

Outline of dissertation

‘OH, EARLY VANISHED FROM A PARENTS EYE’: ‘Childness’ and child memorialisation in the South Australian cemetery, 1836-2018 CE

This dissertation investigates the memorialisation of children in the Western cemetery from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day using the idea of childness as a measure. The importance of children as part of archaeological study has been recognised and developed since the 1980s, establishing the archaeology of childhood. Part of this approach has looked at ways of determining the agency of children in the archaeological record, and the ways in which conceptualisations of children and childhood are represented through the material culture created by adults.

Childness as an interpretative method speaks to the qualities a culture associates with both being a child and that labels someone as a child. The measure of childness found in the family’s memorialisation choices represents the degree of child identity inferable by the observer. Its application is particularly suited to the cemetery setting, as the focus is not limited to actual children per se but the ‘identities’ created for them by adults through the memorialisation process. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the reasons for differences and variations in such representations of the ‘child’ and ‘childhood’ within the cemetery space. Material choices were driven by both the personal relationship between children and their families, and the societal influences and expectations at the time of memorialisation, as Childness sits within the broader processes of socialisation and structuration that inform and replicate these characteristics to varying degrees subject to drivers such as status and class. As a reflection of its multiple creators over time, the cemetery represents a repository of social and ideological trends expressed through the materialised thoughts and feelings of past lives, relationships and world views. This makes such landscapes particularly suitable for longitudinal study.

This study asks the following questions:

1. How is childness observable in the material culture of the Western cemetery, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, and how does it differentiate children from adults and other children?
2. Does the measure of childness change over time, and if so for what reasons, e.g. social status, class, age or gender?
3. What do these observations of childness tell us about children’s value, role and status in society?

The introductory chapter proceeds to illustrate the framework for the study; a statistical analysis of children’s gravesites, both child only and family plots (with both children and adults) at five cemetery sites in Adelaide, South Australia. The rationale for using an age range of 0 to 20 years is also explained.

From this, the way children were remembered through the material culture and spatial arrangements created for their gravesites from 1836 (the date of South Australia’s colonial creation) to 2018, is analysed to illustrate what such representations tell us about their visibility, status and role in society over this period. As the Nineteenth century saw the continuing expansion of European capitalism and its accompanying geo-political influence on a global scale, the colonial societies that resulted naturally reflected the culture of origin. Consequently, the European colonisation of Australia by predominantly British and Irish immigrants is reflected in the development and appearance of the Australian cemetery,

allowing for comparison with burial and commemoration practices in Britain and Ireland, as well as other countries of British colonial origin such as the United States, Canada and New Zealand.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature concerning the multi-disciplinary debate concerning the conceptualisation of children and childhood in the past arising from Phillipe Ariès' 1965 publication of *Centuries of Childhood* (1973). Particularly pertinent to this dissertation were the conclusions that arose regarding the parental (and social) response to child death in a time of high mortality rates. It concludes that today it is generally accepted that Western society since the late medieval period has consistently seen children as different from adults and further, that significant historical changes in the conceptualisation of children coalesced into a concept of the ideal child and childhood by the early nineteenth century (the point which the South Australian sample commences). The influence of this debate on archaeology is then considered in relation to a previously perceived lack of archaeological interest in children, as pointed out by Lillehammer (1989) in her article 'A Child is born', outlining the reasons for this problem and the archaeology of childhood that grew as a response to rectify this. The chapter concludes with a discussion of child agency including indirect agency in the mortuary context.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature relating to previous research undertaken concerning the interment and memorialisation of children in cemeteries. It commences with discussion of the potential for cemetery studies, within the archaeology of childhood, to explore representations of child identity through childness. A series of historical and sociological examinations of children's grave markers in the United States of America (USA) is reviewed, followed by both historical and contemporary discussion of the creation of specific children's spaces in the cemetery in Sweden and France. Next, international archaeological work concerning children's memorialisation from Denmark, Ireland, England, and the USA are examined. Finally, the state of cemetery studies in Australia is presented and two South Australian studies by Farrell (2003) and Degner (2007) are summarised to highlight their implications for this dissertation.

Chapter 4 introduces the South Australian historical context followed by a brief historical overview of each cemetery surveyed. This includes the historical development of each area in which the site is situated, the establishment of the cemetery and its first burials, socio-economic context, site layout, use history and present status. Archaeological comment is made on the level of site preservation, and site maps and photos are provided for reference.

Chapter 5 outlines the archaeological methods used for this study. It commences with an outline of the sample criteria, site selection and survey planning. Next, the cemetery recording process is described, including the conducting of site surveys, the grave marker terminology used, what was recorded, the extent of fieldwork, and how the primary death date was identified. Then, the construction of the database is explained to illustrate data entry and its analysis by descriptive and inferential statistics to address the research questions. The chapter concludes with a look at the surveys limitations due to site preservation, issues concerning the clear identification of denominational and class identities, the approach to monumental masons, and cemetery regulations.

Chapter 6 presents the archaeological results for the following categories using tables and figures generated by the IBM SPSS database analysis: chronological distribution of the sample; the types of grave plot and orientation; sex; age; the grave marker material, dimensions, colour and height; fences and borders; grave marker forms and styles (Tablets, crosses, pillars and sculptures, horizontal slabs and plaques; miscellaneous) and the association of work occupations to families to consider what this may say about their social status and class. Tables are used to show statistical frequencies (count and percent) and

figures to show chronological distribution (percent) and height (mean). Where applicable, categories are also examined in relation to child-only versus family plots, sex, and age.

Chapter 7 presents the archaeological results for the following categories using tables and figures generated by the IBM SPSS database analysis: The style, arrangement of individuals and assumed authorship for the inscription; remembrance introductions; inscription style (emotive, familial, temporal, personalised, biographical, religious and mortality references); motifs (religious, funerary, floral, figural, photographs and Insignia, monograms and crests) and grave furniture (floral, toys, religious and other). Tables are used to show statistical frequencies (count and percent) and figures to show chronological distribution (percent). Where applicable, categories are also examined in relation to child-only versus family plots, sex, and age.

Chapter 8 discusses the results presented in the previous two chapters as they pertain to childness. The statistically significant results for each section, as well as any strong patterns observed in the descriptive statistics are evaluated and interpreted within their historical context to explore the types of childness realised, and to understand the degree of variation observed in the use of these different qualities in the attribution of a child identity to the deceased.

Analysis of the archaeological sample identified the expression of childness through six main characteristics: smallness, innocence, domesticity, play, temporality and emotion, with some categories specific to developmental age (i.e. physical size) and others more broadly spread across the studies defined age range (0 to 20 years). Representations could also be influenced to a varying degree by the family's status, class and for some older children, gender. For example, a young woman in the upper age range who had married and had children had assumed adult status whereas a contemporary who had not could still be represented as displaying some degree of childness.

Chapter 9 addresses how status and class may influence, and age indicate, childness as part of the memorialisation process. Then a comparison of childness as observed over the three historical periods of cemetery development that make up the sample is undertaken to show how the measure of its characteristics has changed over time and why. This includes consideration of differences in childness between contemporaries, and in response to broader social changes in the management of death. The chapter concludes with a summation of what the memorialisation of children says about social perceptions of their value, role and status in society, and suggests other possibilities regarding the future use of childness in archaeology.

These varying combinations determined the level of identity differentiation observable for the deceased child, ranging from age alone to a heightened level of childness involving inscription and motif, and particularly in the Victorian era, the size and height of the child's grave marker. This period through to the 1920s and that following the creation of child-only spaces in the 1980s both represented a more individualistic cemetery ethos, with child memorialisation trending to a more expressive level of childness using a wide range of child-specific associations upon the grave marker and plot (including grave furniture) or adapted more general choices such as religious references to symbolise a greater association with children.

By comparison, the intervening period (1920s to 1980s) generally adopted a more uniform and subdued approach to memorialisation that saw a lower degree of childness in favour of a more un-differentiated family identity, with only age indicating a child. Still, the social role of the child as memorialised retained a marked continuity across the period of study regarding the display of a loving and caring relationship

between parent and child, the importance of family, and the expression of grief at the child's loss. The use of childness varied in accordance with age, but rarely in relation to sex or gender, with those aspects more closely associated with infants and young children becoming less pronounced for older children and those who died on the cusp of adulthood.

In text references

Ariès, P. 1973 *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Translated by R. Baldick. London: Routledge.

Degner, H. 2007 *Silence of the Lambs: The Commemoration of Children in the Gravestones of 19th Century South Australia*. Unpublished Honours Thesis, Department of Archaeology, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Farrell, Z. 2003 *Sacred to the Memory: An Archaeological Investigation into Emotion and Ideology in Cemeteries*. Unpublished Honours Thesis, Department of Archaeology, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Lillehammer, G. 1989 A child is born. The child's world in archaeological perspective. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 22:91-105.