Chapter 1

Down among the Dead

Edwin Chadwick's Burial Reform Discourse
in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England

In 1839, G. A. Walker, a London surgeon, published *Gatherings from Graveyards, Particularly Those in London*. Three years later, Parliament appointed a House of Commons Select Committee to investigate "the evils arising from the interment of bodies" in large towns and to consider legislation to resolve the problem.[1] Walker's study opens with a comprehensive history of the modes of interment among all nations, showing the wisdom of ancient practices that removed the dead from the confines of the living. The second portion of the book describes the pathological state of forty-three metropolitan graveyards in an effort to convince the public of the need for legislative interference by the government to prohibit burials in the vicinity of the living.[2] Walker's important work attracted the attention of Parliament and social reformers because of his comprehensive representation of the problem of graveyards, especially among the poor districts of London, his rudimentary statistics that, in effect, isolated them from the rest of the society, and his unbending insistence that national legislators solve the problem. These three impulses influenced the way that Edwin Chadwick, secretary to the New Poor Law Commission from 1834 to 1842 and commissioner for the Board of Health from 1848 to 1852, identified and represented the problem of corpses and graveyards in his *A Supplementary Report on the Results of a Special Inquiry into the Practice of Interment in Towns* (1843).[3]

Walker's study of the graveyards registered the effects of a surging population and a concomitant concentration of people in the metropolitan areas of England. The population of London more than doubled in fifty years from just under 1 million in 1801 to 2,360,000 in 1851. Furthermore, the increasing physical deterioration of towns surpassed the rate of improvement, causing the death rate to rise sharply between 1831 and 1841.[4] Because towns sustained growth in population and suffered from higher death rates, conditions in the graveyards worsened. Many of the churchyards were quite small, often with less than an acre of ground, and had been in use for centuries. In public sites, the crowded conditions persisted because owners, to turn a profit, preferred the common grave where

they could bury more bodies, collect more fees, and use less space in the cemetery. Bunhill Fields, originally a cemetery designed by and for Dissenters and one of the first public burial sites in London (the first burial occurred in 1665), was reported to have 100,000 bodies buried on four acres.[5] In the metropolis alone, 52,000 bodies were added annually to the 203 acres available for burial. Bodies were indeed cast about the ground, bones tossed into a charnel house, and coffins chopped up for firewood—all to make room for more corpses.

It is against this backdrop that the House of Commons Select Committee on the Improvement of the Health of Towns, Effect of Interment in Towns, chaired by William Mackinnon, convened. The committee met from March 17 to May 5, 1842, on fifteen separate days, interviewing sixty-five witnesses. The report filled 214 pages of testimony, including letters from physicians, clergymen, and elected officials from other large towns in the United Kingdom.[6] Recognizing that the present mode of burial had evolved under quite different economic and social circumstances long before the emergence of congested towns and cities, the committee acknowledged that the evidence given was overwhelming. The practice of interment within large towns was a threat to public health: "The evils of interments in towns and populous places have grown to such a height that no time ought to be lost by the legislature in applying a remedy."[7] Thus they recommended that, with few exceptions, burial in urban areas be prohibited, but that future cemeteries be placed within two miles from the precincts of towns to minimize the hardship on the poor who attend the funerals of their families and friends. To best execute these measures, the committee agreed that the introduction of a bill by the government would be necessary. "It appeared difficult," the committee suggested, "to carry into execution any of the provisions recommended here without the assistance of some central and superintending authority to be established for that purpose."[8]

Mackinnon's committee, anxious to overcome the governmental sluggishness, helped establish the conditions of possibility for systems of regulation and inspection. But the committee's efforts were foiled by a struggle between private and public interests that would plague burial reform throughout most of the nineteenth century. The bill Mackinnon's committee proposed was never introduced to Parliament because Home Secretary Sir James Graham was not fully convinced that the churchyards posed a health threat and was unwilling to aggravate various special interests who would be most affected by a change in burial law. Moreover, in 1832, to meet market demands, Kensal Green Cemetery was opened on the outskirts of London. Begun as an answer to the condition of the city's graveyards, the cemetery was the first of many private enterprise cemeteries formed in the 1830s and 1840s. According to Deborah Wiggins, "Their presence profoundly changed the future of burials, for when the national government proved itself unready and unwilling to solve the sanitary issues surrounding the graveyards, private enterprise took the lead in providing new burial grounds."[9]

But the way in which reformers conceptualized the problem of burial greatly influenced the way the problem was identified and experienced in the 1840s. Beginning in the late 1830s, the deteriorating conditions of the graveyards, the vigorous commentaries about the situation by social reformers, Edwin Chadwick in particular, and the growing perception that the body and soul were no longer considered a continuous entity allowed commentators to criticize traditional working-class burial practices and to represent the working-class corpse not as a site of dignity but as a source of disease to be expunged from society.

I

The significance of the human corpse in popular, working-class death culture in the early nineteenth century seems to have been shaped by the belief in a strong tie between body and soul for an undefined period of time after death.[10] This belief underwrote funerary practices and created ambiguity about the definition of death (that is, the exact time of death) as well as the spiritual status of the corpse. From this ambiguous relationship between body and soul came an emphasis on the centrality of the corpse in death culture. Moreover, attachment to the corpse was intensified by a belief that the time between death and burial of a person was a time when the person was neither dead nor alive. Thus the care and attention given to the body followed from a desire to give due respect to the dead in an effort to aid the future repose of the soul and to comfort the mourners. In this liminal time, the successful death very much depended upon the presence and agency of the living.

Women often were at the center of the preparation of the corpse, a position, as we will see, that social reformers recognized and attempted to control. According to the investigations of Mary Chamberlain and Ruth Richardson, a female healer was charged with the laying out of dead bodies for the community. Women were "agents of continuity, particularly in poor communities, handling both new life as it came into the world and the sick, old and dying as it left."[11] In the nineteenth century, laying out was important to the collective grief of the community. These women performed a special service by closing the eyes, jaw, and mouth of the corpse; by washing and plugging orifices; by straightening limbs and trimming, shaving, and combing hair; and by dressing the body in its grave clothes.[12] For family and friends and for the future life of the soul, it was important to enact correct observances. This meant keeping the body at home for between five and ten days, as much "to give the dead person an opportunity of coming to life again, if his soul has not quite left his body, as to prepare mourning and the ceremonies of the funeral."[13] Family also needed the time to secure funds for the services.[14] If the laying out had been done correctly, then no seepage from the decomposing body would occur. The role of the layer out, then, did much to facilitate a decent burial in days when the corpse was the central figure in the ritual.

Once the body had been prepared, it was customary to keep it in a room where friends and relatives were invited to come and see it. The close proximity to the corpse, if not physical contact with it, conveyed religious as well as social claims even if by mid-century the working class had difficulty sustaining these claims, given the pressures to enact more "hygienic" burial procedures.

Other than the coffin and the religious service, according to Richardson, most of the components of working-class burial were provided by the community.[15] Apart from the actual burial service conducted at the gravesite, the funeral in popular culture included physical attention to the corpse, watching, waking, and viewing the body, some form of refreshment, and a lay ceremonial surrounding the transport of the coffin to church and grave.[16] Chadwick challenged these communal and domestic emphases in burial reform debates, which emerged in the late 1830s and early 1840s, because these rituals assumed reciprocal relationships between the living and the dead and threatened class structures that reformers thought were necessary for industrialization.

In contrast, the middle and upper classes, with their improved spending power, began to use the "respectable funeral" as an opportunity to make symbolic statements about their social worth, which more often than not boiled down to their monetary value.[17] Given these exigencies, the upper classes made an even greater use of the undertaker, someone outside the family or communal network, to care for their dead in a manner commensurate with their rank. The development of undertaking, as Ruth Richardson argues, presaged a fundamental shift of meaning from the funerals that antiquarians and folklorists sometimes witnessed and recorded. This shift "represented an invasion of commerce into a rite of passage; the substitution of cash for affective and older, more traditional social relations."[18] The working class, however, had little need for the undertaker's services, except to provide a coffin and, possibly, transportation. Otherwise, the family and community struggled to provide for what they deemed a "proper" burial that respected more traditional concepts of the dead body and its disposal.

Those people unfortunate enough to have died at the expense of the parish sustained a radically different burial from the ones just described. I mention the pauper funeral here because its specter motivated members of the working class to avoid its ignominy at whatever cost.[19] It represented to them the insensitivity of the New Poor Law of 1834, which denied to them social status by exiling them from necessary relationships in the community, especially at times of death when the community of mourners was the central vehicle for the soul's safe passage into the afterlife. The pauper funeral was something to be avoided because it was a public manifestation of one's failure to maintain a position in society, however lowly.[20] The covered hand cart, pushed by a hunched-up attendant, with the undertaker striding out in front and the mourners hurrying along behind, made a pathetic scene, as this refrain from a popular ballad testifies:

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

The pauper funeral epitomized not the communal and familial values of the traditional funeral, nor the intimate relation between soul and body that determined the shape of traditional burial practices. Instead, it publicly symbolized a person's complete exclusion from the community:

> Oh, where are the mourners? Alas! there are none;
> He has left not a gap in the world now he's gone;
> Not a tear in the eye of child, woman, or man:—
> To the grave with his carcass as fast as you can.[21]

The poor did whatever they could to avoid this disgraceful reality.

Key dimensions of the traditional working-class funeral in the first decades of the nineteenth century emphasized the importance of the local community to aid the future repose of the soul and to comfort the mourners, the domestic location of many of these practices, and the powerful need, among the lower ranks, to enact a decent ritual. Chadwick, on the other hand, called for practices that in effect redefined domestic space to exclude the dead by articulating that space's relation to the health of the national economy.[22]

II

Replete with statistical tables, diagrams of mortuary houses, an overwhelming accumulation of eyewitness accounts, summaries of scientific theories, and comprehensive administrative recommendations, the *Supplementary Report* primarily posits the dead body as a site of problematic social practices and the pivot for all manner of legal, social, political, and economic inquiry.[23] Most specifically, the effect of such positioning is to demean traditional ways of disposing of the dead as practiced by the poor and laboring classes and to idealize middle-class procedures that seek to sanitize death, removing it from any opportunity for exchange with the living through exhaustive administrative machinery. The organization of the report reveals this fluctuation between debasement and idealization. In alternating sections, Chadwick first presents, with deliberate horror, the baleful effects of practices that place the living in proximity to the dead, followed by a "superior economy of prevention," emphasizing regulation and surveillance to serve the interests of the state (*SR*, 73). At the heart of these maneuvers is Chadwick's overarching preoccupation with domesticity and its relation to the national economy.

Of primary concern to Chadwick is the reconfiguration of home life and the refinement of the "feelings" or the "sympathies" of those who live there. He begins with the home and moves outward, because he believed the home to be the center of his sanitary system, connected as it was to a whole network of sewers and water supplies. For Chadwick, the health of one depended upon the health of the other. Moreover, he underscores a predominant belief evident in burial reform discourse: environmental conditions determine the subjectivity of those who inhabit them. Upon such circumstances, wrote Walker, "depend the moral and social elevation or

depression of all sorts and conditions of mankind in the mass. Let circumstances be favorable, virtue and happiness will prevail,—let them be adverse,—vice and misery will abound."[24] Within the first paragraph of the report, then, Chadwick seems eager to draw attention to the relationship between home and burial by describing his report as an examination of "the effects produced on public health, by the practice of interring the dead amidst the habitations of the town population" (*SR*, 1). Confident that removing the corpse from the dwellings of survivors would be in keeping with what he imagines to be the feelings of the laboring class, Chadwick interviews everyone but those most affected by his proposal. Not once do we hear from them directly, but only about their degraded state from clergymen, physicians, and secretaries of burial and benefit clubs. Such a contradiction in Chadwick's method leaves the laboring class silent and makes him their primary spokesman. In contrast, Walker presented evidence from the testimony of those ranked in the lower orders and made concerted efforts to understand the complexity of burial reform for these people.[25] Chadwick, though, seems more concerned with the effects on the subjectivities of the laboring class if bodies are retained in their homes than on other issues that might, in part, determine their rituals of waking the dead.

To justify this shift for the working class from traditional burial practices to state burial procedures, Chadwick redeploys the miasma theory of disease to mark the working class as especially dangerous unless subject to his plans for reform. By the late 1830s and early 1840s, the miasma theory was presumed to have explained definitively—for a time at least—the generation of epidemic diseases. As Frank Mort so thoroughly defines it, "The theory held that under certain predictable circumstances the atmosphere became charged with an epidemic influence, which turned malignant when combined with effluvia of organic decomposition from the earth. The resulting miasma produced disease within the body."[26] Walker and the many witnesses who appeared before the 1842 House of Commons Select Committee on the Improvement of the Health of Towns testified to the deleterious effects of miasma emanating from the overcrowded churchyards. Story after story, piled as high as the bodies they describe, told of innocent bystanders, standing in graveyards and living in neighborhoods nearby, who succumbed: "[A]s if struck with a cannon ball . . . [they] fell back . . . and appeared instantly to expire."[27]

Ideologically, this theory of disease suited the scientific materialism of early social medicine.[28] At the level of public debate about intramural interment, miasma's disastrous and dangerous effects could be pointed to and graphically depicted as an argument against such practices. Previous to Chadwick, most discussions of miasma in burial reform discourse focused on graveyards, where the accumulation of decomposing bodies transformed the land into toxic waste sites. In effect, burial reformers mapped the geography of death, especially in London. In fact, Walker's own map, represented in *Gatherings from Graveyards*, anticipated Henry Mayhew's observation ten years later: "Indeed, so well known are the localities of fever and disease, that London would almost admit of being mapped out pathologically, and divided into its morbid districts and deadly cantons."[29]

Chadwick, however, focuses on the human agents of infection. By dismissing miasma from graveyards as "not an immediately appreciable evil," claiming instead that the deadliest miasma emanates from the body in the first two days after death (*SR*, 41), he marks and makes ready for reform those among the lower ranks living in their homes. Those in the middle class, to their credit, from Chadwick's perspective, were beyond the scope of his reform measures because, increasingly, they took advantage of the undertaker who would remove the body immediately from the home and arrange for burial either in a family vault or extramural cemetery. The very moment when working-class families and communities gathered to enact their burial rituals, Chadwick marks as the deadliest and calls for the immediate removal of the body from the dwelling. In an early passage that delineates the dangers of death occurring in single-room dwellings, Chadwick first begins with the most predictable argument about miasma—but with measured shifts in emphasis:

> When the dissolution has taken place under circumstances such as those described, it is not a few minutes' look after the last duties are performed and the body is composed in death and left in repose, that is given to this class of survivors, but the spectacle is protracted hour after hour through the day and night, and day after day, and night after night, thus aggravating the mental pains under varied circumstances, and increasing the dangers of permanent bodily injury. The sufferings of the survivors, especially of the widow of the labouring classes, are often protracted to a fatal extent. (*SR*, 44)

For Chadwick, "permanent bodily injury" among younger children means fatal disease. But for elder members of the family, the term's definition shifts away from the physical and slips into the moral: "Familiarity [with death] soon succeeds, and respect disappears" (*SR*, 44). Not surprisingly, then, given these definitions, it is the extended spectacle, the excessive time and attention spent on the dead, the increasing familiarity with death, and the commensurate mental anguish among the survivors that threaten the laboring classes, in the eyes of the middle classes, not the physical effects of effluvia. Befriending death effaces respect and demoralizes character. Quoting a clergyman who alleviated "the sufferings in several hundred death bed scenes in the abodes of the labouring classes" (*SR*, 45), Chadwick writes about the dangers of this proximity to the dead:

> From familiarity it is a short step to desecration. . . . Viewed as an outrage upon human feeling, this is bad enough; but who does not see that when the respect for the dead, that is, for the human form in its most awful state, is gone, the whole mass of social sympathies must be weakened— perhaps blighted and destroyed? (*SR*, 46)

Chadwick assumes that proximity to the corpse leads to disrespect, because he perceives proximity to be a threat to social survival. "The whole mass of social sympathies," which governs human relations, he believes, depends upon breaking any unity between life and death, disrupting any exchange between the two, and retaining "that wholesome fear of death which is the last hold upon a hardened conscience" (*SR*, 46). A consequence of his assumption that the proximity of the dead to the living threatens social survival, then, is that Chadwick must figure the working class as "disrespectful" and even dangerous. In this same section I have been analyzing, Chadwick associates these "disrespectful" burial practices among the working class with criminal behavior. Penal documents record "the habits of savage brutality and carelessness of life among the labouring population; but crimes, like sores, will commonly be found to be the result of wider influences than are externally manifest" (*SR*, 45). Apparently, in Chadwick's mind, familiarity with death, as enacted by the working class, threatens the fabric of society and fosters criminal behavior. By concentrating on the indoor effects of miasma, Chadwick shifts the terms of burial reform discourse. As Mackinnon's committee had suggested, no longer is the retention of the body simply a matter of health that must be assessed and solved by speedy extramural interment. Instead, Chadwick transforms the debate into an ideological pivot for social reform.

From Chadwick's middle-class viewpoint, the presence of the dead also becomes an obstacle to the poor's willingness to work. After all, he concludes, "a known effect on uneducated survivors of the frequency of death amongst youth or persons in the vigour of life is to create a reckless avidity for immediate enjoyment" (*SR*, 45). In another instance, Chadwick cites testimony from Mr. Thomas Porter, surgeon to St. Botolph's Bishopsgate District, who, when asked about the moral characteristics of the population parented by these depressing physical circumstances (the presence of the dead among the living), responded bluntly, "They have a decided unwillingness to labour. . . . They are more apt to resort to subterfuge to gain their ends without labour. . . . They will avoid it if they can. . . . The greatest part of them are mentally irritable and impatient under moral restraint" (*SR*, 231). To counter this potential complacency toward work, Chadwick, through the course of his report, appears to express a desire to retain a fear of death, thus "stay[ing] the progress of this dreadful demoralization" caused by miasma (*SR*, 46). Without the close presence of the corpse to remind the working class of life's inconsequence in the face of death, laborers sustain the necessary level of production, without either realizing that their efforts are futile or reflecting on the fact that they sacrifice themselves in other quotidian ways. As the testimony from Porter suggests, reflection on life's futility or work's incapacity to improve one's lot in life leads to irritability and impatience under "moral restraint." Chadwick seems to have understood that the social order, so necessary to industrialization, depended upon the toil and labor of workers who lived within the constraints imposed by masters.

In contrast, Mayhew refuses to make the correlation between the immediately harmful effects of miasma, when the body decomposes in domestic space peopled by widows and children, and the proper disposition of the labor force. In his reports in *The Morning Chronicle*, Mayhew interviews a dollmaker whose visage showed the marks not of a cadaver, which is the conclusion Chadwick draws when describing those who touch death, but of grinding poverty. Mayhew emphasizes the plaintive quality of the man and the scene:

> The man's manner was meek and subdued, and he did not parade either his grief or his poverty. He merely answered my questions, and to them he said: "Ah, sir, the children of the people who will be happy with my dolls little think under what circumstances they are made, nor do their parents—I wish they did. Awful circumstances in my room. Death there now (pointing to the coffin), and want here always."[30]

The dollmaker's self-conscious connection between death and "want" is exactly what Chadwick hopes to preclude in the minds of "his" laboring class. He wants to prevent interruption in production and forestall reflection on a vicious economic cycle that leaves people poor despite their long hours of work. At one point, he seems quite blatant about his complaints over corpses in the home: coffins use up space required for work. When deaths occur among the handloom weavers, for example, the corpse cannot be laid out without occupying the space where the family must work (the father or mother weaving, and the children winding or rendering other assistance).

Not only does the redeployment of miasma theory and its consequent focus on the home serve to emphasize the appropriate dispositions of workers, but it foregrounds gender in the complex network of death, home, and criminality. Chadwick was not, however, the first to do so. His contemporary, George Dorkin Lane, a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, testified before Mackinnon's 1842 Select Committee. In answer to a question about the circumstances of effluvia in "extremely low" neighborhoods of London, where "the people about are extremely dirty," Lane succinctly articulated this nexus that characterizes burial reform discussions:

> I would not confine [miasma] to the burial-ground; it is of little use to remove the burial-grounds unless you make them clean out the houses. It is not only the poor people who sell those things there [oysters and fish], but each of the apartments are let out to one or two girls, and they have their men, many of whom are thieves.[31]

Lane makes the easy and, by now, predictable associations among dirt, refuse, prostitution, and thievery with burial grounds, even though Mackinnon reminded Lane to confine his remarks to the effects of miasma.

But Chadwick permitted a much more extensive and explicit connection between prostitution and miasma than Mackinnon allowed in 1842. There runs in Chadwick's report an undercurrent of fear that widows, overcome with grief caused by miasma and bereft of sensibility, would be forced to abandon the home and work outdoors as prostitutes. Or, perhaps, as historical evidence suggests, Chadwick feared that these women would contaminate the home by being forced to live illicitly with a male laborer in order to earn enough income to feed the children.[32] No wonder, then, that Chadwick anchors women to the home during times of death. Assuming that the dead remain at home only because the family must raise enough funds for burial, Chadwick introduces the notion of a medical officer and national funeral service to prepare the arrangements for her. In effect, however, he confines the woman to a now-hygienic home and prevents her from circulating through town or participating in the national economy by having to negotiate with various parties for the burial of her husband.

In the microenvironment of the house, Chadwick wants to construct homes as spaces without dead bodies, to remove the dead quickly, efficiently, and anonymously by medical officers in order to free the home and its male occupants for work in the national economy and female occupants for work in the domestic economy. In the macroenvironment of the public sphere, Chadwick extends the work of medical officers beyond the home to the workplace, to further ensure behavior suitable to labor. Through the example discussed later of the Sheffield workers, highly paid laborers who could afford time away from work but who died at young ages, Chadwick argues that an officer of health who would "bring large classes of people within one intelligent view" could present clearly "common causes of evil" and suggest means of prevention (*SR*, 180). But Chadwick's discussion quickly slips from one concerned about physical defects and early mortality among the workers to one preoccupied with their moral defects, thus making the presence of the medical officer all the more essential. The example of the Sheffield workers, moreover, serves to emphasize Chadwick's desire to suppress political gatherings that occur in graveyards, a space—not unlike the home—he wants to liberate from communal expressions of working-class solidarity. In their place, Chadwick, by quoting Wordsworth on the nature of churchyards, recommends the individualization of death, a useful social practice to curb volatile political unrest.

Buried in a section of the report praising the extreme advantages of medical officers to discern "the indication of the certain means of prevention of disease" (*SR*, 178), Chadwick cites Dr. Calvert Holland's study of the physical and moral condition of the cutlers' dry grinders of Sheffield to justify his anxiety over unsuitable behavior for laborers. The dry grinders, men who ground, polished, and finished knives, suffered from early mortality, dying between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-two from lung disease. According to a critic for *The Westminster Review*, they opposed any effort to modify the ravages of the trade.[33] On one level, Chadwick simply argues for bringing these cases of early death

before an officer of health who would mark patterns in the disease and suggest means for its prevention. But neither the disease nor high mortality unnerves Chadwick. What worries him is the causal relationship between high income levels, which the grinders enjoyed, and their increased access to leisure. When trade was good, they would only work part of the week. They spent the remainder of the time in the rest and dissipation characteristic of soldiers:

> Many of them each kept a hound, and had it trained by a master of the hunt, and their several hounds formed a pack with which they hunted lawlessly, and poached over any grounds within their reach. The grinders pack is still kept up amongst them. They became reckless in their marriages. (*SR*, 180)

The commentator for *The Westminster Review* reiterates the reproach. They devoted Mondays to drink and the amusement of the hunt "with a perfect knowledge of their doomed lives; on Sundays one could meet group after group of boys and young men playing at pitch-penny, fighting their bull dogs, and insulting every decently dressed passenger."[34] The central tenet of Chadwick's argument is economic: because the supply of labor is kept low, wages are kept high, allowing the grinders to enjoy more leisure time to appropriate an activity that rightfully belonged to the higher classes.

A major subtext to the example of the Sheffield workers involves the use of public space. Already piqued by their "poaching over any grounds within their reach," Chadwick joins the battle to control territories previously available to the working class. One of these territories is the space of the grave. What bothered Chadwick and other reformers was the use the working class made of churchyards, grounds hotly contested in the late 1830s in Sheffield. I believe this historical moment, which Eileen Yeo has investigated extensively, to be the referent for Chadwick's anxiety. Yeo maps the geography of Chartist struggles in Sheffield and, in fact, claims that these demonstrations were dramatic battles for territory.[35] In Sheffield, after two weeks of demonstrations in the summer of 1839, the Anglican churchwardens posted notices against congregating in the churchyard in answer to Chartist protests against the Anglican Church's participation in the enclosure of public property and the church's dismissal of their concerns.

Over the course of two weeks, the Chartists staged silent demonstrations, proceeding from Paradise Square to the church. On Wednesday, September 11, 1839, however, the magistrates issued placards declaring illegal any further meetings, which had swelled to 8,000 earlier in the week. Nonetheless, 2,000 people assembled in Paradise Square, which was that night in darkness because the gas lighting had been extinguished. The cavalry came to clear the square and there ensued a chase up and down the streets of Sheffield. Many of the Chartists took refuge in the churchyard, although they were later driven out. In all, thirty-six were arrested that night. On the following Sunday, September 15, the Chartists

once again marched to the church to find the churchyard surrounded by armed policemen at the gates. They prevented any person who looked poor from entering the burial ground. A reporter for the *Sheffield Iris* wrote:

> An extraordinary exhibition, in England, to see a dozen policemen armed with cutlasses surrounding the churchyard gates on the outside, a posse of constables inside, and special constables stationed about five or six yards apart around the inside of the railings, admitting only those who had good coats on their backs, and whose respectable external appearance would warrant the conclusion that they were not Chartists. The "Poor Man's Church" now calls in the aid of the civil power and the military to prevent the poor from contaminating with their presence the cushioned pew and velvet hassocks of her more wealthy and aristocratic sons.[36]

These political activities, perhaps instigated by men with too much time on their hands, motivate the resistance by Chadwick and his own throng of witnesses to any form of congregation in churchyards, especially amid the bustle of city life. Naturally, within the logic of the discourse, the congregation turns into a mob whose willful disturbances add to the usual uproar of a crowded thoroughfare noisy with "whistling, calling, shouting, and the creaking and rattling of every kind of vehicle" (*SR*, 83).

Such behavior, considered so foul by the reformers, actually constitutes a form of resistance to the middle-class fashioning of communal space and its uses. This opposition becomes apparent if one considers the context of the trade funeral, which was suppressed in late 1834 because it was assumed to foster political activity among the unions. In March 1834, *The Pioneer* reported that in Tunbridge, before an extensive trade funeral, "Unions only initiated about four or five members a week; but since the procession they have initiated in two nights twenty-two, and expect a dozen or fifteen more next week. They nearly have trebled their numbers by means of the ceremonial."[37] Among the shoemakers of Northampton, M. J. Haynes attests, consolidation of their union activity and a key turning point for them in the county occurred at the funeral of Henry Dawson, a local shoemaker.[38] His funeral, which took place on a Monday evening at the beginning of April, turned into a massive procession around Northampton, organized by the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union (GNCTU). Led by some 100 women with nearly 800 unionists following in the cortege, the procession marched around town before Dawson was buried in the local churchyard. According to Haynes, nearly 2,000 people, excluding those who actually marched, witnessed the funeral and perceived it to be a first step toward a general strike.[39]

With the suppression of the trade funeral in late 1834, which prohibited a form of collective action taken by the laboring class, workers seemed to resist the individualizing thrust of more recent funerals, a thrust that Chadwick sponsors.

Chadwick quotes the testimony of Rev. William Stone of Spitalfields in an effort to show that dissatisfaction with intramural burial centers less on sanitary measures than on an aversion to "the profanation arising from interment amidst the scenes of the crowd and bustle of everyday life" (*SR*, 84). Stone's evidence also reveals his annoyance with the working-class desire to have the funeral remain a collective action very much connected to the life of the community:

> If, in such a case, the corpse is brought into my church, this sacred and beautiful structure is desecrated and disfigured by the hurried intrusion of a squalid and irreverent mob, and clergyman, corpse, and mourners are jostled about and mixed up with the confused mass, by the uncontrollable pressure from without . . . for I believe that among the working classes they often congratulate themselves upon it. (*SR*, 84)

Amid this faceless mob and "reckless din of secular traffic," Stone labors under the "indescribable uneasiness" of feeling out of place: "I feel as if I were prostituting the spirituality of prayer, and profaning even the symbolical sanctity of my surplice" (*SR*, 83). As a result of this tension between the curate's desire for a quiet, harmonious funeral emphasizing the individual life and its singular redemption through the labor of the minister and the community's insistence on respecting collective values, in which political, social, and economic questions were not partitioned, burial reformers disallowed walking funerals and Sunday funerals, the only day working-class families and friends could gather to bury their dead.

Instead, Chadwick evacuates the churchyard of any overt political and social turmoil by citing a lengthy passage from Wordsworth's "Essay upon Epitaphs," published by Coleridge in *The Friend* on February 22, 1810.[40] In the excerpt that Chadwick quotes, Wordsworth privileges the moral seclusion of the burial ground, the monitory virtue of tombs, and, ultimately, the solitary traveler who finds meaning in his or her life, not through social relations, but by reflection on epitaphs. The place is meant to inspire people to connect with themselves, not with the person who has passed nor with a community of mourners. The monuments interpellate the Wordsworthian subject by asking him or her to pause and reflect awhile on the analogies of life presented there. Beckoning the traveler to consider life's vicissitudes as naturalized, the gravestones, in effect, lure the subject to construct a private, interior life through the use of imagination: "Many tender similitudes must these objects have presented to the mind of the traveller" (*SR*, 143). Wordsworth leaves only the single subject standing before tombs figured as silent monitors, whose existence have value not because they symbolize the span of a person's life, but because they serve to fashion in the contemplative subject an individual identity. For Wordsworth, and for Chadwick who quotes him, death, "disarmed of its sting, and affliction *unsubstantialised*," is meant to be buried in an individual consciousness, there to give birth to a singular subjectivity.[41]

Karen Sanchez-Eppler notes the irony of early burial reformers citing Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs* to further their arguments for the improvement of churchyards and gravestones.[42] Wordsworth, according to Sanchez-Eppler, insists on "the fluidity of the very dividing line that the burial reformers wished to install when they made even graveyards places of 'order, regularity, and contrivance.'"[43] For Wordsworth, visits to gravesites, their memorials and the epitaphs written upon them, aim to disinter the contradictions concerning death that Chadwick and others sought to resolve. One's presence among the dead, and the internalization of language written about them, unveils grief, a chief source of poetic thought. In yet another ironic twist, Wordsworth, in speaking of the relationship of death and language, "has used thought to replace the dead body in need of flesh."[44] Wordsworth disregards the corpse in order to take comfort in meditation.[45]

Chadwick works Wordsworth to political advantage, because he creates what he perceives to be a necessary link between the successfully contained interior subject and the properly compartmentalized public sphere. Invoking Wordsworth, then, becomes a political response to the increasingly chaotic times evidenced in Victorian deathways. Chadwick also anticipates later Victorian strategies to develop a liberal subject, who, in Elaine Hadley's poignant definition, "seeks out a private space of thoughtful emotion, of human intimacy, where subjects alienated in mind or body can become fully authentic and intentional in relation to themselves and to each other, in spite of the chaotic world without."[46] In Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," for example, the speaker reduces what Sophocles heard as the "turbid ebb and flow of human misery" to a long, melancholic thought in the face of a world bereft of joy, love, light, certitude, and peace.[47] Thomas Carlyle, too, expresses anxiety about whether his own thoughtful endeavors in *Past and Present* will amount to anything, even though his literary Captains of Industry seek to restore some salience of dignity and morality to economic relations. He wonders plaintively: "Certainly it were a fond imagination to expect that any preaching of mine could abate Mammonism; that Bobus of Houndsditch will love his guineas less, or his poor soul more, for any preaching of mine."[48] Carlyle struggles with whether writing will make a difference in the world or whether it too ultimately retreats from agency because it can only represent social change rather than actually produce it.

<div align="center">III</div>

Chadwick's invocation of Wordsworth steadies his own reach into a self-reflective professionalism. His enunciation of the waste problem caused by unregulated burial practices also demands his solution. The professional bureaucrat will indeed have the last word in the *Supplementary Report* because, as Harold Perkin has written, the pressure of intolerable facts led to a professional ideal of "efficient, disinterested and, in the administrative solution of social problems, effective

government."[49] Chadwick believed wholeheartedly in this ideal and so chose to mitigate the waste problem with state intervention. On December 22, 1843, *The Times* published a response to Chadwick's *Supplementary Report* using terms Chadwick deploys throughout the course of his text: "That these [burial] practices should be put down is abundantly clear; but the question is, what system is to be substituted in their room?" Through systems of surveillance and classification, Chadwick enters the "rooms" and, therefore, the lives of the poor and working classes of England. His overarching conceptual scheme of comprehensive national solutions to the problem of intramural interment calls for medical officers, mortuary houses, and cemeteries to monitor the daily patterns of working-class people, whether dead or alive. Chadwick's proposed structures, grounded as they are in visual and spatial organization, inspire further reflection on the relationship of these kinds of spatial entities to the written discourse of burial reform. Specifically, his discussion of the regulatory powers of the medical officers, the formation of reception houses for the dead, and the architecture of the cemetery shapes as well class relations and the disposition of state power at mid-century.

Chadwick's introduction of medical men into the cause of burial reform provided access to various forms of knowledge the state thought essential to have about the working and poorest classes. It would be the duty of these men to inspect the corpse and note the cause of death, to give proper instructions on the immediate removal of the body to the reception house, and to inform the family of the schedule of rates for funeral and burial services. "The ordinary service of such an officer would consist of the verification of the fact and cause of death, and its due civic registration" (*SR*, 159). Especially with respect to the poorest classes, "those who stand most in need of verification," the chief importance of the medical officer is to bring into places rarely entered a person of education, a "trustworthy" person, to provide counsel and direction to survivors and "guide a change of the practice of interment" (*SR*, 165, 159).

In addition, because Chadwick viewed registration of the dead as a means to prevent crime, he insists that registration would expose the criminal element among these classes by discerning fraud and secret murder, namely, infanticide from drug overdoses. "Proper securities are wanting for the protection of life in this country, leav[ing] the widest openings for escape of the darkest crimes" (*SR*, 172, 171). Engaging the panoptic technology, the medical officer would dominate the visual field of the body, the home and the neighborhood, exploring and recording names, ages, addresses, occupations, marital status, social class, and sites of death in the name of an invigorated system of government increasingly defined by new forms of taxonomies. He would occupy a single vantage point from which he could bring under one informed view all the causes of crime and disease by observing large populations, studying their responses to changed environments, and furnishing an accurate diagnosis so that preventative action could take place.[50]

The medical officer not only stands guard over the space of the living but keeps watch over the dead in the sanitized reception houses. These "houses,"

models of which Chadwick culled from German mortuary practices, emphasized security against premature burial. According to the Frankfurt regulations of 1829, found in the Appendix to Chadwick's report, the house was to be under the control of a cemetery inspector (*SR*, 205–17). The officer lived on the premises and was not allowed to leave during the time any corpse lay in the mortuary. The bodies were placed in separate rooms, and a bell was attached to each corpse by a cord, in case the person was indeed alive and needed to summon assistance. Ironically, given Chadwick's insistence that miasma is most fatal in the two or three days immediately following death, the medical officer nonetheless had to keep constant watch over the body until definitive signs of decomposition appeared. With Chadwick's introduction of the reception house into English burial reform, death was policed in ever-greater detail. Furthermore, the transfer of a corpse from domestic space for the dead to a cleansed dwelling represents a simultaneous transformation of English society. The reception house, devoid of family and friends, patrolled by an officer of the state, demarcated by boundaries heretofore nonexistent, becomes a metaphor for the developing perception of the working class by middle-class reformers. Increasingly mistrusted (the body only appears to be dead), subject to surveillance and regulation, isolated from traditional forms of community, and placed in a single-room dwelling, the working class subject takes its subordinate position in English life.

While mortuary houses represent the working class as subservient, national cemeteries depict it as liberated in order to exert "a great moral force" on the public (*SR*, 146). In Section XIV on the necessity of national cemeteries, Chadwick claims that

> the greater part of the means of honour and moral influence on the living generation derivable from the example of the meritorious dead of all classes [especially those "who have risen from the wheelbarrow"] is at present in the larger town cast away in obscure grave-yards and offensive charnels. (*SR*, 146, 147)

He infers that the waste evident in unregulated burial grounds is an opportunity to provide incentives for moral improvement. Nothing suits him more than recovering the lives—figured as "waste" in death—of those from the working class who "had done honour to their country and individually gained public attention from the ranks of the privates" (*SR*, 146).

Chadwick, in the *Supplementary Report*, moves from the establishment of mortuary houses outward to a discussion of national cemeteries and the work of Loudon, whose efforts Chadwick applauds.[51] Of uppermost concern to Chadwick is the visual impact these cemeteries will have on the population: "Careful visible arrangements, of an agreeable nature, raise corresponding mental images and associations which diminish the terrors incident to the aspect of death" (*SR*, 144).

In mollifying a reality so familiar to certain segments of the population, Chadwick hopes to soften the memory of an arduous life spent to improve the lot of the higher orders and to offer comfort that is prohibited in life.

> All the structural and decorative arrangements of the national cemetery should be made . . . under the conviction that in rendering attractive that place we are preparing *the* picture which is most frequently present to the minds of the poorest, in the hours of mental and bodily infirmity, and the last picture on earth presented to his contemplation before dissolution." (*SR*, 190)
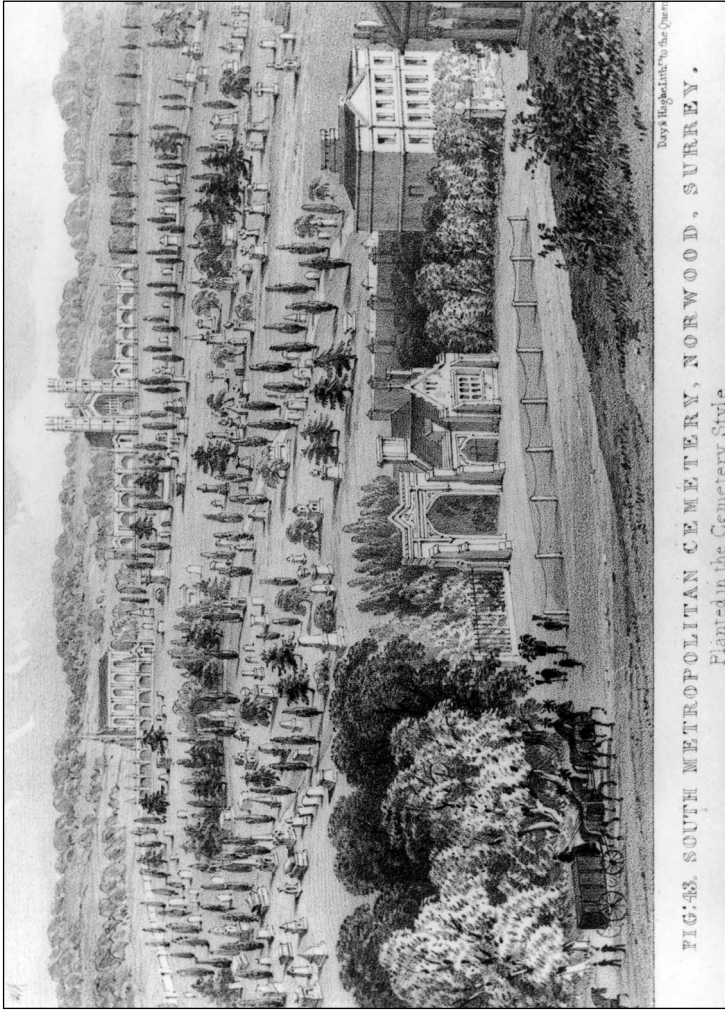
Chadwick seems panicked by grief and the concomitant depression, because he views psychological depression among workers as identical to economic depression. He, therefore, must transform the psychological dispositions of working-class mourners. Because the cemetery is a national institution in Chadwick's mind, the state, the "we" of the passage just quoted, transforms the cemetery into a vision of the afterlife internalized in the imaginations of the living, representing, in effect, heaven on earth. He constructs, then, the promise of salvation, the spiritual compensation to be paid to those who sacrificed themselves while on earth. The construction of the cemetery as a picture painted in public space that then is translated into the minds of the sick serves to emphasize continuity between this life and the next, a continuity that Chadwick has redefined according to state interests. This vision transforms Chadwick's anxiety over the public congregation of working men, evident in his response to trade funerals, to enthusiasm for an "association in sepulture," in which those of particular trades could be buried in the same precinct and the living could visit these illustrious dead, "giving to them a wider sphere of attention, honour, and beneficent influence" (*SR*, 150). Chadwick allows these sorts of associations because they take place within the state-controlled space of the new cemeteries, and because they direct attention to the dead and to imaginative images of another apolitical world.

The work of revising the role of the cemetery in the lives of survivors Chadwick shares with Loudon, editor of *The Gardener's Magazine* and devoted landscape architect.[52] Much of what Chadwick proposes—separate graves at least six feet deep with adequate space between them and a safe and protected distance from local habitations, morally uplifting visual arrangements, and careful attention to the cultivation of breathing spaces to disarm the effects of miasma—Loudon explicates in his definitive text *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries; and on the Improvement of Churchyards* (1843).[53] Since Chadwick admits that this text underwrites his own principles for cemetery design, it is worthy of some discussion here for its enunciation of the twin effects of mid-century cemetery design: the isolation and containment of death and the reformation of the lower class to serve the interests of the wealthy.

Loudon's engraving of the South Metropolitan Cemetery (Figure 1.1)—which is not one of his own designs but is emblematic of so many engravings of newly developed cemeteries at this time—presents a scene designed to turn the viewer's attention upright, away from death.[54] The eye of the viewer is not drawn mainly to the hearse in the lower left, which, along with its attendant mutes, is marching inexorably from the city limits to some black hole of a grave. The eye is drawn, rather, to the dark portal and dense vegetation in the middle foreground, and thence up the hill, following the path in the center foreground toward the two chapels on the brow of the hill, and finally beyond the chapels, into the horizon. In the lower foreground, the fence, trees, and shrubbery, in addition to the cemetery offices and caretaker's residence, substantially demarcate the dead from the living. Once inside the cemetery, however, one's view is directed upward to the top of the hill—toward heaven—and away from individual graves by the conical shapes of the trees planted systematically throughout the grounds. The eye follows along the path, which curves upward from right to left, promoting movement through the cemetery. The path seems fluid, moving the imagined visitor quietly but deliberately from the boundary of the cemetery's main entrance to the chapels, Anglican and Nonconformist, where the visitor is invited to reflect, with the aid of religious burial services, not on the horrors of a grisly death but on the possibility of individual redemption, determined in large measure by the quality of the moral life on earth.[55] On the whole, the engraving makes the passage through death seem restful, natural, and almost desirable. The viewer, seemingly the most active person in the scene, begins by looking down on death from an aerial perspective but then moves quickly through death's center among the graves, returning ultimately to the same aerial plane with the attention redirected, eyeing the sky.[56]

The graves in the scene—marked by monuments nearly indistinguishable from the narrow, columnar trees, the combined effect of which is to draw the eye upward—follow the curves of the path and show no visible signs of ever having been dug. Presumably, according to Loudian principles, which were endorsed by Chadwick and that author's own emphasis on the necessary individuality of death, each grave must contain only one body, or, if more than one body, coffins must be stacked one on top of the other, separated by graveboards, protecting stones, and at least six feet of dirt. In other words, while a family may be buried together in the same deep and rather large plot, each individual member must, according to Chadwick, be separated from the others by concrete or wooden boundaries.[57]

The Victorian marriage of pragmatism with morality, so evident in Chadwick's requirements, is manifested likewise in Loudon's declaration of his two purposes in cemetery designs: first, "the disposal of the remains of the dead in such a manner as that their decomposition, and return to the earth from which they sprung, shall not prove injurious to the living; either by affecting their health, or shocking their feelings, opinions, or prejudices"; and second "is, or ought to be, the improvement of the moral sentiments and general taste of all

FIG: 43. SOUTH METROPOLITAN CEMETERY, NORWOOD, SURREY.
Planted in the Cemetery Style

Day & Haghe Lith to the Queen

Figure 1.1 South Metropolitan Cemetery, Norwood, Surrey. Planted in the cemetery style. John Claudius Loudon, *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries; and on the Improvement of Churchyards; with Sixty Engravings* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1843). Used with the generous permission of the Missouri Botanical Garden Library.

classes, and more especially the great masses of society."[58] To achieve this advance in morality, Loudon suggests that the monuments in a churchyard should act as the conscience and monitor of human behavior. A well-designed cemetery, Loudon claims, develops the value of mercy and portrays vice as ugly, virtue as lovely, selfishness as a sin, and patriotism as a duty.[59] Loudon's emphasis on the moral life also is apparent in his renovations of existing churchyards, which Chadwick, in his own report, wanted closed to further burials in order to make space available for public leisure.

Figure 1.2 shows one of these renovation schemes, an extraordinarily contained plan, considering the randomness with which the graves had been plotted and the irregularity in the designs of the monuments. Loudon's dark borders framing the burial ground and the lines drawn to show where the walks may be laid indicate a compulsion to order and control a reality that had developed beyond its proper borders and a desire to engender a taste for neatness and habits of cleanliness, the bedrock of Victorian moral life.

Cemeteries are not only scenes calculated to segregate death from society and to improve the morals and taste of the great masses, they shape the identity of the masses in relation to the upper classes. In one instance, Loudon argues that cemeteries serve as historical records, with every grave a "page and every head-stone or tomb a picture or engraving."[60] Just as Chadwick hopes to revise one's contemplation of the afterlife, he wants to extend and improve the cemetery as a text for national education since, as he points out, no effective system had yet been established. As he describes it, a promenade through the burial ground is analogous to the perusal of a pamphlet on local history. Despite "the progress of education and refinement," cemeteries can still serve "the poor man [as] a local history and biography, though the means of more extended knowledge are now amply furnished by the diffusion of cheap publications, which will . . . be rendered still more effective by the establishment of a system of national education."[61] In essence, however, a cemetery education teaches the history of class relations, since only those who could afford a monument could be read, with all others, paupers and those buried in common graves, remaining unread and outside of history.

In a second instance of using cemeteries to shape the identity of the masses in relation to the upper classes, Loudon suggests that to sustain morally uplifting environments in the burial ground families should erect "handsome monuments."[62] For each of these structures to have its full effect on the spectator, paupers' graves should be interspersed among the grander plots, which would achieve the desired aesthetic and moral dimensions. Upper-class monuments would thus tower above lower-class plots. By this arrangement, the masses are fractured into serviceable units, while the morally uplifting memorials to the wealthy are enhanced.

Finally, in a plan for creating temporary cemeteries, Loudon establishes class identities by transforming the bodies of paupers into the literal property of a landowner. Land would be leased for twenty-one years and used as a burial ground