

Entombment-proof

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Rituals of death, like negative space, express the outline of what already stands present and real, illuminating the void that is both encompassing and laced. In unison with the systems of sameness, plumped and seamless, bloated in positivity, in pandemic-death the body remains sealed. To be preserved past life in an intravenous gilding, suspended, though only briefly, in a chemical flesh-glow, a denial. Embalming equates, in the present, to a notion derived not from ancient Egypt but from the cosmological systems born of capitalist neuroses (an ideology mothered by the White-Christian neurotic) and obsession with the fluid body. Even in its final act the body must remain positive. A peripheral of death stretched into its visible surface, a stillness and nothing more. As a result of the regulation within the newly coined “pandemic-proof” protocol the act of embalming has been suspended or in many cases not enacted for those taken in COVID-death. Though this is a minor symptom of the current shifts occurring, it is symbolic of the contemporary-subject’s¹ designed-terminal position’s requirement for unflinching participation, both coerced and voluntary, while remaining classically alienated from their labor and activities of non-labor time, a collapsing of life and work into a space of continuous sameness, that is the space of overall production, while increasingly unable to immunize themselves from the byproducts of the contemporary. Mutilations, disease and corruptions inflict or shadow in potentiality due to environmental (both designed and as result of degradation) and systemically created caste-like positions. Each stitched into a horizon of complications. An algebra weaving a network of constraints, lacks and perversions.

Mummification developed within the human era of biopower, in which the body was pure-subject. Punishments such as near-fatal stabbings, disfigurements, and forced amputations, served as a way in which to transform the body into property and the subject into a commercial (which is always both commercial and municipal) asset, not only in the case of the victim of these practices, but also for those in the surrounding community as the criminals anguish, both left in scars and rumors acted as a corporeal boundary and negative-model limiting movement, transforming the body into the prison—or more so the potentiality of becoming the prison. Mummification offered a promise to extend the systems of oppression such as the division of labor into the afterlife, and in doing so transformed the event of death, and simultaneously the body (life) into the essence of the economy. Hollowed out and preserved. Adorned with a surplus, humanity on reserve. *Shabti* dolls or *shawabti* or *ushabti*, were symbolic representatives

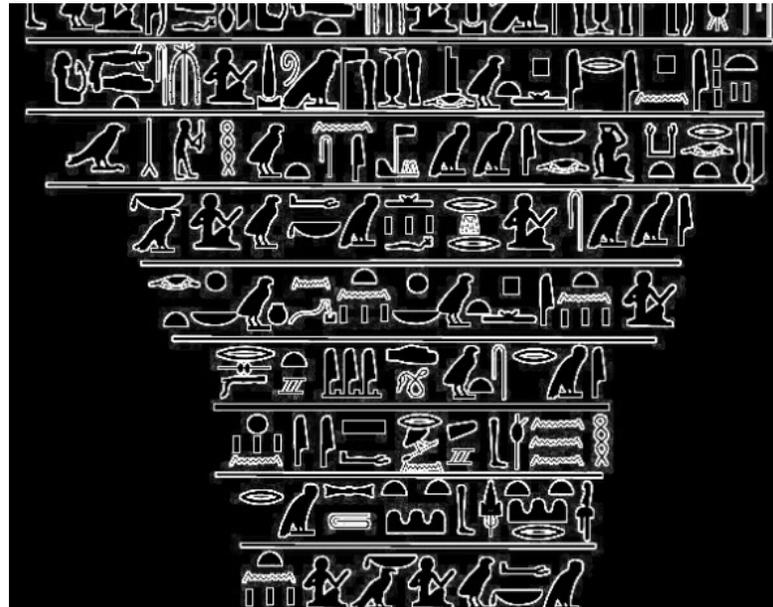
of the dead. Described in the “Coffin Texts” as a way for the dead to still fulfill their civic duties:

“O *shabti*, allotted to me, if I be summoned or if I be detailed to do any work which has to be done in the realm of the dead; if indeed obstacles are implanted for you therewith as a man at his duties, you shall detail yourself for me on every occasion of making arable the fields, of flooding the banks or of conveying sand from east to west; ‘Here am I’, you shall say.”²

This ritualization and moralizing of one’s ability to replicate oneself within the economy, and the cementation of this ideology into the deep psyche of the subject through cultural, religious and created contexts and/or mental/social conditioning, could be equated to the avatars of the “essential workers” rendered in studium soaked images, cartoons, or slogans.

However, in the contemporary, the subject is both living and dead. The essential worker is simultaneously the living, the corpse and the *shabti*.

“According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, essential workers are those who conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continue critical



infrastructure operations. Critical infrastructure is a large, umbrella term encompassing sectors from energy to defense to agriculture.”³

The incantations or spells of the economy force the “answerer” (carved and immobile) to become the terrestrial-subject of the underworld. In accordance with the dictates and rituals of capital, the system’s wanton abstraction inflicts its erosion in disunity. The colonized-subject, the person of color, is in this process forced into history, into the economy, into



the other: the other who is the living-dead-*shabti*-subject. Within a culture of medical-racism the pandemic—the event—expresses the asymmetries of health: the mechanical roots, the caste, the raw squirming digestion of unending mouths. This expression for those who it signifies can only be another trick or false-image, as the unceasing effects creating the symptoms have not been unspoken but rather, like wind, speak both in language and unhearable language, without response.

“Black, Indigenous and Latino Americans all have a COVID-19 death rate of more than 2.7 times White Americans, who experience the lowest age-adjusted rates.”⁴

Designed environments have designed effects. (The base becomes the superstructure). White-supremacy-models-of-patriarchal-hierarchies have spawned in their synthetic-poison a global sickness that has finally emerged as a virus. Makeshift forms of reality must be patched together, bricolage-cosmologies propped up like primitive shelters, in efforts to survive. Constrained by the conditions of the pandemic-proofing and mass loss of employment, with the average cost for a funeral ranging from seven to twelve thousand dollars⁵, a need for new makeshift death-rituals is emerging. In a makeshift effort, Gofundme is in effect the second largest healthcare provider.

In mummification the body becomes the sign of abstraction, both commodity and producer of commodity simultaneously. The removed organs are treated like the symbols of material wealth, the inequivalence of each

naked on display. Caught in the event, the pandemic-subject’s death is treated as it was in life. Alone or among only strangers. Medical workers sealed in plastics and fibers, cloistered in synthetics, move around the COVID victim in scientific ritual. Last moments are shared through screens, the vector’s gaze transforming the subject into temporary-content (the final act of the infinite-scroll), flattened and turned to data. No human touch. Alienated. Trapped in the boundaries of protocol. Sealed in an HRP’s non-porous death-womb.

“One doctor there said the flow of bodies passing through was “like a conveyor belt.”⁶

The essence of capitalism can be found in New York’s Hart Island mass-grave⁷ or the mobile morgues which remain indistinguishable from cargo containers (deconstructed pyramids, temples in reverse). Bare-needs of capital on display.

In the Civil War cosmological shifts occurred, in order to remain fixed in mind and “spirit,” as ways to enact boundaries between the mass-grave of reality and the soft-White-Christian soul. Forms of neurosis and trauma-induced approaches emerged, creating “revivals” and a rejuvenation in thought. The Christian belief of the body in its migration to heaven became reformed in its fetishization of the corporeal, shifting from a realm of pure spirit, divorced from the hunger of the flesh, into a perfect vessel of *eternal-capital*.

“While repeatedly asked to repress the body during the Civil War, to subsume individual desire, Northerners were constantly faced with the body in all its vulnerability: the nervous body, the grief-riven body, the mutilated body, the dead body.”⁸

The pandemic, in its growing death toll and deformative nature, has created demands and labors both on body and consciousness, while the ideologies of the present induce or unveil the contemporary apathy towards the other and the schizophrenic relationship to the event of death. The perceived shifts in what we can now see uncovered in the erosion of the ongoing event are merely what has always been there, submerged in the periphery.

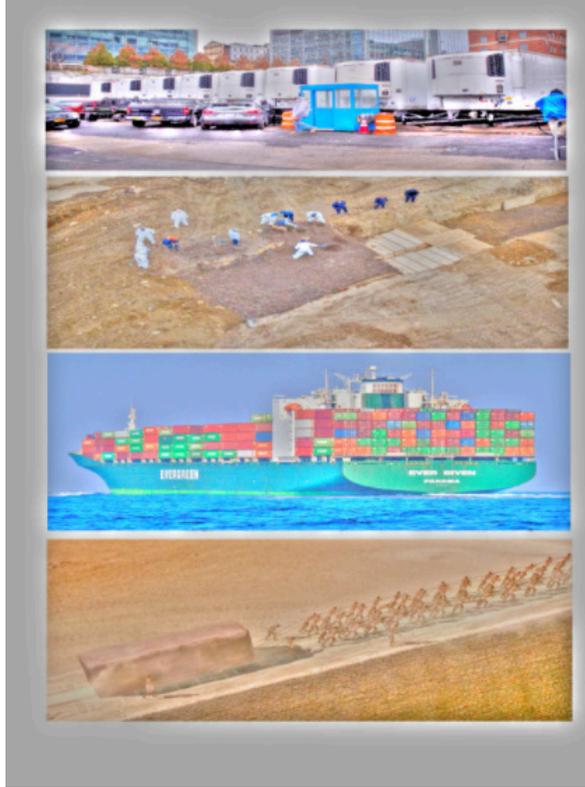
The weight of this realization is met in many ways: those that have in their nausea of the present remained turned away, looking into the opaqueness of pre-scientific *feelings*, animals reduced to guttural reactionary quasi-premonitions (memetic-subjects), there are those who from privilege-narrowed perspectives find the world turned distant and anew in horrific scope, its horizon flattened out and “untouchable,” and there are those whose realities have doubled like the bones of a fossil being

unearthed while simultaneously being entombed. The *Shabti*-subject is constantly faced with the vulnerability of the body. Gorgonized yet stuck in motion, presented with an emptying out, a growing “vacant place⁹”, hollowed in shape by the pandemic, the “spirit” is forced to confront its essences and in doing so undergoes a deformation or mutation.

Religious revivals like those in the time of the Civil War can be seen in miniature within the pandemic, such as the open air sea baptism of Saturate OC in California¹⁰, or the revival in Nashville of 10,000¹¹. The snake eating itself, wincing as its teeth pierce its own soft underbelly. Like the Civil War, the pandemic expresses the absurdity of whiteness, unable to grasp its closed-loop of self-inflicted wounds, an auto-mummification. The attention-economy (which religion is pinned as perhaps the oldest form of) is the space in which the subject now dwells to bathe in the baptismal waters of ecstasy.

The COVID swab in its trajectory is directed into the body away from the brain. Aesthetically the procedure resembles diagrams of excerebration. In mummification the instrument entering the body is directed towards the brain, as the vessel must remain hollowed. The body, dominated in biopower, was the essence of the economy, and therefore fetishized. Though the systems of biopower still lay beneath, the dominance of the vectoral-class denotes psycho-powers’ reign and therefore the fetishization of the brain, as it is the portal to the terrestrial-*shabti*-subject. This asymmetrical paradisiacal relationship in its digestive process erodes the subject in its acids, leaving only the remnants, a stripped down bare life, in which a simulation (promised or experienced) appears as the only respite. A reversal of the Civil War heaven, bodiless and coded.

“Phelps insists that heaven has become the “reality,” the

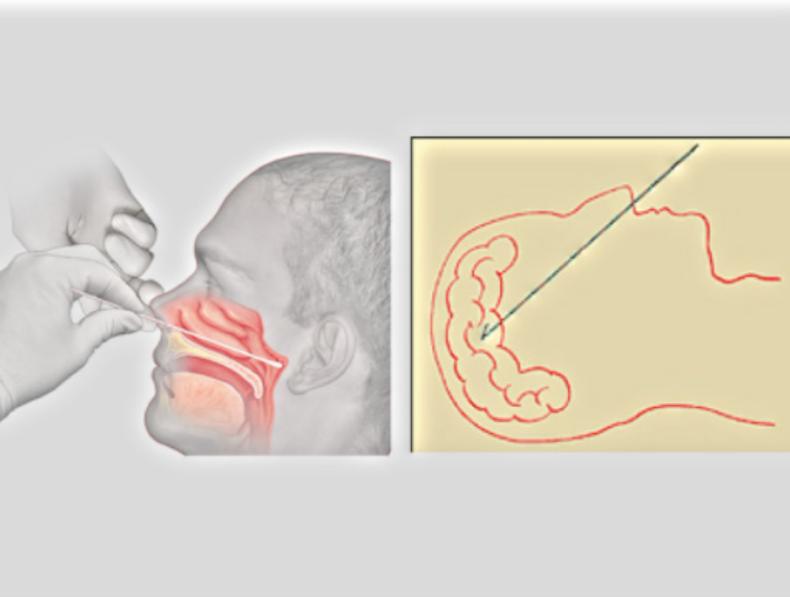


“substance,” while life on earth is the “shadow,” the dream” (194). Ultimately life will be most “life-like” in heaven.”¹²

Heaven is found in the subsuming weight of the stream, the scroll, the binge, the algorithm. Again we are met with the *Shabti*-subject, the tantalian-figure both living and dead. As a way to erect a makeshift reality the religion of the Civil War mutated to reflect its lack. Death, as a pandemic erases and leaves empty. Located in greyness, unmarked warehouse entomb fields of internet-servers, the realm of

digital immortality. Microsoft has recently issued a patent to extrapolate the non-corporeal essence of the subject, to process the data of the dead using artificial intelligence, and reanimate the subject into the non-living-living-avatar.¹³ The *shabti* cannot die. In creating the bellum heaven, life was erased with death and became a “shadow” cast by the promised utopia. Perhaps subconsciously this was done to numb the individual trapped in the mutilation of reality. A makeshift shelter. The half-failed mummification of Jeremy Bentham’s head in its fixed and lasting gaze is a precursor, like his utilitarianistic fetishized panopticon, to the makeshift realities of the present and coming age. Bentham as the auto-icon perhaps indicates the true genesis of the





contemporary subject.

“It would diminish the horrors of death, by getting rid of its deformities: it would leave the agreeable associations, and disperse the disagreeable.”¹⁴

In its empty gaze and festered flesh one can see the meaning of one’s own position, that of the living-auto-icon, hollowed out—but filled, whole—or a simulation of wholeness, that in the moment (the present which the contemporary-subject attempts to look away from) can only be assumed and later half recalled as if in dream. The auto-icon is a tantalus—frozen, dead, eternally alive. The tantalus does not die but rather, the tantalus-subject stands water drunk and thirsty in an undrinkable river, hungry but shadowed in untouchable fruit. Alienated but forced to continue its given role. Even in death one is stripped of the negative, rendered half mummified and stuffed in hay, a dumb-sensationless-scarecrow. The scale of the pandemic, projected through the lens of the positivity-bloated simulations of sameness, cut into segments, flattened into final video calls and algorithmic measurements—the true violence of the virus does not stop at death, but rather lives in numerous duplicates, jutting out in many directions, the subject dragged along in the growing rhizome.

Ritual within the seamless-positivity-bloated society attempts to operate as closed but hollow, lacking a negative opening and therefore content or interior. Everything seems to fall short. The final trajectory of the *shabti* is tethered to their class: a plain burial wrapped in white cloth or the temple.

“The tech billionaire intends for there to be “loans available for those who don’t have money,” and jobs on the Red Planet for settlers to pay off their debts.”¹⁵

In the winds of the red desert, perhaps bodies will begin to self-mummify and become ancestors, artifacts to be found and simulated as it is thought that in prehistoric Egypt due to the climate and sand bodies were found naturally mummified, and in this spectral of preservation a seduction was embedded.¹⁶ In the closed-loop the eternal return is a corrupted cycle, each iteration more defromed. Leaving earth the auto-*shabti* fulfills the negligent conditioned hope of the vectoral heaven, the final death. True alienation.

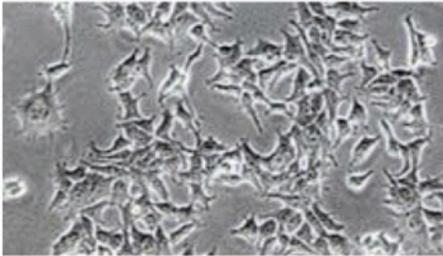
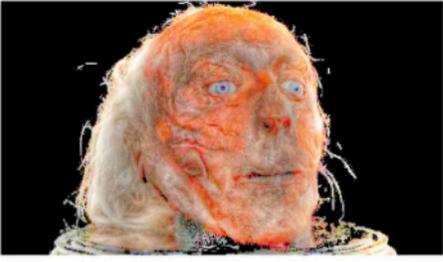
HEK 293T cells are an amalgam of aborted flesh, an auto-iconic-inoculative, and in their infinite ability to recreate themselves represent the essence of capital. To negate the feeling of closed-loop entropy the violence of



sameness is sublimated into banality and animal-comfort. The HEK 293T is the perfect flesh-bank, emotionless and self-replicating. Efficiency mutating on a cellular level. Perhaps an indication that singularity has long passed? The pharmaceutical industry (colonizer of magic) treats the subject as the site of production.

“The cells can be trained to produce proteins like little factories.”¹⁷

Shabti-cells lack death and life, forced into the sealed cybernetic of the economy. Their use is inaccessible, entombed. The death rituals of the elite require the subsuming, digestion, and inversion of the other, conglomerated as a mass. The rest remain at the edge of obliteration. The subject is truncated in the death before death, the *shabti* engineered, a location of designed controls, a gamification of biology (evolution as software). What is



left?

The final skype call, the last screenshot, the funeral stream, the dry fireless burial not-on-the-banks, the vulture eaten, the body behind glass, behind screen shrouded in data, the empty streets, the mass grave, lack of warmth from the remaining, the delayed burial, the mobile morgue. The towering displays of dead labor, of humanity on reserve, the pyramids, the Falcon 9, the tomb, the death mask, the colonized planet, the mummified body, the economy, the skyscraper, the oil derrick, the internet-server, AI-reincarnation. The pandemic-proof public space, siloized and shrinking. The unentombable.

In Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* he gives a semiological reading of cleaning products:

“Foam can even be the sign of a certain spirituality, inasmuch as the spirit has the reputation of being able to make something out of nothing, a large surface of effects out of a small volume of causes.”¹⁸

The present-future of spirituality is located in the myths of disinfectants, hygiene, and fitness, a future that will be conditioned, segregated and truncated. The developing world and its spread-out diaspora will bear as it does now the weight of capital, forced into the algebra or physics of surplus, exiled yet tethered. Like a heavenly substance disinfectant fog moves through space like the holy ghost cleansing as if by miracle, free of human touch, a formless being of purity, existing in faith. A domesticated god. It represents a movement away from corporeality and into formless spaces. The fog moves like data through the air. It is both sign and signified—its effects cannot be seen.

Unseeable could be a word that denotes the present. Things, the inner workings of society, money, machines of annihilation, amassed banks of information, nothing is seeable. Subsumed and veiled. Forms of unseeing are growing in techniques, in options, and in scope and power to change and mutate in slow microaggressions, until the thing that vanishes is forgotten before its departure. In this way the panopticon of the past has slipped into the realm of the asymmetrical, into the underlayer that remains hidden, the cryptopticon.¹⁹ The invisible constraints are further reinforced by a uniformed state of counter-insurgent behaviour and governing. Existing within the counter-insurgent state the subject is turned into the target, and in this way the other is transformed into the target of the target. Pandemic-proofing in many ways is reflective of the movement towards unseeing and counter-insurgent governing. To ensure safety, everyone must be treated as if they carry the virus. Compartmentalization, separation and non-corporeal methods of interacting with environments are all notions of the pandemic-proof facility.

Spatial segregation is enacted through limiting movement, such as unidirectional pathways. The unidirectional facility truncates interactions with the other, leaving only faceless back views to apprehend. It is the cybernetic as architecture, a pathway marked with nodes of which only one entrance and exit remain available.

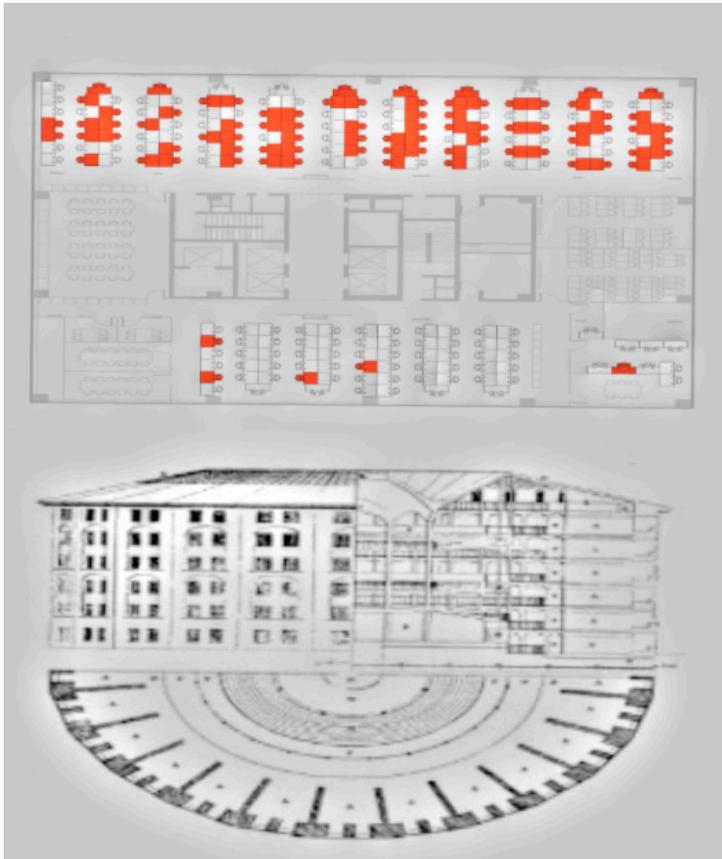
Touchless sensors represent the distaste for the physical, the laborious weight and malfunctions of the



body momentarily transferred to the essence of technology, a moment of singularity. An operation in which a designed environment conditions the user, the pause before the robotic eye apprehends what lay before it, a second in which the full weight of its control can be felt, a stopping of time.

A question of emancipation still remains. As the vectoralist increases profits²⁰ through the sacrifice of “essential workers”, further solidifying the caste and its impassable borders, revolutionary ideas of prior ages now appear empty. A call to seize the means of production would no longer shift the weight of the asymmetrical, as power itself has erased its own form, and can no longer be seen but

creation of an environment of pure-freedom, allowing for sincere friendship and a return to a realm of the signifier. As a result, the creation of new rituals will be formed, rituals of uselessness, light from the loss.



in a fleeting glimpse like the dorsal fin of a shark. Often in stories it is depicted that in order to break a spell one must destroy whoever cast it. Nothing is permanent. Building systems and structures of radical-mutual-aid and critical-Detournement could offer potentiality to reconfigure the present.

The deft increase in myopic sight as a result of domestication and a constant near proximity to screens can be read not only as a loss of vision but also as the horizon eroding within the silo, an effect of the mutilation or perversion of consciousness, a physical response induced by the lack of signifiers.²¹ A world pressed flat. Replacing contemporary hierarchy with radical-mutual-aid and critical-Detournement as a possible exit from the crisis. A

¹ The contemporary-subject consisting of all its layered Egos, the tantalian-subject static in the river unable to drink, shadowed by hanging fruit that is unreachable (the tantalum miner looking up from the pit shadowed by the aimed barrel of a pointed gun), the kinetic-subject being dragged or set into motion before birth, the soft and hard authoritarian-subject whose glazed over eyes can hardly focus on the walls closing them off, the algorithmic-subject circling the circumference of their silo one foot nailed to the floor, the post-freudian subject engaged in their own oppression, the entrenched-subject colonized and unfree....(arguably the category of subject is perhaps no longer a possibility? Or there is both the contemporary-subject within a scale and the chattel-subject of the developing world that is all encompassing but asymmetrically hidden, like the skeletal system which at times is hidden in plumped sections coated in fat and muscle and tissue, hidden though only to those not pressing hard enough at the surface. Even in these deposits of excess, the system and its pressures, and demands, it's constant implementation of abstraction remains attached through subsuming labor (life) and designing environment. In doing so tethering a whole section (a section that is everywhere though not evenly dispersed) of the world. The subject is deftly cloistered like the rare earth entombed in the casket of the Iphone.)

² *Shabti* spell taken from the Coffin text: <https://www.ancient.eu/article/119/shabti-dolls-the-workforce-in-the-afterlife/>

³ <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/covid-19-essential-workers-in-the-states.aspx#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20U.S.energy%20to%20defense%20to%20agriculture.>

⁴ <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race-december2020>

⁵ “The average funeral costs between \$7,000 and \$12,000. This includes viewing and burial, basic service fees, transporting remains to a funeral home, a casket, embalming, and other preparation. The average cost of a funeral with cremation is \$6,000 to \$7,000” <https://www.lhlic.com/consumer-resources/average-funeral-cost/>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/nyregion/coronavirus-new-york-bodies.html>

⁷ <https://time.com/5913151/hart-island-covid/>

⁸ The Corporeity of Heaven”: Rehabilitating the Civil War Body in The Gates Ajar Author(s): Lisa A. Long Source: American Literature, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Dec., 1997), pp. 781-811.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-religious-revivals-and-beach-baptisms-defy-public-health-orders-in-california-12046193>

¹¹ <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/coronavirus/article246403850.html>

¹² See note 8 above

¹³ <https://www.businessinsider.com/microsoft-patents-a-chatbot-to-imitate-real-people-2021-1>

¹⁴ <http://pombo.free.fr/benthamwill.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/elon-musk-colonizing-mars-indentured-slavery/>

¹⁶ <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/ancient-egypt/mummies>

¹⁷ <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/how-cells-taken-decades-old-fetal-tissue-are-used-covid-n1242740>

¹⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957), 163-164.

¹⁹ cryptopticon is an idea by writer Siva Vaidhyanathan detailing the shift from the visibility of the panopticon into a hidden and secretive opticon, the asymmetrical power of the vector.

²⁰ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/billionaire-wealth-covid-pandemic-12-trillion-jeff-bezos-wealth-tax/> (profits rise by 54%) during the pandemic the vector class such as Bazos increased their profits by 54%.

²¹ <https://www.nei.nih.gov/about/news-and-events/news/myopia-close-look-efforts-turn-back-growing-problem>

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