

A NATURAL HISTORY OF URNS

Riccardo Venturi for URNE.RIP, Milan, 2021

CONSERVATORIES

Three kilos of ash or thereabouts, a fine powder, smoothly pulverised without any bone residue. This is what a cinerary urn contains. This is what remains of our body after cremation: an incombustible residue that might come from a bonfire once the party has died down. But a label bearing biographical details reminds us that there is in fact a human being inside. The remains are encased twice: there is an inner container holding the ashes, sometimes a simple plastic bag, and an outer container generally of a more precious material. The design is reminiscent of a miniature coffin. The inner contents are hermetically sealed, fire-welded or cold-welded, while the outer one bolted or sealed tightly, so the ashes cannot be accidentally or deliberately scattered, and so there is no infiltration of air or moisture. The ashes are placed in the urn for storage, not unlike any other form of burial. The pulverised corpse thus lies inside the urn, which is hermetically sealed. Like the entire cremation procedure, a sealing that is subject to legislation and to the control of the mortuary police, which prohibits the scattering of ashes as well as their splitting up to be kept in different places or among different people¹.

"To be human means above all to bury," writes Robert Pogue Harrison in *The Dominion of the Dead*². For this reason it is hard to believe that the void left by the disappear-

URNE·RIP

ance of a human being might be filled by this process and by these norms which would appear to turn our final resting place into a strongbox. Might death as a measure of the living and the condition of existence lie in that pile of ashes? Might our last words be the ones on urns, those memory boxes that the English philosopher Thomas Browne referred to as 'conservatories' in *Hydriotaphia. Urne-Buriall* (1658)³?

HUMUS

Walking around the Pincian Hill and Villa Borghese, the Austrian writer Robert Musil noticed some sarcophagi hidden among the undergrowth. What attracted his attention was the one portraying a couple lying along the cover. The fact that it was placed in the open air in such an idyllic context made the experience unique: "One sees many such sarcophagus covers in Rome; but in no museum and in no church do they make an impression as here, under the trees, where as though on a picnic the figures stretch themselves out and just seem to have awakened from a little sleep that lasted two thousand years." Bodies and smiles conserved in stone in the shade of the boughs until today: "This faithful, proper, middle-class beloved look has lasted for centuries; it was sent forth in Ancient Rome and crosses your glance today."⁴

In this historical parable, we may make out the *cultural* history of urns and burials, one which coincides with the history of human society and, in part, with the history – or at least with the mythical origins – of architecture. It is in fact difficult to think of architecture without the funerary function it served in ancient civilisations and which takes the form of pyramids or majestic temples erected around a human corpse. Before being a geometric figure, the pyramid is a dwelling that hosts a mummy, that of a renowned cadaver waiting to reach immortality. Two distant temporalities – that of the flesh and that of the stone – in which an attempt is made to perennialise the caducity of our own bodies and of our existence.

In this story, certain styles and certain materials are recurrent, as well as certain figures and themes, certain rituals and certain codified practices linked to the disappearance of humans. Urns, for example, often have a cubical and not spherical shape. "As far as I recall, history has no record of conical, cubic or pyramidal gods, but idols. 'The form of the sphere is perfect and corresponds to the divinity (Cicero, *De natura deorum*, II, 17),' [...] Origen believed that the dead would return to life in the form of spheres; Fechner [...] attributed that form, which is the shape of the visual organ, to the angels."⁵

URNE·RIP

Ever since antiquity, funerary practices have made use of cremation, considered the fastest way to obtain the bones, to which great importance was attached: "‘The most sacred duty for the next-of-kin,’ writes Burkert, ‘is to gather the bones (Gr. *ostologhêin*, Lat. *ossa legere*), from the ashes of the pyre [*Homo Necans: the Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, Walter Burkert 1972].’" A divine meal in which fire feeds on the human or animal corpse. It is at this very point that the urn comes in, where the bones and ashes are united and preserved: "‘This act is at once a joining together and a foundation, as in the Latin word *condere* [Burkert, *ibid.*]. Thus an urn with its contents is a concretion or reconstruction of the dead person within it. It is one more form of preserved and recorded sacrifice.’"⁶

What goes for architecture in actual fact has a more general value, as Jacques Derrida wrote: "‘One must go further: culture itself, culture in general, is essentially, before anything, even a priori, the culture of death. Consequently, then, it is a *history of death*. There is no culture without a cult of ancestors, a ritualization of mourning and sacrifice, institutional places and modes of burial, even if they are only for the ashes of incineration. [...] The very concept of culture may seem to be synonymous with the culture of death, as if the expression ‘culture of death’ were ultimately a pleonasm or a tautology.’"⁷

But we could go back to Giambattista Vico when he suggests *humanitas* derives from *humando*, to bury, burial, thus linking it to the *humus* of the ground. Or to the Greek thought according to which in scientific and not empirical (*episteme*) knowledge, the echo of the funerary cippus (*epistema*) could be heard.⁸

Now, I wonder if alongside the cultural history of urns that we know well, there might also exist something like a *natural* history of urns, i.e. a history that considers the conservation of the human body as detached from architecture and entrusted to the elements of the natural world. A history therefore not only human, one which includes the animal, vegetable and geological sphere, and which might lead us to re-negotiate the relationship between the human and the non-human, to bring back into the arena that human exceptionalism underlined by the new geological era which takes its name from *anthropos*. A natural history of urns is unthinkable without that rather unnatural phenomenon that is global warming, be it called Anthropocene, the Great Acceleration (John R. McNeill & Peter Engelke), the New Climate Regime (Bruno Latour), the Chthulucene (Donna Haraway) or other names.

URNE·RIP

VEGETAL URNS

It's hard to think of a more natural element for urns than a tree trunk. The body would be laid to rest in the cavity and entrusted to the waters of a river or the sea: "this is a burial, as Jung noted [...] which places the dead in a two-fold embrace: that of the tree and that of water; the dead is thus certain to be reborn, for he has been returned to the maternal womb, given back to the mother figure so as to be infantilised. The children saved from the waters (as the Bible says about Moses) crossed death; they thus take on a thaumaturgic, almost sacred valance,"⁹ as Mario Porro reminds us.

We come across this kind of burial once more even in the mythical origins of the order of architects, in particular of the Corinthian capital in the Vitruvian version. According to history, the architect Callimachus came across a tomb which he understood to belong to a young woman of Corinth who had passed away before marriage. A basket with her collection of goblets had been placed on top of the tomb by her nurse or canephoros ("she who bears the basket"), in keeping with the tradition of placing alongside the deceased their favourite objects or perhaps, in this case, the dowry, but also to the practice "of pouring libations of wine over the burnt bones of the newly dead."¹⁰ Despite a tile having been placed over the top of it, "an acanthus plant grew up around the basket, its leaves curling under the edge of the tile. Callimachus transformed this assemblage into the Corinthian capital," as we are told by George Hersey.¹¹

This is how a thorny bush or a thicket of leaves ends up guarding or hiding from view the treasure of an unfortunate maiden. Hence from here we have not only the Corinthian capital but also the column tombs of antiquity, decorated with acanthus in bas-relief at their base and a basket or urn at the top.

What interests us above all is the metamorphosis of the stone urn which, with the passage of time, becomes vegetalised: "So the latest of the three capitals, curiously, does the most to return us to the idea of the sacred tree."¹² Hersey continues: "Vitruvius' story belongs to the tradition in which trees and plants serve as tombs. For instance, a cherry tree was planted as a tomb on Geryon's grave after Hercules had slain him, and a pomegranate on that of Menoicus. That tradition, in turn, is linked not only to the sacred tree but also to the idea that the dead metamorphose into plants, as Adonis became an anemone and Daphne became a laurel tree. In Ovid, Venus consecrates the anemone that Adonis had become and calls it a 'monument' (*Metamorphoses*, X, 725),"¹³ or *monimenta*.

URNE·RIP

It is hard not to think of Plutarch's account of Osiris, the god of vegetation, imprisoned in a wooden chest and thrown into the Nile by his brother Set. Once it reaches the shores of Byblos, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, a heather tree grows around the wooden urn, enclosing it within its trunk. The tree soon becomes a pillar of the palace of the king of Byblos. When the goddess Isis, the bride-sister who loved the divine king, visited the palace, she immediately recognised the vegetal – and human – origin of the pillar, so unlike the others. Having obtained the king's permission, she takes the chest-urn away, leaving the tree in its place, which becomes an object of worship among the population. But Set, seizing a moment in which Isis is absent, takes possession of the urn during a hunting expedition and cuts up the contents, that is the *disiecta membra* of his brother, scattering them all over Egypt. Without losing her patience, Isis sets out to find the pieces one by one; only the phallus is missing, having ended up in the depths of the sea where it has been transformed into a fish. With the help of her sister Nephtys, who practises the magic arts, Isis creates a simulacrum of her brother's phallus, thus recomposing his body and giving him eternal life. Having become immortal, Osiris weighs the hearts of the dead to determine whether or not they deserve the prize of immortality.

A case quite unlike that of vegetal urns, one which goes against any memorial intention, can be found in Sade's will. As the French historian Philippe Ariès recalls in *L'homme devant la mort*, Sade manifests the paradoxical will that "a monument be made of the traces of erasure it requires and a ceremony without ceremony."¹⁴ In short, Sade wants his mortal remains to be taken to Malmaison near Epernon, where he was born, and placed in the pit in the coppice wood: "Once the grave is covered, it shall be strewn with acorns over it so that, in time, the terrain of the said grave once again replenished and the wood being thickened as it was before the traces of my tomb disappear from the surface of the earth, as I flatter myself that my memory will be effaced from the spirit of mankind."¹⁵ The acorns, on becoming trees, would thus swallow the writer's body.

Have we moved away from the Corinthian capital and its mythical origins? Not really, if we think the Vitruvian tale is taken up by Francesco di Giorgio (*Trattati di architettura, ingegneria e arte militare*, 'Treatises on Architecture, Engineering and Military Art', c. 1480) with the remarkable difference that, compared to Vitruvius' account, the basket here with the collection of goblets placed on the tomb becomes a real sarcophagus inside which the Corinthian maiden is contained all in one piece. Among other things, the treatise contains, "discussions on the other columns, which are believed to have enclosed human figures, sealed as they would have been inside wicker sarcophagi. Indeed, when he discusses the numerical ratios that govern the proportioning of the human body, as illustrated by anthropomorphic columns, he shows the skeleton within the body, which in turn would

URNE·RIP

be contained within the tomb."¹⁶ The architectural element of the column thus becomes "a mummy enclosed in a pyramidal basket."

Whether it is Vitruvius or Francesco di Giorgio, Osiris or Sade, we are not far from the tradition of the sacred or cosmic tree, containing deities not unlike rocks and mountains and other natural elements do. This is why trees were used as temples or urns, "decorated with the gear and materials used in sacrifice and with the victims' remains: bones, horns, urns, lamps, fruit and vegetable relics, flowers, and weapons. Vase paintings show how garlands, votive tablets, pearl strings or astragals, cymbals, crowns, drums or tympana, Bacchus masks, spears, skulls, and other sacrificial paraphernalia were arranged in the trees and suspended above the altars at their roots."¹⁷

We will have to continue looking for organic urns at great length in our natural history of urns. As long as we do not forget that the human body itself has been regarded as an urn: according to Platonic thought, the body (*soma*) is likened to the tomb (*séma*), insofar as the soul is imprisoned within it.

WHITE PLAGUE

In a natural history of urns yet to be pieced together, the lead role undoubtedly goes to ice and glaciers. They contain numerous traces of the Earth's past, providing valuable details to those who know how to read the core samples studied by palaeoclimatologists. In Greenland, for example, pollen from Asia can be found, thus indicating which way the wind was blowing at the time.

There is the risk of freezing to death. But the cold also has the ability to slow down if not halt the onset of time, a fact that certain alpine travellers become acutely aware of when, over the course of their excursions, they chance upon perfectly preserved forms of life from the past: "I have come across butterflies laid out on the ice, each tessera of colour on their wings still in place, as if they had just been puffed with ether," writes the British critic and alpinist Robert Macfarlane in *Mountains of the Mind*.¹⁸

This is reminiscent of a famous example dating back to 1833, when Charles Darwin was leading a train of cargo mules through a labyrinth of glacier columns on the Portillo snowfields. Suddenly, writes Darwin, on one of those columns he sees "a frozen horse [...], sticking as on a pedestal, but with its hind leg straight up in the air." As Macfarlane comments: "The horse had slipped into a crevasse and then, by dint of the glacier's strange

URNE·RIP

machinations, had been lifted up and out of the body of the glacier. Its corpse was perfectly intact, as though it were still alive. The glacier had embalmed it expertly."¹⁹

We stand before a veritable *natural monument*, an equestrian statue in which representation gives way to presentation, to the presentification of the animal, with its hind limbs stretched out in the air, an unprecedented posture for those equestrian statues that fill the public space. No horseman may tame it, no emperor may ride it, not unlike Maurizio Cattelan's *Novecento* (1997), the stuffed horse harnessed in leather and hanging from a hook that leaves it suspended in the void of a room at the Castello di Rivoli.

Darwin's experience in Portillo reminds me of those famous pages from *Kaputt* by Curzio Malaparte²⁰ on the ice horses. The context could not be more dissimilar: we are no longer at the heart of scientific exploration but in the midst of World War II, in the harsh winter of 1941, on Lake Lådoga in Finland, near the forest of Ràikkola. In December, the temperature falls so low that from one moment to the next, because of the break in the heat balance, the sea, the lakes and rivers freeze. "Even sea waves are gripped in mid-air and become rounded ice-waves suspended in the void," writes Malaparte. In such a deadly freezing over, animals are also involved: "The lake looked like a vast sheet of white marble on which rested hundreds upon hundreds of horses' heads. They appeared to have been chopped off cleanly with an axe. Only the heads stuck out of the crust of ice. And they were all facing the shore. The white lame of terror still burnt in their wide-open eyes. Close to the shore, a tangle of wildly rearing horses rose from the prison of ice."

The scene is quite literally chilling but also grotesque, for according to Malaparte, it might have been painted by Bosch himself. Following his account, during that harsh winter, he used to go down to the lake and sit on the heads of the horses, smoking and chatting with his friend Svartström: "He looked at the heads of the horses protruding from the sheet of ice, those dead heads with hard frozen manes, those shiny wide-open eyes filled with terror. He stroked with a light hand those extended muzzles, the bloodless nostrils, the lips twisted with a despairing neighing – a neighing that was buried with the mouth full of frozen foam. Then, as we walked off in silence, we were wont to caress, in passing, the manes white with sleet. The wind was softly hissing over the vast sheet of ice."

Now, in this dreamlike ecosystem, heedless of the landscape of death surrounding the author, the problem is not given by the long winter or the so-called 'white plague' but rather by the insurgence of springtime, the "insidious disease of the North" which "rots and dissolves the life that winter has jealously guarded and protected within its prison of ice, and bring its fatal gifts – love the joy of living, the yielding to light thoughts and gay feelings, the

URNE·RIP

enjoyment of strife, of idleness, and of sleep, the fever of the senses, the deluding weddings with nature."

The thaw is accompanied by the fetid smell of dead horses which are now rotting away, carried far by the wind, "a warm, greasy odour, mellowed by the resinous scent of the pines and by the lean odour of the birches." A stench smelt by humans and by live horses, which won't stop neighing. All that can be done is to return them to the earth and bury them: "Some fifty carcasses were heaped crossways on the sledges; they were no longer stiff but limp, swollen; their long manes freed by the thaw were floating. The eyelids hung on their watery swelling eyes." The destruction of Europe during the war years described in *Kaputt* thus provides us with a powerful image of ice as a natural urn.

We find many examples of this in the history of mountaineering. I'm thinking in particular of George Mallory's Everest expedition. In 1924, at Camp III by the foot of the mountain, "he comes across the oxygen cylinders abandoned by the 1922 expedition beside the rough memorial cairn built for the seven Sherpas who died beneath the avalanche. He is amazed by just how little the place has changed since then: the cold and the altitude have carried out their task of conservation, halting time. Nothing ages up there; the snow simply changes shape and layout, drifting here and there around the monument. There is nothing to testify to the passing of time."²¹ As well as animal life, the ice thus guards the memory of previous expeditions.

Human beings are no exception to this, as Mallory himself would find out, vanishing in 1924 along with his Sherpa and found only in May 1999 at 8,200 metres above sea level, in excellent condition: "face down on the steep shelves of talus on Everest's north face, his arms flung up and out as though he had halted himself as he slid by digging his nails into the rock. Mallory's clothes had been torn from his corpse by decades of wind and frost, and lay in rags. But the extreme cold had preserved his body. His back still undulated with muscle beneath skin that was bleached bright white. Up there, his body had not putrefied, it had petrified – his flesh looked like nothing so much as stone. When pictures of Mallory's corpse were released to the world's media, many commentators likened it to a white marble statue."²²

Like the case of the horses described by Malaparte, human bodies are also preserved well as long as they remain below zero, undergoing a process of petrification, a 'geologicising' that halts all fluidity, quite the opposite of the ashes and bones generated by the fire of cremation.

URNE·RIP

This is a process peculiar to ice, i.e. of water in its solid state, but not of its liquid version or the earth element: "Human bodies too are preserved by the cold, and the literature of the mountains contains many accounts of the discovery of corpses which look eerily alive. Unlike the ocean, from which bodies turned up bloated and nibbled, or the jungle, in which the best an explorer might hope to find would be a mouldering pith helmet on top of a pile of bones, in the mountains – as at the poles – time was often halted by the cold."²³

To this effect, Macfarlane recalls a tale by Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (1855–57) about a group of travellers who, having been caught in a snowstorm, find shelter in a convent at the Pass of the Great Saint Bernard. In a nearby dwelling lie the bodies of other travellers who, less fortunate than themselves, had met their death up there in the mountains: "The mother, storm-belated many winters ago, still standing in the corner with her baby at her breast; the man who had frozen with his arm raised to his mouth in fear or hunger, still pressing it with his dry lips after years and years. An awful company, mysteriously come together!"²⁴

They too, like Mallory, had been turned into white marble statues. Natural versions of the contemporary fantasies on cryogenetics, the study of the conservation of bodies at extremely low temperatures thanks to interaction with electronic devices. Don DeLillo made it the driving force of one of his more recent novels: *Zero K* (2016).

ÖTZI: AN ARCHIVE OF THE HUMAN SPECIES

A natural history of urns, as we mentioned earlier, is part of the wider context of the Anthropocene. The melting of the glaciers is a demonstration of this, for it is precisely because of this phenomenon – so dramatic that Peter Wadhams, one of the leading glaciologists, entitled his book *A Farewell to Ice: A Report from the Arctic* – that finds have multiplied. These are usually human and animal bones, preserved over thousands of years thanks to the low temperatures.

Unexpected and exceptional, however, is the case of Ötzi or the Similaun Iceman, who was found in his entirety in a crevasse on the Grafferner glacier on the border between Italy and Austria, at an altitude of 3,200 metres. When the head and shoulders of a man could be seen to emerge, thoughts immediately went to a hiker who had lost his footing. There were no signs of decomposition, the skin was dry, the eyeballs in place, yet it soon became clear that the man was much older than had initially been thought.

URNE·RIP

The results of the analysis were mind-blowing: Ötzi was born over 5,300 years ago, i.e. a thousand years before the pyramids. This makes him the oldest human body ever to be found. This is unprecedented if we think that archaeologists never deal with a whole body but with bones or teeth from which they obtain genetic information. Here, on the other hand, we are dealing with cryogenesis *ante litteram*: the body was well preserved because it had been stored at such low temperatures; it had dried out with the blowing of the wind and the sun; the rocks had protected it by forming a sort of trench, and then it had soon been covered in three metres of snow. It did not decompose after death because bacteria do not survive at that altitude. Rather than an embalmed mummy, i.e. artificial, it is a natural mummy, frozen in and by time. It is the mountain that preserved it up to this day, despite the fact that such bodies are usually washed down the rivers, where they end up mixed in with other debris.

In other words, Ötzi is a genuine archive of the human species or a 'library', as suggested by Patrick Hunt, a rather original archaeologist at Stanford University, and author, among other things, of two monographs on Caravaggio and Rembrandt.²⁵

The iceman undergoes the most sophisticated scientific analysis available. The mysteries surrounding his existence are gradually unravelled: he is only 1.57 m tall, a hunter or shepherd, probably not a farmer judging by his hands. His bones suggest that he was about forty years old.

The tools he had with him at the time of his death were found nearby: a knife with a flint blade (a material that came from afar, a sign that the community to which the man belonged practised trade), a bow, a fur hat, patched trousers, a quiver with twelve arrows, shoes, one of which was still on his foot, a leather bag tied around his waist, a maple leaf for lighting a fire. But also a mushroom that burns for a long time when dried, or birch polypore, another mushroom used as a first aid thanks to the polyporic acid it contains, an excellent remedy against bacterial infections, not to mention the intestinal worm that Ötzi had contracted. There was even a copper axe that surprised archaeologists: it meant that the people whom Ötzi belonged to knew how to extract copper from rock and heat it up to 1,085 degrees Celsius: its melting point.

Sixty-one charcoal powder tattoos were found on his skin, divided into nineteen groups and distributed all over his body: were they clan marks, as assumed in 1991? Or perhaps, as was later suggested, those tattoos served a therapeutic purpose, being placed at joints (Ötzi suffered from arthritis) or at points where he had discomfort or a wound? The most recent, for example, is placed at a broken rib. Might the tattoo have served as a kind of painkiller, a magical marking?

URNE`RIP

The study of his stomach was decisive. It took several years because, despite the numerous examinations of Ötzi's body, this organ had escaped notice for it was not where scientists expected it to be according to anatomy. Over the fifty centuries lying on a rock, the body had flattened out to such an extent that some organs had shifted and the stomach ended up at the level of the lungs. It still contained Ötzi's last meal before he climbed up the mountain: cereals (spelt), fats, deer and ibex meat. It was a time of transition from a society of hunters to one of farmers. The pollen found – which is produced at different altitudes – also makes it possible to reconstruct his movements.

In 2010, he was thawed out in order to allow an autopsy to be performed, in search of his genetic code. Doctors had only nine hours to do this, after which the body had to be refrozen. DNA reconstruction is not easy because the humidity inside a natural mummy makes DNA extraction from bone samples delicate. Eventually, 96% of his DNA was reconstructed. We thus know from certain markers that he had brown eyes, that the closest contemporary humans to him did not come from the Alps, where he was found, but from Sardinia (Shardana). That he suffered from cardiovascular disease, as indicated by the hardened arteries that placed him at risk from heart attack. This is an element that links him to us: his arteries are similar to those of a twenty-first-century man. Lyme disease, caused by a bacterium that humans contract from ticks, was also identified.

But it was not these illnesses that caused Ötzi's death, nor any other natural causes. In fact, the tomography shows an arrowhead lodged in his back at the level of an artery. The first human being of whom we have material traces died a violent death. Is hatred perhaps older than love, as Freud suspected?

There are many questions that remain unanswered despite scientific analysis, starting from the reason why this ancestor of ours set out from a 300-metre plateau to climb up to 3,600 metres, venturing to such heights followed, perhaps secretly, by his killer. Certainly, Ötzi's posthumous life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, his second life, is no less compelling than that of his first.

Found near the border between Italy and Austria, Ötzi became a bone of contention between the two countries, which both claimed it belonged to them. Italian or Austrian? This is a question that would certainly have sounded curious to Ötzi's ears. If he had not been hit by that arrow, if he had survived only a few minutes longer, he would indeed have ended up in Austrian hands.

After geopolitics comes the turn of art. In order to preserve Ötzi's remains as well as possible, paleo-artist Gary Staab was hired to make a three-dimensional copy. Staab

URNE·RIP

specialises in creating replicas of extinct creatures. Found in a crevasse, the 'original' is now stored in an artificial crypt in the Bolzano museum, just fifty kilometres from where it was found, where the temperature is set to minus 6.5 degrees Celsius and 98% relative humidity. It is no longer preserved by glacial temperatures but by sophisticated technological apparatus not so unlike cryogenesis.

Frozen here for eternity, he is only visible from the outside through a small porthole. He is brought out for no more than twenty minutes every twelve to eighteen months, for his body remains an endless goldmine of information. After Ötzi's demise, it is estimated that around one hundred billion human beings have lived on this Earth. It's hard to say how many will live after him.

"Buried within 'grave' are four distinct meanings: gravity, the mysterious physical force that draws all things down to the core of the earth; gravitas, the Roman word for weighty seriousness; the grave of the cemetery, where the body is laid to final rest; and gravid, pregnant,"²⁶ as James Hillman writes in *The Force of Character*, the nicest book I have ever read on ageing. Should not the same gravitas be attributed to urns?

URNE·RIP

- ¹ Cf. *Come costruire un'urna cineraria*, 22 August 2007, <https://www.funerali.org/cimiteri/come-costruire-unurna-cineraria-530.html>
- ² Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2003.
- ³ Cf. Robert Macfarlane, *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*, Hamish Hamilton, 2019.
- ⁴ Robert Musil, "Sarcophagus Covers," in *Flypaper*, Penguin UK, 2013.
- ⁵ Jorge Luis Borges, *Other Inquisitions 1937–1952*, University of Texas Press 1975.
- ⁶ George Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi*. MIT Press, 1988.
- ⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, Stanford University Press, 1993.
- ⁸ Mario Porro, *Ipotiposi. Vagabondare per immagini*, with illustrations by Anna Enrica Passoni, Medusa, Milan 2020, p. 72.
- ⁹ M. Porro, op. cit., pp. 96–97.
- ¹⁰ G. Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi*. MIT Press, 1988.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, Stanford University Press, 1993.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ G. Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi*. MIT Press, 1988.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. Cf. also Roger Cook, *The Tree of Life. Image for the Cosmos*, Thames and Hudson, 1992.
- ¹⁸ Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind, a History of a Fascination* Granta, 2003.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Curzio Malaparte, *Kaputt*, New York Review of Books Inc. 2007; citations are taken from the chapter "Ice Horses".
- ²¹ Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind, a History of a Fascination* Granta, 2003.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ *Otzi, l'uomo venuto dal ghiaccio*, National Geographic documentary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5KrNZaZQPo>. Cf. also *Le mystère Otzi. L'homme des glaces*, 2005, Arcades Video; altro BBC.
- ²⁶ James Hillman, *The Force of Character: and the Lasting Life*, Ballentine 2000.