

One Foot in the Grave, One Eye to the Sky: Conflicting Views on Death in a Developing 19th Century America

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A reality which mystified many 19th century Americans was the concept of death. Americans were talking about and outwardly struggling with the effects of death, unlike in previous years when death was treated as a mute subject not to be discussed. High infant mortality rates, short life spans, and Civil War casualties kept death in at the foreground of American culture, forcing many people to confront not only its finality, but for the first time, the deep impact it left on the dead's loved ones. On the whole, many citizens were adopting new ways of seeing and coping with death, loss, grief, religion, and spirituality far differently than their 17th and 18th century predecessors. The American graveyard became the "cemetery," more of a naturalistic park than an unsanitary burial ground for the dead. Grave monuments and tombstone art evolved to reflect the change in perspective, representing new images and inscriptions to memorialize the dead. Writers, poets, and thinkers revealed conflicting ideas in their works. In an essay discussing the historical archeology of mortuary behavior, Edward Bell states, "similarly, death and heaven were idealized in popular literature" (58).

Through critically analyzing 19th century art, architecture, literature, and mortuary practices, it is evident that Americans were struggling to come to a unified meaning that would not only define death but would also give mourners a way to manage grief. New views were heavily influenced by Victorian, Romantic, Transcendentalist, and Realist perspectives that arose in the 1800s, and artistic and literary pieces contained evidence of these movements. However, the reality of death and the impact it left on mourners clearly reflects lingering Puritanical and Calvinist perspectives, such as being realistic about the afterlife, however negatively afflicted by the uncertainty of God's intentions. In the Introduction of a 2011 review of Peter Balaam's

Misery's Mathematics: Mourning, Compensation, and Reality in Antebellum Literature, Peter Gibian states,

Cultural historians have long recognized a seeming paradox of Victorian American life: the same culture that urged a turn away from introspection through strenuous engagement in public life (Work! Produce!) was also obsessed with the scene of death and burial, encouraging public, often histrionic displays of grief as key expressions of its sentimental, middle-class values. (99)

Perhaps the outward expressions of the grief-stricken were an attempt at combating the isolation that loss precipitated. Or, maybe these "displays" were citizens' ways of connecting with each other over an experience that was collectively shared, rather than suffer alone in silence. Gibian comments on a study conducted by Philippe Aries of Western attitudes on death. Gibian says that

Aries “described a gradual shift in focus during the nineteenth century from the deceased to the mourner, from the objective fact of death to subjective responses to death in those who survive, and from a stress on the loss of the departed to an emphasis on what is gained—the moral lessons that could be learned through this process of grieving” (99). Certainly, Americans used the experience and representations of death to construct uniquely American virtues regarding life.

The variety of representations of these responses to death in both art and literature all reveal a nation at odds, working against the backdrop of rapid progress and driven by a desire for a collective identity, but struggling to fully buy into the new perspectives on death and the afterlife because mourners found that these new approaches indeed did not alleviate the soul’s suffering. Many artistic and literary representations of death in the 19th century contained this tension: a struggle to assume enlightened, peaceful, and beautified beliefs about death and the afterlife, while continuing to experience suffering the agony of grief. The results offer a scope into the conflicted souls of the 19th century survivors of loss. This essay seeks to reveal and examine this friction as it appears in 19th century art, literature and mortuary practices.

Painters, architects, sculptors, poets, and novelists, all inspired by a variety of major transformative experiences including the Industrial Revolution, the Civil War, and the wave of social reform that occurred in the 1800s, addressed the complex subject of death in droves. New perspectives arose regarding the various subtopics of death, which included the “art” of dying, burial practices, tombstone art, cemetery design, the afterlife, and coping with grief, showing that death was an extremely active subject in the nation. Artists and architects joined the conversation through paintings, tombstone carvings, and cemetery design. Writers wrote letters, poems, and novels, while anthologies of “death poems” were beginning to be published, along with pamphlets, manuals, and essays which offered advice on mourning and consolation (Gibian 100). The means by which people handled and viewed death had transformed drastically since the birth of the colonies. To fully understand the struggle that 19th century Americans faced in defining the meaning of death, it is necessary to take a look at beliefs and practices regarding death in earlier centuries.

In the 17th & early 18th centuries, premature death was very common, in contrast to today’s life spans which can often reach ninety or one hundred years old. Epidemics and war took many, many young lives, and even babies and young children were not spared this grim reality. In the earliest American colonial days, Puritan views on death were stern, cold, and serious. Their beliefs also contained a friction within, as the following extract from Mintz reveals:

A deep, underlying tension characterized the Puritan view of death. On the one hand, in line with a long Christian tradition, the Puritans viewed death as a blessed release from the trials of this world into the joys of everlasting life. At the same time, the Puritans regarded death as God’s punishment for human sinfulness and on their deathbeds many New Englanders trembled with fear that they might suffer eternal damnation

in Hell.

From their earliest upbringing, Puritans were taught to fear death. Ministers terrorized young children with graphic descriptions of Hell and the horrors of eternal damnation and told them that at the Last Judgment their own parents would testify against them. Fear of death was also inculcated by showing young children corpses and public hangings. (Mintz)

Because of these beliefs, that God was unforgiving and heaven was reserved for a select few, burial practices and funerals were quite unsophisticated. Artistry and decoration mattered not in a funeral service for the dead. Consolation for the surviving loved ones seemed out of line with the belief system. In a funeral, there was no emphasis on giving the corpse special attention, and burial was never near the place of worship:

Funeral sermons offered no individual eulogies for the dead and funeral monuments were kept plain and simple. The first grave markers were wooden and early grave stones contained words but no designs because the Puritans thought that the Second Commandment prohibited the use of graven images. Elaborate funerals or headstones seemed like idolatry. (Mintz)

In the late 17th century, the approach to death and funerals began to transform. It was in these years that the view of death arose as being a “temporary separation” with loved ones. More attention was paid to the pageantry of a funeral service, and the images and words on tombstones and grave sites were changing. Early tombstones and markers often bore symbols associated with fear:

Especially after the Great Awakening - the intense religious revival that swept the American colonies beginning in the 1720s - attitudes toward death began to change. Where, in the seventeenth century, children were told to fear death, they were increasingly told in the eighteenth century look forward to death as a reunion with God and their parents. Adults, in turn, were increasingly assured that a life of active piety assured salvation.

In cemeteries, which were now described as ‘dormitories,’ winged cherubs replaced the grisly death’s heads and winged skulls that marked early Puritan graves. Republican symbols - such as urns and willows - began to appear in graveyards after the American revolution and the discovery of the archaeological remains at Pompeii. The wording on gravestones also changed - reflecting a dramatic transformation in American views of death. Instead of saying, ‘Here lies buried the body of,’ inscriptions began to read, ‘here rests the soul of,’ suggesting that while the corporeal body might decay the soul survived. (Mintz)

Upon entering the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the frightening images of finality and phrases which focused on the physical fact that death took life from the body which adorned older tombstones were being replaced by angels, plants, flowers, and urns, and epitaphs which expressed sentiments on the deceased's soul or spirit, rather than the body itself. This quote needs an introductory phrase:

An analysis of the motifs on the stones in the Forbes collection shows that in the period from 1675 to 1800, the prevalence of the skull/skeleton motif diminished from being almost exclusive to being present on about one in every thirty stones. During the same period, the frequency of the winged-face motif increased from about one in ten stones to nearly one in two; that is, at the turn of the century, almost half of the stones were decorated with the winged face. (Farber 21)

Mortuary practices also transformed. Coffins, which were wooden, octagon-shaped, flat-sided modest boxes for holding the dead, were renamed as “caskets” in the 19th century. One reason why the name changed was because of shifting religious beliefs. Another reason their name changed was due to the development of coffin-making as a growing industry. Earlier, sea travel was far too slow to depend on imported coffins, so early colonists took to the construction of coffins themselves. By the 19th century industrialization turned a necessary practice into a business. All of these changes surrounding the treatment of death were a result of a cultural shift which included the development of mass media, transportation, industry and a rising economy.

This collective movement of physical, visible changes in American representations of death from the 18th to the 19th century was the overarching movement called “the beautification of death.” In an journal article discussing the archeological history of coffin hardware produced in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, Edward Bell describes the beautification of death: “...this Romantic movement idealized death and heaven through ideological, behavioral, and material transformations” (Bell 54). In other words, death and the afterlife were viewed with a sentimentality that greatly contrasted the 17th and early to mid-18th century views of death, which were of a very realistic, unemotional nature. Beautification was a practice adopted with the sole purpose of making death appear less harsh and more peaceful and serene for the mourner. This impacted actual death—burial practices, funeral services—and the representation of death in art and literature, which contained images and expressions exhibiting the grief and coping mechanisms of the mourner, ideas about heaven, and the realm of the afterlife.

In the early part of the 19th century, one category of art by which mourning was represented was the memorial picture. This type of image carries an important significance: it was an artistic style that truly belonged to the female sector of society. In Laverne Muto's essay titled, “A Feminist Art--The American Memorial Picture,” she describes the significant role females played in helping mold this important aspect of art and social history. She says “but at no other place or time did women in art work at art in such great numbers as the young ladies of the late 18th and the first half of the 19th century in the eastern and

southern states of America” (Muto 352). The widespread emergence of the memorial picture further emphasizes 19th century preoccupation with death. Young women’s plunge into the ubiquitous creation of this particular image was a result of education reform in the Northeast after the Revolutionary War. Bostonians, especially, were committed to educating both genders, unlike prior to the establishment of the new nation.

Because views of education changed during the American Revolution, young girls were given more opportunities and encouraged to go to school beyond the elementary level. Private coeducational and all-girls schools taught the basic subjects as well as “extras,” including different types of art. During these years, memorial pictures filled the homes of almost every American. The standard features of the image showed “a mourning figure standing over a tombstone in a tree-filled landscape” (Muto 353). The first-known introduction of the mourning picture to Americans was painting titled *Fame Decorating the Tomb of Shakespeare* by Angelica Kauffmann. American girls began copying the image, which “was put on ceramics, paper, and printed cotton” (Schorsch 8), as well as depicted through needlework and embroidery. The image was highly inspirational to women and impacted their feminine self-image. The image was copied and spread throughout the country as a “part of the deep yearning for good taste, encouraged by a belief that the nation’s moral fiber depended on it” (Schorsch 11). Through the image, grief was put on display and mass produced, reflecting the industrial fervor of the time.

Though the image of a mourning person dates back to fifth century B.C. in Greece, and though directly influenced by the “18th century English and French prototypes” (Muto 353), the American form of the memorial picture developed its own stamp of individuality through a handful of motifs that can be found across the board in these images. The figure is most often a female appearing alone, holding a handkerchief in front of her face, in a pose meant to express grief. Introductory phrase: “The posture of grief is expressed most often by the mourner leaning one elbow on the monument, hand to face” (Muto 353). The tension in the mourning picture lies in its juxtaposed representations of grief. The female figure is clearly downcast and in despair, however the symbols and motifs which adorn the landscape surrounding her contrast her dismal state.

Each motif symbolized the new, more peaceful ideas on death and the afterlife: “In the culture of the period the interpretations most readily assigned to these symbols are the following: the willow identified with sadness; the church with faith and hope; the withering oak tree with transitory life; the house with the earthly home; the pine tree with everlasting life; the sea with tears; and the ship with departure” (Muto 353). Each of the symbolic meanings embedded in the memorial image reflects changing views of death and the afterlife, from a finality of the dying, and then dead, physical body, to a more spiritual sense of the entire experience of death in all of its impacts, on the dead and on the surviving. In other words, people did not simply think of death anymore as an experience that solely took the breath from the body; new views meant an awareness of the spiritual implications of death, as well as the impact it left on the surviving

loved ones.

According to Muto, “some interpreters of these memorial paintings feel they express a more realistic acceptance of death and because of the high mortality rate of young children at this time, others feel that the memorials reflect an all-pervasive 19th century preoccupation with the thought of death” (Muto 358). However, the image itself and its ubiquity in 19th century American homes reinforces the idea that Americans were highly consumed by the role of death in their lives. Clearly, “Fame” had a strong impact on the nation. In England and Rome, memorial pictures were created only to honor key figures, such as Shakespeare. However, in America, the memorial picture would be created to honor the well-known and the average citizen. Families adopted the mourning picture to memorialize loved ones who had passed. “The elegant mourner “Fame” became the new symbol for America, now called Columbia after Christopher Columbus” (Schorsch 12). For a nation struggling to define death, the gravitation toward a common image was reflective of the desire to generate a communal experience for all to cling to in times of loss.

Burial customs and the overall image of resting places for the dead were also impacted by transforming ideas of the new century. In the early 1900s, the city of Boston was expanding, like other major cities at the time, and burial grounds faced problems of overcrowding. It should be noted that at this time, Boston burial grounds “were barren landscapes--crowded, poorly maintained, devoid of plantings, and with little sense of permanence--which reinforced Calvinist teachings about the horrors of death” (Heywood 12). As cities grew, residents became more aware of public health concerns and wanted to implement sanitation practices conducive to future growth and expansion. In Boston, “Residents were concerned that the burial grounds were contaminating water supplies and that gases emanating from graves threatened public health” (Heywood 9). It was not uncommon for city authorities to unearth old remains in order to “reclaim space for future burials” (13). This public concern was occurring in other major U.S. cities as well. “So bad were conditions in New York that residents blamed a yellow fever epidemic in 1822, which killed 22,000 residents, on the unsanitary conditions in the city’s cemeteries” (Mintz). In a 2002 school curriculum unit released by the National Parks Service entitled, “Teaching With Historic Places,” the vision behind America’s first rural cemetery is described:

The idea of a burial ground outside Boston had been discussed informally for several years, but Dr. Jacob Bigelow, a Boston physician and Harvard professor, was the first to take action. In 1825 he called a meeting of prominent Bostonians to explore the concept

of a rural cemetery, a place beyond city limits composed of burial lots interspersed with trees, shrubs, and flowers. The rural cemetery was to be a place for the living, as well as the dead, where family values and the endurance of the family would be celebrated, and nature would provide comfort and inspiration. It would be designed to be an example of the best in landscape and artistic taste. (Heywood 13)

Founded in 1831, Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts was the first rural resting place constructed using the concept of beautification. At Mount Auburn, there was plenty of space available for burial, and the park provided mourners a setting to grieve openly surrounded by the comfort of nature. The beauty of Nature would soon be deemed by Transcendentalists in nearby Concord as one of God's loving gifts to human beings; using Nature as a major element in resting places reinforced the shift in perspective of a vengeful God to a loving God who accepted all into heaven. The cemetery remained well-groomed, with plants, flowers, and shrubbery to soften its image and provide comfort to everybody who stepped inside. It was the hope that the tranquility of Mount Auburn would allow city folks a place to be comforted in times of grieving, surrounded by the reminder that loved ones were resting with this loving God.

With the formation of rural cemeteries came the formal funeral service, clearly designated to focus on comforting the mourner in an act of communal support. According to Bell, "Perhaps the best known social expression of the beautification of death was the practice of high mourning among middle-class Victorians. Public mourning became protracted and increasingly formalized and expensive, reaching a pinnacle of ostentation toward the close of the 19th century" (56). At Mount Auburn's formal dedication ceremony on September 24, 1831, U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice and Mount Auburn Board of Trustees member, Joseph Story, stated:

A rural Cemetery seems to combine in itself all the advantages, which can be proposed to gratify human feelings, or tranquilize human fears,...And what spot can be more appropriate than this, for such a purpose? Nature seems to point it out...as the favorite retirement for the dead. There are around us all the varied features of her beauty and grandeur the forest- crowned height;...the grassy glade; and the silent grove. Here are the lofty oak, the beech,...the rustling pine, and the drooping willow; the tree, that sheds its pale leaves with every autumn, a fit emblem of our own transitory bloom; and the evergreen, with its perennial shoots, instructing us, that "the wintry blast of death kills not the buds of virtue".... All around us there breathes a solemn calm, as if we were in the bosom of a wilderness, broken only by the breeze as it murmurs through the tops of the forest, or by the notes of the warbler pouring forth his matin or his evening song.

Ascend but a few steps, and what a change of scenery to surprise and delight us. We seem, as it were in an instant, to pass from the confines of death, to the bright and balmy regions of life. Below us flows the winding Charles [River] with its rippling current, like the stream of time hastening to the ocean of eternity. In the distance, the City, at once the object of our admiration and our love, rears...its lofty towers, its graceful mansions, its curling smoke, its crowded haunts of business and pleasure....

We stand, as it were, upon the borders of two worlds; and...we may gather lessons of profound wisdom by contrasting the one with the other, or indulge in the dreams of hope and ambition, or solace our hearts by melancholy meditations. The voice of consolation will spring up in the midst of the silences of these regions of death.... The hand of friendship will delight to cherish the flowers, and the shrubs, that fringe the lowly grave, or the sculptured monument.... Spring will invite thither the footsteps of the young by its opening foliage; and Autumn detain the contemplative....

Here let us erect the memorials of our love, and our gratitude, and our glory. (Heywood 14)

Story's dedication contains clear evidence of the need for Americans to find comfort and contemplate mourning in a peaceful setting. Story himself appears to regard death as both an experience of confinement and an opportunity to obtain spiritual wisdom. By pointing out that cemeteries were "upon the borders of two worlds," Story acknowledges a belief that the afterlife exists and that heaven was like another world or universe awaiting all. This contrasted the earlier Puritanical perspective that heaven was governed by a selective God; that it was a dwelling hard earned by a life of toil and labor, or simply by birthright. Most early colonists expected to be damned to Hell. Therefore, death did not provide these "lessons of profound wisdom" (14), but instead an acceptance of original sin and a life lived in attempt to redeem oneself from the depths of sin. Consequently, 19th century Americans hoped to gain something in the experience of loss, and the atmosphere that a rural cemetery provided helped to reassure the mourner of this possibility.

Despite Joseph Story's active involvement in the initial rural cemetery movement, Story himself was a man plagued by loss all throughout his life. In an article by S.M. Silverman entitled "Justice Joseph Story and Death in Early 19th Century America," the author recalls the life afflicted by many close deaths, including his first wife of less than one year, five of his seven young children, his father, and many close friends. Despite the views on death expressed in the Mount Auburn dedication speech, Story's letters and poems reveal a contrasting reaction to these losses. In these literary pieces, Story appears inconsolable, highly sickened and emotionally distraught. On the death of his first wife in 1805, he wrote in a letter to Samuel Fay, "my tears and my groans are ineffectual. She has left me forever, and the grave has closed between us" (Silverman 399). This does not reflect the same Story that spoke in the above dedication; rather, it appears he viewed death as a door closed on love, a conflict unable to be resolved.

Story's father died less than two months later, and in another letter to Fay he wrote, "The deep losses which have fallen to my lot have been darkened by a fear ...but joy has forever departed and left me the miserable victim of despondency. It is in vain that I have called philosophy or reason to my aid" (400). Here, faith in a loving God, and the idea that death only provides a temporary separation with loved ones, is not present. Story unwillingly depends on reason rather than faith in order to cope.

He did remarry, however, and had two children with his second wife. However, death continued to pervade his life, as he suffered the loss of several of his children in the years following. To this extent, Story “buried himself in work and study, and, by creating other interests, tried to forget his loss” (401). Again, this denial of grief is in stark contrast to his later statement to mourners to “solace our hearts by melancholy meditations” (401).

Perhaps Story came to his later conclusions about death and coping, as seen in the dedication speech, as a result of decades of suffering. According to another piece by Story from 1851, Silverman writes, “His religious faith became an anchor” (405), which shows a shift in perspective. However, after another his daughter Louisa’s death in 1831, Story once again was devastated to the point of “utter desolation and despair” (406). In a poem excerpt that Silverman includes, Story makes a statement about the finality of death which mimics Puritan views more than 19th century views; “More vain to tell that sorrow of the soul, / That works in secret, works beyond control, / When death strikes down, with sudden crush and power” (406—line numbers). It seems he feels that death is an attack on humans, striking them as if from some unknown source. Again, this is further evidence of Story’s conflict (and probably many other Americans’ conflicts) between facing the inconsolable effect that death imparted upon the living, and willingly accepting the chance it offered to gain tranquil, spiritual wisdom that would lead to intellectual and emotional growth.

In the works of 19th century literary giant, Edgar Allan Poe, generations of readers have found time and time again a connection to the heavy emotional burden that death bears on one’s soul. Poe repeatedly visited the subject in his literary work, most likely influenced by the death of his mother, brother, and later, his wife. In his poem “Ulalume,” Poe tells the story of the narrator, who wanders outdoors at night and converses with his soul as if it is another person, which Poe personifies using an allusion to the Greek mythological character of Psyche. The entire poem is accented with images of nature, decay, sorrow, and pain. The setting is described using an array of poetic literary devices, such as metaphor, repetition, and alliteration, revealing a place marked by somberness, the atmosphere encompassing the narrator in a world teeming with dreary surroundings:

The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crisped and sere -
The leaves they were withering and sere;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year:
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir -
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir (Poe l-9).

The setting complements the torment felt by the narrator. This emotional burden of anguish continues to weave throughout the poem as the narrator is attempting

to appease his soul, Psyche, of its pain by pointing out the light cast by the moon and stars:

I replied: "This is nothing but dreaming:
Let us on by this tremulous light!
Let us bathe in this crystalline light!
Its Sybilic splendour is beaming
With Hope and in Beauty tonight! -
See! -it flickers up the sky through the night!
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,
And be sure it will lead us aright - (Poe 61-68).

The narrator resembles the Romantic archetype, which appeared as movement in 19th century America distinguished by several key elements, including a tone of passionate enthusiasm, inner musing, a respect and reverence for nature, and a strong emphasis on inner emotion. The narrator is a passionate individual consumed by inner thoughts which are mirrored in his natural surroundings. In true Romantic fashion, the individual seeks clarity and inner understanding in a solitary manner, much like the mourner Joseph Story speaks of in the Mount Auburn dedication. This part of the poem reveals the narrator as possessing the 19th century value for finding sense and wisdom in the solitude brought on by loss. In the case of Poe's narrator, though, his solitude is due to the loss of his loved one; therefore, his solitude is weighed down by grief. Though the narrator personifies his soul, making it seem as if there are two subjects in the poem, he ultimately is confronting himself. In this stanza, Poe is illustrating the narrator's attempt at meditative contemplation of death's meaning in life, and faith in the goodness that nature always leads us down a path of understanding, even amidst suffering: "Ah, we must safely trust to its gleaming" (Poe 67). He does so in the form of his narrator's appeasement of Psyche's anguish.

However, the final stanza is marked by a sudden reverse in emotion, as the narrator is swept up by grief when he realizes that he has wandered to the tomb of his dead wife, who was buried there exactly one year earlier. The experience brings him severe anguish. After attempting to convince Psyche to "see the bright side" in early stanzas, the sudden awareness of his wife's absence blasts the narrator with the irreversibility and finality of death, and he cries out in anguish upon being reminded of her passing:

And I cried: "It was surely October
On this very night of last year
That I journeyed -I journeyed down here! -
That I brought a dread burden down here -
On this night of all nights in the year,
Ah, what demon hath tempted me here? (Poe 85-90).

The outstanding conflict in this poem is reflected in the turn of emotion by the narrator. The effect on the psyche and soul of a mourner grieving lost love is clearly reminiscent of the effects of earlier religious views in American society.

These earlier perspectives on death lend to the poem's theme of the irreversibility of death and the anguish upon being reminded of one's passing. Also, the narrator suggests that the agony of loss is somehow precipitated by a demonic force, again suggesting Poe's clinging to a much older, Puritanical or Calvinist value, that most were sinners damned to Eternal Hell. Like so many artistic and literary movements in young America, Poe's literary style represented Romantic elements which did not ignore the influence of European cultures. However, Poe also invented an entirely new genre of literature in his obsession to represent the individual person dealing with life in the purely psychological realm.

As beliefs and spirituality morphed into new avenues of faith in the 19th century, American citizens were viewing the process of grief in a whole new way, through their own emotional turmoil and through the physical expressions of art, architecture and cemetery landscape design, all which represented a complex belief system accented with bits of enduring colonial attitudes. Much of this transformation in the 19th century coincided with an environment focused on change and prosperity, and the American nation was embracing the opportunity to expand its physical borders and material production. In order to do so, it was crucial to also seek new frontiers in psychological, emotional, and spiritual potential.

Possibly, the tension within society surrounding human beings' relationship with death has always been and will always be irresolute. By examining early American views on death in order to fully analyze 19th century views, it is clear there has always been a struggle with how to handle the dead body and handle the impact of death. And yet, in modern society the sentiment is no different; death is the ultimate mystery in life as its fate lies in the hands of an entity unknown, deeply felt by millions and yet unresolved in terms of its nature and ability to provide answers to the everlasting questions and debates over it. Perhaps, as long as the human race seeks various outlets of expression to engage with the meaning of death, and as long as diverse forms of cultural representations of death are available for mourners to cling to in times of grief, American perspectives of death will be found embedded in the individual's unique relationship to the deceased and to his/her faith itself. This approach truly exhibits the core characteristic of the American identity, which since the birth of the nation has always been a pride in and adherence to the cultivation of independent values.

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One Foot in the Grave is a British television sitcom written by David Renwick. There were six series and seven Christmas specials over a period of eleven years from early 1990 to late 2000. The first five series were broadcast between January 1990 and January 1995. For the next five years, the show appeared only as Christmas specials, followed by one final series in 2000. Artifact of Death: The scorpion encased in resin that Victor and Margaret are given (and that they can't get rid of) is said to bring bad luck to whomever holds it. Eventually subverted when the old lady who they give it to uses it to smash a knife-wielding mugger in the head. Ascended Extra: Mr. Swainey started off as a relatively minor character in the pilot episode. In later episodes, she develops into a more complex character. The final episode laments that Margaret has evolved into an even more curmudgeonly and no-nonsense figure than her late husband. Turns out that the grave she was visiting belonged to Victor's father, and the 'events' simply referred to the typical mishaps that they have to deal with in every episode. Played straight in the 2001 Comic Relief episode. One Foot in the Grave was a British TV comedy show that followed the misadventures of cranky Reluctant Retiree Victor Meldrew. The story begins with Victor being forced into early retirement, because his job, where he greets people and signs them in at an office building, is replaced by a small electronic box. Suddenly and unexpectedly finding himself "retired", he looks for other means to keep himself occupied. More often than not this means he lands himself in unbelievable and frustrating Was this a common sentiment for Europeans in the late 18th and early 19th centuries? (self.AskHistorians). submitted 23 days ago by jackp536. 107 comments. Regardless, I doubt Mary Shelley would have been very tuned in to this discourse. It's too early in the century. First off, she would not have been that up on American culture or events (though Wikipedia tells me she met Aaron Burr I did not know that!) But she would not have been reading American books for sure because no one was, since the United States was such a political, economic, and cultural backwater. A cultural wasteland, if you will. Not worth the time. (and has this really changed....? but I digress

This is a list of episodes of the British television sitcom *One Foot in the Grave*, written by David Renwick. The show ran for six series of six 30-minute episodes each. There were also six Christmas specials (of various lengths) together with two shorts for Comic Relief, first screened from 4 January 1990 to 16 March 2001 on BBC One and subsequently repeated both on the BBC and thereafter on satellite channels such as Gold. Some of the early episodes bear a 1989 copyright date. While the programme has like the first book, *One Foot in the Grave* contains a lot of sex, action, supernatural dudes and only moderate-to-light buttsecks. Buttsecks. The storyline is quite good with a clever little ending which contains absolutely no buttsecks at all. That first time Bones said "Hallo Kitten" I squealed, bouncing up and down in my seat, clapping like a idiot yelling Yay Bones is back! Bones and Cat have such a strong connection. There is some ex drama in this book and of course Tate drama (Tate is one of Cat's team mates, but he is in love with her). OMG OMG OMG chapter 32. The sex in chapter 32 holy hell, it set my body on fire, melted my bones, made me start shaking, and left me basking in the afterglow. Fuck but that was the single best sex scene I have ever read ever. Ever! *One Foot in the Grave* was a British TV comedy show that followed the misadventures of cranky Reluctant Retiree Victor Meldrew. The story begins with Victor being forced into early retirement, because his job, where he greets people and signs them in at an office building, is replaced by a small electronic box. Suddenly and unexpectedly finding himself "retired", he looks for other means to keep himself occupied. More often than not this means he lands himself in unbelievable and frustrating *Artifact of Death*: The scorpion encased in resin that Victor and Margaret are given (and that they can't get rid of) is said to bring bad luck to whomever holds it. Eventually subverted when the old lady who they give it to uses it to smash a knife-wielding mugger in the head. *Ascended Extra*: Mr. Swainey started off as a relatively minor character in the pilot episode. In later episodes, she develops into a more complex character. The final episode laments that Margaret has evolved into an even more curmudgeonly and no-nonsense figure than her late husband. Turns out that the grave she was visiting belonged to Victor's father, and the 'events' simply referred to the typical mishaps that they have to deal with in every episode. Played straight in the 2001 Comic Relief episode.