Whose Grave's This, Sir? An Ethico-Political Critique of Organized Resting Places[1]

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What can we learn about organizational ethics from studying cemeteries as orga-
nizational/organized manifestations of our mutual, embodied vulnerability? How
does, and how should, the ethico-political imperative of death and the deceased
materialize in the cemeterial space? With reference to a comparative analysis of two
island cemeteries, Venice's San Michele and New York's Hart Island, this paper
makes three contributions to the emerging literature on organizational ethics of life
and death. First, it makes an empirical contribution based on an organizational study
of two "resting places" that highlights the importance of understanding organiza-
tional life and death with reference to ethics. Second, it makes a theoretical contri-
bution to scholarship on the organization of death and on grieving as embedded in a
politics and ethics of recognition. Third, the paper shows how our desire to be
recognized as valid, viable subjects comes to be organized, and situated, in ways
that perpetuate precarity and vulnerability, a point that is illustrated with reference
to cemeteries as ethically significant organizational settings.

Key Words: cemeteries, death, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, grievability,
survivance

MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

As Agamben (1998) and others have noted, how death and the dead come to be
organized is a fundamentally ethical consideration (see also Elias, 1985).
While discussions about organizational ethics tend to gravitate towards life and
the living, recent global events including an ongoing climate emergency, the
COVID pandemic, and emerging and ongoing wars, famine, and recession, coupled

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[1] Our title refers to Derrida's (2006 [1993]: 9) reference to *Hamlet* (act 1, scene 5) in describing the work
of mourning as an attempt "to ontologize remains, to make them present" as both an ontological act and an
epistemological one, the latter driven by the desire to know, as Derrida puts it, "who and where, to know
whose body it really is and what place it occupies—for it must stay in its place. In a safe place."

with social movements responding to racial, sexual, and homophobic violence, have contributed to a growing awareness of the many ethical challenges attached to how dead and dying people are treated (Oxfam, 2022; Skeggs, 2021). In various ways, these events and the considerations they give rise to have starkly brought to the fore how some bodies come to "matter" more than others (Butler, 1993, 2022), and what this means both in life and death. As a potentially reflexive moment (Parker, 2020), the current era arguably has the capacity to be marked by the compulsion not to "look away" (Courpasson, 2016), requiring us instead, to critically and reflexively consider what our response to this "moment" and the challenges it presents might tell us about who and what is recognized as being of value, in life and beyond.[2]

While there is a growing interest in death in the field of management and organization studies (Ashley, 2016; Banerjee, 2008; Jagannathan & Rai, 2022; Le Theule, Lambert, & Morales, 2020; Reedy & Learmonth, 2011; Smith, 2006), academic research tends to reflect a wider social discomfort with death and "our common aversion to close proximity to it" (Byers, 2022: 9). Yet encounters with death and the dying are for many, everyday work experiences, including for those who undertake the "necessary yet undesirable work" of organizing and handling dead bodies (Jordan, Ward, & McMurray, 2018; Ward & McMurray, 2017). Mahalingam, Jagannathan, and Selvaraj's (2019: 213) study of the Dalit people who cleaned the streets and toilets in the Indian city of Chennai in the aftermath of floods in 2015 shows how "handling" death can involve working in "appalling and unsafe conditions." Like Jagannathan and Rai (2022), their account shows how the shame and stigma attached to working with dead bodies, including those of humans and animals, intersects with class inequalities and caste-based injustices. Research also shows how others, such as policymakers, politicians, and administrators, "handle" bodies in more mediated ways—for example, by contributing to decisions that have life or death consequences (Le Theule et al., 2020: 523). The responses to these kinds of mundane and extreme circumstances are grounded in normative expectations shaping perceptions of value attributed, for instance, to ideals such as independence and self-sufficiency. They involve complex and fundamental questions about who and what "counts" as a liveable life, and how dead bodies should be handled in ways that recognize and respect their dignity.

In order to consider these issues, and to subject norms underpinning the organization of life "beyond death" to critical scrutiny, we examine death—or more specifically, the treatment of dead people and/as bodies—as an organizational and organized phenomenon by comparing the aesthetics, poetics, and ethico-politics (Linstead, 2018) of two distinct island cemeteries: San Michele in Venice, Italy, and Hart Island, located off the coast of New York City. We selected these two

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[2] Like many others (see Parker, 2020), Butler writes about the pandemic as a "reflexive moment" (Butler, 2022: 12) that forces us to ask the question "what kind of world is this?"—a question we are urged to examine as both an ontological and ecological consideration underpinned by a related ethical and political challenge; namely, to think through "the conditions that permit life to be lived in a way that affirms the continuation of life itself" (Butler, 2022: 30).

cemeteries for their intriguing mix of similarities and differences. Both situated on islands, they respond to the need to separate living beings from the dead while efficiently utilizing increasingly limited space. However, they diverge significantly in terms of their occupants, visitors, organization, architecture, and atmospheres. The former is a renowned and aesthetically pleasing tourist destination, while the latter is a neglected site characterized by a series of anonymous mass graves. Comparing these two distinct settings enables us to examine how death is organized, and dead bodies are "handled" very differently in both settings.

Our aim, in examining these two cases, is to think critically and reflexively about how dead bodies come to be subject to organizational processes and practices in distinct settings, and to examine what we can learn from this. We do so through the lens of a recognition-based ethics and politics of relationality, one that is of increasing interest to scholars in management and organization studies, and which foregrounds the idea that collective solidarity, accountability, and relationality (Painter-Morland, 2007) can only emerge from mutual recognition of our most basic inter-connectedness (Antoni, Reinecke, & Fotaki, 2020; Fotaki, Islam, & Antoni, 2020; Mandalaki & Pérezts, 2023; Shymko, Quental, & Navarro Mena, 2022), forcing us to cease "looking away" (Courpasson, 2016) from phenomena we find difficult or confronting, including death and dead bodies.[3]

Drawing from this emerging stream of thought in management and organization studies, we use the term "ethics" here and throughout the paper to refer to both a way of relating to ourselves, others, and things (including the environment in which we live and die) based on recognition of our mutual inter-dependency and vulnerability (Derrida, 2006 [1993]; 1999), and to a reflexive awareness of how that vulnerability is differentially situated (Butler, 2022). In other words, we adopt a recognition-based view of ethics,[4] and of ethical relations, as grounded in a belief that while we are all mutually inter-dependent and vulnerable in an existential sense, we are by no means not equally so, at least not sociologically speaking (Butler, 2016, 2022).

Adopting this approach, and bringing it into dialogue with insights from scholarship on grieving and mourning, we begin from the premise that an ethical life and

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[3] Here and throughout the paper, we understand recognition as a mutual sense of affirmation that implies a mode of relating to one's self, the social world, and others based on the premise that "one's life has … a value beyond market value" (Butler, 2022: 4).

[4] A recognition-based ethics of relationality is underpinned by three theoretical premises. These are, first, that ethics and politics stem from the way in which we are fundamentally mutually inter-dependent—throughout our lives, and in death, we are inherently reliant on others. Second, we are driven by the desire for recognition of ourselves as socially viable beings worthy of rights, responsibilities, and resources, and, thirdly, we depend upon other people and organizational infrastructures to provide or "honour" this when needed. In this respect, this desire for recognition is what drives our need for organization—it renders us mutually, inescapably vulnerable in an inter-subjective and embodied sense, a scenario that we do not somehow "grow out of"—sometimes we simply cannot function unaided. Our most vulnerable states of existence are likely to be at the beginning and end of our lives (and beyond), but our ability to exist without others persists throughout our life course. And yet of course, we also need to reflexively recognize that our social positioning is such that while our mutual reliance on each other renders us all vulnerable, this vulnerability is socially contoured and situated. As Butler (2020: 199) put it, "exposure is … a socially organized relation."

death requires us to commit to a critical, reflexive, and hopeful reconsideration of how we might create alternative conditions of possibility for relational modes of organizing that affirm, and enact, affective bonds of solidarity (Vachhani & Pullen, 2019), in life and in death. In this sense, the paper contributes to conversations currently exploring the possibilities that might support more dialogic, affirmative modes and relations of organizing, drawing from, and contributing to a growing interest in the ethical and political potential attached to a relational ontology (Bell & Vachhani, 2020) and to affective bonds of solidarity (Johansson & Jones, 2020; Mandalaki, 2019; Pullen & Vachhani, 2020; Smolović Jones, Winchester, & Clarke, 2021). This recognition-based approach to ethics, drawing on the works of Butler and Derrida, provides an alternative to the modern, rational, and autonomous self-centred approach that has tended to dominate business ethics discussions to date (Gustafson, 2000; Loacker & Muhr, 2009), offering rich insights into how "we act ethically in relation" (Kaufmann, 2022: 565). In particular, we respond to the idea that organizational processes and practices "beyond death" need to be opened up to further critical scrutiny, in order to engage with the ethical possibilities that doing so might lead to, including understanding—and organizing—the handling of dead bodies in more socially, environmentally, and ethically responsible ways.

Thinking about embodied life, and death, in this way, and in this context, reminds us of just how mutually inter-dependent we are. In sum, a recognition-based approach to ethics (Butler, 2022; Derrida, 2006 [1993]) highlights that social relations and solidarity can only emerge from a mutual recognition of our embodied relationality and shared inter-corporeal vulnerability. In this paper, we aim to show how our vulnerability[5] when and after we die is a poignant illustration of this, one that opens up new possibilities for re-imagining more ethical and sustainable modes of organizing, including of organizing our bodies when and after we die, in the future.

Working from these starting points, we explore the two island cemeteries considered here as providing insight into the ethical question of whose lives are understood to be of value (worthy of recognition), and of why certain lives are valued more so than others. We examine what this means for how our lives, and our desire for recognition, come to be organized in life and in death. By shedding light on the ethics of life and death implicit within human efforts at organizing, we hope to contribute to the evolution of ideas leading to more socially, environmentally, and ethically responsible ways of organizing, and interring, dead bodies in the future. With this in mind, we set out to address two related questions: First, what can we learn about organizational ethics from studying cemeteries as organizational/organized manifestations of our mutual, embodied vulnerability? Second, how does, and how should, the ethico-political imperative of death and the deceased materialize in the cemeterial space?

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[5] Reiterating the view that while we are all (bodily) vulnerable, we are not equally so, Butler (2022: 87) makes two related points about vulnerability that foreground a relational ethics. First, its ontological nature: it describes "a shared condition of social life, interdependency, exposure and porosity." Second, its sociological nature: "it names the greater likelihood of dying for those who are marginalized, understood as the fatal consequence of a pervasive social inequality."

Structure wise, we begin the paper by positioning it in related bodies of literature on death, dying, and burial, drawing from research in management and organization studies, and on grieving and the work of mourning in social theory and philosophy. We bring these literatures together to study "resting places" as organizational settings that materialize differential value, developing an ethical critique of what this involves. The methodological approach that we took to analyse the two cases is then outlined, followed by a presentation of the case-study material, based on the San Michele cemetery, Venice and Hart Island, New York. These two examples are compared in order to develop an ethical critique of San Michele as a place of reified, highly individualized recognition and of Hart Island as a site of negation. In the final part of the paper, we draw from current discussions on recognition and relationality in light of the case-study analysis to map out the relevance of the paper's empirical and theoretical contributions to evolving concerns with the ethics and politics of grievability (Butler, 2004, 2022) as a process through which our desire for recognition in life—and in death—comes to be organized. We conclude by summarizing our contribution to existing scholarship on organizational ethics and outlining potential avenues for future research.

CEMETERIES AS ETHICALLY SIGNIFICANT ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

Sociological research has highlighted how modern rationalism has changed our relationship with death in at least two fundamental ways. With the diffusion of scientific discourse and a secularization of values, death has come to be regarded as an increasingly private, individual matter (Mellor & Shilling, 1993). At the same time, the "disappearance" of death from the public sphere has required an increased effort to organize it, to make it "manageable." Thus, encounters with death are increasingly mediated, sanitized, and institutionalized (Reedy & Learmonth, 2011; Smith, 2006). Death has been "sequestrated" (Giddens, 1991) by professions, organizations, and practices whose aim it is to "manage" death and dead bodies, giving rise to a complex, and profitable, death industry. Insights to be gleaned from this research include an understanding of how the organization of death involves a combination of economic, political, cultural, spiritual, and theological, as well as ecological and ethical considerations (Pava, 1998), foregrounding the gendered, class, and racial conditioning of the struggle for recognition and dignity in death and in work involving the handling and processing of dead bodies. Such research has also highlighted the necropolitical contours of capitalism and colonialism (Banerjee, 2008) shaping the contemporary death industry, and the "force of separation" (Mbembe, 2019: 1) as an organizing principle governing the treatment of those whose lives and bodies are deemed dispensable.

While this research has reflected on how proximity to death and to dead bodies can prompt a sense of vulnerability, reminding us of our inter-dependence with others (Butler, 2022; Yu, 2021), how these differential proximities and vulnerabilities come to be organized and situated in distinct settings has yet to be fully explored within the field of management and organization studies. Cemeteries, and the rites

and rituals they involve, are places that, often in highly organized ways, guide us through some of the existential, and ethical, challenges that death presents us with. In this sense, cemeteries are ethically significant organizational settings that materialize recognition—or its absence. They do not simply offer a practical solution to the disposal of dead bodies but are settings where a sense of our entwined, mutually vulnerable social existence can be signified, and where an affective sense of ourselves and others as "mattering" is played out. In this respect, individually marked graves are widely regarded as important signs of recognition, providing points of connection and continuity in the face of loss that act as signifiers of the value attributed to us and those we care for. As settings where bodies and memories meet, cemeteries are, therefore, highly organized places that materialize the differential attribution of value to people in life and in death (Ashley, 2016), acting as possible points of recognition, commemoration, and connection (Cutcher, Dale, Hancock, & Tyler, 2016; Francis, 2003). This means, conversely, that the absence of such signifiers can silently but poignantly speak of the opposite. Commemorative markers and practices, and the social relations they signify can therefore help to maintain individual identities (and, e.g., in the case of war memorials, their affiliations), and affirm their continued social existence, organized through the demarcation of burial spaces (e.g., via a grid-based layout) where grave plots are located, delineated, and identified by named markers. Francis, Kellaher, and Neophytou (2005) also show how this takes place on a more collective level, with, for example, different communities potentially reinforcing boundaries and/or recreating diasporic evocations of "home." They note how cemeteries, in this sense, are settings where intensely meaningful and socially significant landscapes of memory are shaped over time, ritual, artefact, and place.

Meeting the need for individually marked graves is a growing practical concern, however, particularly in densely populated urban environments, yet burial continues to be the preference of the majority of the world's population. This combination of a lack of space and enduring beliefs is coupled with the often-prohibitive costs of burial, reminding us that for many, access to a "good death" is widely precluded by enduring social inequalities shaped by "historic systems of oppression, exploitation and marginalisation" (Byers, 2022: 2).

Broadly speaking, the management of the dead in urban environments has always posed practical and ethical problems for the living, particularly for a city's poorest people. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, rapid population growth in global cities intensified pre-existing concerns around space, sanitation, and changing sensibilities towards the management and visibility of death (Foucault, 1998 [1967]; Ross, 2020). In major Western centres such as London, Paris, and New York, this led to the closure of many inner-city burial spaces and the establishment of cemeteries further afield, including many so-called garden cemeteries.

The two island cemeteries considered here are examples of the practical and ethical issues raised by the long-term problem of where to situate relatively large numbers of dead bodies in urban settings in which space is limited (i.e., Venice, Italy and Manhattan, NYC), in which "burial cultures" and related beliefs predominate, and

in which the need to separate burial spaces from inhabited areas, while making the former accessible, is a significant and ongoing logistical challenge raising questions about how dead bodies are interred now and in the future in ways that are sustainable, affordable, and ethically defensible.

AN ETHICS OF GRIEVABILITY AND THE GIFT OF RECOGNITION

To reflect on and respond to some of these challenges, we turn to Butler's theory of grievability (2004, 2022) and Derrida's ethico-politics of survivance (2006 [1993], 1999) in order to consider how and why death poses ethical questions and how the ethico-political imperative of death and the deceased materializes in spaces like cemeteries.

Building upon Heidegger's philosophical reflections on death, time, and existence, Derrida (2006 [1993]) argues that the ethical imperative, "how ought I to live?" can only be answered through an encounter with death and the other. The lessons of life cannot be solely taught through personal experience, but rather are learned through the death of others, as it is through others' deaths that we come to understand the meaning and significance of our own existence (Derrida, 1999). Death, in this sense, is never truly "our own," for it is an experience that cannot be experienced. It follows that mourning the loss of others is more fundamental and essential to our existence than mourning our own death, and that death is ethically significant in the way it defines our relationship with others (Derrida, 2001). Death represents the most "ex-propriating" possibility and reveals alterity while simultaneously constituting the most powerful event of singularization, the utmost individual possibility, as nobody can take the inevitability of one's death away (Derrida, 1999).

Derrida introduces the concept of "survivance" to deconstruct the life-death binary and explain the implications of death's aporetic character (Derrida, 1993). The suffix "-ance," as for other terms forged by Derrida, here refers to a suspended status that undermines oppositions, namely the opposition between death and life. As survivors, we are indeed called to testify and bear witness to the ethico-political imperative of caring for the life-death of others, honouring their memory, and interpreting the traces that the dead leave behind (Derrida, 2001). Survivance becomes a "politics of memory, inheritance, and generations" (Derrida, 2006 [1993]: xviii), urging us to undertake a process—the work—of mourning and remembrance.

Understood through the lens of survivance, mourning becomes a complex and ongoing process of being inhabited by the dead who "defy semantics as much as ontology" (Derrida, 2006 [1993]: 5). Yet, the work of mourning consists of an inscription process that involves language and forms of representation that "write" our experience of mourning, which is culturally and socially mediated, and is always open and dynamic (Derrida, 2001). Thus, the imperative of the dead is both individual *and* ethico-political (Derrida, 1999).

For Derrida (2006 [1993]), death teaches us not simply how to live but also how to live more justly. Ethics and justice are ultimately about being responsible towards

others beyond the living present. As Derrida (2006 [1993]) puts it, "no justice …
seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, *beyond all
living present*, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of
those who are not yet born or who are already dead" (xviii, emphasis added). Justice,
for Derrida, is not about calculable or distributive justice, about restitution and
punishment, or the law but about "the incalculability of the gift," wherein the gift
of death consists of giving to the other what properly belongs to them, giving them
"presence" (Derrida, 1999). Hence, mourning takes the form of a social and cultural
practice that emerges in the ways we organize our rituals and spaces of dying and
death to "donate" or gift presence to the deceased.

Cemeteries, as discursive-socio-material assemblages of inscriptions and marks,
materialize the work of mourning and offer a form of bearing witness in response to
the ethico-political imperative of the deceased's death. Through Derrida's lens,
cemeterial spaces appear as sites of inscription, commemoration, and meaning-
making that materialize the work of mourning in its attempt "to ontologize remains,
to make them present, in the first place by identifying the bodily remains and by
localizing the dead" (2006 [1993]: 9). Epitaphs allow the deceased to speak "beyond
the grave," break the silence, and return to us.

Resonating with Derrida's ethico-politics of survivance, Butler's theory of grie-
vability begins with the ethical question, "What kind of world is this?" (Butler,
2022). This inquiry invites us to scrutinize the ethical issue of how to recognize and
honour the vulnerability and relationality we share with the deceased. In dialogue
with Derrida's concept of survivance, Butler argues that we must examine how we
"account" for the deaths of others and the ways in which we produce (mis)recog-
nition as we do so. In other words, for Butler, the "gift of death" has to do with its
capacity to force us to recognize, reflexively, the differential distribution of value
attributed to others.

In their essay "Grievability for the Living," Butler (2022: 93 and 94) set out an
ethical premise that connects to Derrida's understanding of justice, namely that "it is
not possible to understand social inequality without understanding how grievability
is unequally distributed." On this premise, Butler frames grievability as a loss that is
"publicly marked and acknowledged" as opposed to one that is melancholic,
whereby the latter "passes without a trace, with no, or little, acknowledgement"
(Butler, 2022: 89). To put it simply, to be grievable means "counting as a life …
being a body that matters" (Butler, 2022: 102). In contrast, living with an embodied
sense of dispensability:

> is the feeling that one could die and pass … leaving no mark and without acknowledge-
> ment. It is a lived conviction that one's own life does not matter to others or, rather, that the
> world is organized … so that the lives of some will be safeguarded and the lives of others
> will not (Butler, 2022: 92–93).

Thus, "to live as someone with a sense of being ungrievable is to understand that
one belongs to that class of the dispensable and to feel abandonment as basic
institutions of care either pass one by … or are withdrawn." In these circumstances,

"one is oneself the loss that cannot be mourned" (Butler, 2022: 93). The melancholia induced is that of a circumstance, not simply, as Butler puts it, of foreclosed futurity "that goes along with having perpetually fallen through a safety network" in a sociological sense, but also of mis- or non-recognition in a more fundamental, ethical, and ontological respect.

Explored through the lenses of survivance and grievability, cemeterial spaces appear as crucial sites of recognition because they embody the materialization of recognition, or its absence, acting as (organizational) sites for the (ethical) work of mourning, or otherwise. They can produce "knowledge" that reinforces existing power relations, but they can also be transformative and offer radical possibilities through the traces they leave. Drawing on this idea, which combines Derrida's ethico-politics of survivance and Butler's recognition-based critique of the social relations of grievability, we investigate how the work of mourning materializes in two cemeterial spaces: San Michele cemetery in Venice and Hart Island, New York.

RESEARCHING RESTING PLACES FROM "ABOVE GROUND"

Our methodological approach was informed and inspired by Cutcher, Hardy, Riach, and Thomas's (2020) invocation to think critically and reflexively about different ways of undertaking academic research that are more intersubjective and dialogical. Hence, we devised an approach that involved processes of collating, interrogating, sharing, discussing, reflecting, and reworking, each of us responding to our own and each other's thoughts but also our emotional and affective responses to the two cases and the other materials we drew on (e.g., other writers' accounts of death, dying, and dead bodies in organizational life, and of the two case study settings in particular). Our research began with the realization that we shared a fascination with burial places, both of us being taken (independently) with the landscaped beauty of San Michele and being moved by our quite different affective responses to Hart Island and what it seemingly represents.

As a result, the methodology we worked with was deliberately "holey," with our approach being shaped largely by the generation of rhetorical questions that formed the basis of an ongoing, critical dialogue between us. Examples of the kinds of questions we asked include: What is this? How and why does this happen? Who was/is involved? In what ways is where this happened/happens relevant? How might this be different? What do we think about it, and how does it make us feel? How do our responses compare to those of others that are documented, and to which we have access? We repeatedly returned to, and adapted these questions, to guide our method of collating and analysing material on the two cases. Throughout each stage, we sought to be reflexive and mindful of the ways in which we were thinking and writing about life experiences and circumstances very different from our own. We took inspiration from Cutcher et al.'s (2020: 15) call for more reflexive research that strives to interweave "different discursive practices in ways that open conversations up to a wider range of voices, where respect and generosity are evident and where forms of knowledge emerge in dialogue." On this basis, we worked to produce

accounts of the two cases that would contribute to critical, reflexive dialogue on the ethics and politics of resting places, including by opening up space for what Cutcher et al. (2020: 15) call "productive moments of possibility" through which alternative ways of organizing might emerge.

Drawing on previous literature on organizational ethics and Butler's and Derrida's work, our analysis involved a comparative case study approach that drew together visual, textual, and video archival materials that are available in the public domain. The two cases were chosen because of their comparative and affective qualities. First, both are island cemeteries: separated physically from the communities they serve by water, they are both accessible only by boat. This physical separation reflects a combined ecological necessity: the logistical problem of what to do with an infinite volume of bodies in a relatively small amount of space, and a theological one—both cemeteries are situated in, and serve, societies in which the religious beliefs and cultural practices that predominate foreground the importance of keeping the body intact after death (in other words, they are largely burial cultures). In cities like Venice and New York, in which space is at a premium, this makes the problem of where to bury a large number of people an ongoing one. Second, the two cases were selected because we were struck by the aesthetic qualities of these different spaces. San Michele is a beautiful, tranquil space and Hart Island, by comparison, a heart-wrenching place of abandonment, where those whose lives had already been precarious came to embody, seemingly forever, their status as part of the world's "dispensable population" (Butler, 2022). We found ourselves wanting to know, think and talk more about these different spaces, and what we can learn about ethical life and death, and the social relations of recognition, by studying them.

Our "multifaceted magpie" method (Levitt, 2004)[6] involved collecting and collating the research materials we drew on by undertaking multiple digital searches using the names of the two islands, and by following up secondary links from these primary searches. This led us to working through academic and journalistic reports, court documents, minutes of meetings (e.g., council and committee meetings, limited to those available in the public domain), social media accounts, and interview data available via websites (e.g., the Hart Island Project—see below) as well as online materials to understand what we might broadly call the ethnographic landscape of the two cases. We did not do this systematically, but opportunistically, following links and connections that seemed interesting and relevant, and which helped us to respond to the rhetorical questions noted above, as these evolved during the research process and as we felt drawn to (and often, simultaneously troubled by) emerging discourses, narratives, and insights.

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[6]Levitt (2004: 315) describes conducting research on searchable text presented in digital format as "a multi-faceted magpie method," one that reflects an interpretive understanding of the social world and a social constructionist ontology. We draw on this approach while supplementing it with the idea, derived largely from feminist methodology, that our understanding and experience of the social world depends upon how we are situated within different epistemic communities. As such, we made efforts to ensure that differently situated perspectives and narratives were included in our collated data (e.g., by drawing on the views of community groups, activists, politicians, journalists, workers).

As Raudon (2022: 5) has noted when discussing what researching places like Hart Island and other burial sites involves, "they are difficult to talk about, information about them is often hidden, discovery may be haphazard or serendipitous, they are challenging to visit and what they represent is confronting." With this in mind, we made efforts to ensure, as far as possible, that a range of different perspectives and differently situated ways of knowing, thinking, and writing about the two islands were included in our research materials in order to take as much account as we could of "different communities of interest with contested responsibilities and concerns" (Raudon, 2022: 87). This helped us to make sure that, as much as we could, the perspectives of otherwise marginalized or neglected stakeholders were included (see also Derry, 2012).

Combining a variety of resources in this way allowed us to access commentaries, reflections, and discourses that enabled us to understand more about the two cases, and to get a sense of how, over time, they are experienced and perceived in different and evolving ways by those connected to them (e.g., people connected to those interred there, visitors and other researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and politicians, and those who work there). This process, one that in practice wove together data collation and analysis, took approximately five months and enabled reflexive conversations to take place between us about the two cases, so that, following Jagannathan and Rai (2022: 431), our research materials combine "personal reflections [our own and others'], stories, intuition, imagination, cultural and political beliefs."

Working in this way enabled us to get a sense of what Jagannathan and Rai (2022: 431) describe, with reference to their own methodology, as "an opportunity to unravel the temporal unfolding of human lives" and to understand how a phenomenon as fundamental as death is situated "at the intersection of the personal and political." This approach also enabled us to bring together our own and others' perspectives with wider social and political discourses (e.g., by reading personal stories multiple times in different reports such as newspaper articles). The data we draw on are not "representative" in any conventional sense; we selected some of the insights we draw from and the stories we refer to because they affected us in significant ways—for example, some of the stories on the Hart Island Project (HIP) webpage literally stopped us in our tracks in the way that Milroy, Cutcher, and Tyler (2019) describe, so that we could not "look away" (Courpasson, 2016) but found ourselves needing to think, know, and talk more about them.

To do this, and inspired by Jagannathan and Rai's (2022) approach to their research, we analysed our data on the two cases by writing long notes for each other (approx. 10,000 words each) to help us to understand as much as we could about the two sites. These notes enabled us to discern the analytical frames that we used to make comparative sense of important similarities and differences, including in relation to the islands' histories, geographies, and possible futures. The analytical frame we worked with drew from Linstead's (2018) categories or "moments" in the research process focusing on aesthetics, poetics, ethics, and politics.

For Linstead (2018), the aesthetic moment occurs when we become forgetful of ourselves as we are fully immersed in our sensations and feelings, gaining sensory

knowledge through our exposure to that which is most difficult to convey through language or text (Gagliardi, 1999). In our own analysis, we each became aware of a very affective sense of the places we found ourselves drawn to, being directly or indirectly moved by the two spaces and the combined sense of fear and fascination they engendered in us. Through poetic moments, as noted above, we found ourselves "held," contemplating the materials we engaged with, particularly the most poignant images and film footage, and the deeply personal accounts we encountered (notably the HIP ticking clocks, discussed below). Our experiences resonated with the expressive language of videos and poems about the two places, and we were "arrested" by these resonances, finding ourselves deeply affected by them.

These aesthetic and poetic moments, in turn, stimulated a reflexive dialogue between us as we began to question how we found ourselves thinking about and relating to those buried on the two islands, reflecting on what their deaths and interments could tell us about the nature of the world we live in (Butler, 2022). Derrida's concept of survivance and Butler's ideas around the mattering of bodies, and the ethics and politics of grievability and/as recognition appeared especially relevant to us at this stage wherein the last two of Linstead's (2018) "moments"— that is, the political and ethical—seemed to us at least, to conflate. Drawing from Butler's and Derrida's work, as well as the organizational ethics literature on relationality (Bell & Vachhani, 2020; Fotaki et al., 2020; Pullen & Vachhani, 2020; Smolović Jones et al., 2021), we came to draw from an understanding of ethics as situated within power relations and, therefore, as always also political.

In the sections below, we present accounts of the two islands, based on the research process described above. We make no attempt to generalize on the basis of these accounts, but aim to provide insight, based on these two case studies, into the different ways in which recognition and the attribution of value come to be organized in the handling of death, dead bodies, and in scope for grieving. As we sought to understand connections between different themes emerging in our writing, reading, and discussion of the notes we both made on the two cemeteries during the "moments" outlined above, we began to discern distinct themes that the data started to coalesce around, and which helped us to convey our informed understanding of how people experience these two burial sites. We turn to these themes in our discussion of what this comparative analysis foregrounded in response to the research questions outlined earlier.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO "RESTING PLACES"

Venice's San Michele Cemetery

The Isola di San Michele (in English: Island of San Michele) is situated in the Venetian lagoon in North Italy. In 1804, when Venice was under French occupation, Napoleon Bonaparte chose the neighbouring island of San Cristoforo to host the city's cemetery when it was decreed that burial on the mainland (or on the main Venetian islands) was unsanitary (Franceschi, 1992). The cemetery was completed in the spring of 1813 and entrusted to the care of the Augustinian friars who inhabited San Cristoforo. However, in a short time, the space designated for burials was

exhausted. In 1810, the Camaldolese monastery that stood on the nearby island of San Michele was suppressed and the island became the property of the state, which in turn sold it to the Municipality in order to join it to San Cristoforo. From 1835 to 1839, works were executed that involved filling in the canal between them, uniting the two islands into a single burial area (Franceschi, 1992). Since then, the island became known as Venice's "Island of the Dead."

In 1858, a contest was held that was won by the architect Annibale Forcellini whose project design for enlarging the two islands was chosen. A cemetery was planned with a typology that responds to the classical Mediterranean type, that is, as a Monumental Cemetery, conceived as a miniature city that imitated, to a certain extent, the development patterns of the city of the living. In 1998, another international competition for the expansion of the San Michele cemetery was announced. The winning design was that of the architecture studio of David Chipperfield, with the first phase finishing in 2008.

Today, San Michele cemetery is a highly stylized place, consisting of carefully landscaped gardens and monuments consisting largely of commissioned artworks (Figure 1).

A high wall goes around the cemetery island, whose area is, in total, about 18 hectares. The cemetery has a simple structure, with a Greek cross plan, a perimeter of solid red bricks, in turn circumscribed by Istrian stone. Chipperfield (2022) explains how the cemetery space has been designed to convey "a sense of intimacy and enclosure" and how this is obtained through a careful design of boundaries and courtyards.

Figure 1: A Detail of a Commissioned Artwork in San Michele
Note. Photo by Luigi Maria Sicca.

Also, materials such as marble and stones materialize a feeling of long-lasting harmony. Texts from the Gospels offer guidance to visitors signalling the sacred nature of the place. In combination, the design, aesthetics, materials, and markers that make up the island of San Michele give a feeling of tranquillity, harmony, continuity, and connection. Everything is designed to seek balance and symmetry (Figure 2).

As Semerani (2004: 11, cited in Monestiroli, 2021) notes, the island's aesthetic qualities derive largely from its uniformity, "from having … the right measure, the right number of courses of bricks or stones, the right size of the marble slabs, and therefore the right kiln or the right quarry, the right firing or the right vein, the exact profile of the beam, the best projection to use the shadow as a residual mobile moulding."

Each redesign of San Michele has aimed at crafting a sense of perfection, balance, and beauty. The latter is reflected in the many accounts of the people who have visited the cemetery, which in turn resonates with our own recollections and experiences of the place. The selection of the materials, the shapes of the enclosures, the latter's relation to the water that surrounds it, all evoke a calming experience of this peaceful and beautiful setting, associating it with tranquillity and artistry. The use of long-lasting, natural materials and design motifs resonant with a classic era combine to produce a feeling of longevity and connection, solidity and significance (Figure 3).

Figure 2: A Portico in San Michele
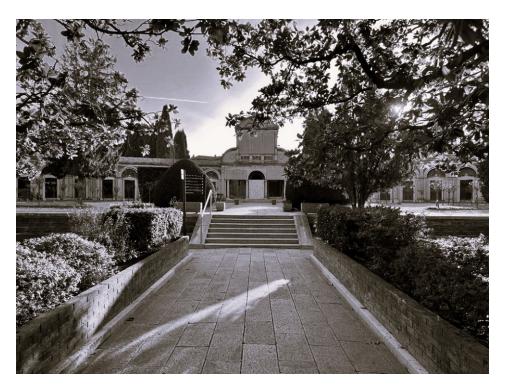*Note.* Photo by Luigi Maria Sicca.

Figure 3: A Pathway in San Michele
Note. Photo by Luigi Maria Sicca.

As Linstead (2018) notes, encounters with beauty often take our breath away. While San Michele appears solemn and majestic on the horizon as it is approached from the water, or as it is seen from Venice itself, the island's artistic beauty is striking in a way that is somehow "beyond language" (Gagliardi, 1999). It would be easy to approach or go past the island by boat and not realize it was a cemetery, but to assume it is a beautifully landscaped and well-maintained park, palatial private residence, or hotel complex. Unsurprisingly, over the centuries, fascination with the island has mostly been articulated through literary works and poetic language as not only San Michele, but also the city of Venice became associated with death—for example, through Thomas Mann's masterpiece *Death in Venice.* The city's association with death arguably emerged but continued well beyond the Romantic period, and San Michele Island became a desirable and popular "resting place" among poets and artists (Perocco, 2012).

In addition to stimulating us aesthetically and poetically (Linstead, 2018), the San Michele cemetery also interrogates us ethically. Wandering in the cemeterial space is an opportunity for encountering the many people who are buried there. Visitors are able to access the island by boat and are invited to read names and biographical details of those buried there. In contrast to Hart Island (see below) there are detailed accounts of people's identities and lives; the organization in charge of San Michele

Table 1: List of Illustrious Deceased Buried in the San Michele's Cemetery

Name	Occupation	Location
Alessandro Poerio (1802–1848)	Patriot and poet	Cloister grande, between the graves of fallen in Russia and the secular hall
Antonio Dal Zotto (1852–1918)	Sculptor	Area 20° centre
Armando Pizzinato (1910–2004)	Painter	Area 17°, front entrance
Ashley Clarke (1903–1994)	English diplomat	Evangelic area, first on the left
Carlo (1720–1800) and Gasparo Gozzi (1713–1786)	Dramatist; Literatus, journalist. Descendants, both Venetians	Area 1°, 329 dx Dock
Carl Filtsh (1830–1845)	Pianist	Evangelic area, south wall at the entrance
Cesarina Vighy (1936–2010)	Writer	Area 20° gruppo 8, testata A vt1 2d
Cesco Baseggio (1897–1971)	Actor	Area 2°, east portico
Christian Doppler (1803–1853)	Mathematician, physicist	Cloister grande, beginning of the semicircle
Eduard Douwes Dekker (1820–1887)	Writer	Evangelic area, corner 1 square left
Emilio Vedova (1919–2006)	Painter	Area greco, square 2 right
Emilio Zago (1852–1929)	Italian actor	Area 2° east portico
Emma Ciardi (1879–1933)	Painter	Area 7°, vt36 row 5/a
Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (1876–1948)	Composer, Italian musician	Area 5° south portico
Ezra Pound (1885–1972)	Poet	Evangelic area, 1 square left
Franco Basaglia (1924–1980)	Psychiatrist	Family tomb area
Francesco Carnelutti (1879–1965)	Jurist	Area 20°, quad.13 nr1
Franz Wickhoff (1853–1909)	Art historian	Area 1°, tomb dock 326dx
Frederick Rolfe (1860–1913)	Writer, photographer	Area 7°, vt13 row 6a
Felice Carena (1879–1966)	Painter	Area 5°, quad.d n148
Giacinto Gallina (1852–1897)	Playwright	Area 2° east portico
Giacomo Favretto (1849–1887)	Painter	Area 2° south portico
Giacomo Galvani (1825–1889)	Singer	Area 3°, vt44 row 2
Giulio Lorenzetti (1885–1951)	Writer, art critic	Area 12°, nr 62
Giustina Renier Michiel (1755–1832)	Writer	Cloister grande, end of the semicircle
Giuseppe Volpi, Count of Misurata (1877–1947)	Italian entrepreneur, politician	Family tomb area, corner
Guido Cadorin (1892–1976)	Painter	Area 16°, right side, vit 4 row 3b
Giovanni Querini Stampalia (1799–1869)	Philanthropist	Cloister grande, near the fallen in Russia
Giuseppe Jappelli (1783–1852)	Engineer, architect	Small cloister, near the church
Helenio Herrera (1910–1997)	Coach	Evangelic area, along the right wall
Igor Stravinskij and Vera (1882–1971)	Musicians	Greek area, along the right wall

Table 1: continued

Name	Occupation	Location
Italico Brass (1870–1943)	Painter	Area 20°, tomb dock nr 30
Josif Brodskij (1940–1996)	Poet	Evangelic area, 2 square left
John McAndrew (1904–1978)	Architect	Evangelic area, 1 square left
Lauretta Masiero (1927–2010)	Actress	Area 21°, vt56 row 7/i
Louis Léopold Robert (1794–1835)	Painter	Evangelic area, left side wall
Luigi Nono (1924–1990)	Composer	Corner of the friars' area
Luisa Baccara (1892–1985)	Pianist	Area 1°, field o, row 13, grave 15
Olga Rudge (1895–1996)	Violinist	Evangelic area, 1 square left
Piero Leonardi (1908–1998)	Geologist	Area 21°, vt200 row 21a
Pompeo Gherardo Molmenti (1852–1928)	Writer, politician	Area 1°, tomb dock nr.216 left
Pier Luigi Penzo (1896–1928)	Aviator	Military area
Pietro Fragiacomo (1856–1922)	Painter	Area 1°, tomb dock n185 right
Riccardo Selvatico (1849–1901)	Playwright, poet, Italian politician, mayor	Area 2° east portico
Domenico and Roberto Tramontin	Glassmakers	Area 1°, tomb dock 47 left
Sergej Djagilev (1872–1929)	Theatrical impresario	Greek area, along the back wall
Teodoro Wolf Ferrari (1878–1945)	Painter	Evangelic area, left wall towards the end
Virgilio Guidi (1891–1984)	Painter	Area 20°, square 6, nr10
Zoran Mušič (1909–2005)	Painter	Area 16°, right side, vt4 row 3b
Corenao Ogata	Architect	Area 2°, vt74 row 4

Note. Source: Venice municipality website.

cemetery keeps an account of the famous people who are interred there (see Table 1), with a detailed visitors' map indicating where to find their graves.

These forms of "inscriptions" testify to the importance of preserving the memories of these lives, signifying their ongoing value beyond death (Derrida, 2001), materializing recognition in the accounts and artefacts that signify value through the act of producing memories and assembling (designing, maintaining etc.) San Michele as a meaningful place. And this has been the case throughout its history —records of epitaphs and tombstones date as far back as 1663 (Perocco, 2012). Keeping and updating these inscriptions over time is a practice that involves, and testifies to, distinguishing lives that "matter" from those that don't. Those interred on San Michele do not appear as an anonymous list of names. Significantly, the tombstones are marked with Roman numerals before being assigned to someone. In the moment in which someone then inhabits their allotted space, these numerals are "translated" into the names and life stories that make up San Michele's burial records. Furthermore, these accounts are shared with the public, and with visitors to the Island, so that they become part of its collective memory.

In this respect, the San Michele cemetery is an example of how the "Western culture … established … the cult of the dead" (Foucault, 1998 [1967]: 5). This cult emerged in conjunction with a change in the management of dead bodies, including the organization of cemeteries, as noted earlier. The Church was no longer the only institution in charge of organizing death. The cemetery, like the school and the post office, became a sign of the presence of the State and a space for making explicit and affirming its civic ethos. Reflecting this, San Michele cemetery is a burial ground for people who have distinguished themselves, predominantly in the artistic field. Poets, musicians, architects, psychiatrists, and philanthropists are given recognition with monuments of artistic and historical significance. Both the public/political and private life of these personalities find recognition in the cemetery where they are buried with their loved ones, as it is the case for Stravinsky, who is buried next to his wife, the artist Vera de Bosset. Overall, there exists a certain normativity in the organization of this space as graves are also there to signal "role models" and "lives" that are revered as worthy of aspiration and imitation. These deaths are there to inspire us, to teach us a way of life, acting as individual as well as ethical markers.

In this sense, the "famous" individuals buried in San Michele are like "spectres" haunting us with their example and request for "survivance" (Derrida, 2006 [1993]). Those interred there seem to inhabit a liminal space, as they do not belong to the world of the living (since their physical body is dead) but neither do they belong to the world of the dead (since their life as an example, their endeavour, survives the death of the physical bodies). These graves appear more as a contemporary version of the apotheosis of Roman emperors, a *wax imago* that is worshipped as if these bodies can never actually die (Agamben, 1998). There is an "excess" inherent in these sacred lives, the *corpus morale et politicum*, that survives the death of the physical body and is passed to others, to be revered and shared. The tombstones in San Michele are thus highly individualized and serve as a reminder of our role as witnesses and survivors. By acknowledging the uniqueness of each person and their passing, we are able to differentiate and bear witness to each death in its own way. However, this individualized recognition is accorded only to those who were privileged, revered, and/or well-known enough to be buried there, and who are, as a result, memorialized accordingly.

As a publicly managed cemetery, San Michele abides by regulations requiring citizens to be buried in their nearest cemetery. Consequently, the administration must allocate burial capacity for Venetian citizens. However, San Michele often receives numerous requests for burial exceptions from "famous" individuals who are not Venetian citizens but who wish to be buried in Venice. These requests are carefully evaluated by both the mortuary police and the municipality, with decisions made to either approve or reject them. Given the cemetery's status as a tourist attraction, the municipality frequently opts to approve these exceptional requests, recognizing their potential benefits. Simultaneously, this poses further challenges regarding the maintenance and preservation of the artistic and monumental essence of the site, as well as the meticulous management of burial capacity. Essentially, the administration must navigate a delicate balance between its obligations to ordinary citizens and the preservation of San Michele's allure as a tourist destination. In this respect, it is important to notice that whereas the "famous" dead can rest undisturbed

in perpetuity in their graves, recently more and more other "common" bodies are instead subject to exhumation after a fixed period of time, a practice introduced in San Michele in the 1950s to deal with the scarcity of burial space. Exhumation, typically aimed at relocating or cremating the deceased, underscores a significant evolution in legal norms regarding the treatment of the dead. Moving from perpetual burial to shorter intervals (exhumation in San Michele occurs after 10, 15, or 99 years, depending on the location), this shift signals an emerging necroeconomics (Banerjee, 2008; Skeggs, 2021), as a paradigm shift prioritizing organizational practices that pragmatically address economic needs, such as efficient burial space management and revenue generation from concession sales.

The cultivation of memory, including that of revered individuals, requires social rituals and ceremonies that convey recognition. Recognition is part of how dead bodies are organized on San Michele, practised through how encounters with those interred there are organized. The "cult" status of those buried there involves public and communal worshiping, and the accessibility of the place and the visitors' guide noted above reflect this. On the island itself, signs help visitors navigate the space and find the sections of the Island they wish to visit. San Michele is a tourist destination and, as such, it is highly accessible and pleasant to visit. Historically, once a year, during the week of the Commemoration of the Dead, the Island had become accessible through a bridge of boats connecting the Fondamenta Nove with San Michele Island. Beginning in 1950, this tradition allows visitors to arrive directly at the monumental portal that once served as the main entrance to the cemetery. The bridge connecting Fondamenta Nove with the island of San Michele during the week of the Commemoration of the Dead, as well as the numerous boats that transport visitors to the cemetery daily, materialize the return of the dead in our lives in a way that "repeats itself, again and again" (Derrida, 2006 [1993]). Through these materializations, we are reminded of the importance of repeatedly recognizing and commemorating loss, and of the ongoing presence of the dead—or rather, those whose deaths and hence lives are recognized as being of value.

In sum, San Michele is an artistically and historically significant burial setting. Architect designed, carefully landscaped, and meticulously maintained, it is not only accessible to the public, but is a coveted tourist destination. Visitors are encouraged and welcomed there. It reflects the modern conviction that mortal remains have an ethical significance beyond death, and individual burial plots and grave markers signify this. Not only do carefully kept burial records and visitors' guides indicate the recognition and reverence accorded to those buried there, the detailed life histories which are shared with members of the public contribute to collective memory-making, and to the constitution of San Michele as a meaningful location where those who "matter" are buried.

New York's Hart Island

In contrast to the artistic integrity, idyllic setting, and manicured tranquillity of Venice's San Michele cemetery, Hart Island is a desolate, isolated place. Situated just off the east coast of Manhattan in the Bronx Sound, Hart Island is reportedly the largest publicly funded cemetery in the world (Raudon, 2022), yet it is practically invisible.

Figure 4: Prison Inmates Digging Graves on Hart Island, and Examples of Burial Records
Note. Photo by Melinda Hunt (The Hart Island Project).

Hidden in plain sight, Hart Island does not feature on public transport maps, or architectural representations of the city of New York and is largely inaccessible to all but those who work there. That access is "severely limited and strictly regulated" exacerbates the Island's long-established reputation "of separation and otherness" (Byers, 2022: 9).[7] As Rees (2020: 8) puts it, its location is part of what makes Hart Island "such a tragic place"; it is "literally and metaphorically disconnected from humanity." Described as the City's "dark shadow," it is the final resting place of approximately one million of New York's "unwanted, … lonely, … forgotten and … marginalised" (Byers, 2022: 1); it is a cemetery "for the nameless and the homeless' (Bowring, 2011: 251). Until 2020, its massed, anonymous graves were dug and filled by prisoners from nearby Rikers Island, in a workforce scenario that bordered on Dickensian[8] (Figure 4).

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[7] At the time of writing, even those who can visit are required to sign a liability waiver and are unable to walk around the island unescorted (visitors are accompanied to and from the graves they are scheduled to visit). As Byers (2022) reports it, the potential dangers posed to visitors include collapsed building structures, wild animals, spikes in the ground, exposure to dangerous chemicals and large potholes. Byers also notes that after lengthy debate, and following tireless work by Melinda Hunt and the HIP, the City of New York approved demolition of nearly all the remaining structures on the island, including a former workhouse, asylum, and reform school, under an emergency order. In her view, the continued presence of these derelict buildings "risks reinforcing the site's former functions and perpetuating the existing reputation of the island, a painful legacy that can be acknowledged without insisting [as some critics of the plan have done] that the island retains physical representations of shameful historic practices."

[8] On 1 July 2021, the administration and management of Hart Island transferred from the Department of Corrections to the City's Department of Parks and Recreation, thus (formally) ending an association with

Raudon (2022: 84) notes that the dead are largely interred on Hart Island in deep plots, each holding approximately 150 adults or 1,000 babies. While the island is commonly referred to as a mass grave, this term is misleading, as it suggests a pit in which bodies are piled. Rather, the Island is better understood as consisting of a series of massed graves, where the dead are communally, if predominantly anonymously, interred in individual coffins. Accounts (e.g., of precise locations) are often vague or contradictory, but official records suggest that details of burials are kept so that graves can be identified, and bodies can be disinterred when necessary. In short, Hart Island is a mass burial site that is widely regarded by those who know of it as a poignant, barren "hellscape" (Byers, 2022: 6). Aesthetically and poetically, it would be hard to imagine a burial site more different from San Michele.

Believed to be the world's largest potter's field[9] Hart Island has, for over 150 years, been a mass burial ground, largely for New York City's indigent and unclaimed dead. From its earliest use in the 1860s, it was an extension of the places where the city's most marginalized residents were contained or cast out.[10] These were spaces where the outsiders the City sought to expel but could not entirely rid itself of, were sent to be unseen, and unheard, condemned to reside in an "elsewhere" (Kristeva, 1982: 5), of which Hart Island is a notable example. Reflecting this history over a century later, Hart Island was widely used during the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and again, during the COVID pandemic in the early 2020s.[11] It was only

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incarceration that had been in place since the island's first use in the 1860s. While for some (see Brouwer and Morris, 2021) this transfer is not enough to eradicate the complex legacy of this historical association, and its grounding in racialized and class-based systems of oppression, others (e.g., Byers, 2022: 2–3) are more optimistic, noting how "if lingering social stigma and practical obstacles can be addressed, this could be an incredible opportunity to transform Hart Island into a multifunctional, modern burial site … to create a space that offers genuine healing, reconciliation, connection and community for the living." Yet for Byers (2022: 6), "a damaging, one-dimensional public perception of the island as a deeply shameful and degrading site' represents a significant obstacle to the island being re-imagined." This reputation has served to create an additional layer of suffering for the communities of those interred there, so that "without unpicking the historic threads of this legacy and the ways in which cultural attitudes to pauper burial have endured, any real transformation … will be hindered by this powerful public perception, and the enduring social stigma associated with being buried there."

[9] Biblical in origin (in its reference to clay-rich ground), the term "potters' field" refers to a burial ground used predominantly for those who are unclaimed or destitute.

[10] Byers' (2022: 5) account explains some of the organizational history of Hart Island: "Formerly used as a civil war training camp, it was purchased by the Department of Charities and Corrections in 1869 … Along with the grid cemetery for mass grave trenches, a number of penitentiary institutions were established [t]here, such as a psychiatric hospital and a workhouse for delinquent boys. Institutions within this network were utilised throughout the burial process, with inmates at the workhouses put to work building pine coffins and sewing shrouds, and prisoners from the penitentiary burying the bodies. In a time when poverty was largely seen as a personal failing resulting from immorality and inherent criminality, little sympathy was extended to those who ended their days on Hart Island. Instead, contemporary media reinforced existing social and cultural stereotypes about poor, largely immigrant communities."

[11] Byers outlines how the COVID pandemic represents one of those rare historical moments when New Yorkers from across a wider social spectrum than are normally interred there were temporarily or permanently buried on Hart Island as the city struggled to cope with rapidly rising mortality rates and a large volume of dead bodies as humanely as possible (see also Raudon, 2022). For Byers (2022: 8), this scenario potentially offers an opportunity, a "critical moment" as it were, to reconsider how we recognize people when they are dead, and to explore the possibility of how we might rethink an anonymous burial "as an inherently

during the latter that media coverage of Hart Island began to shine a critical spotlight on the island's history. As Raudon (2022: 84) notes in her account of this:

> When drone footage emerged of New York City's COVID-19 casualties being buried by inmates in trenches on Hart Island, the images became a key symbol for the pandemic: the suddenly soaring death toll, authorities' struggle to deal with overwhelming mortality and widespread fear of anonymous, isolated death.

Records indicate that approximately a million people are buried there, predominantly those who, largely because of race, immigration status, poverty, and disease, have been buried in obscurity, with many ending up, because of the circumstances of their life and/or death, being condemned "to oblivion's relegation" (Brouwer & Morris, 2021: 160) in almost entirely "unmarked and unmemorialized" (Raudon, 2022: 84) massed graves.[12] In the words of a New York City council worker: "the city has always wanted to forget about Hart Island. The city has wanted to forget about the people who are buried there. It's wanted to forget about the fact that there is a potter's field, that there is a place where difficult stories are hidden" (Brouwer & Morris, 2021: 164).

For Keene (2019: 65), the common denominator for all who are interred on Hart Island is "mass anonymity, total detachment, and a dark loneliness."[13] The stigma that surrounds burial sites like Hart Island reflects more than anonymity and marginalization, however. Potter's fields are places that materialize both changing attitudes to death and enduring moral judgements about those who come to be buried there and in places like it. For Byers, the "trauma tourism" that Hart Island has attracted since the COVID pandemic is simply a contemporary manifestation of this, with the moral outrage engendered by growing awareness of the indignities suffered by many of those interred and required to work there, simply inverting the indifference or fear engendered by burials during the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. The relative anonymity of a burial on Hart Island has particular poignancy given "the normative Anglo-American expectation of an individual named grave" (Raudon, 2022: 91), as discussed above, one that "makes the unknown dead a moral rebuke," and which contrasts markedly with the reverence and meticulous process of memorializing those who are interred on San Michele, Venice. As Raudon (2022: 91) puts it:

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shameful endeavour" and explore the relational possibilities attached to reconceptualizing burial sites as playing a multifaceted role within a community, as well as offering both individual and communal burial within the same geographic space.

[12] A small stone pillar marks the only individually identified grave on the island, of the first child known to have died from AIDS-related causes, who was buried with the inscription "SC-B1, 1985" (an abbreviation of Special Child, Baby—see Keene, 2019), but (at least at the time of writing), no proper AIDS memorial exists there, despite Hart Island playing a major role in the history of the AIDS epidemic in New York. Rees (2020: 9) notes that more people who died of AIDS-related causes are believed to be buried on Hart Island than in any other place in the USA, perhaps even the world.

[13] Keene (2019: 40) contrasts this anonymity and detachment with the City's National September 11 Memorial, which contains a secure repository in which unidentified fragments of human remains are stored behind a blue tile inscribed with a quote from Virgil: "no day shall erase you from the memory of time."

> Massed graves challenge … [the] normalisation of individualised human remains, and effectively mute social connections. To be buried promiscuously, in the sense of indiscriminately mixed, is a lonely burial, separated from family, faith community or other groups. Because Hart Island is difficult to visit, rituals celebrating the continuing bonds between the living and the dead are not easily performed publicly or privately. The lack of headstones and names means there is no legible public display of these social links.

Founded in 1994 by activist and artist, Melinda Hunt, the Hart Island Project (HIP) has worked to destigmatize the island and to find the names and locate the burial places of those known or believed to be interred there. The HIP's work both highlights the racialized and class-based politics of misrecognition that Hart Island represents and draws critical attention to the "memory impoverishment" (Brouwer & Morris, 2021: 161) that places like it materialize. The HIP has focused on how, especially during the 1980s AIDS epidemic, "a collective 'recoil' characterized administrative logics and labour practices" (Brouwer & Morris, 2021: 166) governing how the bodies of those who had died were treated. Buried in lead coffins in quarantined plots, those known to have died from AIDS-related causes suffered "a double indignity"—"to die from such a stigmatized disease and then be buried in anonymity" as Elsie Soto, one of the featured storytellers in the HIP AIDS Initiative web series describes it. And to this double negation, we might add a third, namely that the enduring public perception that a Hart Island burial "inevitably means a deeply shameful and degrading end to an unfulfilled, unhappy life" arguably limits the ways in which Hart Island's possible futures might be reimagined (Byers, 2022: 2). For those who are aware of its history, Hart Island will most likely, *always* be a place populated by those who have suffered the multiple indignities of "disposals of last resort" (Raudon, 2022: 84).

For nearly three decades, the HIP has challenged Hart Island's memory constraints—awareness, accessibility, prejudice, and carceral stewardship. Through legal intervention and public memory work that includes the collation of stories, photographs, art works, music, and film footage, the HIP has pursued commemorative transformation through archival facilitation, by making public records and institutional history more transparent, and by generating remembrance through its Traveling Cloud Museum, documentary films, and web series. As Brouwer and Morris (2021: 164) sum it up:

> A key motive of the Hart Island Project is to destigmatize the site, transforming it into a reachable and respectable public cemetery and national monument, via the breakthroughs of rhetorical claimings and tellings. The vision is liberatory but the labour daunting, owing to the deep discursive sedimentation constituting the ignoble status of Hart Island's dead and the forbidding nature of the destination.

HIP's work to find, name, and curate the life stories of people buried there is designed, in part, to provide points of identification and reconnection, to commemorate, and to problematize the whitewashing of AIDS remembering, in order to interrogate who counts as a grievable subject, and to critically question the

politics and practices of remembering in and through spaces such as Hart Island. As Raudon (2022: 85) puts it, "in most societies, mass graves indicate a bad death, because individual burial crucially affirms personhood by signalling who is 'grieveable': some lives are recognised as worth celebrating, while others are deemed less than human and disposed of anonymously … These burials materially illustrate a nexus between inequality and symbolic violence." It is worth noting in this respect that until public condemnation put an end to the policy in 2015, bodies due for burial on Hart Island were automatically made available for unconsented dissection (Keene, 2019). As Raudon (2022: 92) puts it, this practice was significant as it was not only an ethical violation but it "clearly signalled the deceased's value to the City, classifying them as a physical resource rather than a person."

In November 2018, HIP released an activist documentary, *Loneliness in a Beautiful Place*, and uploaded it to the Project's AIDS Initiative website. As noted above, the film features aerial footage that aims to render Hart Island more accessible, and subject to scrutiny. Recognizing growing critique of the uses of drone technology for state and corporate surveillance and violence, Brouwer and Morris (2021: 167–68) view the film as illustrative of how drone technology's oppositional uses for activists and social movements can help in the assertion of counterhegemonic rhetorical possibilities, highlighting how, under what were (at the time) conditions of restricted access to the island, the film performed a kind of "queer reconnaissance … a rare way of getting there that facilitated the ability for wider publics to see and experience the AIDS dead." Providing unrestricted aerial "access" to the island for the first time and illustrating its proximity to mainland Manhattan with a commentary that highlights its history and topography, the film implicitly poses the question of why somewhere so close could be so out of reach and in doing so, "performs a critique of limited access." In this sense, as part of the wider activist project, the film shows how "the variegated 'unclaimed' AIDS dead on Hart Island struggle to achieve standing as grieveable subjects on a national scale, [arguing] … for a reconsideration of the indigent or 'unclaimed,' including the abundance of those with Latinx surnames, as grieveable national AIDS subjects" (Brouwer & Morris, 2021: 169). In doing so, the film and the wider project undertake the work necessary to both highlight the negation of those deemed unworthy of recognition at the time of their burial, and to begin the process of recognizing and remembering them. Arguably, this is a process necessary to the realization of cemeteries like Hart Island as part of ethical life and death.

As another of HIP's activist practices, the AIDS Burials on the Hart Island Web series features storytelling interviews, ranging between ten and nineteen minutes in length. Launched in April 2020, the series introduces us to friends and family of the deceased, interspersing home encounters with family artefacts, street scenes, HIP video footage, and photographs. Across these interviews, the contributors share different perspectives on what it means to be buried there, and to visit Hart Island as a grieving friend or relative. Referring to Hart Island as "beautiful," "calming," and even as "relaxing," some of the short films support HIP's project to destigmatize the island and to reimagine what it means to be associated with it; others, however,

refer to family members' desire to exhume bodies and have them reinterred in marked graves (e.g., in their home towns), although the cost-prohibitive nature of this is also noted.

As noted earlier, a third element of the HIP project is that of the "ticking clock" that features on its Travelling Cloud Museum (TCM) webpage.[14] This feature counts the time difference between the date of a person's burial on Hart Island, as recorded in the New York City official record, and the precise time when a living person confirms that they are known, recognized, and "claimed."

Most of the clocks are still ticking in real time, attesting to the number of people who no-one has "claimed." Brouwer and Morris (2021: 172–73) note how, as one element of the TCM, the ticking clocks function as an "affect generator," heightening a sense of urgency to recognize and reconnect. Crucially, (from our own experience) encountering not just one but so many ticking clocks on the TCM produces a strong affective response marked by the "quiet, haunting persistence" of each unclaimed person, highlighting the dynamics of vulnerability and recognition that constitute cemeteries as sites on which a recognition-based "ethics of claiming" (Brouwer & Morris, 2021: 174) is played out. At those "moments" in the research when we encountered these clocks, we felt the aesthetics and poetics, and politics, of San Michele and Hart Island particularly acutely.

The HIP aims to bring dignity and accessibility to those interred there, to help relatives and kin connected to people known or believed to be buried there to access their records and resting places, and to tell their stories, as well as to rehabilitate Hart Island as an affordable, sustainable alternative to cremation. At the time of writing, the HIP is also working towards designating the island as a National Monument to recognize those who are buried there. Through its COVID-19 Initiative, the HIP aims to support people in locating gravesites of people who died during the pandemic and who were given a city burial on Hart Island. This project evolved from the longer-standing AIDS Initiative discussed above, and underpins the HIP's aim, through identification, connection, and storytelling, to make Hart Island an inclusive, accessible rather than shameful, isolated resting place, and in doing so, "to enlarge the meaning of this landscape" (hartisland.net). In October 2022, the Hart Island Touchstone Coalition (HITC) organized the first in a planned series of bereavement walks to honour the memory of those interred on Hart Island as a result of pandemic illnesses, including AIDS and COVID.

Some of the most pressing yet seemingly insurmountable issues facing Hart Island at the time of writing include the need for a new infrastructure to make the site safe, workable flood barriers and mechanisms to deal with the problem of shore erosion, and better transport links for public access. Byers notes how inadequately interred bodies sometimes wash up on neighbouring shores after floods there. For Rees (2020: 9), memorialization is crucial to combatting the "double death" of those

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[14] https://www.hartisland.net.

interred on Hart Island and places like it, and the work of the Hart Island Project discussed above is clearly vital in this respect, doing the ethical work of reinstating those interred there as grievable lives and therefore beginning to undo "some of the social death that made it possible for human life to be discarded in a mass grave in the first place" (Rees, 2020: 13, see also Guenther, 2013). Serving to reconnect those interred there with wider society and social networks and, thus, resuscitate them socially is ongoing work, but as it stands, the majority of those interred on Hart Island remain "unreachable, unknown, unclaimed and [in many cases] unidentified" (Rees, 2020: 14).

DISCUSSION: GRIEVABILITY AND SURVIVANCE AS GRAVE MATTERS

Cemeteries, and the rites and rituals they involve, are places that, often in highly organized ways, guide us through some of the ethical imperatives that death and the dead present us with (Francis, 2003; Francis et al., 2005). Our aim has been to explore what we can learn about organizational ethics from a comparison of two distinct cemeteries, San Michele in Venice and Hart Island.

We propose that an ethics of grievability (e.g., of mourning and, by implication, living) can only emerge from mutual recognition of our most basic inter-connectedness. Growing interest in organization studies (Antoni et al., 2020; Fotaki et al., 2020; Mandalaki & Pérezts, 2023; Painter-Morland, 2007; Shymko et al., 2022) and business ethics literature (Kaufmann, 2022; Loacker & Muhr, 2009) in a relational, ethico-politics of recognition provides a vital theoretical framework for understanding grievability as a "gift of recognition," and to develop what this means, we have turned to insights from Butler and Derrida. Drawing on ideas derived from their writing on death, grievability and mourning in our accounts of the two cemeteries, we have reflected on how cemeteries can provide a space for organizing the "work of mourning" and for offering—or reclaiming—recognition. The notion of gifting recognition involves bearing witness to the traces left by the dead, as it is through recognizing the dead that we learn how to live justly (Derrida, 2006 [1993]). On this basis, we have suggested that spaces of negation, such as Hart Island, are unjust, not simply because of how the dead are treated there but in terms of what this means for the living, with our most basic relational connectivity being severed. Understood as situated within capitalist and colonial relations perpetuating class, gender, sexual, and racial injustices, we can see how this severance causes a necropolitical, forceable separation (Mbembe, 2019).

Using these theoretical and conceptual lenses to reflect on the two cases, we have proposed that cemeteries provide a material representation of the extent to which we value the other (Butler, 1993, 2004), determining who is memorialized and who is negated (see Francis, 2003). In our comparative analysis of Hart Island and San Michele, we have highlighted how both settings materialize how ethical relations come to be organized in ways that perpetuate inequalities around who counts as fully human, worthy of recognition and remembrance, in life and in death, and the corresponding organizational problem of how to inter dead bodies in ways that are ethically defensible.

Aligned with Rees (2020: 13), our analysis foregrounds three essential components necessary for the "work of mourning" and the responsibility of inheriting (Derrida, 2006 [1993]; 2001): accessibility, inscriptions (i.e., naming), and commemoration rituals that respond to the research questions we posed earlier. Firstly, access is an important ethical issue, as without it, not only do the bereaved suffer from being unable to attend burials, they are, as Raudon (2022: 87) describes it, "prohibited from memorialising, performing rituals or visiting the grave as they wish and carrying the affective burden of [providing] for their deceased." Thus, different forms of accessibility can have ethical implications for the ability to mourn and recognize the dead, and accessibility is very differently organized in the two cemeteries we consider here.

Second, gifting recognition involves producing "knowledge" by ontologizing remains through inscriptions (naming being one of these), that is, traces of traces (Derrida, 2006 [1993]). Ethically speaking, unnamed and unmarked mass graves produce an "inauthentic" relation to death by evading its ethical imperative. The absence of inscriptions erases the traces left behind by the dead and fosters a collective forgetfulness that disavows our fundamental relationality. As a place devoid of recognition, Hart Island negates our most basic relationality in ways that contrast markedly with a place like Venice's San Michele cemetery, which arguably does something similar but in reverse, that is, by hyper-individualizing recognition of those buried there, "fixing" their existence in their achievements and social standing, and in doing so, also reifying social relations. In this sense, San Michele can be understood as a place of reified, highly individualized recognition and Hart Island as a site of negation, both materializing how our desire for recognition in life —and in death—comes to be organized in ways that reify or disavow relationality as the ethical basis of social relations.

Third, the gift of recognition also involves performing rituals of commemoration, which challenges our linear understanding of time and deconstructs the binary of life and death. Mourning involves repetition, as the dead are always a revenant, constantly returning (Derrida, 2006 [1993]). Thus, the ontologization of remains through cemeterial space serves the purpose of creating a time and space for collectively recognizing and commemorating loss, as well as keeping memories alive in the long term. In this sense, the Hart Island Project is ethically significant, especially its "ticking clock" that materializes the urgency of repetition as a "haunting" of both memory and translation (Derrida, 2006 [1993]). The ticking of the clock serves as a reminder of time for commemoration that has been "lost," serving as a tangible reminder of the need to (re) connect. Again, while San Michele arguably reifies this relationship, Hart Island negates it, precluding rites and rituals that accord recognition.

Derrida's (2006 [1993], 1999) concept of "survivance" emphasizes that mourning is not something that happens only when someone else dies; rather, it is something that is always present as we leave traces throughout our lives. This notion is consistent with Butler's (2022) argument that the lives of some are more grievable than others. Building on their earlier work (Butler, 2009) and writing with reference to the pandemic, Butler (2022: 86) refers to the notion of a "metric of grievability" that marks out "whose life, if lost, would count as a loss, enter into the registers of

loss, even broach the status of an incalculable loss. And whose death can be quietly calculated without ever being named as such." In such instances, they argue, "social inequality works together with necropolitical violence" (Butler, 2022: 89) to value some lives, not just as opposed to, but arguably at the expense of others (see also Islam, 2022).

In stark contrast to those interred on San Michele, even relatively temporarily, those buried on Hart Island have never been mourned; their traces have never been kept and inherited, they are "unknown." These individuals have experienced ungrievable deaths and have repeatedly died unnoticed. The idea that the work of mourning is an ongoing process (Derrida, 2001), rather than a reaction to a specific event, highlights the importance of recognizing and honouring those who are "lost" in this way.

Overall, through our analysis, we have revealed the variegated landscape of recognition that materializes in the two cemeterial spaces we have considered. There are differences between and within the two places in terms of signifying something/ one of importance, and in terms of the socio-material forms they take. Not least, these are two places where bodies, living and dead, are treated very differently, and —we have suggested—these differences can be understood with reference to the ethics and politics of survivance and grievability (Butler, 2022; Derrida, 2006 [1993], 1999). The two cemeterial spaces indeed provide poignant illustrations of the differential attribution of grievability as an organizational, or organizing, process of gifting recognition.

Understanding relationality as the premise of an ethical life and death requires us to commit to a critical, reflexive, and hopeful reconsideration of how we might create and reimagine alternative conditions of possibility for recognition-based, relational modes of organizing that affirm, and enact, affective bonds of solidarity (Vachhani & Pullen, 2019) in life and in death. And this ethical premise allows us to open up organizational processes and practices "beyond death" to further critical scrutiny, and to engage with the ethical possibilities that doing so might lead to. With reference to our discussion of the two cemeteries we have considered here, we would suggest that this kind of ethico-political critique could lead to understanding—and organizing—the handling and interring of dead bodies in more socially, environmentally, and ethically responsible ways in the future. Thus, we drew from recent recognition-based accounts of the conditions governing a liveable, and by implication grievable life, in order to examine how an ethics of relationality might be materialized in the context of resting places in the future, in ways that recognize our mutual vulnerability and inter-connection and organize death and dead bodies accordingly.

Clearly, finding ways for places such as Hart and St Michele to be both respectful burial sites and public spaces (and tourist destinations, in the case of the latter) is likely to be met with both practical and ideological resistance, but Byers (2022) emphasizes how historical precedents (e.g., medieval cemeteries as community hubs) as well as some contemporary examples (e.g., Highgate in London, or Glasnevin in Dublin—see Ross, 2020), can potentially point to how burial places, as sites of death and mourning, might be reimagined in the future. Hart Island, Byers

concludes (2022: 14), "deserves the same respect, reverence and relevance" as these kinds of community cemeteries which have been allowed to serve the needs of their local and wider environments as spaces both to mourn and to connect in a relatively green environment. As she puts it, "although they house the dead, cemeteries are ultimately for the living" (Byers, 2022: 14).

In contrast with Hart Island, San Michele grapples with the task of maintaining its public essence and serving as a space for the process of mourning, while resisting the commercialization that often typifies tourist destinations. In other words, the cemetery administration has to vigilantly guard against the risk of an "infiltration of market logic into politics" (Banerjee, 2008: 1546). This entails, for instance, preserving burial capacity for those "ordinary" deceased individuals who have emotional ties to Venice and whose mourners reside there, or nearby. Additionally, securing a more ethical future for San Michele, and cemeteries like it, requires exploring alternative burial and visiting practices that can mitigate the environmental impact in a region heavily affected by the corrosive effects of climate change and mass tourism.

In sum, we have made three contributions to relevant research on "matters" of life and death in management and organization studies. First, we have made a case-study-based empirical contribution to research that highlights the importance of understanding organizational life and death with reference to ethics. Second, we have made a theoretical contribution to scholarship on the organization of death and on grieving as embedded in a politics and ethics of recognition. This ethics of recognition also provides critical foundations for informing debates in business ethics by enriching our understanding of responsibility, moving beyond the modern approach that grounds it in values such as independence and autonomy, emphasizing relationality and inter-dependency. Third, the paper shows how our desire to be recognized as valid, viable subjects comes to be organized, and situated, in ways that perpetuate precarity and vulnerability, an argument that is illustrated with reference to cemeteries as organizational settings. We show how, in San Michele, the desire for recognition is reified into highly individualistic, stylized modes of recognition, while on Hart Island, the social conditioning of grievability perpetuates inequalities and the treatment of dead people in ways that, drawing on recent scholarship on organizational ethics and the politics of grievability, we would argue are ethically indefensible.

IN CONCLUSION: ETHICAL LIFE/DEATH AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUE

Returning to the aims of the paper, we set out to explore the role of cemeteries in perpetuating a reified rather than relational, recognition-based ethics of inter-subjectivity. Through this lens, we have considered how the attribution of value to some rather than others involves a "forgetting" of our most basic way of relating to one another (Casey, 2000), namely our mutual vulnerability and inter-dependency, producing a scenario in which, in death, some are reified (elevated to the status of tourist attractions), while others are reduced to the status of anonymous things.

In developing this approach, we were guided by a concern to understand what we can learn about the ethics and politics of recognition, and about the normative conditions governing liveable and grievable lives, from studying cemeteries as sites on which death is organized. We also sought to reflect on what ethical justifications might be mobilized for the attribution of different values to lives, and deaths, and to consider how these differential values are materialized in different settings. In response, we have highlighted how an ethic of relationality and a recognition-based politics might better reflect, and materialize, the shared predicament of human vulnerability (Fotaki, 2019), at the same time as reflexively recognizing how that predicament is differently situated for different people, living (and dying) in different circumstances.

This reflection has enabled us to clarify further that necropolitics and necroeconomics concern not only the treatment and (economic) valuation of dead bodies but also the suppression of grievability and mourning. Previous studies have focused on mechanisms that classify populations subject to precarious, unliveable conditions as *living dead* (Mbembe, 2003: 40). In particular, they have delved into the establishment of zones where state violence is exercised, such as Guantanamo, and concentration camps and colonies (Banerjee, 2008; Mbembe, 2003, Skeggs, 2021). In our examination, we have broadened this discussion by elucidating how grievability is materially organized and managed, exploring the spatial dimensions of necropolitics. By studying cemeteries, we show how the suppression of mourning contributes to the classification of individuals as *living dead* with cemeteries such as Hart Island materializing this, as individuals are deprived even of the fundamental recognition of inter-dependence that is inherent in mourning the deaths of others, and others' dead. Therefore, our study not only underscores how some individuals are perceived as more dead or as "already" dead compared to others, drawing from Butler's work; it also highlights how those *living dead* are such because they are dispossessed of their relationality with the deceased—an aspect of social relations that, according to Derrida, forms the foundation of ethics and self-formation.

In doing so, we brought an organizational perspective to theoretical accounts of the conditions governing liveable, grievable lives. Judith Butler's (2009, 2016, 2020, 2022) widely cited writing on the governance of whose lives "matter," and on what basis, has tended to focus on these questions as framing inter-subjective social relations, drawing as it does on a Hegelian approach to understanding how our desire for recognition as viable social beings comes to be organized. We have been able to add a material dimension to this evolving theoretical interest, highlighting how "mattering" takes place in ethically significant, organizational locations, in this instance, cemeteries, foregrounding the ethical and political issues raised when the latter are organized in such a way as to preclude them from functioning as reminders of how we ought to live (Derrida, 1999), closing off scope for the work of mourning. Finally, and in this respect, we have been able to show, through our case-study analysis, how resting places represent and perpetuate inequalities in the attribution of value. Doing so has enabled us to consider how differential ascriptions of value are materialized in resting places as economic, spatial, cultural, political, and ecological constellations that frame ethical life and by implication, death in ways that

perpetuate unethical social relations and modes of organization—that is, those that disavow or "forget" our most basic social relationality as the ethical premise underpinning who we are and how we ought to live, in life and beyond. In this regard, the ethics of relationality we have outlined also prompts us to deconstruct the dichotomy between animals and humans (Derrida, 2006), aiming to develop a critique of the anthropocentric nature of cemetery organization as one that relies on a severance, rather than recognition of, human inter-dependence with the wider ecology. This endeavour leads us towards envisioning a posthumanist comprehension of mourning and the concept of grievability (see Butler, 2022), opening up avenues for future exploration.

To return to where we started, which seems apt given our subject matter, when Hamlet asks the grave digger whose grave he is digging, and he replies, "mine sir," Shakespeare reminds us not only of the noble responsibility attached to treating the dead with respect—through his ironically pedantic reference to the grave as his own, the grave digger reminds us that the grave, all graves, are everyone's.

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