Chapter 10   Mortuary Culture

Death is a natural process, but humans have consistently created cultural behaviours and associated material culture to cope with this separation of the living from the dead. In the early modern period the material culture associated with burial, mourning and commemoration were of many kinds, linked to class and religious persuasion, but also changing over time. The early modern period saw a readjustment in attitudes to the dead and to commemoration brought about by the Reformation, both within those areas that became Protestant, but also because of the effects of the Counter-Reformation elsewhere in Europe. However, once these adjustments had been made the effects of increased literacy, the expansion of the middle classes, and increasing consumerism, were combined with changing attitudes to the body, death and the afterlife in the light of shifts in scientific and ethical paradigms. These all created significant changes in mortuary and commemorative practices. Recent research has examined many of these trends, with differing emphasis with regard to the main motors for such changes, in part because distinct data sets have tended to be researched by scholars within separate disciplines. For example, internal memorials have largely been the preserve of art historians, with external memorials more frequently considered by archaeologists. The treatment of the body and the practices of the funeral, together with the undertaking trade, have been the focus of historians, though archaeologists have considered these alongside the evidence from excavated coffins and their contents – both cultural and anatomical. Some aspects of the subject are still largely in a data-gathering phase, others are more interpretive, but across the whole range of early modern mortuary culture the researches of the last few decades have transformed our understanding.

Post-Reformation changes in attitudes to the dead and funerary practice

Commemoration within a Catholic theology had the important purpose of encouraging prayers for the soul of the deceased. Whilst issues of status, lineage, occupation, and piety could be depicted through symbolism and text on monuments, the underlying imperative was to encourage the efforts of the living to reduce the time of the deceased in Purgatory (Ariès 1974). In early modern Catholic Europe this remained a major imperative, but mortuary practice there was also affected by changes in the role of commemoration worked through within Protestant contexts, as these often chimed with new church teachings as redefined in face of the Protestant critiques. Some of the motif changes previously claimed as intimately related to theological priorities are now being seen as part of wider changes in attitude caused by a combination of the aesthetics such as the Baroque and Roccoco, and by wider shifts in ideology linked to the Renaissance and the rise of scientific enquiry, leading to new attitudes to the human body that were explored and developed in the period leading up to and during the Enlightenment (Mytum 2004a; Tarlow 2011; Heinrich 2014).

The treatment of the body and funeral culture

The process of dying became more fully formalised during the early modern period, and one important research focus has been on the role of the 'good death' and all that this implied (Beier 1989; Gittings 1999; Houlbrooke 1998). The ideal was to die at home, surrounded by family and

friends, one's earthly business concluded and being at peace with God. Whilst Catholics also desired the last rites from a priest, for Protestants it was the dying individual who had to ask God to forgive their sins. The medical profession could be involved in the time leading up to death, but only late in the period was their presence common, albeit even then rarely effective. The 'bad death', in contrast, would come suddenly, possibly with violence or alone, and might result in no body being recovered as with some losses at sea, or during war. Attitudes to the 'bad death' affected treatment of suicides and unidentified drowned victims (who could be interred outside formal burial grounds), and also the imposition of capital punishment and ways in which the corpse was then mutilated and displayed (Tarlow 2011). The nature of a death was often recorded on commemorative texts and symbolism, as well as in funeral sermons, and any written reporting such as newspapers and broadsheets. Popular literature and illustrations emphasised the ideal, which was widely recognised across all classes. Some occupations where 'bad death' was common, such as mariners, developed their own superstitious beliefs and practices as ways of coping with this fear, and these continue through the whole of the period considered here (Stewart 2012).

Many aspects of preparing the body for burial continued from the Middle Ages, with regionally distinct popular cultural reactions to death being negotiated through the washing, dressing, and display of the body, usually in the home. Tarlow (2011) has expanded on the work of Park (1995) in seeing Britain and Ireland as part of the northern European tradition that considered the body as still having powers. The wealthy would invest in a coffin to contain that power, and this allowed the development of various material forms of coffin and fittings that could display wealth and status as well as containment of the deceased. The poor would be wrapped in a shroud before being carried in a communal, re-usable coffin to the funeral service and then interment in the graveyard. Even here, however, commercial and consumerist interests prevailed, with legislation in England demanding that the corpses be wrapped in English woollen shrouds (Litten 1991), thus ensuring a steady market for the cloth. However, by the later 18th century it was normal for even the poorest to have an individual coffin, and this was a major expenditure of institutions such as the orphanages and workhouses. Here the increasing power of individualism – represented by the single person enclosed in the coffin – is visible even in common graves where several interments of unrelated individuals could take place in quick succession.

The beliefs in southern Europe saw the soul as departed and the body merely a shell, and a shroud was often sufficient to cover the corpse (Park 1995), so the opportunity to exploit the material opportunities of the coffin only commenced relatively late in this part of Europe. Even elite funerals could be relatively simple and the consumerist imperative had less of a hold on mortuary culture until the memorial, which could be as extravagant as anywhere else.

Ariès (1974; 1981) has considered the role of loss but also the transfer of power and property that follows on from a death, and the ways in which cultural practices allow adjustments to be made. Historical studies have concentrated on the ways in which royal power was transferred, and the importance of the funeral in that politically significant rite of passage (Fritz 1981). However, the transfer of property and power on death was of increasing importance across

most social classes during the period. The significance of wills and probate inventories to record the belongings of the deceased reflects both increasing bureaucracy and literacy, but also a greater concern that property should be measured, known, and handed on appropriately across the middling classes and beyond (Houlbrooke 1998). Things were now so important that popular culture and practice now required these records, and the body – as both person and thing – should be managed using material culture, and where possible remembered with monuments.

Many traditional funerary customs again continued from the Middle Ages within Catholic contexts, but Protestants held new attitudes to the body and its disposal, and so had to develop innovative, simpler modes of disposal. Tarlow (2011) has recently considered this process of adjustment, indicating great variation in attitude and practice, and also internal contradictions between belief as written in tracts and practice in terms of the writers' actions with regard to the bereaved for whom they had responsibility. Here the tensions between accepted social custom, folk beliefs, established theology (of whatever kind), and a developing scientific understanding of the body created an uneasy cocktail of attitudes within families and even individuals. Tensions were partly alleviated by the developing professional cadre of undertakers who could offer an expert and experienced route through the options available. Whilst the more extreme theological views saw the body merely as carrion, cultural values and emotional ties meant that formal deposition continued, even if in some cases there was no formal funeral service at all.

In those 16th- and 17th-century Calvinist and Puritan contexts where many aspects of traditional funeral practice were seen as superstitious and to be denounced, there was a great simplification of the activities from home to burial ground, and where there was a funeral service this was short, simple, and careful to avoid any hint of Catholic values. In other Protestant traditions modifications were less, but still excluded all mention and liturgy that could be linked to prayer for the soul. There was an increase in night funerals from the 1630s (Gittings 1984; Litten 1991); the dominant interpretation is that they were initiated by the elite, then their popularity spread through society, though research on the process has been limited, so why they became so popular is not clear. The material evidence comes in the form of various printed sources including emblem books and funeral invitations replete with funeral scenes and mortality symbolism but with the name, date, time and location left blank to be filled in as appropriate (Litten 1991). Other items such as feathered funeral plumes and the pall that would cover the coffin on its journey could be rented. Night funerals may have been designed to attract less attention, with only the most committed mourners attending, and not seen by those going about their normal business by day; body disposal was marginalised and seen as private, linked to family and friends, and not of wider social significance.

The relative simplicity of early Protestant funerary practices was rapidly undermined as the increasing materialism and consumerism in society at large encouraged all to cope through the use of material culture – here coffins, funeral clothing and the distribution of material goods at funerals to mourners. The material consumption at funerals consisted of food and drink, distributed relatively widely, and other items including gloves and rings to an inner circle (Llewellyn 1991). Many of these 'momento mori' have survived, indicating a diverse range of forms that could be worn after the funeral as a sign of mourning.

Litten (1991) has argued that the extravagant funeral was restricted until the early 18th century to those entitled to bear arms, for whom complex and extravagant rules were set out and managed by the College of Arms. He argues that later, less elaborate versions were developed by the funeral industry to attract the middle classes during the later 17th century and becoming very popular in the 18th century (Litten 1997; 1998), with even simpler options eventually being made available to the poorer classes, as a process of emulation. Fritz (1995) considers that funerals were used to demonstrate wealth, not social rank, with undertakers following the profit motive to provide as elaborate and costly funeral as the clients would allow; a shift from purchasing funerary trappings to renting them reduced costs and expanded the market. Tarlow (1999) argues that it was not emulation but a growing sense of emotional attachment within families that led to this growth in investment, and reflects a separately developing middle class sense of grief that led to the desire for commemoration. It is likely that a number of factors combined; the armorial funerals clearly formed a well-established model from which the undertakers could develop a wider repertoire of services, but there had to be a demand for these. Whilst emotion may have increased – or at least it may have become more acceptable to display grief publicly – it was the insidious spread of materialism as a means of dealing with the world's challenges that was the major factor here. Investing in a more complex coffin, a more elaborate burial space, or erecting a monument, all now helped the bereaved to deal with grief. Material culture was now a significant and active part of the coping strategies of both individuals and society; the rise of this material repertoire has been recognised (Llewellyn 1991), but this factor in the trend has not been considered, despite recent recognition of the rise of consumerism in wider society (Weatherill 1988; Johnson 1996). Both the undertakers and the bereaved looked to material goods to manage loss, grief, and transition.

The survival and recovery through excavation of burials from the late 16th and 17th centuries has not been high, largely because most earth burials seem to have been in the same type of shallow grave cuts as used in the Middle Ages. Later burial not only therefore easily disturbed them, but was also often achieved through deeper grave cuts, creating even greater disturbance of previous interments than had previously been the case. Nevertheless, some burials for the period do survive, including standard churchyard burials, those of sects such as the Quakers in unconsecrated ground, and unusual burials linked to various forms of 'bad death' such as plague victims, criminals, and the drowned (Cherryson, Crossland and Tarlow 2012). Those most frequently identified are interments within burial crypts belonging to the aristocracy, as here the various generations of a dynasty could be laid side by side or one above another on shelves around the walls of the crypt, untouched by later interments as with earth-cut graves. Most regions saw increasing populations during the early modern period, and therefore increased rate of reuse of grave space, also with the result that intact remains of this period are rare.

Coffins held the body – in Tarlow's terms to contain its power – and thus avoided its pollution (as evidenced by odours and indeed any liquids that could seep from the body) spreading to the living. Early modern lead coffins sealed the body, sometimes in mummy-shaped forms almost like a permanent version of a shroud. These could be embellished with appliques depicting heraldry or with a small incised text (Litten 1991), and were normally placed within family vaults.

Early wooden coffins were six-sided with the widest point at the shoulders, a form that had begun in the Middle Ages but was now dominant. The first early modern coffins, however, had a coped lid in a form hard to identify in earth graves, but unusual preservation in North America has allowed their identification (Riordan 2009) to complement images in Britain in funerary monuments and paintings (Llewellyn 1991; Gittings 1999). By the later 17th century the flat-lidded hexagonal coffin was the norm, often elaborated with the initials, year of death and age marked out on the lid in copper alloy pins; more wealthy families also had a lead lining. Not seen whilst the body was on display in the house as the coffin was open, and rapidly buried in a crypt or the earth, this labelling of the coffin marks a significant shift from the anonymity of the shrouded burial, and indeed medieval coffins. Here the importance of literacy enabling the naming of the deceased can be recognised, but as significant was the placing of the person within history, within linear time (Mytum 2007a). The medieval person existed largely in cyclical time, and on death their soul entered Purgatory from which, eventually but indeterminately, it could be released. The post-reformation person increasingly lived within a measured world, and one of those measures was of time. Moreover, this time was now linear time, marked through use of Arabic numerals whereby year of death, and by age given on the coffin the year of birth, placed the deceased within events – within history. The texts of memorials performed exactly the same function.

From the 18th century onwards consumerist demands were satisfied as mass-produced metal fittings, often highly decorated, were placed over the fabric-covered coffin, and the corpse was dressed in special funerary clothing within a lined interior. Many different crafts could all profit from the range of material goods required, as also with mourning clothes and funeral gifts, but the demand for these came from bereaved customers requiring physical items, whether their reasons were emotional or driven by social convention.

All aspects of mortuary culture was now imbued with a level of corporality, personhood and emotional relationships that have been explored by Tarlow (1999; 2011), but also within family, regional and national history, exemplified by coffin, memorial, and parish registers recording baptism, marriage and burial. Anniversaries of death were important in the repeated cyclical medieval cycle of prayer, but in the early modern world life events were seen within linear time. As years passed, events became more distant, but in a measurable way; significant longer anniversaries could be remembered, and it is here that our contemporary commemorative obsession began, still often materially manifested and most marked in Britain by the national memorial arboretum, a whole landscape of commemoration. To record and remember individuals and events, material culture played a role – not only in the funerary context but also through initials and dates being cast into church bells, carved into furniture, formed on slipware ceramics, and erected as date stones on buildings (Mytum 2007a). Some related to family events such as marriages and births, others on significant communal investment such as extension of buildings or hanging of bells for the new forms of ringing (Cressy 1989).

Arenas of burial and commemoration

The locales for both burial and commemoration remained the same over the Reformation period, and indeed subsequent changes were limited until close to the end of the period considered here. The traditional locales were either within a religious building, or outside within the consecrated area set aside for burial; only in the last decades of the 18th century did the first urban cemeteries appear, though their floruit was not until well into the 19th century. Some Protestant sects established their own unconsecrated burial grounds, and developed distinctive burial and commemorative patterns (Stock 1998), and from the 1740s some aristocratic families began to erect family mausolea on their estates. Here can be seen a further extension of the privatisation and control of the corpse seen in family vaults, but now taken completely out of church control. The landscape and commemorative impacts of such shifts have attracted some attention (Colvin 1991; Curl 1980; Mytum 2007b). There was an increase in the number of burial grounds over time, but this expansion did not match the increase in interments caused by the rising population, particularly in urban contexts, leading to evermore frequent over-burying of the ground and by the end of the period considerable concern over the environmental and health implications of the burial crisis (Gittings 1984).

Both the Catholic and Protestant body was in theological terms unimportant, and charnel pits and ossuaries reveal how human remains disturbed in the repeated re-use of consecrated burial space were treated. The soul had gone, and whilst human remains might evoke some emotional response, the physical remains had more cultural than religious significance and changes in body disposal and commemoration was not directed by the church, though it controlled the space in which these took place and had to manage competing demands of different interests. In some regions this led to the construction of elaborate structures to house the charnel, and in Catholic regions these could provide a focus for prayer for departed souls (Musgrave 1997), in others the re-use of parts of the human skeleton in architectural decorative schemes are seen by modern eyes as macabre, but form an extreme end of the 'momento mori' spectrum. Most remains, however, were reburied with more or less ceremony and the details of their location and treatment are only discovered through excavation.

The interior spaces of churches were always more prestigious for both interment and commemoration, and those near the altar or in other prominent locations the most desirable of all. For Catholics this was to be close to any relics or saints to benefit from such association at the Resurrection, but for their families, and for the Protestants, it was the social cachet that was assigned to such locations that ensured remarkable uniformity of practice across Europe. Surprisingly few studies have explored the spatial patterning of internal commemoration in detail, though some have considered particular family chapels and crypts of the aristocracy and royalty (Curl 1980; Colvin 1991; Litten 1999; Llewellyn 2000). This is in part because monuments can be moved around a building over time, and it is their original locations that must be identified.

In some Protestant countries such as Scotland, internal burial was officially prohibited, though many landowners resolved this problem by constructing structures adjacent to the church (and

7

sometimes merely additions that opened onto the worship space), creating what were termed lairs (Colvin 1991). Another solution was to erect substantial monuments against the churchyard boundary walls which were often rebuilt or increased in height at this time to provide a location for such monuments; a few monuments were also erected on the exteriors of churches (Willsher and Hunter 1978). Starting in the 17th century, this Scottish tradition of large monuments linked to walling continued through to the 19th century.

The investment in the interment process developed in another significant material way during the early modern period as the middle classes adopted the enclosed, built, subterranean spaces designed to house the coffins previously only constructed for the aristocracy (Litten 1985; Mytum 2004). Brick or stone-built vaults, usually within churches but sometimes outside, created defined spaces within which a family could be sure of the safety of their ancestors' remains. The normal form was rectangular with a barrel vault, and an approach down steps to enter at a narrow end, this access route being normally infilled and covered with paving if inside. In some cases the vault was under the family pew, and may or may not be close to any above-ground memorials, depending on where existing vaults and memorials were already positioned when new ones were commissioned. Simple vaults often had coffins lying directly on the floor or on timber sleeper beams, but more elaborate examples had shelves along the sides; a few vaults have been investigated, and in some cases preservation of the coffins, their fabric coverings and fittings can be excellent (Litten 1999).

During the 18th century smaller, shaft style structures were constructed in which coffins could be placed one above another (Litten 1985). These were in effect brick or stone-lined individual graves, the coffins separated from each other by the placement of iron bars above the coffin after interment so that the next one could rest on these rather than on the lower coffin and possibly crush it. These could be placed along the church aisles, and were a reaction to a wider clientele requiring protected interment space. They were augmented at the end of the period with communal crypts beneath city churches, such as at Spitalfields, London (Reeve and Adams 1993), which could accommodate large numbers who could thus avoid the perceived horrors of the urban churchyard, provided they could pay the considerably higher burial fees for the crypt over those required for external earth burial.

There has been limited discussion of why these forms of construction were initiated and became popular, but the assumption implicit in the literature is that they protect the integrity of the body in the face of likely disturbance and disarticulation as greater numbers of interments took place with population increase. However, this disturbance was already frequent, albeit with anonymous and older skeletons, during the Middle Ages, so it clearly also reflects a change in attitude to the body. Moreover, it reveals once again that the use of material means could alter practices, and create privatised spaces that could be assigned to families and be passed down over generations. These crypts – and indeed brick-lined shafts which held a more limited number of coffins – were brick or stone enclosed spaces that were protected and privatised, enclosed and exclusive. Most were constructed within churches, but they also were used in churchyards.

The graveyard was the repository for most of the population, with very few interments having any permanent memorial during the 17th century and in many regions for much of the 18th century (Mytum 2004a). It would seem that wooden crosses were occasionally used both in the Middle Ages and later, according to contemporary illustrations, but only a few stone monuments, largely similar in style to those more commonly erected inside, are found in post-Reformation contexts, though a few 17th-century headstones survive across Europe (Nijssen and Nyssen 2011). Chest tombs were occasionally erected in the Middle Ages, and a few in similar Gothic style continued through the 16th century. In the 17th century, monuments with carving similar to that seen on contemporary furniture were commissioned in some areas such as south-west England, but to date they have only been described and not placed in any wider context (Elliott 1977).

Scholars from Burgess (1963) onwards have speculated as to whether the small number of external monuments before the 18th century reflects a limited number being erected, or is a factor of survival; this affects whether the 'graveyard boom' from the 18th century was a real cultural phenomenon or is an effect of taphonomy – the process of creation and degradation of the material remains that leaves us with what we can see today (Tarlow 1999; Mytum 2004a; 2006). This greatly affects how one should reconstruct burial and commemorative landscapes, and also the role of commemorative practice in mourning and death ritual. Consideration of early transcriptions such as those by Bigland in Gloucestershire (Frith 1989-95), the absence of early stones recovered from archaeological watching briefs at churches or found built into churches or boundary walls, and examination of antiquarian illustrations of churches and churchyards together suggest that during the 16th and 17th centuries permanent external memorials were indeed rare, especially of the more modest kinds. Such limited research as has been carried out to date suggests that external memorials at this date were being erected by substantial farming and mercantile patrons. There certainly has been attrition and loss, but not of a scale to deny the exponential rise from the later 18th century onwards, when the 'graveyard boom' in monumental commemoration did indeed occur.

The Content of Commemoration

A wide variety of internal monuments occurs following the Reformation, but in relatively small numbers (Kemp 1980). Numerous of forms can be found, and the most educated and culturally aware partook of elements from Renaissance traditions to create innovative designs (Sherlock 2008). However, as permanent seating was introduced with the provision of pews, often owned by particular families, the interior space was filled and churches no longer had floor space for large tombs. The physical marking and privatising of space used every Sunday within the church by socially powerful pew ownership was another effect of materialism and individualism. However, the pews undermined the same individuals' commemorative desires for monuments set on the floor as the seating now occupied the available space. The commemorative solution was to utilise the walls on which monuments could be placed, even if not always close to where the family burial vault could lie. Larger wall monuments extended from the floor and could be extremely complex, with many architectural, figural and heraldic elements, but most were smaller, simpler forms placed on the wall above any seating. Ledgers – slabs of paving that

completely covered the grave – were laid on the church floors and provided a less expensive form of internal commemoration; already present in the late Middle Ages, these gained in popularity from the later 17th century and could be placed along the aisles even in a heavily pewed interior.

Internal wall monuments were particularly successful in giving commemorative prominence within the structure – a clear sign of status. However, the degree of elaboration of the monument was the major factor in visibility, and the form and content of such monuments has been a significant focus of research (Kemp 1980; Llewellyn 2000; Sherlock 2008). Usually surrounded by elaborate architectural framing, there may also be a portrait or full figure of the deceased, sometimes augmented by those of relatives or allegorical figures. Central in all cases, however, was a text which provided key information about the deceased, their life and their virtues. In Protestant contexts the power of the exemplary good life dominated; this was usually also the case on Catholic monuments, though the exhortation for prayers for the soul would usually also be prominent. The symbolism of the monumental architecture, any heraldry, and the use of classical imagery together materially conveyed education, refinement, and the virtues desired by society, all reinforced through an often extensive text. Education was required to 'read' all the various elements of the monument, but it was to such an audience that it was intended to communicate.

The traditional studies examining the works of high quality carvers still dominate the literature, exploring the development of their careers and the various products over time, the stylistic influences which they absorbed, and their relationships with patrons (see numerous papers in the journal *Church Monuments*). The major interpretive issues addressed in such studies are often the role of the monument within a Protestant ideology and the ways in which medieval, Catholic elements were transformed into a new tradition, how new purposes for monuments developed in terms of political rhetoric and the representation of both a 'good death' and of an exemplary life, or how the memorials formed part of the 'momento mori' tradition. There is less frequent attention to the relationships between the client and carver, and none on how the monuments were actually put together in a technical, craft sense, reflecting the art historical rather than archaeological background of most researchers.

External memorials include a small number of headstones from the 17th century onwards. These tend to be small, and usually commemorate a single person. In some cases the reasons for the erection of early stones can be inferred. Many in Scotland and Ireland indicate that it is the ownership of plots – the right of family burial – that is being marked by the monuments. Early Scottish memorials, such as those at Stirling, have initials and dates as seen on the coffins, but the documentary sources reveal that the dates relate to purchase of plots, not the year of death of the person (or persons – often the initials of husband and wife are given). In Ireland many early external monuments state who erected them, and that this was for the person who commissioned the stone 'and their posterity' (i.e. descendants), with a date that again relates to the erection of the stone, not any particular death (Mytum 2004b; 2004c). Once more, the importance of property, the material marking of this, and the protection and privatisation of burial space and the bodies it might contain, are the motors for change. Once existing, such

monuments have the opportunity to also express grief, status, and religious affiliation, but these do not seem to be the primary motive for innovation.

Late 17th and early 18th-century memorials tend to be small headstones, by this time carved in distinctive regional styles, and almost always only recording a single death. This pattern can be seen, throughout Christian Europe, through Britain and Ireland, and across the Atlantic to the New World, as well as with Jewish memorials such as those which survive in numbers in a few locations such as Prague (Mytum 2004a). The amount of decoration or symbolism on the earliest stones is usually extremely limited, but then a repertoire of symbols began to be used which, whilst often individually paralleled on internal monuments, were used in quite innovative and distinctive ways.

The earliest studies of gravestone symbolism were carried out in New England, in parallel but with apparently little intellectual overlap by archaeologists (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1967; 1971; Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966) and by the combined efforts of art historians and folk life scholars (Benes 1977; Ludwig 1966; Tashjian and Tashjian 1974). The archaeological interpretation emphasised the changes in style over both time and space, particularly the shifts from mortality symbolism – as exemplified by the death's head – to cherubs and then to urns and willow. These studies were graphically represented in 'battleship curves' – a form of bar graph that allows the representation of the relative popularity of the major shifts in symbolism at various sites over time. These are now famous icons in the archaeological practice of typology, seriation and dating stylistic change. They revealed how the popularity of motifs moved from intellectual and mercantile centres such as Cambridge and Boston, Massachusetts, to other areas. The explanations of these shifts were, however relatively simplistic interpretations of Puritan theology and its changing emphases, including evoking the role of the 'Great Awakening' Puritan revival with appearance of the cherub. However, from the earliest studies the art historical approach emphasised that simplistic interpretations were unconvincing, and that detailed analysis revealed the potential complex symbolism within particular monuments which could not be easily directly linked to tight theological issues. Nevertheless, this particularist style of approach ignored some of the wider social shifts, and there was a great emphasis on the individual carvers as the inspiration and decision-maker for designs. The tradition of carver identification continues, with impressive results (e.g. Luti 2002 and numerous papers in the journal *Markers*), but there is still limited explanation offered for change.

One of the issues that emerged during the carver studies, for which excellent probate and other records exist in New England allowing many unsigned stones to be assigned to carvers, was that death dates on early stones do not always match when the stones were made. Once the practice of headstone erection was established, families commissioned stones for their recent ancestors, so the battleship curves described above have too early a start, and this pattern has also been noted in Britain and Ireland through analysing death dates on memorials which also have explicit dates of erection (Mytum 2002). However, the New England pattern of stylistic shift is still otherwise sound, and similar changes from mortality to cherubs and then to urns (though usually without willows) is also seen in Britain. In Ireland, Catholic monuments shift from mortality to IHS and cross motifs, which remain popular from that time onwards.

Many interpretations regarding the role of mortality symbols have been formulated within a Protestant, and indeed often Puritan or Presbyterian (New England or Scottish) context, and have emphasised the relevant theology. Whilst this undoubtedly was a factor, this now appears to be not the only reason, as Catholics also adopted the mortality symbols within their Counter-Reformation ideology (Mytum 2009). It would seem that the increasing concern with the body, and its decay, contained within the coffin and increasingly within vaults or physically defined family plots, was revealed through the symbolism that also allowed the 'momento mori' themes of warning of having a Christian life before death and inevitable judgement to be emphasised in the iconography. Indeed, the very memorials – headstones or ledgers – that contained this symbolism often also revealed this theme through introductory phrases 'Underneath this stone lies' or 'Here lies the body of'. This phase of external monument, belonging to the 17th and early 18th century, reveals in text and symbol no sign of grief or emotion, though that was to appear in due course. Here the materiality of the body, in contrast to the soul, was emphasised, as was the place of deposition.

Mortality symbols became less popular and were replaced as the dominant iconographical element with the cherub. Some mortality monuments had architectural elements, but these become far more common, even in attenuated and schematic form, during the 18th century. Most studies assume that the cherub represents the soul, and this may be the case where there is a single, centrally-placed cherub at the top of the monument. Indeed, many Scottish memorials show mortality symbols near the base, and a cherub at the top, emphasising the separation of corporal remains from the soul. However, others show numerous cherubs, some in the sky, others blowing trumpets as on the Day of Judgement. Many of these figures are identical in style to, or at least clearly inspired by, the cherubic *putti* widely seen on Baroque and Rococco art, including church art. The argument, therefore, that the preponderance of cherubs is as much a statement of wider cultural affiliation, and part of a wider utilisation of material culture in aesthetic display, is convincing (Heinrich 2014). Moreover, these very styles are also dominant in the coffin furniture which becomes increasingly popular during the 18th century.

Inscriptions, often placed in cartouches which could be compared with those used on internal monuments, but also on the forms and decorations of coffin plates, have an emphasis on remembrance of the deceased rather than marking the position of the body. Just as the cherub may emphasise the soul over the body, so the sentiment of the text has a focus on the life and relationships of the deceased rather than their corporal decay.

Deetz and Dethlefsen argued that the urn and willow marked the arrival of the Georgian order, Enlightenment, rationality and the end of the 'medieval' view of the world, a view that Deetz (1977) propounded across a wide range of tangible and intangible heritage. At the same time as the style shifted, the method of production of the monuments also changed dramatically. The memorials no longer were produced within a folk craft tradition, but were more uniform over large areas, and had lettering and motifs inspired by mass-produced products. Recent issues of the journal *Markers* contain numerous local and regional studies of this shift, and how individual carvers rapidly accommodated this within their working lives, with no transitional designs. No explanation for this has yet been provided, however. A similar change occurs in Britain and

Ireland, with greater standardisation of motifs and textual elements, though still with regional traditions of delivering these. This takes place during the use of cherubs, and continues when urns become popular, though many designs incorporated both motifs.

The relationship between the producers of monuments – the carvers – and the consumers – the bereaved – has received limited attention for the early modern period, and has not been an aspect much considered in the well-documented New England contexts. It is notable that coffin furniture during the 18th century remains remarkably conservative, whilst memorial forms change over time, suggesting that the producer-consumer relationship, as well as the various roles of these aspects of funerary material culture, were different in each case. It seems that the bereaved, in their emotional state, were not in a strong position to push for up-to-date styles for coffin fittings but relied on the undertaker to make most choices within a framework defined by price, class and religion. In contrast, it would seem that the subsequent commissioning of the memorial, months if not years after the death, allowed time for consideration in the light of observing other existing memorials. This created firmer opinions on the part of the bereaved as to what they required, leading to greater sensitivity to fashion and nuances of message given out by form, motif and text (Mytum, forthcoming).

Conclusions

A wide range of factors clearly affected changing attitudes to death, the afterlife, and treatment of the body during the early modern period. These in turn affected mortuary practices, but these were also heavily influenced by other social changes, particularly the increasing wealth and confidence of the middling classes and, even more broadly the escalating importance of material goods in the lives of all members of society. Consumption of material goods seen widely across all aspects of life also affected the treatment of the dead, allowing the containment and protection of the body through coffins, vaults and plots, and the placing of the deceased within history and their immediate social context through commemorative texts.

All material culture is subject to changes brought about by shifts in fashion and style, and to methods of manufacture, but even these come about and are spread through space and the various subsets of society by other forces. Mortuary culture was produced at the intersection of aesthetic, religious, scientific, and other cultural factors that allowed the bereaved to cope with loss. Thus, mortality symbols gave way to cherubs in the same way that introductory phrases emphasising the body ('Here lies the body', 'Underneath this stone') were replaced by ones with a focus on remembrance ('In memory of'), indicating a shift in ideology. But this was also often materially emphasised with a transition from folk art to more commercial production, frequently accompanied by use of the Roccoco style. Individuals can be seen to have made many decisions in the mortuary and commemorative traditions, but they did so within their wider social, ideological and cultural milieu. Mortuary culture, with its unique combination of physical object and textual content, linked directly to named and dated people and events, offers a unique opportunity not only to study attitudes to and practices surrounding death and commemoration at every level from the individual up to an international comparative scale, but also wider trends in materialism, consumerism and identity.

References

Ariès, P., 1974, *Western Attitudes toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Translated by P.M. Ranum. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Ariès, P., 1981, *The Hour of our Death*. Translated by H. Weaver. Knopf, New York.

Beier, L.M., 1989,The Good Death in Seventeenth-Century England. In *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, edited by R. Houlbrooke, pp 43-61. Routledge, London.

Benes, P., 1977, *The Masks of Orthodoxy: Folk Gravestone Carving in Plymouth County, Massachusetts, 1689-1805*. University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst.

Burgess, F., 1963, *English Churchyard Memorials*. Lutterworth Press, London.

Colvin, H., 1991, *Architecture and the After-Life*. Yale University Press, London.

Cherryson, Crossland and Tarlow 2012

Cressy, D., 1989, *Bonfires and Bells. National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London.

Curl, J.S. 1980, *A Celebration of Death: An Introduction to Some of the Buildings, Monuments, and Settings of Funerary Architecture in the Western European Tradition*. Constable, London.

Deetz, J.F., 1977, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life.* Anchor Books, Garden City.

Deetz, J.F., and Dethlefsen, E., 1967, Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow. *Natural History* 76.3, 29-37.

Deetz, J.F., and Dethlefsen, E., 1971, Some Social Aspects of New England Colonial Mortuary Art. *American Antiquity* 36, 30-38.

Dethlefsen, E., and Deetz, J.F., 1966, Death's heads, Cherubs and Willow trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries. *American Antiquity* 31.4: 502-510.

Elliot, W.R., 1977,Chest-tombs and 'tea caddies' by Cotswold and Severn. *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 95, 68 – 85.

Finch, J 2000 *Church Monuments in Norfolk before 1850*. British Archaeological Reports British Series 317, Oxford.

Frith, B. (ed.) 1989-1995, *Bigland's Gloucestershire Collections*, 4 vols., Gloucestershire Record Series, Gloucester.

Fritz, P.S., 1981, From "Public" to "Private": The Royal Funerals in England, 1500-1830. In *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death*, edited by J. Whaley, pp. 61-79. Europa Press, London.

Fritz, P.S., 1995, The Undertaking Trade in England: Its Origins and Early Development, 1660-1830. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28: 241-253.

Gittings, C., 1984, *Death, burial and the individual in early modern England*. Croom Helm, London.

Gittings, C. 1999, Sacred and secular: 1558 – 1660. In *Death in England. An illustrated History*, edited by P.C. Jupp and C. Gittings, pp. 147-173. Manchester University Press, Manchester.

Heinrich, A.R., 2014, Cherubs or Putti? Gravemarkers Demonstrating Conspicuous Consumption and the Rococo Fashion in the 18th Century. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 18, 37-64.

Houlbrooke, R., 1998, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750.* Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Johnson, M., 1996, *An Archaeology of Capitalism.* Blackwell, Oxford.

Kemp, B., 1980, *English church monuments.* Batsford, London.

Litten, J., 1985, Post-medieval burial vaults: their construction and contents. *Bulletin of the CBA Churches Committee* 23: 9-17.

Litten, J., 1991, *The English way of death: the common funeral since 1450.* Robert Hale, London.

Litten, J., 1997, The Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England 1714-1760. In *The Changing Face of Death. Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, edited by P.C. Jupp and G. Howarth. pp. 48-61. Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Litten, J., 1998, The English funeral 1700-1850. In *Grave concerns: death and burial in England 1700 to 1850*, edited by M. Cox, pp 3-16. Council for British Archaeology Research Report 113, York.

Litten, J., 1999, Tombs Fit For Kings: Some Burial Vaults of the English Aristocracy and Landed Gentry of the Period 1650-1850. *Church Monuments* 14: 104-128.

Llewellyn, N., 1991, *The Art of Death. Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c. 1500 - c.1800.* Reaktion Books, London.

Llewellyn, N., 2000 *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Ludwig, A.I., 1966, *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650-1815.* Wesleyan University Press, Middletown.

Luti, V.F., 2002, *Mallet and Chisel. Gravestone Carvers of Newport, Rhode Island, in the 18th century.* New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston.

Musgrave, E., 1997, Momento Mori: The Function and Meaning of Breton Ossuaries. In *The Changing face of Death. Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, edited by P.C. Jupp and G. Howarth, pp. 62-75. Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Mytum, H., 2002, The dating of graveyard memorials: evidence from the stones. *Post-medieval Archaeology* 36: 1-38.

Mytum, H., 2004a, *Mortuary Monuments and Burial Grounds of the Historic Period.* Kluwer Academic Press, New York.

Mytum, H., 2004b, Artefact biography as an approach to material culture: Irish gravestones as a material form of genealogy. *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 12/13, 111-127.

Mytum, H., 2004c, A Long and Complex Plot: patterns of family burial in Irish graveyards from the 18th century. *Church Archaeology* 5/6, 31-41.

Mytum, H., 2006, Popular attitudes to memory, the body, and social identity: the rise of external commemoration in Britain, Ireland, and New England. *Post-medieval Archaeology* 40.1, 96-110.

Mytum, H., 2007a, Materiality and Memory: An Archaeological Perspective on the Popular Adoption of Linear Time. *Antiquity* 81, 381-396.

Mytum, H., 2007b, Monuments and Memory in the Estate Landscape: Castle Howard and Sledmere. In *Estate Landscapes: Design, Improvement and Power in the Post-Medieval Landscape*, edited by J. Finch and K. Giles, pp. 149-174. Boydell & Brewer, Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology, Woodbridge.

Mytum. H., 2009, Mortality Symbols in Action: Protestant and Catholic memorials in early 18th century West Ulster. *Historical Archaeology* 43.1, 160-182.

Mytum, H., forthcoming. Explaining Stylistic Change in Mortuary Material Culture:The Dynamic of Power Relations between the Bereaved and the Undertaker. In *Death Across the Sea: Studies in British and American Historic Mortuary Practices*, edited by H. Mytum and L. Burgess. Smithsonian Press, Washington.

Nijssen, J. and Nyssen, J., 2011, Pre-indistrial headstones across the continental North Sea plain. *Journal of Historical Geography* 37, 273-287.

Park, K. 1995, The life of the corpse: division and issection in late medieval Europe. *Journal of the History of Medecine and Allied Sciences* 50, 111-132.

Reeve, J. and Adams, M., 1993, *The Spitalfields Project. Volume 1- the Archaeology. Across the Styx*. Council for British Archaeology Research Report 85, York.

Riordan, T. B. 2009, " Carry Me to You Kirk Yard": An Investigation of Changing Burial Practices in the Seventeenth-Century Cemetery at St. Mary's City, Maryland. *Historical Archaeology*, 81-92.

Sherlock, P., 2008, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*. Ashgate, Aldershot.

Stewart, D.J., 2012, *The Sea their Graves: An Archaeology of Death and Remembrance in Maritime Culture*. Florida University Press, Gainesville.

Stock, G., 1998, Quaker burial: doctrine and practice. In *Grave concerns: death and burial in England 1700 to 1850*, edited by M. Cox, pp. 129-143. Council for British Archaeology Research Report 113, York.

Tarlow, S., 1999. *Bereavement and Commemoration: an Archaeology of Mortality*. Blackwell, Oxford.

Tarlow, S. 2011. *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Tashjian, D., and Tashjian, A., 1974, *Memorials for Children of Change: The Art of Early New England Stonecarving*. Wesleyan University Press, Middletown.

Watters, D.H.,1981, *Eschatological Themes in Puritan Literature and Gravestone Art*. UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor.

Weatherill, L., 1988, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*. Routledge, London.

Willsher, B., and Hunter, D., 1978, *Stones: eighteenth century Scottish gravestones*. Cannongate Books,Edinburgh.