is evident in the funeral of the Elizabethan soldier, poet and courtier, Sir Philip Sidney, who died in story-book fashion as a knight on the field of Flanders. His funeral was by nineteenth-century standards small, at most seven hundred people. (The funeral of London's fire chief in 1861 had five times as many marchers; the next year over one thousand people followed Samuel Hicks, a once illiterate blacksmith who became a Methodist lay preacher, from Macclesfield, to his grave in the Derbyshire village of Abberford.) But Sidney's funeral was as large as it could be, for to be larger would have been to go beyond the bounds of the community which it defined and of which it was a model. Thirty-two poor men for the "thirty-two years of his age" led the procession. Poor men, women or children were customary attendants in elite funerals until the late seventeenth century, performing a dual role as living reminders of the deceased's benevolence and bearers of that blessedness which was still thought to inhere in poverty. Representatives of Sidney's regiment followed the poor; then came his servants, then his heraldic devices; then in order of precedence sixty gentleman and yeoman servants of distinguished participants; then the esquires "among his kindred and friends" (sixty in number) followed by ten knights, the two categories distinguished by their collars; then his horse of the field and his horse for state and chivalric occasions; then more banners followed by heralds carrying spurs, sword, and gauntlet. Following these came the corpse borne by the dead man's friends; then came mourners of the appropriate number; then barons and earls; and then, after various others, the more ordinary, though richly dressed folk of the grocers' company to which Sidney belonged. All was done in exquisite order to the dictates of the King of Arms, who marched as well. It was intensely inward-looking; Sidney's friends, in order, among the great; their servants in order; flags, banners, bannerols, telling anyone who could decode them of the deceased's relationship to those alive and those dead.⁵

Though manifestly expensive, Sidney's funeral was not primarily a reflection of his wealth. As one contemporary put it, "His virtues have made a conquest of death . . . [they] so revive him from the grave that in truth he speaketh unto you."⁶ And speak he does, about his place in the Elizabethan world order and more specifically about his relationship to the small world of great men. In short, Sidney's funeral was not a moment of judgement, as the nineteenth century funeral was to become, but rather a magnificent display of what was never in doubt.

The funerals of more ordinary men, like the funerals of the great, were essentially rituals of inclusion; in contrast, however, they expressed the deceased's place in the local community rather than in the social order generally. There was no outside world, as was represented in heraldic funerals by those who watched it—its audience—against which the rank of the deceased was measured. The participants in the ordinary funeral were also its audience; there was no other public for whose edification the ritual was being performed. In contrast to heraldic funerals, the funerals of ordinary men followed no set forms. Status, and not wealth alone, marked one's place in the local community; there was therefore almost no relationship between the costs of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century funerals and the size of the deceased's estate. There were clearly some notions of funeral rites appropriate to one's place in the community but these appear to have been so vague that the variation in funeral expenditures even for a given status are considerable. In short, it appears that there was no standard respectable funeral, costing a specified amount, and with specified accoutrements toward which the ordinary person aspired. The funeral was less a parade, a public procession marking the deceased's place in the world, than a feast to which the greater or lesser part of the community was invited.⁷

Ordinary funerals, in sharp contrast to the heraldic funeral and to funerals generally a century later, were materially austere. There was no hearse or bier (the body usually being carried by friends and colleagues), nor were there mourning coaches. Some accounts note a certain expenditure for mourning clothes, a few gloves, scarves, and more commonly rings, but there are no charges for feathers, nor for velvets, nor for fancy coffins or coffin furniture. A large proportion of the cost was not for the funeral itself but for food and drink at the feast which followed burial.⁸

In part, of course, the material paucity of the ordinary seventeenth-century funeral was a reflection of the poverty of the society as a whole and the expense of handmade articles of consumption. The diarist Abraham de la Pryme complained that when Queen Mary died the price of black cloth jumped from 10s to 20s a yard; in the nineteenth century waterproof 42-inch wide silk crepe was only 8/6 a yard and one could get over ten yards of French cashmere for the price of one yard at the inflated price de la Pryme reported. The first private carriage in Manchester was not acquired until 1758; by 1850 there were 1009.⁹ Thus, the resources for a full nineteenth-century funeral simply were not available to any but the very rich a century or more earlier. More to the point, material display was largely irrelevant to funerals which were demonstrations of a status largely independent of the deceased's economic prowess, funerals produced to make manifest a well-defined hierarchical niche.

But, as almost all social commentators in the eighteenth century noted, money was a solvent of the old order. Earned wealth could make a man; and, trade and commerce were essentially incompatible with fixed hierarchy. As Defoe put it:

Wealth however got in England makes
Lords of mechanics, gentlemen of rakes.

“Gold and silver,” said Dr. Johnson with some annoyance, “destroy feudal subordination.” Of course, mobility through acquired wealth had always been possible, but never before so dramatically and never before with such an impact on the nature of society. The Elizabethan world order represented by the funerals like Sidney’s was shattered in an age whose central concerns were not rank and glory but, as Namier put it, “property, contract, trade and profits.”¹⁰

The College of Arms in fact lost its monopoly over heraldic funerals in the late seventeenth century. William III refused to renew the commissions which gave the heralds sole authority to adjudicate the use of heraldic devices and to hale those who used them without the authorization before special courts. “Commerce,” as a late eighteenth-century historian of the College noted, regarding the Hanoverian age, “rewarded her votaries with a profusion of wealth.” While England still had privileged orders, he continued, “they are attainable by all who merit them.”¹¹

The undertaker rose as the servant to this new order. By the late seventeenth century, anyone could buy a funeral like Sidney’s. Profiting from the declines of the heralds, this novel class of merchant rented out cloaks, hangings, escutcheons, coach coverings and even coaches to whoever could afford them. From one stock he could furnish a hundred funerals relatively cheaply. As a tract in 1698 put it,

Since the method of these undertakers have got a footing, persons of ordinary rank may, for the value of fifty pounds, make as great a figure, as the nobility or gentry did formerly with the expence of more than five hundred pounds . . . the gaiety and splendour both of the nobility and gentry is hereby very much eclipsed so that not many of them do in this exceed the show of the common people.¹²

In short, undertakers were seen as purveyors of falseness; they were from the very beginning depicted as men who traded in lies and deception. As a London guide to various trades noted in 1747, “the undertakers’ business is to watch death and to furnish out the funeral . . . with as much pomp and feigned sorrow as the heirs or successors of the deceased chose to *purchase*.” Robert Blair, the poet, wrote in 1743:

Ye undertakers, tell us,
Midst all the gorgeous figures you exhibit
Why is the principle concealed, for which
You make this mighty stir?—’Tis wisely done.
What would offend the eye in a good picture,
The painter casts discreetly into the shades.

That “principle” can be read, on one hand, as the body “which in the nostril smells horrible,” but is paraded in finery; but it is also money, for which undertakers “let out their persons by the hour.”¹³

Yet, the falseness of the seventeenth century would become the truth of the nineteenth. Money made the man, or at least went a long way toward doing so; and, death became the occasion for a final accounting, a stocktaking of worldly success. The funeral became a consumption good whose cost was clearly evident and could be matched with exquisite precision to the class and degree of “respectability,” to use that new nineteenth-century term, of the deceased. When one bought a funeral one bought a more or less splendid parade, each additional bauble, each horse, each feather or set of nails adding to the base price. Bit by bit, this accumulation of finery is apparent even in the account books of one J. H. Wick, an undertaker who provided funerals, on contract, for paupers who died under the jurisdiction of the City of London Poor Law Union. The Union allowed the poor to add what little they could to the basics; and by examining what they bought one can discern the essential features of a minimally respectable funeral. The unadorned pauper funeral—a plain pine coffin, four bearers, and rental of a pall made of rough woven cloth—cost the Union £1/15/0. The most common “extra” was the coffin plate with name inscribed costing 2s 6d—desirable despite, or perhaps because, the body was headed for the anonymity of a common grave. For 6s 5d one could buy a row of nails all round, black and shiny, though these were less in demand. Wick’s account book makes clear that it was the making of a little finer procession that was most called for; aside from the plate, an extra man—presumably a mute to attend and look sorrowful—at 3/6, and the “best pall” to cover the coffin at 2/6 extra.¹⁴

The nineteenth-century funeral was built in this manner and there was almost no limit as to what could not be added from the stores of funereal consumer goods produced by the new industrial economy. Coffin furniture, for example, became a staple of the Birmingham metal trades beginning in 1769 and great quantities of decorative metal fell from its presses. From one catalogue an undertaker could order wholesale angels and flowers, white for infants at 1s 9d each; for children, white at 5s 6d, and black at 8s 6d. Pairs of small angel handles, if bought by the dozen, cost 15s white, 18s black. Cotton, wool, and silk mills produced staggering amounts and varieties of cloth to be made into drapes, mourning clothes, hats, scarves, or gloves. By 1870 over 1500 people in the town of Whitby worked making jet mourning jewelry. And of course one could choose from coffins of lead, oak, elm, or pine, decorated with various qualities of nails, lined with various qualities of cloth and furnished with the mattress of one’s choice. Even feathers for the mutes hired from the undertaker, for the horses and for various coaches were available in astounding variety.¹⁵

The funeral of a respectable working man was constructed from a modest collection of such items. From the advertisement of a London burial society we learn that for a 2d/week subscription one was entitled upon death to:

a strong Elm Coffin, covered with fine Black, and finished with Two Rows all around close drove with Black Japanned Nails, and adorned with rich ornamental Drops, a handsome Plate of Inscription, Angel above the Plate and Flower beneath, and four Pair of handsome

Handles with wrought Gripes . . . For Use, a handsome Velvet Pall, Three Gentlemen's Cloaks, Three Crepe Hat bands, Three Hoods and Scarfs, and Six Pairs of Gloves: Two Porters equipped to attend the Funeral, a Man to attend the same with Band and Gloves.¹⁶

A reasonably posh bourgeois funeral required more items from the shopping list; like a Victorian parlor it reeked of materiality. One bill, for example, lists a shell for the body, covered with crepe, £2; a lead coffin, £7; an outside coffin covered in silk with furniture, £7/7; a brass plate, £2/12. Omitting several items but still on the first page of the accounting: a set of velvet and feathers for the coach, £3/7/6; another set for the hearse and horse (each animal had a feather on its head), £7/19, and yet another set for the chariot and horse, £1/17. This excludes wages for bearers, feathermen, undertakers' assistants and the like, scarves, gloves and many other items.¹⁷

The meaning of the funeral as a consumer good which defined the place of the deceased in society could thus be clear to all. Cassel's *Household Guide* in its 1870 edition listed various classes of funerals from £3/5 for the poorest to £53 for the respectable middle class. In 1843, however, a Parliamentary report announced that, at least in high-priced London, the lowest tradesman, in station "not much beyond that of a mechanic" needed a £10/2 funeral while the average prosperous tradesman required one for £50; "a professional person's" cost at least £100.¹⁸

The police chief of Stockport testified to another Parliamentary investigation in 1854 that the funeral expenses of a child (though the same could be said of adults) depended on "the differences in the parent's notions of respectability . . . in a very low class of life £2, others £4, £8 and some even £10." The point is not the exact amount, but that a precise relationship could be established between social standing and the cost of a funeral; and, that the cost was manifest in the parade that was presented to the public.¹⁹

As the funeral thus became crucial evidence for a final judgement on a dead man's standing among his fellow creatures, the ceremony came to represent in urban, and increasingly in rural landscapes, the severing of the dead from organic ties to the community and the rise of the burial place as but another species of realty, able to be bought and sold for profit. The eighteenth-century churchyard of the elegaic poets and the nineteenth-century cemetery differed not just in their sentimental associations but in their legal and economic ties to the community. In law, anyone dying in a parish had a right to be buried in its churchyard. Though small fees were customary, a clergyman could not refuse burial because of a failure to pay them. Indeed parishioners, through the churchwardens of each parish, had a freehold interest in the ground even if surface rights were tediously disputed in the courts. True, urban churchyards were becoming increasingly crowded so that burial was often away from the old center of the parish. It was true also that two or three grades of fees existed in some places, depending on the location of the grave plot in the churchyard (the southern and eastern sides were most desirable, the northwest least) although the practice was condemned as a foolish effort to "keep the rich and

poor asunder, as if there were a difference in their dust.” Generally, however, the churchyard was relatively open to the whole community.²⁰

But this was not so in the privately or municipally owned cemetery. One bought a plot: front row 8’0” by 7’6”, i.e., 60 sq. ft.; the rest 7’7” by 7’6”, though of course it was possible to buy adjoining lots to increase one’s property. The cemetery developers could thus calculate in advance the number of plots available—1113 in one section of Manchester’s Ardwick Cemetery, 420 in another—and the profits they could hope to realize from their sale. Places of burial became like speculative building projects; and occasionally, as in other real estate developments, government regulations could spoil the most carefully devised predictions. Between 1849 and 1861, for example, dividends per share at Ardwick were down because of a “one body per grave” rule promulgated by the Home Secretary. After considerable effort the cemetery’s directors managed to negotiate a relaxation of this rule to permit four bodies in each grave, resulting in a “gratifying” increase in income and dividends per share during the next decade.²¹

Prior to the sanitary regulations of the late 1840s, private cemeteries could sell to the poor as many places in a common grave as the depth of the shaft would allow; paupers paid for on contract by the parish or Poor Law Union mingled helter skelter with the non-pauper poor who in nineteenth-century England had to buy their final resting place. Three coffins wide, twelve deep, they were stacked. There is still a certain poignancy in reading their names in registers of interments—a poignancy born of anonymity, of individuality reduced to a name on a list, of the absence of the communal: No. 3788 in Rusholme, Manchester, for example, opened November 13, 1825 for the burial of Dennis Hannam “found dead on the highway”; thirteen bodies later we come on November 25th to Maria Bright, 45, who died of “decline;” the infant Elizabeth Gibbons who died from the same cause; and Anne Findley, 26, who died in childbed. By November 27, coffins must have been near the top, because all but one of the next fifteen occupants were children. With Chris Connelly, dead of measles at 14 months, no. 3788 on December 7 was filled.²²

Clearly this is a far cry from “the gracefully undulated surface interspersed with flower beds and serpentine walks, presenting situations unrivaled in appropriateness for the favourable display of architectural taste,” which, according to one sales prospectus made cemeteries attractive to those who could afford land in finer sections.²³ Like the funeral itself, the burial place was a thing to be purchased, a consumption good to which one had no more right than to any other. Those who had worked sufficiently hard and had been sufficiently frugal could rest in well-earned glory, and those who had not could be shown to have failed. In short, the funeral, and to a lesser extent place of burial, had become a powerful representation of one great determinant of social standing in the nineteenth century—money.

But, the proper nineteenth-century funeral, in relation to which the pauper funeral assumed its meaning, was clearly more than a reflection of the wealth of the deceased and the social standing that was born of money. Death is, by its nature, at

the same time profoundly individual (one dies alone) and social—it is the fate of all as well as a diminution of the community of survivors. Earlier, however, membership in the community was passive, given, and not generally a source of anxiety. Moreover the death and funeral of an ordinary person made no claim for universal significance. Their significance was limited to a small and self-contained circle.

By the nineteenth century, however, a wide range of voluntaristic associations had come to define the social standing of even ordinary men (trade unions, political parties, religious denominations, for example), associations which did make public claims for power and for the moral centrality of their precepts. Moreover, a wide range of social relationships and distinctions—between masters and men, between the rough and the respectable, between governed and governors—were made manifest in the last rite of passage. Finally, the audience of the funeral was in the nineteenth century vastly expanded; most importantly the press, but also commemorative pottery, engravings, medals, and the like gave the funeral a cultural power it had not hitherto had.

Thus, as the funeral became an increasingly important commemoration of wealth and more widely available public place, the pauper funeral became a representation of their antithesis. In a world in which money was a major determinant of social standing it spoke of abject poverty; in a society of voluntaristic associations, it proclaimed the failure to create bonds with one's fellow men. Moreover, as both wealth and the bonds of the new social order were fragile, contingent, and susceptible to wild swings of fortune, the pauper funeral became the locus of enormous anxiety about dying bereft of the final signs of communal membership.

The trade union funeral was probably the most explicit effort to create and display a new kind of social identity, a new social bond—that of class. “Nothing is more calculated to give more exalted feelings,” both to the minds of relatives and spectators, “than to witness a respectable and numerous attendance at the last rites of a brother,” proclaimed the *Pioneer* in its account of the burial service of a Barnsley linen operative. “What man, that has a rational feeling for himself, his family, and his country, would not be a unionist, . . . all to be surrounded with laurels in life, and when dead to be clad with them.” The funeral parade was spectacular and laden with trade union iconography: a band and mutes, the officers of various lodges with black sashes and white rosettes, then bearers of white rods and crepe, then several choirs four abreast, then the body borne by three officers clothed in white on each side, then other officials, then the secretary of the deceased's lodge carrying the Bible on a black velvet cushion, then his whole lodge, then other lodges all wearing rosettes. Fifteen hundred marchers in all, it was reported, with 5000 spectators. “How elated did every spectator appear, and with what amazement did they gaze upon the whole movement.”²⁴ And, this was by no means the biggest funeral of the movement before its suppression late in 1834, nor the most iconographically complex. A workman in Nottingham went to his grave followed by 1200 lodge brothers from throughout the Midlands, each wearing a white rosette and carrying a laurel

sprig which was thrown into the grave as the men trooped by. At the funeral of a carpenter from Derby, one hundred women dressed in white preceded the coffin which was followed, again by a Bible on a velvet cushion, and then by lodges of stone masons, bricklayers, sawyers, painters, small-wear weavers, bobbin-net-hand throwsters, all with officers in white robes, the men wearing black rosettes and carrying ivy leaves. The same psalm, No. 133: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head . . ." was sung at other union funerals.²⁵

These occasions were remarkable in several respects. They were an indication of the sheer scale of public honors that in the nineteenth century could be rendered to the remains of quite ordinary men. The funerals of a Barnsley linen operative, a Nottingham worker, a Derby carpenter dwarfed that of Sir Philip Sidney as described earlier. These were also theatrical events, aimed at both the players themselves and at an audience outside the union, which dramatized social bonds transcending place and craft. Their very existence was a manifestation of the working class' ability to organize and to define itself. "The order and devotion with which the brothers sang during the entire route, the long train of mourners, the extraordinary appearance of forty or fifty individuals in white clerical gowns, the Bible, and the apparatus of the different officers, rendered the funeral one of the most affecting scenes that has ever been witnessed in Nottingham." Funerals could speak to the masters of the orderliness and respectability of their workers' union thus reconciling them to it. But they could also, as one commentator noted, demonstrate that "moral and intellectual union can, and will, stay the hand of tyranny, and avert the wrongs that the oppressor would heap upon us." And finally, the funeral was an act of resignation; whatever it might say to earthly tyrants, it proclaimed that nothing "can arrest the grim tyrant [death] in his career: he is absolute, almighty, to him all must yield."²⁶

A brief analysis of two chartist funerals will emphasize the enormous and complex range of commentary the nineteenth-century funeral could deliver. These funerals must be seen as public representations, not only of the virtues of the deceased, but of his place in politics and history, and more generally of the place that working men might have in the social order. The first is that of Samuel Holberry, "martyred" as a political prisoner in 1842. The funeral had many of the marks of the ordinary bourgeois funeral: undertakers, mutes, mourning coaches and a beautifully decorated hearse. It also had political banners. But more importantly it had numbers—20,000 said the Whig *Sheffield Iris*; nearer 50,000 said the *Northern Star*; somewhere in between said another witness. And they were gloriously manifest; several views are described, but "it was on Sheffield Moor that the mighty multitude showed to the best advantage." (This notion borrowed from the theater, of "showing off well" was central to nineteenth-century funerals.) No previous assemblage in Sheffield, it was reported, approached Holberry's funeral in scale. "Is Chartism dead?" the paper asked rhetorically.²⁷

The funeral of Ernest Jones, firebrand of the movement and a friend of Marx, jailed for his role in 1848, tells a very different political history of chartism. He was buried in Manchester in January, 1869. As mutes marched four old men, veterans of the Peterloo Massacre. (It was in 1819 that Hussars charged a reform meeting in Manchester's St. Peter's Square killing eleven and wounding hundreds of others.) The coffin bearers were old chartists "associated" as the *Times* put it, "with Mr. Jones in the agitation of 1848." Then behind the coffin were his pallbearers: Mr. Jacob Bright, MP; Sir Elkanah Armitage, Lord Mayor of Manchester; Mr. C. H. Bazeley, the factory owner and liberal worthy; Mr. T. B. Potter, MP; among others. Thus the body of a man who had been jailed as a dangerous revolutionary nineteen years earlier was buried to the cheers of tens of thousands of his fellow citizens. His procession was an uncannily precise model of the political history of Manchester and of the fate of radicalism: the tumultuous uncertainty of the post-Napoleonic years when troops were garrisoned near the city to prevent serious unrest was glimpsed safely through aged Peterloo survivors; chartism was manifest in the corpse of one of its leaders, and the representatives of Gladstonian liberalism, triumphant, brought up the rear, mourning the man but not his cause.²⁸

Indeed the nineteenth-century funeral became that occasion on which not only the values of a civilization generally but of its component parts were mirrored and reaffirmed. The deaths of dissenting clergymen were marked by displays of denominational solidarity. "Multitudes" followed the body of the Methodist Rev. William Dawson for a mile and a half as it left Leeds; eighty-six carriages "containing friends of various ranks" continued on to the village where he was buried. Provincial culture celebrated itself in the funeral of one of its worthies. Forty thousand saw John Dalton, the great chemist and lion of the Manchester Lit and Phil lie in state. The account of the various parts of the almost mile-long procession takes thirty columns of small type: group by group, carriage by carriage, all associated with the hero by virtue not of his place in a God-given hierarchy, but by his great energy and intelligence.²⁹

The funeral of the great manufacturer, Titus Salt, made different sorts of claims. In part it appropriated the charisma of aristocracy to the new industrial order, aping in a curious way the great heraldic funerals of two and three centuries earlier. As one report noted with stunning insightfulness, "a stranger might have thought a prince had fallen, and the people had come to witness the funeral pageant on its way to the tomb of his royal ancestors." His barons-in-chief, the foremen of his various departments, were bearers; loyal retainers, some four hundred who had been in his employ twenty years or more, were privileged to be allowed on the chapel grounds. The crowds and the procession, as might be expected, would make even Queen Elizabeth's funeral seem puny: forty thousand, many arriving by special trains, crowded the factory village of Saltaire for the last stages of Salt's funeral alone. But of course it was again not the size that differentiated Salt's from Sidney's funeral. It told a very different story. Salt was a leader of Congregationalism; his life

had been a testimony to the power and moral fiber of Independency. He entered Bradford a poor youth in the early decades of industrialization and at his death, as one of many memoirs points out, “men of middle age, who as they gazed on the spectacle [of his funeral] and remembered the successful career now ended, must have received an incentive in prosecuting their own life work.”³⁰

Finally, the most spectacular of Victorian funerals, that of the Duke of Wellington in 1852, makes clear the exuberance of meaning that the age could attach to burial. It was to death what the 1851 Great Exhibition was to capitalism—the grand occasion to show off a civilization. The very scale of Wellington’s funeral bore witness to the productive capacities of industrial England: mechanical steam presses working around the clock could not keep up with the demand for the *London Illustrated* accounts of the funeral. Two million copies were ultimately sold, but only after temporary shortages resulted in scalpers’ prices up to five times the normal cost. The 27-foot long by 17-foot wide monstrosity of a funeral cart, modeled on that of Alexander the Great, was a triumph of the metal trades which managed to melt down and mold twelve tons of old Waterloo cannons into some semblance of decorative form. Because the railroads provided cheap transportation for the masses, almost a half million people could file by the coffin as Wellington lay in state. “Why, more visitors to London have come by the railroads to see the mighty Duke’s coffin than all London and Britain furnished as spectators to any royal funeral, or all royal funerals put together, since any living man was born,” proclaimed the *London Illustrated*. The funeral was a sign of social cohesion; even thieves mingled with the public as ordinary subjects and did not ply their trade. It was a celebration of London, “the empress of cities,” of England in which “this event is to be solemnized as becomes the mightiest nation in the world.” It was a commentary on spiritual and “higher” things, the day on which the dominant utilitarian spirit of the age was to be forgotten; it was the final event of the French Revolution, its two great sons, Wellington and Napoleon, now dead—the one, as the papers all pointed out, having early on fought and destroyed his mother. There was no end to the allegorical interpretations that could be attached to the funeral of the Great Duke.³¹

The funeral, whether of a trade unionist, a Methodist clergyman, or England’s greatest general, came thus to represent society’s final judgement upon the deceased. It was a looking glass in which a person’s life and his relationship to society could be viewed within a certainty and a finality that only death could bring.

In this context the pauper funeral became the final stamp of failure. But it must also be seen as a badge, consciously and unconsciously wrought of a new status for the poor in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. The poor, instead of being those who would always be amongst us and who indeed occupied a spiritually privileged category, became those who could not or would not sell their labor and who consequently had to be supported, more to assure political stability than by reason of benevolence, at some minimal levels above starvation. With the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, the so-called New Poor Law, this notion was finally given its full

legal articulation; its evolution since the seventeenth century had, however, been slow and irregular. Similarly, the pauper funeral as a distinguishable category of burial and a sign of the new poverty appeared in different places at different times. In the Oxfordshire Bridewell as late as 1775 an anonymous deaf-mute woman who died while in custody was buried with a full complement of bearers, not just a cart to the churchyard, and with a small party of beer, bread and cheese for those who laid her out and those who carried her to the grave, as well as with the accustomed peal of bells at the church. As late as 1830 in rural parishes, beer, cheese, and bread for bearers, candles for a wake, and the use of a pall, etc. all costing 18s to 22s were still common at a time when these same parishes, on the roundsman system, were forcing unemployed men to break stones from dawn to dusk for a shilling per day. A respectable funeral was, it appears, the last of the old communal rights to go.³²

The right to decent burial disappeared first in cities and in parishes burdened by large numbers of the extra-parochial poor. It fell victim to the process by which the poor went from being objects of charity to being objects of administration, a process evident in petitions to Parliament for new burial grounds to serve newly authorized workhouses and in the increasingly skimpy funerals, offered the poor by urban, and in particular, London parishes. A sprig of rosemary costing only 3d, for example, disappeared from accounts about 1730. An old woman, who was paid 3d to follow pauper funerals to St. John's Wood and thereby add a bit of dignity, disappeared in the early nineteenth century. Most poignantly, pauper funerals as a category of degradation emerge in contracts between authorities responsible for the poor and those who were to provide the actual services. Manchester, which in 1715 still bought coffins of an ordinary sort as needed for the dead poor, in 1811 contracted for specially built pauper coffins: ribbed only on the lid, made of the cheapest pine, specified to be only $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick on the sides, $\frac{1}{2}$ " on the lid, $\frac{5}{8}$ " on the ends for small coffins; somewhat thicker all around for the bigger ones. Another page of the contract gives a set of estimates with higher prices marked out and a new rock bottom price for each size, without any ribs, noted by the clerk as "lowest price."³³

Most telling is a contract between one Nicholas Soan and the Churchwardens of St. Botolph, Bishopgate, London, in 1780. He agreed to a whole list of provisions with regard to the maintenance of the poor in the workhouse which was to be under his management. Then somewhere in the middle of the contract he committed himself to "provide the sick poor with physic, Surgery, and midwifery (doctor excepted), all hospital expenses (lunatics excepted), to pay all expenses of Burials, to pay the emptying of the Necessary [i.e., the privy, the cesspit] when occasion requires."³⁴ Thus, he promised to provide certain care while his poor charges were still alive; he would bury them, and, as part of the same thought, he would cart off the workhouse excrement.

The New Poor Law of 1834 intensified and codified the attitudes which made such contracts possible. More specifically, it promulgated the doctrine of "least eligibility" which held that the poor who fell within its administrative jurisdiction must

be treated worse than anyone who could sell his or her labor in the open marketplace. The pauper funeral in this context was but the final ignominy; even in death the poor were marked as social outcasts. As late as 1795 in the industrial town of St. Helens the overseers contributed 7s to drink and other niceties at the funerals of the poor. By 1840 the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners had convinced the new Poor Law Union to put everything it needed up for bids: food, fuel, cogs, coffins. No extras at a pauper burial, under this regime. In London, that part of the burial service carried out inside the church was omitted for the pauper dead if their relatives couldn't come up with the required fee. Unions were authorized by new legislation to purchase special burial grounds solely for paupers who died in the workhouses of the new regime. It was routine in London and other big cities for several pauper funerals to be combined, thus giving the poor no choice as to when their relatives or friends were to be buried and creating through the display of identical unmarked parish coffins a striking image of anonymity and individual worthlessness. Whether or not it was Chadwick or his rival Lewis who forbade Unions to pay for the ringing of bells at pauper funerals is not clear; the important point however is that the degree of shabbiness of the pauper funeral had become a question for administrative adjudication.³⁵

Thus in the same spirit in which the Commissioners disallowed public funds for workhouse Christmas dinner—some of the working poor might not have it so good—they created the degrading spectacle of the pauper burial. Just as the proper funeral came to be defined quite precisely by its cost, so also the pauper one. Gone was the variation of the eighteenth-century churchwardens' accounts; neatly lined "Relieving Officers' Application and Report Books" give the standard entries: 20/6–23/6 depending on the size coffin or grave and fees—nothing more.³⁶

A new discourse of markets for the bodies of the poor as a salable commodity added yet another level of terror to the category "pauper" which funerals helped define. Those who in life could not sell their labor for sufficient money to provide for a decent interment were of value only when they no longer owned their labor or their bodies, i.e., when they were dead. While an individual living had no rights in his body, dead he could become the property of someone else. The legal innovation of the 1832 Anatomy Act was to allow a specific group, doctors, to possess the bodies of ordinary citizens for purposes other than burial, i.e., for dissection. Therefore, by the early nineteenth century, while the pauper poor had no claims to their own bodies, certain of them could end up in death owned by someone else.³⁷

The meanings of the body, of poverty and property, of death and burial were moreover intimately connected in the nineteenth-century imagination. A pauper was one whose body no one claimed:

Rattle his bones over the stones,
He's only a pauper who nobody owns.³⁸

Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, a novel about dust and gold, opens with Gaffer Hexam and Rogue Riderhood discussing the relationship of money to the dead in the context of robbing a floating corpse: "Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? . . . How can money be a corpse. Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it. . . ." In the same novel, Silas Wegg tries to buy back his leg bone which Mr. Venus the taxidermist had purchased as part of an odd lot from St. Thomas' hospital. It should be cheap, says Wegg, because it was crooked—that was the reason for its amputation in the first place—and because Venus bought it as part of an assorted batch of bones. But no, argues Venus, it may have had no use or value while attached to Wegg, but now it could be worth something as a curiosity; and in any case, its market value was up simply because Wegg wanted it so as not to be, as he says, "dispersed."³⁹

The bodies of the poor, in the most literal, physical sense of body, became the badge of their condition. The evils of the new industrial system, of mine and factory, were clearly manifest in the bent spines, legs, and arms of children who were measured and duly recorded by scores of social investigators. The diseased poor were thought especially suitable objects for medical teaching because only by allowing young physicians to learn on them could they repay society for its charity. From the rotting pestilential bodies of the poor, according to a prominent physician, a miasma "by secret avenues . . . reaches the most opulent, and severely revenges their neglect, or insensibility to the wretchedness surrounding them." Finally the bodies of the poor were up for sale; the object, as James Doherty, a leading trade unionist of the 1820s and 1830s, put it, of an "odious and disgusting traffic in human flesh."⁴⁰

The demand for bodies, itself a product of the renovation in medicine and medical teaching that began in the Paris hospitals of the 1790s, came from doctors. The new anatomical-pathological model of disease required an intimate knowledge of the body's structures, particularly organs, which could only be acquired by dissection. In the 1790s when demand was still relatively low "the price of a subject," as it was called, was between 1 gn. and 3 gn. By the late 1820s it was up to an average of 8 gn. to 10 gn. with especially fine specimens, or a particularly tight market, pushing prices up to 16 gn. Before 1832 bodies were provided to the anatomists by an early nineteenth-century version of a criminal mob, some ten full-time and several part-time "resurrection" men who, in turn, got their wares either by robbing graveyards (most generally pauper graves since these were shallowest) or by murdering someone who was unlikely to be missed.⁴¹

After 1832, the Anatomy Acts provided that those who died in the workhouse and were not claimed for burial could, for a small fee, be passed on to the anatomist. After all, "the fittest persons in society for dissection," remarked a witness to the Parliamentary committee investigating the problem, were those who had no friends to care about them, "those who died friendless." This was the moderate position which was ultimately reflected in the new law. Thomas Rose, surgeon of the St.

James Parochial Infirmary, argued that any poor person dying in a workhouse should be sent to the anatomists. Their relatives had forfeited any rights they might have had to “interfere,” as he put it, with the disposal of their kin’s bodies because they had failed to provide for them while they were still alive. The body was, in short, payment for society’s services in providing a roof under which to die. By Rose’s calculation, the almost four thousand people who died in London’s workhouses each year would provide the anatomists a more than adequate supply. Others, arguing against this plan, pointed out that such a surplus would drop the price of bodies to the level in France where, it was said, medical students took too little care of their cadavers since new ones were so cheaply available. These sorts of issues were debated for about five hundred pages of testimony: just how should the market in bodies be regulated?⁴²

“Not content with the people’s toil while living, the rich insist upon having their bodies cut up and mangled when dead. We have seen the bodies of the poor stolen from the grave, and carried away to be sold, like port, to the highest bidder” wrote John Doherty, defending the rioters accused of ignorance and brutality for demolishing the Manchester infirmary, brick by brick, when, during the cholera epidemic, they discovered that “somebody had taken the liberty of chopping off the head of a child, and of substituting, in its stead a brick.” The likely suspects for making the switch, discovered when the coffin was opened, were of course the doctors. The trade in bodies was clearly seen as an evil greater than itself, as a most powerful reminder of the dominance of Mammon over feeling. Doherty thought it worth his time to spend much of 1831 exposing the rector of Stockport for having allegedly been in league with resurrection men to take bodies of the poor from his churchyard and convey them to his brother-in-law, a surgeon. William Cobbett, after a long account of the iniquities of the New Poor Law, ended it with a condemnation of the “Dead Body Bill” which, he asserted, would authorize the keeper of the workhouse “who may be a negro-driver from Jamaica, or even a negro, to dispose of the body to the cutters-up.”⁴³

The use and disposal of the bodies of the poor as an expression of their vulnerability, their powerlessness and their marginality was given fullest expression in the apprehension, trials and executions of Bishop and Williams for the murder, so as to sell the bodies, of three of society’s outcasts. One, Fanny Pigburn, they found sitting in a doorway with her four-year-old child; when asked why she was there she said she had no home since her landlord had evicted her; another, a drover boy from Lincolnshire they found sleeping in a pigpen at the Smithfield Market; the third, an Italian pauper boy they found wandering the streets. They offered each food, drink and shelter; they drugged them with laudanum; and they then hanged them upside down in a well so as to suffocate them without leaving overt signs of the deed on their bodies. Having provided themselves with their merchandise, they proceeded from anatomist to anatomist to sell at the best price the market would bear. They carried their victims on a cart in a wooden box, with one of their wives walking next

to it holding a band box to make it appear as if theirs were but an ordinary family moving house. “Ten guineas!” “I’ll give you eight”; “I’ll take it elsewhere”; “Nine guineas!” “Sold.” And so on, body by body. Bishop’s and Williams’s execution was apparently the best attended of recent London history and hundreds were injured as the crowds backed up for a quarter-mile pressed on the barricade in front of Newgate. Thousands flocked to the anatomy theater to see the murderers themselves “anatomized.”⁴⁴

Such murders were very rare indeed, but were the darkest of reminders of the meaning of poverty and of a pauper funeral. To be a pauper meant not only to contemplate burial with indignity, having one’s life publicly marked the most dismal of failures, but also having one’s body, worth nothing alive, sold for dissection when one had ceased even to own it. To be poor was to be profoundly vulnerable. Worse, to be a pauper was to be so vulnerable—as were Bishop’s and Williams’s victims—that one risked death by accepting help from those who appeared to offer food and shelter.

By 1850 the pauper funeral had become perhaps the dominant representation of that vulnerability, of the possibility of falling irrevocably from the grace of society, of exclusion from the values of one’s culture. It was an image, too, which worked on the poor; they would, as one observer put it, “sell their beds out from under them sooner than have parish funerals.”⁴⁵

The “parish funeral” was thus itself more than a passive image. It drew the poor into the new civilization; it was one of the most powerful ways in which the relationship between money and standing was made manifest, a metaphor for the meaning of consumption, an element in the creation of desire which made the industrial order possible. To avoid the ignominy of a pauper funeral the poor were forced to save—through the burial clubs, friendly societies, or the large “collecting” societies—to borrow and to repay loans, to live frugally. The rules of the various burial clubs and societies in many cases denied benefits to families of those who died as the result of profligate lives, i.e., from alcoholism or venereal disease, and they demanded sobriety and civility at meetings. Thus to provide oneself with a dignified burial was, consciously or not, to abandon the plebian ways of the old order and to participate in the respectability of the new.⁴⁶

But, the pauper funeral as a cultural construct of great coercive power is derivative of changes in the meaning of death and in the meaning of funerals as its celebration which this essay has described. By the nineteenth century, death and the funeral were occasions far more for the contemplation of the biography of the deceased than the future of his soul. The evangelical proof text, “as the tree falls, so shall it lie,” referred more to a demonstration on the deathbed of already apparent salvation than to a moment of genuine suspense. Epitaphs confirmed this optimism. There was a punctilious propriety, a sense of worldly orderliness about the ideal Victorian death scene. One prepared for it as one might for any important occasion: “Mr. Baines,” said Edward of his father, the pillar of Leeds Congregationalism and editor of the

Mercury, “changed for death about eleven o’clock on the forenoon of Thursday, the 3rd of August.”⁴⁷

Gone, too, by the nineteenth century, was a sense of the deep irony inherent in the democracy of death. When in the early seventeenth century Sir Walter Raleigh wrote that “death alone . . . can suddenly make man to know himselfe,” it was, as one critic has noted, “with the brittle laughter of a man who has abandoned all faith in human achievement.” Death mocked the great heraldic funeral:

It takes account of the rich, and proves him a begger; a naked begger, which has interest in nothing, but in the gravell that fills his mouth. He holds a Glasse before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see therein, their deformitie and rottennesse; and they acknowledge it. . . . [Death] has drawne together all the far stretched greatnesse, all the pride, crueltie, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic iacet*.⁴⁸

The glass which death held before the eyes of nineteenth-century men was very different. On it was projected a profound anxiety about earthly standing; and on it could be etched in perpetuity the definitive record of the place of the deceased in a social order in which that place had, during life, been tenuous. The nineteenth century was a world enormously conscious of the fragile nature of respectability, and even of civilization. All sorts of imaginative literature as well as works of social investigation play on this theme. One thinks of heroines “ruined,” it was said, by a single false step; one thinks of the image of bankruptcy and of debtors’ prison; and one thinks of charities ministering to those who had fallen from grace. As the Reverend Richard Parkinson pointed out in soliciting support for the Manchester Night Asylum, “There is but a thin gauze veil between virtue and crime, which once broken through . . . can never be wholly repaired.”⁴⁹

Far from being a time for reflection on the transience of earthly glory death had become the moment to exult in it. The funeral, as a rite of passage, spoke not of the world hereafter but of the history of the deceased. It was the final pronouncement on his earthly existence.

Thus, in the funeral of others one could contemplate the meaning of one’s own life. Walter Benjamin observed that “what draws the reader to a novel is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about.”⁵⁰ What repelled the poor in the pauper funeral was precisely that they could find no warmth in its contemplation; they were left shivering.

Notes

1. Charles Lamb, “On Burial Societies; and the Character of an Undertaker,” *The Reflector*, No. III, Art. xi, 1811; Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (1971, Penguin ed., Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 87 and 84–88 *passim*; Mrs. Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (1913), “A Horrible Problem” in Peter Keating, ed., *Into Unknown Eng-*

- land (Fontana, 1976), pp. 304–305; Edwin Hudder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, K.C. (London, 1887), p. 25.
2. *Select Committee of the House of Commons, on the Improvement of the Health of Towns*, 1842 (327) X.Q.; membership statistics derived from the *Fourth Report of the Royal Commission on Friendly and Benefit Building Societies with Appendices*, 1874 (349) XXIII (2); see for a more general discussion of these figures P.H.J.H. Gosten, *The Friendly Societies in England, 1815–75* (Manchester, 1961), Chapter 1; Margaret Fuller, *West Country Friendly Societies* (Reading, 1964), p. 87, as cited in Pamela Horn, *Labouring Life* (Gill and Macmillan, London, 1976), p. 197; *Our Mutual Friend*, Bk. 3, Chap. 8.
 3. This formulation is from Edward Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essay in Macrosociology* (Chicago, 1975), p. 3 and Chapter 1 generally.
 4. See A. R. Wagner, *The Records and Collections of the College of Arms (Burke's Peerage)*, 1952), pp. 4–22; John Paul Rylands, ed., *Cheshire and Lancashire Funeral Certificates (The Record Society, 1882)*, pp. v–xxiii; T. W. King and R. F. Raines, eds., *Lancashire Funeral Certificates (The Chetham Society, 1869)*, vol. 75, pp. 1–3.
 5. See the extraordinary illustrated roll by Thomas Lant, *Sequitur celebritas et pompa funeris [of Sir P. Sidney]* (1587), *STC* 15224; for the funeral of Superintendent James Braidwood, 30 June 1861, see the *London Illustrated*, July 6, 1861, pp. 17–18; James Everitt, *Village Blacksmith: Memoir of the Life of Samuel Hicks* (1863), p. 326; the poor children of Christ's Hospital were “employed” at some 1000 funerals between 1622 and 1648 and another 550 in the century to 1754. E. H. Pearce, *Annals of Christ's Hospital* (1901), p. 136 and pp. 228–231. The poor might also come from almshouses which the deceased had patronized, from neighbors who had benefited from his casual charity, or from unspecified sources.
 6. John Phillips, *Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney* (1587) unpaginated, *STC* 19871.
 7. Thomas Wentworth, *The Office and Duty of Executors* (1656) admits “decent suitability to his [the deceased's] quality” as criteria for how much an executor was permitted to spend for a funeral out of estate funds. Clearly however this was only the vaguest of guides. Clare S. T. Giddings, “Funerals and their Social Context in England, 1580–1645,” Oxford, B. Litt. Thesis, 1977, found that, for example, while the median cost of 116 gentlemen's funerals in seventeenth-century Lincolnshire was £4 2s 4d, the average of the lowest three was 9s 4d and of the highest three £33 17s 4d. Out of 71 estates in the range £100–£150 (based on probate figures) the median deduction for the funerals was £2-0-0, the average of the lowest three 7s 3d and of the highest three £9-19-3. See her tables 2:5-2:11 based on almost 5000 inventories and executors' accounts from Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Kent. My much less comprehensive analysis of 100 administrators' accounts from 1690–1711 from Kent Record Office PRC 19/5-6, and PRC 1/18 confirms these findings.
 8. It is impossible to document this claim quantitatively since the only systematic record of funeral expenses—the administrators' accounts—do not generally itemize funeral expenditures. Thus one must rely on random accounts that remain. That of the funeral of Alice Clayton, d. 1706, daughter of John, a modest gentleman in Little Harwood Lanes, lists expenditures of £4-5-3 (excluding the apothecary's bill) of which £3-0-4 was for food and drink and another 12s to the poor (Manchester Central Reference Library L1/10-/130/2-5). The £3 11s expended for the funeral of one William Onyon, more or less the median expenditure for a yeoman on Giddings' evidence, was accounted for as “for burying of the corps . . . for making of the grave, for rings on the daie of the buriall and for entertaining of the neighbors on the daie of the burial” (MS Wills Berks 206/95, Bodleian Library).

9. Abraham de la Pryme, *Diary*, ed. Charles Jackson, Surtees Society, LIV (1869), pp. 48–49; William E. A. Axon, *Annals of Manchester* (1886), pp. 92, 255.
10. Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat Gentleman*, Chap. 1; James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 924; Sir Lewis Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (2nd edition, London, 1961), p. 32.
11. Rev. Mark Noble, *A History of the College of Arms* (London, 1804), p. 44.
12. T. T. Merchant, “Some General Considerations offered relating to our present trade . . .” (1698), pp. 6–7, quoted in J. S. Burns, *The History of Parish Registers in England* (London, 1862), pp. 109–10; undertakers upgraded funerals by using gentlemen’s carriages borrowed, with the connivance of servants, from their unsuspecting masters. This relatively cheap way of putting on a good show was made illegal by 1 Geo St. 2.c57, para. 4, *Statutes at Large*, vol. 13, p. 321.
13. R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747), pp. 329–30; Robert Blair, “The Grave” in Dennis Davison, ed., *The Penguin Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 103–104.
14. *Accounts of Parish Burials for the City of London Union*, Guildhall Library, MS 11, 446.
15. G. C. Allen, *The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country* (1929, 1966 reprint, London), p. 18: see the price list “to the trade” in Joseph Turner, *Burial Fees of the Principal Churches, Chapels and New Burial Grounds . . .* (n.d. but c. 1838), Guildhall Library pamphlet 5713; Diana Cooper and Norman Battershill, *Victorian Sentimental Jewelry* (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 23–26; coffin furniture and mourning jewelry were among the industrial products shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851; three English firms won honorable mentions. *Reports by the Juries, Exhibitions of the Works of Industry of All Nations*, 1851 (1852), pp. 13, 493, 508.
16. From an advertisement issued by one John Middleton in Funeral Box 3, The John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library.
17. From a bill rendered by W. Briscoe, “Upholsterer, Appraiser, Cabinet Manufacturer and Undertaker,” Bath, for the funeral of Miss A. Bayard, 1839, MS Victoria and Albert Museum.
18. *A Supplementary Report on . . . the Practice of Interment in Towns*, 1843 (509) xii, pp. 50–51 and 69–71.
19. *Report from the SCHC on the Friendly Societies Bill*, 1854 (412) vii, Q 781.
20. Richard Burn, *The Ecclesiastical Law* (9th ed., London, 1842), vol. 1, pp. 256–73; see also T. F. Thiselton-Dyer, *Churchlore Gleanings* (London, 1891), pp. 135–48; William Andrews, *Old Church Lore* (Hull, 1891), pp. 102–106 and *Curious Church Customs and Cognate Subjects* (Hull, 1895), *passim*; as well as J. Edward Vaux, *Church Folklore . . .* (London, 1894).
21. “Plans of Ardwick Cemetery and for Ornamental Monuments” and “Ardwick Cemetery: Minutes of Shareholders’ Meetings, 1836–1890,” both in Manchester Central Reference Library, M 7415, Box 5.
22. Rusholme Road Cemetery Registers of Interment,” vol. 1 M 74/8, Box 10, Manchester Central Reference Library; these mass graves offended the sensibilities of at least some contemporaries; see, for example, in a long poem, *The Cemetery: A Brief Appeal to the Feelings of Society in Behalf of Extra-Mural Burial* (Oxford, 1848), p. 11:
In foul accumulation, tier on tier,
Each due installment of the pauper bier,
Crushed in dense-pack’d corruption there they dwell.
‘Mongst earthly rags of shrouds and splinter’d shell.
23. W. Arthur Deighton, *The Manchester General Cemetery, Harpurhey, from 1836 to 1911*

- (Manchester, n.d.) in the John Rylands Library, p. 10, quoting from the cemetery's "General Report" for 1839–40.
24. *Pioneer, or Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union Magazine*, March 29, 1834, pp. 266–67. The *Pioneer* with a paid circulation of c. 20,000 was the best selling working class paper of the times. Since the number of readers and those hearing the paper read were many times the number of copies sold, the funerals reported were far more "public" than suggested even by the crowds in actual attendance. On the *Pioneer* see Joel H. Weiner, *The War of the Unstamped* (Ithaca, 1969), pp. 192–93.
 25. *Pioneer*, Feb. 1, 1834, pp. 177–78.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 177; April 12, 1834, p. 298; see also Feb. 22, pp. 213–14; March 29, pp. 278–79; May 31, p. 384; June 7, pp. 396–97, and p. 400 for engravings of Union funeral badges; June 14, 1834, p. 407.
 27. *Northern Star*, 5:242, July 2, 1842, p. 5; the account takes up almost an entire page of small newsprint. See also R. C. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement, 1837–1854* (London, 1894), pp. 213–16.
 28. Benjamin Wilson, *The Struggles of an Old Chartist* (Halifax, 1887), reprinted in David Vincent, ed., *Testaments of Radicalism* (London, Europa Publications, 1977), pp. 235–36; *Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1869, p. 5; *Times*, January 27, p. 7, January 28, p. 9, and the funeral on February 1, p. 10, 1869.
 29. *Manchester Guardian*, August 16, 1844, for Dalton; for Dawson see James Everitt, *Memoirs of the Life, Character, and Ministry of William Dawson* (London, 1842), pp. 478–82; for reports of the funerals of men who, as one account puts it, "represent the culture, the industry, and the enterprise of the North of England," see R. V. Taylor, *Biographia Leodiensis* (London, 1865) or Richard Welford, *Men of Mark 'twixt Tyne and Tweed*, 3 vols., 1895, *passim*, and quote, vol. 1, p. 489.
 30. B. Allsop, *The Late Sir Titus Salt, Bart.: A Brief Resume of his Life and Works* (Bradford, 1878), pp. 14–22 and R. Balgarnie, *Sir Titus Salt, Baronet* (London, 1877), pp. 303–19; see for another example George Lander, "An Answer to the Pamphlet of Mathew Robinson . . . relative to his Father's Funeral" (Birmingham, 1811), Guildhall Library. Lander is defending himself for not having produced a funeral grand enough to warrant the £544 17s 2d he was paid. Five hundred men and sixty women from the Boulton and Watts works marched in the parade, all dressed in deep mourning; in addition there were twenty-three carriages and scores of assistant undertakers, friends, and other worthies.
 31. The public press wrote incessantly on the death of Wellington between September and December 1852. The index alone to the *Times* accounts takes two pages of fine type. I have drawn primarily from the *London Illustrated*, September 25, 1852, October 2, November 20, and November 27 (Supplement) since its coverage was the most thorough I encountered; see also Leopold Ettlinger, "The Duke of Wellington's Funeral Car," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 3, 1939–40, pp. 254–59.
 32. Oxfordshire Quarter Sessions Accounts, T, 1775, no. 4, Oxfordshire Record Office; I base the claims in this paragraph on accounts of the overseers of the poor in some thirty parishes in Oxfordshire, Lancashire, the West Riding, Berkshire, Kent and Middlesex. In 1816 the parish of Wooton-Bassett spent for 1 pound cheese, ½ peck loaf bread, six quarts of beer, ¼ pint of gin a total of 6s 1d plus the cost of coffin, laying out and fees, i.e., 17s, on the funeral of George House. While alive, he got 1s 6d per week (Oxfordshire Record Office Pc iv, iii, 4 Wooton). In the tiny parish of Garsington the usual funeral expense was just over £1–0 around the turn of the century. The rates for roundsmen 1804–1807 were 6s 9d for nine days. (Garsington Overseers' Accounts MSS DD Gar-

- sington 6.11, Bodleian); the accounts of Kidlington (ORO K II/a/1–3) provide a particularly complete 150-year view of life and death in a rural parish, 1684–1836.
33. *Manchester Poor House Book*, Manchester Central Reference Library M3/3/5, June 1, 1811, ff. 322–33. I base my assessment of London on the following records in the Guildhall Library: St. Anne, Blackfriars, *Overseers Accounts* MS 7746/2–7, now bound in one volume; All Hallows, London Wall *Churchwardens Accounts* MS 5090/3; St. Catherine Coleman *Accounts* MS 1124/2, 1672–1720; St. Botolph, Bishopgate, *Annual Accounts* MS 4525; S. R. Broadridge, “The Old Poor Law in the Parish of Stone,” *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies*, vol. 13, 1973, esp. p. 14; *Walthamstow Vestry Minutes, Churchwardens’ and Overseers’ Accounts 1710–1740, 1741–71, 1172–1794*, Walthamstow Antiquarian Society Publications, No. 13–14, 16 (1925–26, 1927), ed. by Stephen J. Barns; *Leeds Overseers’ Accounts, 1801–5*, Leeds Record Office MSLO/A/1; F. M. Cowe, ed. *Wimbleton Vestry Minutes 1734, 1743–1788*, Surrey Record Society xxv (1964); *Report of the Select Committee on Anatomy 1828* (568) vii, p. 20 re: St. Johns Wood.
 34. *Annual Accounts*, St. Botolph, Bishopgate, Guildhall Library, MS 4525 for 1780, unpaginated.
 35. T. C. Barker and J. H. Harris, *A Merseyside Town in the Industrial Revolution: St. Helens 1750–1900* (Liverpool, 1959), pp. 132–142, 307–311; *Report on a General Scheme for Extra-mural Sepulture* (1850), pp. 54–55; Manchester Reference Library pamphlet 21196; *SCHC Health of Towns 1842* (327) x, Q. 1882–1891 and Q 1926–1929; regarding the ringing of bells, see *Report SCHC to inquire into the Administration of the Poor Laws in the Andover Union 1846* (663) v. Q 2260 and *Times*, August 12, 1846; Chadwick it appears was the more liberal, see *2nd Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners 1836*, App. C., pp. 536–37.
 36. Regarding the issue of Christmas dinners, one of considerable emotional charge in the debate over the New Poor Law, see W. G. Lumley, *The General Orders Lately Issued by the Poor Law Commissioners* (London, 1842), p. 212 citing a letter of March 18, 1840; privately funded dinners were said to be beyond the purview of the Commissioners.
 37. See *Anatomy . . .*, 1828 (568) vii, esp. the accounts and segments of Rex vs. Lynn, 1788, and Rex vs. Cundick, 1822, Rex vs. King, unreported, p. 6ff.
 38. I have been unable to track down the origin of this widely known ditty. It is cited in Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (2nd ed., New York, 1971), p. 213 without attribution.
 39. Book 1, Chapter 1 and Chapter 7.
 40. Indeed the morality of the factory system was debated in large measure on the basis of its effects on bodies. The index to Sedler’s critical report on child labor in factories, *SCHC on the Bill to regulate the Labor of Children in Factories 1831–32* (706) xv gives hundreds of references to evidence demonstrating the physically harmful effects of the system; *The First and Second Reports of the Commission . . . inquiring into the employment of children in factories 1883* (450) xx and 1833 (519) xxi present evidence more evenly divided on both sides of the question; *Reasons against lectures in the Lying in Hospital, Dublin [with reasons for . . .]* (n.d., c. 1770) Goldsmith-Kress collection 961: 10688; R. Lowth, *Sermon [on Gal. vi, 10] before the Governors of the Radcliff Infirmary . . .* (1771); Goldsmith-Kress 981/10808 in which Lowth points out that the poor, who constitute “the book of nature” for students, will also be particularly susceptible to “good impressions” since they are “awakened to reflection and a sense of duty, by the chastening hand of God [and] by the fears of approaching death,” pp. 17–19; regarding the poor and pestilence see John Ferriar, MD, *Medical Histories and Reflections*, 4 vols. (War-

- ington, 1792) vol. 1, p. 241 and 218ff; *Poor Man's Advocate*, no. 33, September 1, 1832, p. 263.
41. See *Anatomy . . . 1828* (568) vii, pp. 22–23 and generally the testimony of Sir Astley Cooper; on the extraordinary efforts to protect the graves of St. Pancras, one of the most vulnerable London churchyards, see W. E. Brown, *Saint Pancras Open Spaces and Disused Burial Grounds* (1902); for the history of body snatching see C. H. Turner, *The Inhumanists* (1932), Hubert Cole, *Things for the Surgeon* (1964) and J. B. Bailey, ed., *The Diary of a Resurrectionist, 1811–1812* (1896); all published in London.
 42. *Anatomy . . . 1828* (568) vii, p. 24, Q 123; pp. 78–79, Q 912–16, 922.
 43. *Poor Man's Advocate*, September 15, 1832, p. 3ff; Doherty's encounters with the Revd. Mr. Gilpin begin in *The Poor Man's Advocate*, no. 11, March 31, 1832, p. 81 and take up at least some of most of the future issues; R. G. Kirby and A. E. Musson, *The Voice of the People* (Manchester, 1975), 368–78, 433–38; see also on Doherty's interest in the issue of "resurrectionism"; William Cobbett, *Legacy to Labourers* (London, 1834), p. 24 and further in his *Political Register*, vol. 67, no. 5, January 31, 1829 and vol. 75, no. 5, January 28, 1832; see also Ruth Richardson, "A Dissection of the Anatomy Acts," *Studies in Labour History*, no. 1, 1976, esp. pp. 8–11.
 44. There are many accounts of the confession, trial, and execution of Bishop and Williams. I have drawn primarily on the *Morning Chronicle*, December 5 and December 6, 1831, and the London *Examiner*, December 4, 1831. The bidding for the body is my reconstruction of the account in Bishop's confession.
 45. *SCHC Health of Towns . . . 1842* (327) x. Q.
 46. I will develop this notion further in forthcoming work. The notion already in evidence in early friendly societies that "since Men of wicked and disorderly Lives are more exposed than others to Sickness, Lameness and Infirmary . . . no one remarkable for Cursing, Swearing, Lewdness and Drunkenness . . . shall be capable of becoming a Member of this Society" (*Rules and Orders of the Friendly Society, Hitchin*, 1752, p. 66) is prominent in nineteenth-century societies. Members of collection burial societies lost not only their benefits but all previous contributions if they fell into arrears with their weekly payments. In short, providing for a proper burial entailed a strong measure of discipline and self-denial.
 47. *The Life of Edward Baines*, by his son, Edward Baines (London, 1851), pp. 352, 345–353 more generally.
 48. Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (New Haven, 1973), p. 154; Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World*, quoted in Greenblatt, p. 153.
 49. *Manchester As It Is* (Manchester, 1839), p. 67.
 50. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (Fontana edition, New York, 1971), pp. 100–101.