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DEATH OF FASHION ISSUE

FEATURING:

↓
CEMETERIES

↓
MOVIES ABOUT CEMETERIES

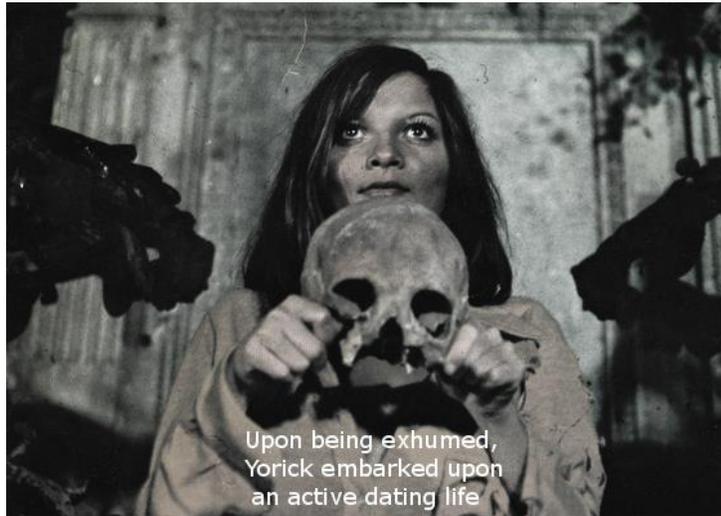
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WHAT TO WEAR TO CEMETERIES

↓
A FEW FACTS ABOUT MOURNING
FASHION

↓
ONE FAMOUS DEAD DANDY

↓
CEMETERY READING

👤 THE IRON ROSE (1973) 👤



When you consider that most people spend a few decades above ground and several centuries below, it's odd that burial grounds aren't featured more frequently on the screen. Sure, the average person (the sort of person who won't be reading this article...ever...even on a dare) will most likely spend more time in line at the DMV than they will visiting a graveyard (a trip the sort of sick individuals who would never read this article reserve only for attending funerals). Not encountering a memorial park is nearly impossible in a society which buries its dead. Just like schools, hospitals, and hotels, graveyards are something that we see every day, but are rarely shown on screen unless the filmmakers need to establish that someone is a child, sick, having an affair, or died (combine those four elements and you'll be able to pitch a Michael Jackson biopic). So, where are the cinematic cemeteries?

Well, a small cluster of headstones does pop up occasionally in 1944's brilliantly dark *Arsenic and Old Lace*. *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) famously begins in a cemetery, but curiously for a film about dead people, only spends about ten minutes there. The same could be said for the underrated *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* (1972). This somehow brings us to the celluloid fever-dream that is *The House by the Cemetery* from 1981. The reason the house gets top billing over the cemetery is because the film spends 90% of its time indoors. In fact, there are only two movies I can think of wherein the majority of the action takes place within the confines of a boneyard: *Cemetery Man* (1994) and *The Iron Rose* (1973).

👤 Fashionable Reading: The Works of Thomas Ligotti 👤

According to that infallible all-encompassing bastion of human knowledge, Wikipedia, *The Washington Post* once referred to Thomas Ligotti as "the best kept secret in contemporary horror fiction," The worst kept secret? Garth Marengi, of course.

The reason Ligotti has remained such a well-kept secret might be because his work is difficult to describe, let alone categorize. There are elements of cosmic horror in Ligotti's work, but he's not a cosmic horror writer in the fashion that H.P. Lovecraft and August Derleth are. There's more than a hint of Gothic influence in Ligotti's writing, but it's hard to imagine anyone pigeonholing Ligotti as a purveyor of Gothic prose. No, Ligotti is a true original. A writer who can draw upon the works of others without being derivative. And it's that feeling of being on unfamiliar ground that makes Ligotti's writing so disturbing. It's the literary equivalent of being lost in the woods.

Take, for example, Ligotti's "Notes on the Writing of Horror: A Story". What starts off in essay form as a light academic exercise in composing a story in each of the various sub-genres of horror fiction eventually devolves into a strange little tale of murder and madness. It's a wonderfully vicious finger-in-the-face to all of those how-to-write-in-this-style pieces you might have encountered in numerous creative writing handbooks.

If your interest in the works of Thomas Ligotti has been piqued and you're looking for a place to begin, then seek out "Mrs. Rinaldi's Angel". This short story is quintessential Ligotti, delving deeply into his obsession with dreams. Follow up "Mrs. Rinaldi's Angel" with Thomas' (I feel that we're on a first name basis with the author at this point.) "Songs of a Dead Dreamer" and "Grimscribe", both of which have been collected into one tome by the good folks at Penguin Classics. After completing that assignment, the budding Ligotti scholar will then, most likely, wish to read Tom's non-fiction efforts, the most notable of which is "The Conspiracy Against the Human Race".



It was with a combination of this royal camaraderie and his keen sense of style (spending roughly \$70,000 a year in today's money on clothing and having his boots polished with Champagne) that Beau set about ingratiating himself to London Society.

Occasionally, Beau's buddy the Prince would swing by and spend a few hours watching Beau get dressed because that's the sort of thing you do when you're the Prince of Wales and the word "stalker" has yet to enter the lexicon.

Life was good for Beau Brummell. Alas, whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make fashionable.

In July of 1813, at a masquerade party, the Prince of Wales approached Beau and William Arden AKA "Lord Alvanley". The prince then engaged the lord in conversation, completely ignoring the presence of Beau. Refusing to silently accept this insult, Brummell turned to Arden and loudly asked, "Alvanley, who's your fat friend?" With that cutting remark, Beau's reversal of fortune began.

Three years later, Beau was living in exile in France in an effort to avoid debtor's prison. It was in France where the Father of Dandyism would live out the remainder of his days, eventually dying penniless and insane from syphilis in an asylum in 1840 at the age of 61.

Ordinarily, when someone dies in obscurity, they tend to be forgotten by history. But there was nothing ordinary about Beau Brummell. In the decades following his death a collection of his witticisms fittingly titled Brummelliana was regularly reprinted. In 1924 John Barrymore portrayed Beau upon the screen. In the 1960's, The Beau Brummels had a Top 10 hit with the song "Just A Little". (They also appeared in the movie "Valley of the Giants" and as "The Beau Brummelstones" on "The Flintstones".)

In 2002, a statue of Beau Brummell was erected in London's Jermyn Street. Whether or not the current Prince of Wales spends his free time watching the statue is matter of speculation.



Unless you're the type of person who regularly finds themselves awake at 3AM on a Saturday night watching TCM (in which case, you ARE the sort of person who would read this article. Congratulations!), you've probably never seen The Iron Rose, the plot of which can be summed up thus: A young French woman and man meet at a wedding and agree to go on a date together. The date takes place in a cemetery. After some nudity (because this film was made in France in the early 1970s by the director of The Nude Vampire), the couple discover that they are lost. After dark. In the graveyard. They wander aimlessly through the cemetery for the majority of the film, occasionally stopping to argue (the male character is a complete bastard, and not just because he probably holds an affinity for the works of Jerry Lewis), and then something happens that makes John Carpenter look like Walt Disney. The end. Roll credits,

Granted, on paper, The Iron Rose may not come across as compelling cinema (even though the words "nude" and "nudity" were used in the synopsis above), but you really need to experience the parts of the film where the protagonists roam the necropolis, because there is something inexplicably magical about these scenes. Somehow, Jean Rollin - the uncredited director of Emmanuel 6 (Emmanuel vs Rocky?) - perfectly conveys the disquietude of being alone in a cemetery at night. It might have been a "happy accident", but we should all be grateful that Monsieur Rollin managed to capture that sensation on film..

Oh, yeah. This also happens...



☞WHAT TO BE CAUGHT DEAD WEARING☞

Beyond clean underwear, the fashion-forward morbid person should never be far from thoughts of what kind of corpse she will make. Dramatic, beautiful and Fabulous- of course! One never knows when the Grim Reaper will come calling! A staple wardrobe of black clothing is essential. Black goes with everything! Color accents may be incorporated seasonally or for an element of surprise. Style and comfort should not be compromised, but if one of those must be sacrificed, go in favor of style! You know what they say, "Suffer for the look!" The ability to exude mystery and elicit fear as well as admiration is the essential thing. Yes, it can be a challenge in warmer seasons or climes. Cool weather is the best friend of the dead or undead. Mixing the textures of velvet, silk, satin and brocade always works in the winter. Lace, netting, gauze, and cotton are the best summer fabrics. With the right design, white, off-white and ghostly grey can be the perfect go-to on the hottest days. Keep in mind, though, that stains from mud and blood will show! Whatever you do, don't forget to accessorize! The well-chosen shoe, hat, belt, glove, purse, jewelry, parasol or walking stick can make the outfit! In future columns, I'll be introducing some of my favorite designers as well as discussing what the well-dressed murderess should wear on and off the clock.

☞FUN FACTS ABOUT FUNERAL CLOTHING☞

☞ In 1881, an edition of *Sylvia's Home Journal* recommended that mothers wear black crepe for six weeks after the death of the mother-in-law or father-in-law of their married children.

☞ Mourning jewelry was popular during the Victorian era. This jewelry would often incorporate a lock of hair from the deceased.

☞ During the Middle Ages, under sumptuary laws, mourning dress was limited to people of society's upper echelon. Apparently, it was illegal to be a Goth peasant.

☞BEAU BRUMMELL: FASHIONABLE DEAD GUY☞



"Who's your fat friend?"

More than a century before David Bowie delighted teenagers and induced coronary arrests in adults by stepping upon the stage as Ziggy Stardust, another fashion icon – history's first true Glam Rocker - stepped upon a much larger stage: the world. His name was Beau Brummell and this (or at least as much as limited space will allow) is his story.

Born George Bryan Brummell on July 7th, 1778 somewhere in England that was clearly not Stocksbridge, he would go on to attend both Eton (where he updated the white cravat worn by all the boys at the school because what strapping lad doesn't lay in bed at night dreaming of wearing a gold-studded cravat?) and Oxford, picking up the nickname "Beau" somewhere along the way.

At some point in 1794, Beau had his nose broken when he was kicked in the face by a horse. The next year, Beau got kicked in the face by the untimely passing of his father. Now, here's the thing about Brummell: Beau was born into the middle class, yet he always aspired to be part of the aristocracy. This aspiration would eventually be his undoing. You see, Beau took the bulk of his inheritance, left to him by the aforementioned Brummell Sr., and spent it on clothes. Really, really nice clothes. Let's just say that Beau was not an "off the rack" kinda guy.

Initially, Beau's investment in upgrading his wardrobe paid off as his stylish attire caught the attention, and earned him the friendship of the Prince of Wales.