Estella Weiss-Krejci
Sebastian Becker
Philip Schwyzer *Editors*

Interdisciplinary Explorations of Postmortem Interaction

Dead Bodies, Funerary Objects, and Burial Spaces Through Texts and Time

 Springer

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Foreword

Welcome to the first volume out in 2022! COVID has hit us all hard in so many ways, so it is even more joyous that this edited volume came to fruition. Estella Weiss-Krejci and her colleagues have produced a marvelous collection of chapters in this, the 21st volume in the Bioarchaeology and Social Theory Series. Started in 2015, this series has published an average of three volumes a year.

And, we received news right as COVID hit us that this book series is indexed in SCOPUS. This is huge for us because SCOPUS is a bibliographic database containing abstracts and citations for academic journal articles covering 20,000 peer-reviewed titles from 5000 publishers in scientific, technical, medical, and social science areas. Very few edited books get accepted by SCOPUS, but based on the strong scientific data-based chapters, as well as methodological and technical innovations, we were accepted into their data base.

The goal of the series has not wavered. It is to publish research grounded in empirical and scientific analysis of human remains and the mortuary context from a wide variety of perspectives and approaches. And, interpretations utilize social theory to frame the questions, blending cultural, environmental, and social domains so that a more integrated picture emerges. In this series, we hope to move bioarcheology into new methodological and theoretical arenas by framing questions that can be answered with bioarcheological data. I am happy to say that this volume of collected studies does exactly that, and more.

Thus, this volume co-edited by Estella Weiss-Krejci, Sebastian Becker, and Philip Schwyzer will get read and cited by a much larger audience than many edited volumes. This is great news because these editors have brought together some of the finest scholars in mortuary studies to create a volume that goes beyond where mortuary archaeology usually ends, that is, into a deep exploration of the intersection of dead bodies, funerary objects, and burial spaces. The methodologies are mixed and innovative, from the addition of historical resources, literary sources, and archival texts while traversing time and space to provide a nuanced, detailed, and meta exploration. From investigating the portrayal of archaeology in *Beowulf* to exploring agency among the dead to the "prehistory" of Romeo and Juliet, this volume is an incredible ride through an interdisciplinary lens of the interactions between the

living, the dead, the contexts, and the spaces in a wholly new light. Authors draw on a number of disciplinary approaches far outside of the usual archaeology and bioarchaeology. These include literary studies, ancient Egyptian philology and literature, and sociocultural anthropology. The final product offers the reader a truly interdisciplinary approach to burials and those who buried the dead.

This is an exciting and innovative approach that is relevant to pushing studies that rely on skeletal remains and mortuary contexts into new arenas bolstered by social theories from a range of disciplines. These chapters provide a body of scholarship that demonstrates the relevance of this kind of approach not only for the past but also as a model for thinking about the dead and buried in today's world.

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Acknowledgments

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About the Editors

Estella Weiss-Krejci is an archaeologist and social anthropologist. She received a PhD and a *venia docendi* from the University of Vienna. Her research interests include ancient Mayan water management and mortuary behavior, and dead-body politics in prehistoric, medieval, and post-medieval Europe. She has been a recipient of grants awarded by the Austrian Science Fund, the Portuguese Science and Technology Fund, and the Fulbright Commission. Her research results have been published in peer-reviewed international journals and edited books. From 2016 to 2019, she was the Austrian PI of the HERA/EU Horizon 2020 project "Deploying the Dead."

Sebastian Becker gained a first-class undergraduate degree in archaeology and anthropology from the University of Cambridge. As part of an EU-funded research project, he completed a successful PhD, also at the University of Cambridge, focusing on later prehistoric art in Central Europe. His research took him to France and, more recently, Austria, where he has been researching the uses and re-use of (pre-) historic bodies as part of the HERA/EU Horizon 2020 project "Deploying the Dead" (2016–2019). He currently lives in Berlin.

Philip Schwyzer is Professor of Renaissance Literature at the University of Exeter. He received his BA and PhD from the University of California, Berkeley. Interested in links between literature and archaeology, he has led interdisciplinary projects including "Speaking with the Dead" (2011–2014), "The Past in its Place" (2012–2016), and the HERA/EU Horizon 2020 project "Deploying the Dead" (2016–2019). His books include *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III* (2013) and *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (2007).

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Chapter 1
Interdisciplinary Explorations
of Postmortem Interaction:
An Introduction

Estella Weiss-Krejci, Sebastian Becker, and Philip Schwyzer

1.1 Introduction

On 3 April 2021, the city of Cairo witnessed a lavish nighttime event in which 18 mummified kings and four queens of ancient Egypt were paraded in custom-built shiny vehicles from their old home at the Egyptian Museum to the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization. The convoy, filmed by the Egyptian state television and broadcast live to a worldwide audience,[1] showcased the glory and beauty of ancient Egyptian civilization (Abu Zaid, 2021; Hussein, 2021). This parade of the dead formed an antithesis to the clandestine mass transport of coronavirus victims in the city of Bergamo just over a year earlier, on 18 March 2020. Loaded into camouflaged military trucks, the corpses were taken out of town under the cover of night because the local crematorium could no longer handle the rising number of victims

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[1] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/3/egypt-parades-royal-mummies-in-show-of-pharaonic-heritage. Accessed 8 April 2021.

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of the pandemic.[2] This incident caused a worldwide shock after a cell phone snap-shot and several videos of the convoy had been published on the Internet—a cruel realization that all are not equal in death (Battistini, 2020; MacGuill, 2020). While the kings and queens of ancient Egypt[3] were welcomed into their new home by the Egyptian president, the deceased residents of Bergamo did not even receive a proper funeral for fear of a deadly virus.

The circumstances that prompted these two dead-body convoys are in polar opposition to each other, as were emotions and reactions. We have chosen these two recent examples as a starting point for this introduction because they illustrate how diverse the manifestations of postmortem interaction can truly be. Postmortem interaction not only encompasses mourning and funerary rituals and the veneration of ancestors (Bloch, 1971; Hertz, 1960; Hill & Hageman, 2016; Metcalf & Huntington, 1991; Rakita et al., 2005; van Gennep, 1960) but can imply the han-dling and disposal of corpses in the absence of proper funerary ritual (Crossland, 2009a; Robben, 2000; Weiss-Krejci, 2013), as well as encounters with bodies that have been dead for decades, centuries, and millennia (Bartlett, 2013; Klevnäs et al., 2021; Parker Pearson et al., 2005; Stavrakopoulou, 2010; Verdery, 1999; Williams & Giles, 2016). Disrupting chronological time and collapsing temporal distance, the dead have the capacity to emerge into the limelight anytime and anywhere, whether they were buried for good or never given a proper burial, regardless of the circum-stances of death, their premortem social status, whether famous individual persons or an anonymous collective.

The past two decades alone offer numerous examples of celebrated but also con-troversial encounters with these reemergent long-dead: the removal of Francisco Franco's remains from his mausoleum outside of Madrid and reburial at a city cem-etery (Taladrid, 2019); the conflict over the burial place of Olympic gold medalist Jim Thorpe of the Sac and Fox Nation (Arnold, 2014, p. 524); the exhumation of the last Romanov tsar and tsarina at St. Petersburg for the purpose of DNA analysis (Katz, 2018); the reburial of the Irish rebel and nationalist Thomas Kent in Cork (O'Connell, 2015); the finding of fragmentary bones belonging to Lisa Gherardini (Leonardo's Mona Lisa) in a tomb in Florence (Killgrove, 2015); the discovery of the remains of the English King Richard III in Leicester and the controversies over the appropriate site and manner of his reburial (Chap. 10); the reopening of the shrine and renewed osteological analysis of Saint Erik of Sweden at Uppsala (Chap. 7); the investigation and reburial of the remains of Edith of England at Magdeburg

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[2] https://bergamo.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/20_marzo_18/coronavirus-troppi-morti-bergamo-l--esercito-porta-bare-fuori-regione-la-cremazione-7d5ec5f6-694e-11ea-913c-55c2df06d574.shtml. Accessed 8 April 2021.

[3] The deceased kings and queens first received elaborate funerary treatments between the sixteenth and twelfth centuries BC, and, in the early first millennium BC, were rescued by priests from the depredations of ancient grave robbers. Twenty of the mummies that participated in the parade came from royal caches DB 320 and KV 35 (Chap. 2), both discovered in the late nineteenth cen-tury, and two (female) mummies were removed from tombs TT 358 and KV 60 by archaeologists in the first half of the twentieth century.

(Meller et al., 2012); and the bioarchaeological attention to the remains of Charlemagne, the unrivalled symbol of European unity and integration (Schleifring et al., 2019).

Some long-dead have been drawn into violent conflicts as the objects of destructive assault or of daring rescue. In 2015, Turkey sent ground forces into Syria to retrieve the remains of Suleyman Shah, whose tomb was one of many targeted by the Islamic State (Girit, 2015). In its well-publicized assaults on tombs and shrines in Iraq and Syria, from that of the Biblical Jonah in Mosul (Samuel et al., 2017) to the mausoleum of Saddam Hussein (Toppa, 2015), ISIS struck a tender nerve well outside its immediate area of operation.

In some countries, celebrated exhumations have occurred against the backdrop of campaigns to recover the bodies of the less famous dead. Calls for the exhumation and identification of victims of civil conflicts, wars, and genocide have intensified over the past decades (Mark, 2010; Renshaw, 2013a, b; Robben, 2000; see also Chap. 8). After almost half a century of demanding the repatriation of all of their ancestors (Fforde, 2004) and three decades after the implementation of NAGPRA in the US (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011, p. 90; Parker Pearson, 2000, pp. 171–176; Watkins, 2013, p. 697), returning anonymous human remains from colonial collections to their indigenous owners has now become a global practice (Fforde et al., 2020). In an apparent paradoxical turn, as campaigns continue to remove sets of human remains from public display for repatriation and reburial, public fascination with the dead appears to be unbroken (Buikstra, 2019a, b; Williams & Giles, 2016).

As human remains seemingly excite extraordinary media interest in the digital age, the prehistoric dead have not been spared from these developments (Jenkins, 2016; Redfern & Fibiger, 2019; Robbins Schug et al., 2019; Sayer & Walter, 2016; Watkins, 2013, pp. 698–700). Some even have turned into emblems of contemporary cultural values. In the UK, the 2002 discovery of the Amesbury Archer, a richly furnished Bell Beaker grave containing the remains of a man, and the oxygen isotope analysis of his teeth pointing to his origin in Central Europe, awoke the public imagination to issues of migration.[4] A pair of embracing Neolithic skeletons—the so-called 'Lovers of Valdaro'—unearthed near Mantua, Italy in 2007 was greeted in the international media as an emblem of undying romantic love (Geller, 2017, pp. 1–2; see Chap. 10). Another pair of skeletons from a Late Antique grave known as the 'Lovers of Modena' sparked a debate about homosexuality in the past (Mason, 2019), as the skeletons were identified as belonging to two men (Lugli et al., 2019), and a male skeleton found in a Czech Corded Ware grave equipped with 'female' artifacts was hailed as a "gay caveman"[5] and "5,000-year-old 'transgender' skeleton"[6] (cf. Geller, 2017, pp. 11–12).

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[4] https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/feb/21/arrival-of-beaker-folk-changed-britain-forever-ancient-dna-study-shows. Accessed 6 August 2021.

[5] https://newsfeed.time.com/2011/04/07/archaeologists-find-worlds-first-gay-caveman-near-prague/. Accessed 6 August 2021.

[6] https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2011/04/06/5000-year-old-transgender-skeleton-discovered/. Accessed 6 August 2021.

1.2   Staking Out the Research Field

When we speak of interaction with 'the dead' we refer not only to corpses, mummies, bones, and cremains. The dead can exist in various material and immaterial forms: as coffins, urns, funerary monuments, tombstones, statues, effigies, masks, paintings, photos, and audiovisual records like sound recordings and film; in oral histories, books, and house and street names; in places where they once lived, died, or were (re)buried; in objects believed to be associated with the deceased; in the soil; in virtual sites on the Internet; and in the imagination. Interaction with the dead can take place 'face to face' or over long distances, mediated by tangible or intangible agents. As a consequence, the study of postmortem interaction is related to a vast field of interconnected research strands: dying, care, and death (Das & Han, 2016; Farman, 2020; Green, 2008; Laqueur, 2015; Robben, 2018; Troyer, 2020); memory and commemoration (Hallam & Hockey, 2001; Jones, 2007; Koselleck, 2002; Williams, 2006); postmortem agency (Crandall & Martin, 2014; Crossland, 2017; Harper, 2010); bodies and embodiment (Hamilakis et al., 2002; Houston et al., 2006; Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987; Sofaer, 2006); personhood, ontologies, and assemblages (Alberti, 2016; Carr, 2021; Fahlander, 2020; Fowler, 2004, 2013; Harrison-Buck & Hendon, 2018); emotion and politics (Ahmed, 2004; Mark, 2010; Stavrakopoulou, 2010; Tarlow, 2012; Verdery, 1999); formation processes, object biographies, and object networks (Appadurai, 1986; Knappett, 2011; Meskell, 2004; Schiffer, 2010; Walker, 1995); landscape and monuments (Bradley, 1998; Díaz-Guardamino et al., 2015; Holtorf, 1998; Tilley, 1994); the agency of objects and materials (DeMarrais et al., 2004; Dobres & Robb, 2000a; Fowler & Harris, 2015; Gell, 1998; Hodder, 2012; Jones & Boivin, 2010; Joyce & Gillespie, 2015; Knappett & Malafouris, 2008; Latour, 2005); digital postmortem identity and legacy on social media (Brubaker, 2015; Maciel & Pereira, 2013; Walter, 2019); and inquiries into multitemporality and non-linear chronology (Dinshaw, 2012; Harris, 2009; Koselleck, 2004; Nagel & Wood, 2010). Since many of the aforementioned themes and research strands are beyond the scope of this book, while others are mentioned only occasionally, in this section we would like to single out the most salient ones.

One of the issues that has inspired past debates is whether dead bodies are human beings or things. Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection is frequently employed to explain the transformation of a once living person into an object. Unless mummified or cremated, the body becomes an abject, a repulsing something, that can be assigned neither to person nor object (Buikstra, 2019a, p. 20; Crossland, 2009b, p. 103; Nilsson Stutz, 2015, p. 3; Sørensen, 2009, pp. 125–126). The subject/object issue has been part of a discourse which considers the view of a shift from subject to object as highly subjective, as it cannot account for the vitality that is felt in human remains that are not corpses. The permeability between subject and object is also particularly evident in examples of medieval bodies preserved from corruption either through embalming or putatively miraculous means, the phenomenon of relic theft, and the production of contact relics (Angenendt, 2002; Brown, 1981; Geary,

1990; Nagel & Wood, 2010; Smith, 2012; Walsham, 2010). The subject/object problem is closely related to the question of whether images, masks or monuments create presences that substitute for the absent dead body (Knappett, 2011, p. 209) or if these images, statues, etc. actually can become the dead body. While the former would speak for a distinction between subject and object, the latter dissolves the subject/object division.

At this point it is fitting to introduce the concept of postmortem agency. The agency of the dead is a relatively young topic of study (Arnold, 2014; Crossland, 2017; Harper, 2010) that has been closely positioned to approaches to the agency and properties of things, objects, and materials. The term 'postmortem agency' was coined by sociocultural anthropologist Benjamin Wilreker (2007) and introduced into archaeology in a special section on "The bioarchaeology of postmortem agency" in the *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* (Crandall & Martin, 2014). As observed by numerous scholars, 'agency' per se is an ambiguous concept (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 962; Robb, 2013, p. 448). Although agency is now widely regarded as a relational property, there is no single definition. One of the most imminent problems with agency has been the tension between (a) intentionality versus (b) consequence (Díaz de Liaño & Fernández-Götz, 2021; Dobres & Robb, 2000b; Dornan, 2002, p. 319–324; Robb, 2010; Tung, 2014, pp. 441–442). Whereas in the former definition, (a) agency is seen as initiating causal sequences of events by acts of mind, will or intention (originally only attributed to living human people), in the latter definition, (b) agency implies initiating action only, something that also can be applied to objects and dead bodies. In order to overcome the problem of will and causation or the lack thereof, designations such as 'primary' and 'secondary' agency (Gell, 1998, 20) have been developed (cf. Tung, 2014, p. 441). Recent studies focusing on agency, animacy, soul concepts, and personhood with respect to 'other-than-human persons'[7] from non-European perspectives have provided important contributions to this discussion, underscoring the historical and cultural contingency of these concepts (Carr, 2021; Harrison-Buck & Hendon, 2018).

Because of the diverse meanings of agency and Cartesian dualisms, such as human and non-human, nature and culture, subject and object, posthumanist scholars have started to critically discuss (Lindstrøm, 2015) and reject agency as analytically useless (Crellin & Harris, 2021). Departing from approaches to emotion, the senses, and affective capacities (Hamilakis, 2013; Harris & Sørenson, 2010), Crellin and Harris (2021) have advocated a reorientation to the concept of 'affect' to overcome the difficulties with agency. This approach is fundamentally relational, as it argues that people, things, monuments, etc. emerge through relations. Affects are the capacities of a human and non-human body,

> to be affected by the world and to affect the world around it. These capacities are clearly historically situated and emergent, and do not have to be exercised at any one moment to be real. The capacities human beings have today to read, for example, are not historically

[7] 'Other-than-human persons' was coined by A. Irving Hallowell (1960) to designate inanimate objects, animals, plants, rocks, etc. as well as spiritual and supernatural beings among the Ojibwa.

eternal, but emergent, and you do not have to be reading at the moment to be able to read later today or tomorrow. (Crellin & Harris, 2021, p. 471)

As we show later in this chapter, this is a useful approach to the study of postmortem interaction. In most of the contributions to this book, however, the term 'agency' is used in a more general sense, as 'acting upon the living', 'causing an effect', 'making a difference', 'producing transformation', 'leaving a trace'. A theoretical treatment of the concepts of agency and affect can be found in Chap. 8.

Another relevant topic, and originally discussed in the context of the Middle Ages, is that of the reopening of tombs (Chaps. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 10). Since the end of the Communist era in Eastern Europe, there is increased scholarly attention on the sociopolitical significance of acts of grave disturbance, exhumation, desecration, and reinterment (Mark, 2010; Verdery, 1999; Zempleni, 2015). In her groundbreaking study, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, Katherine Verdery has demonstrated how the movement of large numbers of people, along with their monuments, aided nation-building in postsocialist Eastern Europe after the end of the Communist era. Through a process that compressed chronological time and reconfigured temporality, it became possible to forget and obliterate certain dead, while others were evoked and remade (Verdery, 1999, pp. 4–13 and 111–124). The dead came to embody the past in the present, collapsing essential distinctions in temporality (on multiple temporalities, see Chap. 4). The trajectories described by Verdery are reminiscent of the Black Lives Matter movement, in which not only current victims of police violence (Engelke, 2019, p. 34) but also the defacing and toppling of statues of historical celebrities have been deployed to underwrite, rewrite, and overturn narratives of national and community origin in order to remake identities in the present (Bracelli, 2020). Verdery also poses the question: "How does this [postsocialist] dead-body politics differ from examples in other times and places?" (Verdery, 1999, p. 3). Although this remains more of a rhetorical question in Verdery's book, archaeologists, bioarchaeologists, and literary scholars have increasingly focused on the far-reaching implications of such forms of postmortem interaction in other eras and places (Aspöck, 2011; Aspöck et al., 2020; Gardeła & Kajkowski, 2015; Kinkopf & Beck, 2016; Klevnäs, 2013; Klevnäs et al., 2021; Prendergast, 2004; Osterholtz et al., 2014; Weiss-Krejci, 2001, 2011a). This interest is spurred by the realization that the in-depth study of interaction with the remains of the dead could be a means to unmasking past social, political, and economic processes and ideals.

This volume draws from a variety of disciplines such as archaeology, literary studies, Egyptian philology and literature, bioarchaeology, and sociocultural anthropology providing an interdisciplinary account of the ways in which the dead are able to transcend temporal distances and engender social relationships. While interdisciplinary approaches between archaeology, biological anthropology, and social anthropology go back a long way (Boas, 1904; Hicks, 2013), the integration of literature is a rather new endeavor. Until quite recently, literary sciences and archaeology were generally regarded as incommensurable in their aims, methodologies, and source material (especially for the postclassic era). Although archaeologists and

literary critics have been increasingly willing to borrow concepts and terminology from the other discipline (Schwyzer, 2007), there have been only a few examples of genuinely collaborative endeavors. Recent studies (Gill et al., 2021) have begun to reveal the rich potential for dialogue and collaboration between two disciplines that are, albeit in very different ways, fundamentally concerned with the traces of past life.

1.3   The Chapters in This Volume

The book is one of the principal outputs of the DEEPDEAD project[8] and developed from an international workshop and a conference session, both held in 2018. Additional contributions were commissioned between 2018 and 2019. Through a series of case studies ranging from ancient Egypt through prehistoric, historic, and present-day Europe, the volume explores the complex interplay of various text genres, dead bodies, monuments, and material artifacts.

In Chap. 2, Roman Gundacker examines a range of textual and material interactions with ancient Egyptian sepulchral monuments that took place from the Old Kingdom to the Graeco-Roman period. Egyptian tombs were designed to preserve the memory, social being, mummified body, and soul of the dead for all eternity. Through inscriptions, the dead appealed for prayers and offerings from passers-by, while visitors left 'letters to the dead' requesting favors. Predominantly in the New Kingdom, reuse of tombs and sarcophagi was commonplace, yet this did not always involve outright appropriation or attempted erasure of the previous occupant; in some cases the name and decorative program of the original possessor were preserved alongside those of the new occupant, perhaps in order to claim a connection with an individual or family esteemed in bygone days. Gundacker notes the growing pessimism concerning the survival of physical monuments expressed in the harper's songs accompanying depictions of musicians within the tombs. Predating by more than a millennium the comparable sentiment in the *Odes*[9] of the Roman poet Horace, the *Eulogy of the Scribe* concludes that immortal memory is not achieved by those dead who built elaborate tombs but only those who made heirs unto themselves of the writings.

Continuing the focus on poetry, eternity, embalmed bodies, and tomb reentry, Chap. 3 by Naomi Howell explores the detailed descriptions of marvelous tombs found in the 'romances of antiquity' of the later twelfth century AD. While these Old French, Anglo-Norman, and Middle High German poems are based on classical models, there is no Greek or Roman precedent for their extended ekphrastic descriptions of tombs. Rather, Howell argues, the romance authors were responding to

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[8] For details see 'Acknowledgments' (p. vii).

[9] "I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze, more lofty than the regal structure of the pyramids" ("Exegi monumentum aere perennius/regalique situ pyramidum altius") (Odes III.30.1–2: Horace, 2004, pp. 216–217).

accounts of actual excavations and tomb openings in the preceding century, including the entry into the tomb of Charlemagne in Aachen by Otto III in the year AD 1000 and the supposed discovery of the tomb of Pallas in Rome. Exemplifying the medieval archaeological imagination, romance authors drew on these reports to revive the ancient past and describe the entombment of classical heroes. Whether or not any real event lies behind the ramifying web of references, Howell demonstrates how repetition, embellishment, and the accumulation of ekphrastic motifs lend these tombs and the dead they contain a kind of intertextual agency.

Whereas Chap. 3 deals with an entire medieval literary genre, the dead bodies and objects in Chap. 4 exist only within one very famous text. In Andrew James Johnston's study of archaeological 'traces' in *Beowulf*, the Old English poem's material world is revealed as a dense fabric of fragments from Germanic Iron Age, Roman, and still more distant pasts. Material traces like a sword recovered from a creature's lair or a cup stolen from an ancient barrow invest the poem with complex, competing temporalities. Like the sword with an enigmatic inscription whose blade melts away in the hero's hand after having served in the killing of the creature's mother and in the decapitation of her predeceased son, these objects convey only imperfect knowledge of past civilizations, and like those civilizations they seem always on the verge of vanishing. In Johnston's argument, these historical objects attain a paradoxical agency as they at once constitute and unravel the 'now' of *Beowulf*, leaving the present subject to the pull of multiple pasts.

Like the Egyptians of the New Kingdom and European poets of medieval times, the peoples of Iron Age northern Europe interacted with the deep past by making use of already-ancient artifacts and tombs. In Chap. 5, Robert Schumann examines archaeological evidence for these types of interaction in the context of Iron Age burials in northern Germany. Pre-Iron Age burial grounds were frequently reused, sometimes as the sites of new cemeteries and on other occasions in a more selective way, with the insertion of a small number of cremation urns into a pre-existing mound. Artifacts or antiquities from the past, not originally associated with funerary practices, could also be incorporated into graves: the examples considered by Schumann include a Roman comb, a bronze axe, and even a clutch of Neolithic artifacts already several millennia old. Were these objects intended to express a relation or affinity with forebears? Are they evidence of ancestor veneration, or tools of social legitimation? Can we be sure that those who employed them in burials even understood them to be old? Much more research is needed, but as Schumann concludes, there can be little doubt that objects like these, handed down or rising up from the distant past, played an important role in the construction of individual and collective identities in Iron Age communities.

In Chap. 6, Astrid Noterman and Alison Klevnäs demonstrate how appropriation of grave goods from the past and changing narratives concerning mortuary behavior of past civilizations have shaped national identity in France. Exploring the processes by which the Gauls came to out-compete the Franks as ancestors of the modern French nation, they show how early medieval grave reopening was seized upon by nineteenth-century archaeological literature as evidence of the savagery of the Frankish people. Recent archaeological approaches to the burials of this period have

tended to move away from ethnic categories and explanations, and it has now become possible to view the evidence of grave reopening as testimony to the complexity of early medieval societies and their funerary practices, rather than proof of looting and barbarism.

The seventh and eighth chapters deal with the peculiar status and agency of human remains in the form of holy relics. Chapter 7 by Anna Kjellström highlights the shifting fortunes of human remains according to the cultural paradigm of the time. The remains of Saint Erik of Sweden, a martyred saint who was also a king, were of unusual interest in every era from the Late Middle Ages to the present and were repeatedly examined. A telling contrast between the degree of bioarchaeological analysis and the public reverence accorded Erik's bones in the twenty-first century and the treatment of anonymous medieval skeletons recently discovered near his resting place serves to illustrate the point that the agency of the dead is highly dependent on the stories we attach to them.

A related argument is developed by Miriam Edlich-Muth in Chap. 8 which moves between medieval reliquaries, the anonymous remains in twentieth-century mass graves, and the fake relics jumbled in the bag of Chaucer's Pardoner. Edlich-Muth, whose discussion is anchored in relational theory, argues that the agency of these 'hybrid objects' is "predicated on the networks of relationships that unfold between the remains of the dead and the people or institutions engaging with them." The bones of the dead accrue power through the narratives they enable and activate; agency emerges in the triangulation of the dead, the living, and the stories that shape (and threaten) the identities of both.

The next two chapters in the volume continue the question of the relationship between textuality and materiality, with a focus on English literature of the early modern period. What happens when texts and excavations tell different stories? As Sarah Briest discusses in Chap. 9, Thomas Dekker's vivid descriptions of mass burials in seventeenth-century London have not been confirmed in all respects by recent archaeology. Whereas Dekker describes the bodies of plague victims being thrown haphazardly into a pit and "lying slovenly" upon each other, excavations at London's New Churchyard reveal the remarkable orderliness and care with which the plague dead could be buried, even when the numbers were staggering and haste was essential. Dekker's belief that the reopening of graves would allow the dead to regain social agency through the act of bearing witness is highly pertinent to the discourse and practice of forensic anthropology.

Similarly, in Chap. 10, Schwyzer explores points of connection between mortuary archaeology and the works of William Shakespeare. Since the middle of the nineteenth century references to Shakespeare's works have percolated through archaeological discourse and the ways in which archaeological discoveries are reported to the public; recent examples include the exhumations of Richard III and the Lovers of Valdaro. The links drawn between Shakespeare and archaeology in journalistic reports are not always productive or illuminating, yet the persistent conjunction indicates that archaeology and Shakespearean drama play similar roles in the modern popular imagination as technologies for the revival and celebration of the dead.

That the grip of the dead on the living has not died away with modernity is also apparent from Chap. 11 which challenges ideas of a reputed disenchantment of death. Part of the broader 'disenchantment of the world' theorized by Max Weber, the idea of disenchantment denotes a more distanced, scientific, and in some ways mechanical approach to death and burial characteristic of modern society. Yet as Saskya Tschebann argues in her study of the natural burial movement, specifically at « Cimetière naturel de Souché » in Niort, France, reports of death's disenchantment are highly exaggerated. The meaning-making practices of visitors to the cemetery, including leaving vegetal offerings to bloom and wither on the grave, express an underlying understanding of death as a cyclical return to nature; in natural burial the dead may take the role of agents in healing a perceived spiritual rift between humans and the planet. Citing Michael Taussig's observation that "death […] is the fount of magic," Tschebann argues that the natural burial movement is only the latest expression of death's continuous enchanting force.

Focusing not on a specific set of dead people, but on a locale defined by their presence and perceived power, in Chap. 12, the last chapter of the volume, Jan Horák, Estella Weiss-Krejci, Jan Frolík, Filip Velímský, and Ladislav Šmejda examine interactions with the dead in the cemetery and ossuary at Sedlec near the historic mining community of Kutná Hora in the Czech Republic. The chapter draws connections between medieval reports of epidemics and archaeological investigation of burials; between tales of soil brought from the Holy Land to Sedlec and subsequent traditions of corpses miraculously decomposing overnight or being cast out by the soil itself. The famously elaborate decoration of the Ossuary with its bone pyramids and hanging adornments of bone is discussed, along with local traditions of the bones taking vengeance on those who doubted their sanctity. The agency of the dead emerges repeatedly in this discussion, taking many forms: as soil, as relics, as ghosts, as animate bones, and above all as guides and motivators, encouraging and warning the living to remember the interests of the dead.

1.4   Approaching the Living and Dead in This Book

Given that a detailed discussion of all the issues raised in this multifaceted book is hardly feasible within the scope of this introduction, we will limit ourselves to a few questions: Why do certain types of dead bodies attract more interest than others? How do objects and other-than-human beings become sacred through their connection with bodily relics (understood both in the specific religious sense and more broadly)? And how would the people that this book is about respond to the question of whether only humans can have agency?

If one looks at (bio)archaeological papers on the agency of the dead, one finds that they often deal with unusual and uncanny corpses (Alfsdotter, 2019; Novak, 2014; Phelps, 2020; Tung, 2014). This observation has led Bettina Arnold to suggest that there may be limits to the general applicability of postmortem agency (Arnold, 2014, p. 524). The present book also contains stories about real and

fictional famous (Chaps. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 10) and uncanny dead (Chaps. 8, 9, and 12). However, it is not limited to them (Chaps. 2 and 11). Moreover, we try to approach the dead from the perspective of affect. Guided by literature on properness in death (Nilsson Stutz, 2015; van Gennep, 1960; Weiss-Krejci, 2011a, 2013), we will sort the dead in this book into three broad groups: (a) the dead whose burial places, souls, etc. are perceived as being in a proper place and state; (b) the dead that are perceived as being in an improper place/state; and (c) a third group that emerges from either group (a) or (b) when the relations they are part of start to shift. We call them the 'reemergent dead'.

The dead in group (a) are those that have received proper funerary rites—as defined by the norms and beliefs about death and burial customs of their particular social group—and remain in their designated burial places once the liminal stage of the funerary process is complete. Rites to ensure a safe passage of bodies and/or soul(-like essence)s to the afterlives can include diverse forms of body manipulations as well as exhumation and reburial (Hertz, 1960); the placement of apotropaic objects (Bill, 2016) may provide protection for the dead but also protection from them. After completion of the funeral rites, which may take days, months or years, these dead are remembered or forgotten (Williams, 2006). In this volume we encounter them in a reciprocal relationship with the living by means of objects, materials, and texts. They take the form of benevolent ancestors and intercessors (Chap. 2) and as solace offering entities (Chap. 11). Though the bodies of these dead are often not visible, their presence is felt strongly, in some instances through continued textual engagements. These dead not only remind the living to pray for and respect them, but also issue threats not to invade their graves. The curse written on Shakespeare's tombstone in Holy Trinity, Stratford (Chap. 10) and the tomb spells from the *Pyramid texts*, though ineffective (Chap. 2), are but two examples.

There is always a certain risk during the liminal phase that the mortuary rites may not be fulfilled (Harper, 2010).

> The loss that comes with death is an absence that needs to be carefully managed, and when it is not, the risk of haunting looms (Knappett, 2011, pp. 208–209).

Apart from not being afforded a proper funeral, the dead in group (b) have suffered violent deaths, fatal disease or other misfortunes, with their bodies neglected, mistreated, dissected, improperly buried or disappeared (Crossland, 2009a, b; Pettigrew, 2000; Renshaw, 2013b; Robben, 2000; Tarlow & Battell Lowman, 2018; Weiss-Krejci, 2013). The manner of death and burial overwrites previous identities that would have determined these persons' funerary rites. Perceived as not alive but also not (yet) or never socially dead (Weiss-Krejci, 2011b, pp. 71–76), the deceased's liminal essences hang about and haunt the living (van Gennep, 1960, pp. 161–162). These dead often populate stories about ghosts (Crandall & Harrod, 2014, p. 495) and revenants (Barber, 1988). In archaeology they are sometimes referred to as deviant, unusual, and non-normative burials (Betsinger et al., 2020; Murphy, 2008)

However, not all of the deceased in group (b) remain in this state. When the bodies of the dead are called upon as witnesses to the atrocities inflicted against them, they have a chance to reemerge. This holds true for the victims in popular accounts

of forensic anthropology (Crossland, 2009a, 2017), as well as the seventeenth-century English plague victims in mass graves, literally called 'witnesses' by plague narrator Thomas Dekker (Chap. 9), the genocide victims of twentieth-century Germany "that testify to mass murder" (Chap. 8), and the Cistercian martyrs murdered by the Hussites in the fifteenth century (Chap. 12). As a matter of fact, the word 'martyr', which derives from the Greek μάρτυς (martus), literally means 'witness' (Bartlett, 2013, p. 3). Because of the emotional aspects associated with the martyrs' suffering and gruesome deaths, their remains accrue special powers. These types of dead bodies seem to attract more interest than others, because particular narratives accompany them. They are always on the brink of reemergence.

The reemergent dead (c) are by far the largest group in this book and also the most heterogenous. We discuss them under one label even though one could certainly make many further subdivisions. When bodies are exhumed by accident or intent after the funeral, or burial places have fallen into an improper state through deliberate damage or neglect, a chain of events is set in motion. The fate of the dead not only depends on their affective capacities (e.g. their identities) but is also affected by a host of culture-contingent factors of the society that dug them up. Their bodies can become subject to examination, fragmentation, veneration, display, discard or reburial. The reemergent dead are constituted as multitemporal entities, with the capacity to appear in various places. If investigated by bioarchaeologists, their bodies will bear the marks of their in vivo past as well as their entire funeral and postfuneral existence (e.g. Chap. 7). It is important to note that acts of reburial of these long-dead dead should not be confused with mourning and funerary rituals. One should also be aware of the fact that these newly created deposits and the materials inserted into them create new assemblages (cf. Fahlander, 2020; Fowler, 2013) that will only ever represent the ideals of the society that undertook the reposition. This book provides numerous examples for these reemergent dead in the form of bodies and objects from reopened graves and shrines as well as charnel houses (Chaps. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12).

This brings us to the question of how objects and other non-human-entities become sacred through their connection with dead bodies. There are several interesting objects in this book that could be used to discuss this question, as for example the dead bodies and body parts that populate the poem *Beowulf* and set in motion a series of events during which objects emerge from distant pasts (Chap. 4) or the golden objects (Napoleon's bees) discovered in Childeric's grave (Chap. 6). However, we chose to use the example of contact relics for our discussion, because it is explicitly addressed in some of the chapters of this book.

Saints and their relics are seen as able to infect things and people by a form of contagion (Nagel & Wood, 2010, p. 198; Walsham, 2010, p. 12). Not only objects the saints have touched during their lifetime—clothes, murder weapons, bodily effluvia—are revered among Christians (Bynum, 1995) but the saints' bones can rub off their sacredness onto objects too. Through the principle of infection these objects become (secondary) relics themselves. The process of infection is traditionally regarded as one-directional and thought to work like 'contagion' by bacteria or a virus. Though it can be airborne (as in the example of a woman who is healed from

her blindness after looking at Saint Erik's relics, Chap. 7), touching the relic is more potent. From a posthumanist view, the relationship between the relic and the faithful is not so much a one-directional infection but regarded as permeable in both directions. As Edlich-Muth shows in Chap. 8, relics strongly depend on their labels, in form of tags and inscriptions. As already observed by Patrick Geary, "divorced from a specific milieu, a relic is entirely without significance" (Geary, 1990, p. 5).

One type of relic that appears in this book is fundamentally different from other contact relics in that it was not created through direct interaction with a saint or another contact relic: the Holy Soil (Chap. 12). Holy Soil is the dust or dirt brought from the Holy Land (probably from burial sites in Jerusalem) to Europe in medieval times. Holy Soil was believed to have the capacity to colonize whatever it came into contact with, as for example, the holy fields at Pisa and Rome (Cole Ahl, 2003, p. 95; Nagel & Wood, 2010, pp. 201–202), or the entire Sedlec cemetery (Chap. 12). At Sedlec this soil was very powerful. On the one hand, it denied salvation to those who were not fit to access it, by casting them out of their graves. On the other hand, hundreds of years after parts of the Sedlec cemetery had fallen out of use, the soil still was believed to be able to kill those who plowed its grounds. Though soils today are also understood as living bodies with agency (Given, 2018, pp. 128–129), this is not the same type of affective capacity that the premodern inhabitants of Sedlec attributed to their cemetery soil. Only Holy Soil, not just any soil, could cause such an effect.

As is evident from the contributions to this volume, people of the premodern world (as well as some from the post-Enlightenment era) strongly believed that the dead and other empowered entities were able to act, that they were sentient, and even capable of empathy. European folk tales abound with stories about blind or otherwise disabled people being led by the dead to find and open their graves or, as in the case of the blind monk of Sedlec, to rearrange their bones (Chap. 12). Similarly, the linden trees on which the Cistercian monks had been hung by the Hussites possess a special power (Chap. 12) which is different from the agency discussed for trees in general (cf. Jones & Cloke, 2008). The perspective of the longue durée taken by several contributors in this book, illuminates shifting attitudes to death, memory, and identity crystallized in encounters with human remains, while also highlighting their persistent affective capacities.

1.5   Conclusions

In this introduction, we have highlighted some unifying aspects of the book, even though the contributions are wide-ranging and varying in focus. In the dialogue between literary studies and (bio)archaeology, it has become apparent that both fictional representations in literature and the media give priority to the famous, infamous, and so-called 'deviant' and 'non-normative' dead. While this is not surprising—don't we all like exciting stories?—it is hardly representative of the real scope and value of bioarchaeological research. Bioarchaeologists have expressed

frustration with this situation (see Buikstra, 2019b), but it is a vicious cycle. More public attention to unusual and uncanny bodies might lead to more research funding, and more researchers will seek out similar research avenues, which in turn will lead to more such stories in the media. The way out of this dilemma should be feasible. Recent attempts, mainly by bioarchaeologists working with human remains, involve the adoption of new literary techniques to produce specific effects. Poetry and narratives that choose less scientific language have been used alongside scientific language to create fictive osteobiographical narratives (Boutin, 2016, 2019; cf. Gill et al., 2021). After all, the imperative to communicate a point of view in writing to a heterogeneous audience (Connah, 2010; Joyce, 2002) and the need for authentic cross-cultural translation (Carr & Weeks, 2021) make the social and human sciences literary disciplines as well. This trend in bioarchaeology not only proves the point that we pay a lot of attention to human remains in present-day society, but in this way the dead also inspire new forms of literary traditions.

To conclude the introduction, we offer an insight and a prediction. The insight is that there are probably many more reemerged and reburied dead bodies in the archaeological record than we assume. The prediction is that more dead will likely reemerge in the near and distant future. Policy-makers, heritage professionals, church authorities, academics, journalists, and the general public should be prepared to answer the questions posed by these famous, infamous, and anonymous dead. Identifying the meanings and mechanisms of past postmortem interaction might inform our understanding of present-day and future discoveries and dilemmas. A deeper understanding of why these forms of matter provoke such a range of responses will help to better anticipate the reactions they elicit. The contributions to this volume testify to a widespread sense that societies must resolve aspects of their relationship with the past, literally embodied in the remains of the dead, before entering into their imagined futures.

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Chapter 2
Visitors, Usurpers, and Renovators: Glimpses from the History of Egyptian Sepulchral Monuments

Roman Gundacker

2.1   Introduction

The Egyptians spent considerable time and resources to erect their tombs and cult installations (Dodson & Ikram, 2008; Kanawati, 2001; Taylor, 2001). In order to secure an everlasting mortuary cult, perpetual commemoration, and eternal life for the deceased, they endowed funerary institutions with land and income, appointed priests to perform rites, and hired personnel to administer the estates. Just as the tomb owners' children were meant to inherit offices and property, the offspring of mortuary priests and further personnel were expected to ensure forever the mortuary cult. However, as time went by, families declined into poverty or became extinct, mortuary personnel deserted their duties, and funerary institutions were deprived of assets and estates. No matter whether it was the tombs and memorials of kings or commoners, as soon as they were uncared for, their future grew uncertain. Some of those monuments fell into oblivion, some became attractions for visitors, some were devoutly restored, some were demolished and processed as spolia, and some were usurped and reused. The present chapter aims at illustrating the ancient Egyptians' mindset and the eventful history of their mortuary monuments with the aid of Egypt's rich legacy.

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2.1.1   The Egyptian Tomb as a Place of Eternal Life

The Egyptians' great investment in and care for tombs becomes understandable, when we recall their belief that they would live on as long as their mummified bodies endured and their souls were nourished with offerings (Assmann, 1986, 1996, 2001; Guksch et al., 2003; Kees, 1956; Legros, 2016). In addition to the preparation of the tomb and the burial as such, provisions were made in order to guarantee the continued operation of the mortuary cult. Beyond this material basis, the assertion that the tomb and its supplies had been funded righteously, without inflicting harm to other tombs or people and in exchange for proper payment, became a common topic in inscriptions as early as in the third millennium BC.

> Ex. (1) I made this tomb of mine from my own true property. Never did I take away something of any other people. […] I made this tomb of mine on the side of the west in a pure place, where no tomb of any (other) people had existed, for the sake of protection of the property of a man who has gone to his *ka* (i.e. who has died).[1] (Table 2.1)

> Ex. (2) He is one beloved of the king and of Anubis atop of his mountain who will not inflict damage on that which exists in this tomb of mine and on all the people who have gone to the West. As for this tomb of my funerary estate, I made it in the shadow of perfect reverence of people and of god. Never was a stone of any (other) people brought for me to this tomb of mine because I am fully aware of the judgement in the West. I had this tomb of mine made in exchange for bread and beer, which I gave to all workmen who worked on this tomb of mine, and I gave them an immensely big payment of linen, as they had requested, so that they thanked god for me because of it. (Table 2.1)

In case someone died and left an unfinished tomb, it was frequently the son who had the work continued and the tomb completed. As a result, altars, libation basins, and false-doors as central objects of the mortuary cult were often inscribed with donation remarks and dedication statements (Grallert, 2001).

> Ex. (3) As for this (false-door), it was his eldest son, the acquaintance of the king, Kawab, who made (this) for him (i.e. his father) when he was (already) in the West after he had gone to his *ka*. (Table 2.1)

The natural counterparts of assertions of just funding and erecting a sepulcher are texts, which aimed at perpetuating the intact status of the tomb. Whereas 'addresses to visitors' appeal to their morality and integrity (Blumenthal, 1991; Edel, 1944, §§ 3–24; Sottas, 1913), threat formulae were supposed to deter visitors from doing anything harmful to the tomb (Morschauser, 1991; Nordh, 1996). The consequences for damage were severe in this life and the next (cf. Czerwik, 2001), but in case of pious behavior, the tomb owners promised to intercede before the gods in favor of sincere visitors.

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[1] If not stated otherwise, all translations of Egyptian and Greek texts in this chapter are the author's (synopsis of text sources in Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 List of text examples

	Text source	Dating/ Dynasty	Site/ Provenance	References
Ex. (1)	Tomb of Hetepherakhti	Fifth	Saqqara	Sethe (1933, pp. 49–50) and Mohr (1943, pp. 34–35)
Ex. (2)	Tomb of Remenwika	Sixth	Giza	Hassan (1936, p. 173, fig. 206)
Ex. (3)	Dedication of Kawab on the false-door of his father Kanefer's tomb	Fifth	Dahshur	James (1961, p. 10, pl. X), Ziegler (1979), and Gundacker (2006, pp. 153–172)
Ex. (4)	Tomb of Herimeru	Sixth	Saqqara	Hassan (1975b, pp. 76–78, fig. 39)
Ex. (5)	Tomb of Tjeti	Sixth	Giza	Simpson (1980, p. 8, fig. 15)
Ex. (6)	Pyramid of Pepi I, final section of PT 534 §§ 1278a–1279c	Sixth	Saqqara	Sethe (1910, p. 219) and Berger el-Naggar et al. (2001, p. 172, pl. XIX)
Ex. (7)	Tomb of Senenuankh	Fifth	Saqqara	Sethe (1933, pp. 36–37) and Goedicke (1970, pp. 75–80)
Ex. (8)	Tomb of Djau	Sixth	Deir el-Gebrawi	Davies (1902b, p. 13) and Kloth (2002, no. 86)
Ex. (9)	Stela of Samenekh	Twelfth	Abydos	Spiegelberg & Pörtner (1902, p. 6) and Vernus (1976, nos. 140–141)
Ex. (10)	Stela of Nebwawi, CG 34016	Eighteenth	Abydos	Lacau (1909, pp. 37–38), Helck (1956b, p. 1495), and Frood (2003, p. 70)
Ex. (11)	'Cairo bowl', CG 25375	Twelfth	Saqquara	Gardiner & Sethe (1928, pp. 7–8, pls. VI–VIa) and Wente (1990, no. 350)
Ex. (12)	Dipinto of Men/Tomb N13.1 of Ibi-iti-iqer	Eighteenth/ Eleventh	Asyut	Verhoeven (2012, pp. 52–53, pl. 3)
Ex. (13)	Dipinto of Hednakht/Pyramid complex of Djoser	Nineteenth/ Third	Saqqara	Firth & Quibell (1935, pp. 82–83, pl. 83) and Kitchen (1980, p. 148, 1985, p. 148)
Ex. (14)	Dipinto of Aakheperkareseneb/Pyramid temple of Sneferu (Fig. 2.1)	Eighteenth/ Fourth	Meidum	Petrie (1892, p. 40, pl. 33) and Wildung (1968, pp. 142–143)

(continued)

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Table 2.1 (continued)

	Text source	Dating/ Dynasty	Site/ Provenance	References
Ex. (15)	Tomb of Ibi, TT 36	Twenty-sixth	Thebes	Kuhlmann (1974) and Kuhlmann & Schenkel (1983, pp. 71–74, pls. 23–25)
Ex. (16)	Inscription of Julia Balbilla/ northern Memnon colossus	AD 130/ Eighteenth	Thebes	Bernand & Bernand (1960, no. 28) and Rosenmeyer (2008, p. 341)
Ex. (17)	Inscription of Dioskorammon/ Tomb of Ramesses VI, KV 9	Graeco-Roman Period/ Twentieth	Thebes	Baillet (1926, no. 1550)
Ex. (18)	Inscription of Hermogenes of Amaseia/Tomb of Ramesses VI, KV 9	Graeco-Roman Period/ Twentieth	Thebes	Baillet (1926, no. 1283)
Ex. (19)	Inscription Ouranios/Tomb of Ramesses IV, KV 2	Graeco-Roman Period/ Twentieth	Thebes	Baillet (1926, no. 562)
Ex. (20)	Papyrus Abbott 1.1–8, 3.1–7, 3.15–16, 4.1–4	Twentieth	Thebes	Peet (1930, pp. 37–39, pls. I–III) and Kitchen (1983, pp. 468–473)
Ex. (21)	Papyrus Abbott 5.1–10	Twentieth	Thebes	Peet (1930, p. 40, pls. I–III) and Kitchen (1983, pp. 474–475)
Ex. (22)	Papyrus Leopold II + Amherst 1.1–3, 1.8, 1.14–3.7, 3.16–18	Twentieth	Thebes	Capart et al. (1936, pp. 170–172) and Kitchen (1983, pp. 481–487)
Ex. (23)	Inscription of Djedkare Isesi/Mortuary temple of Niuserre	Late Fifth/mid Fifth	Abusir	Borchardt (1907, p. 158)
Ex. (24)	Inscription of prince Khaemwaset/Pyramid of Unas	Nineteenth/ Fifth	Saqqara	Gomaà (1973, pp. 62–64, 77, 102, fig. 2) and Kitchen (1979, pp. 873–875)
Ex. (25)	Inscription of prince Khaemwaset/Statue of prince Kawab	Nineteenth/ Fourth	Memphis	Gomaà (1973, pp. 67–69, 119, fig. 51) and Snape (2011), cf. Gundacker (2018a, pp. 81–82)
Ex. (26)	Dipinto of Maya/Tomb of Tuthmosis IV, KV 43	Late Eighteenth/ mid Eighteenth	Thebes	Newberry (1904, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv) and Reeves & Wilkinson (1996, p. 108)

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

	Text source	Dating/ Dynasty	Site/ Provenance	References
Ex. (27)	Docket of Pinudjem/Mummy of Tuthmosis II	Twenty-first/ Eighteenth	Thebes	Römer (1994, p. 561), Kitchen (1995, p. 381), and Jansen-Winkeln (2007, p. 21, no. 29)
Ex. (28)	Docket of Pinudjem/Mummy of Ramesses III	Twenty-first/ Twentieth	Thebes	Römer (1994, p. 559), Kitchen (1995, p. 382), and Jansen-Winkeln (2007, p. 22, no. 35)
Ex. (29)	*Song of Antef*/Papyrus Harris 500	Seventeenth (?)/Nineteenth	Thebes (?)	Budge (1923, pls. XLV–XLVI) and Fox (1977)
Ex. (30)	*Eulogy of the Scribe*, Papyrus Chester Beatty IV 2.5–3.11	Nineteenth	Thebes (?)	Gardiner (1935, pp. 38–42, pls. 18–19)

> Ex. (4) As for every man who will do anything evil to my tomb or who will enter it with the intent of stealing, I will seize his neck like a bird's, and I will be judged with him in the court of the Great God (i.e. the god of the local necropolis). But with regard to any person who will make invocation offerings or will pour water, he will be pure like the purity of god, and I will protect him in the necropolis. (Table 2.1)

> Ex. (5) As for every man who will take away or who will steal a stone or a brick from this tomb of mine, I will be judged with him in the tribunal of the Great God. And I will make an end to him therefore and (I will) see life (again) on earth. (Table 2.1)

From the *Pyramid Texts* (PT), a set of spells is known which served the same purpose of providing security to the king's pyramid and warding off all evildoers and enemies (PT 534, 599, 600, 601: Allen, 2015, pp. 171–172 and 265–267; Meurer, 2002, pp. 327–333).

> Ex. (6) He who will raise his finger against this pyramid and against this mortuary temple of king Pepi (I) and of his *ka*, he will have raised his finger against the Palace of Horus (i.e. Hathor) in the (heavenly) Cool Waters! The Lady of the Palace (i.e. Nephthys) will crush for him (i.e. the king) every place of his father Geb (i.e. on earth), because his words have been heard by the ennead of gods! There will be no ground beneath him (i.e. the evildoer), and there will be no ground beneath his house! He is a doomed one, and he is one who consumes his own body! (Table 2.1)

Inscriptions like those quoted are the starting point for the judgement of the dead (Kloth, 2002, pp. 83, 236, 276–279; cf. Spiegel, 1935, p. 60) which is well known from spell 125 in the *Book of the Dead* (Lapp, 2008). It is thus unsurprising that the assertions of righteous provisions for the afterlife became the core of the 'ideal biography' (Edel, 1944; Kloth, 2002; Stauder-Porchet, 2017), which is a text genre consisting of proclamations about the deceased's virtuous life. An offspring thereof became famous as the 'negative confessions' (Maystre, 1937; Yoyotte, 1961, pp. 63–65), which form the very core of spell 125 in the *Book of the Dead*.

Since funerary estates were bestowed with considerable wealth, particularly in the form of land (Jacquet-Gordon, 1962; cf. Moreno García, 1999), it soon became

necessary to decree the specifications for using the current income in order to maintain the mortuary cult in accordance with the canonical offering list (Barta, 1963; Lapp, 1986). Accounts of this kind (Goedicke, 1970) were often detailed and aimed at establishing an arrangement far beyond the lifetime of the personnel hired so that also their future descendants and the then available assets of the funerary estate would serve the tomb's possessor and his own offspring. In particular, the founders were concerned about legal complications and quarrels within the community of the personnel.

> Ex. (7) The mortuary priests of this my funerary estate and their children and, of course, the children of their children who will be born to them all throughout eternity [shall provide me with invocation offerings in this tomb of my funerary estate]. I do not authorize them to sell or to will away (anything) to any people, but instead they shall pass on their share to their children [together with the office of mortuary priest among these mortuary priests]. As for any mortuary priest here who will leave or be taken away to another priestly office, everything which I have given to him shall go on to the mortuary priests of his phyle. I do not authorize [him to take away with him anything which I have given to him]. As for any mortuary priest among them who will go to court against his colleagues, everything which I have given to him shall be taken away (from him) and shall be given to the mortuary priest against whom he went to court. I have not authorized [him to (continue) providing me with invocation offerings here]. (Table 2.1)

The property of royal funerary endowments was of course much richer than that of courtiers and officials. Just as the offspring and mortuary priests of courtiers and officials could not dispose of the assets of the funerary estate, the successor kings could not get involved in internal affairs of their predecessors' funerary endowments. The kings nevertheless issued elaborate decrees in favor of their predecessors' endowments (Goedicke, 1967; Strudwick, 2005, pp. 97–128) in order to confirm or restore their internal organization, to protect their personnel from corvée, and to grant overall tax exemptions.

2.2 Visitors

The Egyptian mortuary cult required that relatives, offspring, and personnel of the funerary estate regularly approached the tomb in order to perform the offering ritual and other ceremonies. By the time of the Middle Kingdom, it became common to compensate failing cult provisions with the erection of commemorative stelae and statues in temples or near processional roads such as the 'Terrace of the Great God (Osiris)' in Abydos (Simpson, 1974). Those monuments served the same purpose and were thought to convey the benefits which they evoked to their owners. Visitors, who more or less accidentally passed by the tomb or a memorial, were highly welcome to enter the tomb's chapel or to take a closer look at the inscriptions on a stela or statue. The 'appeals to the living' are a bright testimony for this desire (Edel, 1944, §§ 3–5; Müller, 1975; Sainte Fare Garnot, 1938; Sottas, 1913), which has already been met with the 'address to visitors' mentioned above. Even though there is a considerable variation among the texts of this genre (cf. Desclaux, 2017;

Shubert, 2007), they all have in common that the deceased asks the visitors, their purity provided, to perform offerings or to recite a prayer.

> Ex. (8) O you who live on earth, servants like myself! (People) whom the king loves and (people) whom their local god praises are those who will say: 'A thousand of bread, beer, oxen, fowl, alabaster vessels, and garments for Djau, the son of Djau!' (Table 2.1)

> Ex. (9) O you who live on earth, every lector priest, every scribe, every purification priest, every embalmer, every official who will pass by this stela of mine, be it travelling downstream or be it travelling upstream! If you desire that your local gods may praise you and that you may pass on your offices to your children, then you should say: 'An offering which the king has given (to) Osiris consisting of (a thousand of) bread, beer, oxen, and fowl for the *ka* of the steward and companion of the crescent moon Samenekh.' The breath of the mouth is beneficial for the noble deceased though it is nothing under which to weary. (Table 2.1)

> Ex. (10) O you who live on earth, purification priests, lector priests, assistants, divine fathers of this sanctuary, the entire priesthood of the temple alike, and everyone who will pass by this stela, (all) who will read from it aloud! May Osiris, the ruler of eternity, praise you and love you inasmuch as you will say: 'May the sweet breath of the north wind come to the nose of the first prophet of Osiris, Nebwawi, justified before Osiris!' (Table 2.1)

Just as the deceased asked their visitors for a favor, the visitors requested from the deceased to intervene in their interest (Moreno García, 2010). Visitors wrote their wishes and sorrows on vessels, stones, linen, or papyrus and deposited these 'letters to the dead' (Donnat Beauquier, 2014; Gardiner & Sethe, 1928) in a ritual ceremony near the tomb of the invoked spirit. In many cases, predeceased relatives were asked for a favor, but sometimes it was also local authorities who were requested to continue their work. In the following example, a widow is petitioning her dead husband to intervene for a maidservant who is essential for keeping house and family prosperous.

> Ex. (11) Given by Dedi to the priest Antef, born of Iunakht: As for this maidservant Imiu who is sick—can't you fight for her by night and day with every man who is acting against her and with every woman who is acting against her? Why do you want to have your doorway deserted? Fight for her anew today so that her household be maintained and that water be poured out for you! If there is nothing (helpful) in your hand, your house will be destroyed. Can it be that you don't recognize that it is this maidservant who fills your house with people? Fight for her! Be vigilant for her! Save her from each man and woman who are acting against her! Please let your house and your children be (firmly) established! May your listening be good! (Table 2.1)

As in most cases, the single preserved letter does not allow for tracing the fate of the requesting people, but, at least in some cases, the deceased's intercession must have been perceived as successful (el-Leithy, 2003). It may well be that this became the starting point for the veneration of certain deceased as intermediating saints or deities (von Lieven, 2008), which made their tombs popular places of pilgrimage and worship. Developments of this kind occurred all throughout Egypt, with Imhotep (Quack, 2014; Sethe, 1902; Wildung, 1977) and Amenophis, son of Hapu (Galán, 2003; Simmance, 2014; Wildung, 1977) as most prominent exponents who were still venerated in the Graeco-Roman Period. Supported by well-equipped funerary estates which kept the cult functioning for generations, nomarchs and other

high-ranking officials were deified from the Old Kingdom on (Krämer, 2019), e.g. Heqaib at Elephantine (Franke, 1994; Habachi, 1981, 1985).

Visitors' dipinti and graffiti, which can be found all throughout Egypt (Navrátilová, 2010; Peden, 2001), follow their own diction and style (cf. Navrátilová, 2006, 2011a). As a standard, they make statements of admiration for the building visited and remarks of veneration for a person or deity worshipped there or in the near surroundings, but they also serve the purpose of perpetuating the name of the visitor in a famous place.

At Asyut, the tombs of high officials of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom, e.g. the nomarchs of Asyut whose mortuary cults were connected to the local temple of Toth (Kahl, 2012), became places often visited by pilgrims and travelers. The tomb of Ibi-iti-iqer (Kahl & Verhoeven, 2008) even became the destination of excursions of the educated elite and progressing students (Kahl, 2006). Consequently, this tomb preserves more than 150 dipinti and graffiti (Verhoeven, 2013, 2021), among them a considerable number of incipits and famous passages of classical Middle Egyptian literature (Lichtheim, 2006; Parkinson, 2002) like the *Enseignement loyaliste of Kairisu* (Posener, 1976; Verhoeven, 2009), the *Instruction of Amenemhet* (Adrom, 2006), the *Great Hymn to the Nile* (van der Plas, 1986), and *The Satire of the Trades* (Jäger, 2004). On the edge of piety and touristic curiosity, many visitors' inscriptions fuse a prayer with remarks about the site visited like the following example of Men with a prayer for his homonymous father.

> Ex. (12) Once came the scribe Men, having come to see the beautiful temple of Hathor, lady of Medjeden. And he found it more beautiful in his heart than any other beautiful temple. And then he said: 'An offering which the king has given to Osiris, lord of Tanakh, to Anubis, lord of Raqereret.' (This is something) which the truly bright scribe has made, the truly silent one, the one with bright character, the humble one whom the people love for the *ka* of the scribe Men, the son of the priest of Wepwaut (called) Wepwaut, whom the lady of the house Nut has born and whose brother is Duaw. (Table 2.1)

During the early Middle Kingdom, the kings had their mortuary temples planned and erected according to the model of Old Kingdom precursors (e.g. Pepi II: Jéquier, 1938), as is obvious in the case of Amenemhet I (Arnold, 2016; Jánosi, 2016) and Sesostris I (Arnold, 1992). As part of a general interest in the traditions of the Old Kingdom (Gundacker, 2015, pp. 131–132; for the general background, cf. Oppenheim et al., 2015), the mortuary cult of many kings of the Old Kingdom was reinstated (cf. Wildung, 1968), and artists and officials studied Old Kingdom buildings and reliefs (Freed, 2010, pp. 886–887; cf. the articles in Silverman et al., 2009) as well as texts (Gundacker 2010; Hayes 1937). This interest in the past continued over a millennium and peaked again in the New Kingdom, when, e.g. in Sahure's mortuary temple, a square grid was drawn on reliefs in order to copy them and plaster casts were taken (Borchardt, 1910, pp. 104–106). At the same time, visitors left astonishing numbers of inscriptions in order to worship the kings of the past and to acclaim their monuments around Memphis (Navrátilová, 2018; Wildung, 1968), in particular at Saqqara and Abusir (Navrátilová, 2015).

Ex. (13) Regnal year 47, second month of the winter season, day 25 (of Ramesses II). Once came the scribe of the treasury Hednakht, the son of Selo, whose mother is Twosret, to take a stroll, to have a joyous time in the west of Memphis together with his brother, the scribe of the vizier, Panakht, and to say: 'All gods of the west of Memphis, ennead of gods at the forefront of the sacred land, Osiris and Isis, and all great transfigured deceased of the west of Ankhtawi! Grant a beautiful lifetime in following your *ka* and a beautiful burial after a beautiful age in order to see the west of Memphis as a greatly praised one like you yourselves. It is the scribe of the treasury of the lord of the Two Lands Hednakht, justified, and the scribe [of the vizier], Panakht [who made this inscription …]. (Table 2.1)

By the time of the New Kingdom, the necropoleis of Memphis even had become a playground for sportsmen. According to their stelae, Amenophis II (Der Manuelian, 1987, pp. 181–191; Hassan, 1953, pp. 73–77; Klug, 2002, pp. 223–234) and Tuthmosis IV (Hassan, 1953, pp. 193–197; Klug, 2002, pp. 296–304) both practiced their horses (cf. Decker & Herb, 1994, pp. 191–263) in and around Giza, which must have been a very busy place at the time. Besides ancient cults and monuments, new cults evolved such as that of Isis, Mistress of the Pyramids, who was worshipped in a temple on the remains of the mortuary installations for one of Cheops' royal wives at Giza (Wildung, 1968, pp. 177–188; Zivie, 1976; Zivie-Coche, 1991), and Sakhmet of Sahure, for whom a cult was installed in Sahure's mortuary temple at Abusir (Borchardt, 1910, pp. 101–106, 1913, pp. 113–114; Wildung, 2010). At Meidum, Sneferu had been merged with Horus already in the Old Kingdom (Gundacker, 2006, pp. 247–252; Schmitz, 1976, pp. 141–158) and was henceforth venerated in the temple at his pyramid according to numerous dipinti and graffiti (Harpur, 2001, p. 275; Navrátilová, 2011b; Petrie, 1892). Some of the inscriptions display a truly baroque and flowery language and certainly also served the purpose of showing off the skills of their composers. One such dipinto with literary qualities from the time of Tuthmosis III includes a royal eulogy and extensive variations of the usual formulaic passages (Fig. 2.1).

Ex. (14) Regnal year 41, fourth month of the summer season, day 22, under the majesty of Horus 'strong bull, appearing splendidly in Thebes', the Two Ladies 'with enduring kingship like Re in heaven', Golden Falcon 'with powerful vigor and with holy appearance', the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Menkheperre, the Son of Re Tuthmosis [III] with beautiful emanations, may he live forever and ever upon the throne of Horus of the living. Indeed, his majesty is a young bull /// body as a perfect youth of twenty years, whose equal has not come about: Khnum formed him /// according to the true rules of full likeness (as) the image of Atum, the creator of mankind, the lord of all. He is a victor, great of vigor in every battlefield. Once came the scribe Aakheperkareseneb, son of the scribe and lector priest of (king) Aakheperkare, Amenmesisu to see the beautiful temple of Horus Sneferu. And he found it as if heaven was within it when Re is rising in it. And then he said: 'Heaven rains pure and fresh myrrh, and it drops frankincense atop the roof of this temple of Horus Sneferu!' And he said: 'O every scribe, every lector priest, every purification priest, and every [man who will pass by and] who knows the transfiguration spells, who reads those time-honored texts to the entire mankind, and who will hear them! [If you would like] that your local gods praise you, you shall come in! (If you would like) that you pass on your offices to your children, you shall come here! (If you would like) that you will be buried in the necropolis of the west of Ptah south of his wall after you have grown old having spent a long time upon earth, you shall say: 'An offering which the king has given to Osiris, lord of Busiris, the Great God, the lord of Abydos, to Re-Harakhte-Atum, lord of Heliopolis, to Amun-Re, king
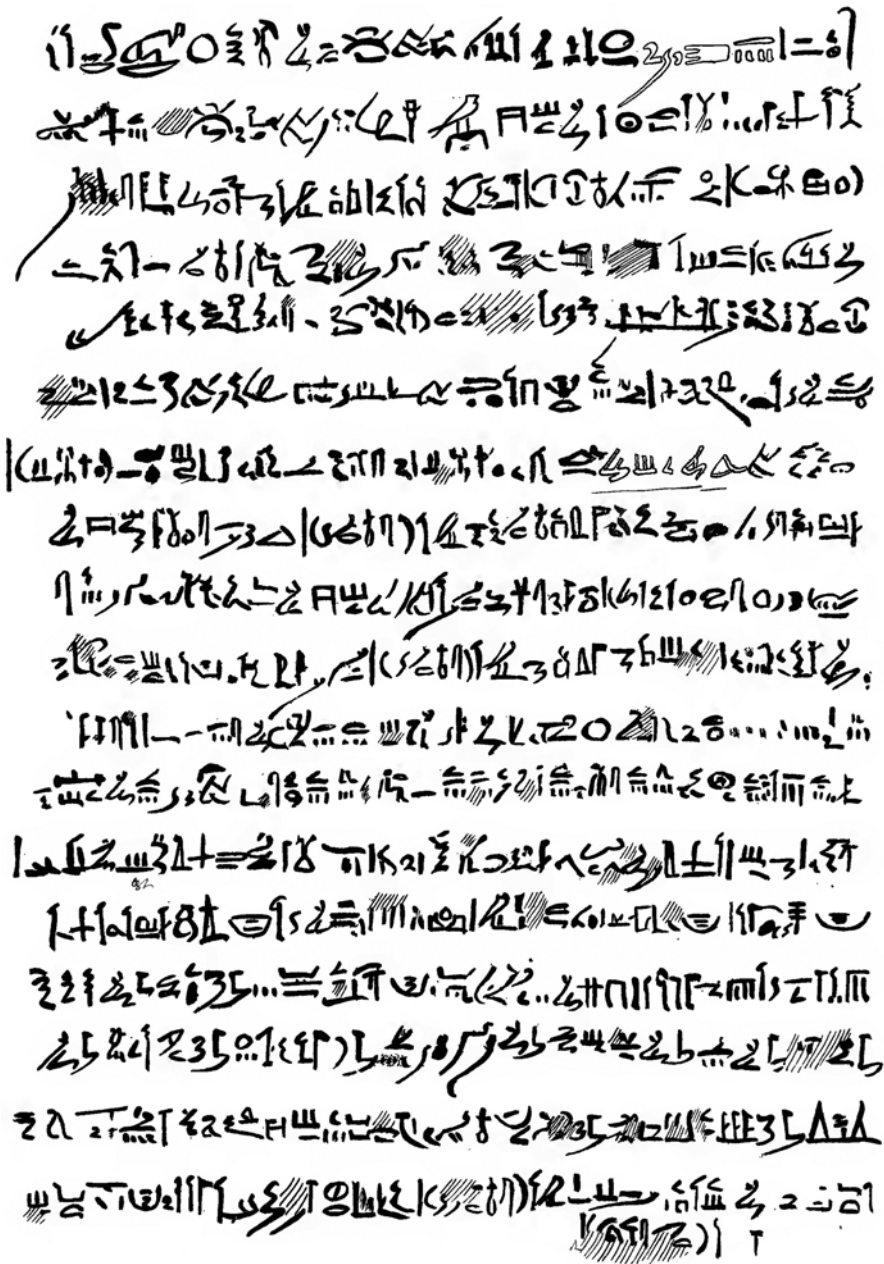
Fig. 2.1 Dipinto of Aakheperkareseneb, Eighteenth Dynasty, pyramid temple at Meidum. (Petrie, 1892, pl. 33)

of the gods, and to Anubis, foremost of the hall of god, who is in the embalming place, lord of the West, so that they may give a thousand of bread, a thousand (jugs of) beer, a thousand oxen, a thousand fowl, a thousand offerings, a thousand provisions, a thousand (portions of) frankincense, a thousand (jars of) balm, a thousand cloths, a thousand (bouquets of) herbs of the field, and a thousand of every good and pure thing which heaven gives, which earth produces, and which the Nile brings forth from its cavern (i.e. its source) for the *ka* of Horus Sneferu, justified before his father Osiris, the Great God, the lord of the sacred land, and [for the *ka* of the king's mother] Merisiankh [I].' (Fig. 2.1, Table 2.1)

A comparable syncretism of Cheops with Re can be observed at Beni Hasan, where several tombs of Middle Kingdom nomarchs show graffiti and dipinti of worship (Champollion, 1889, pp. 423–424; Wildung, 1968, pp. 171–173). However, the most remarkable case of deification is certainly king Djer, who reigned in the mid-First Dynasty (Wilkinson, 2005) and may have been apotheosized already in the Old Kingdom, at least he is mentioned as a deity in the *Coffin Texts* (CT 403 V 180c: de Buck, 1954; Faulkner, 1977, p. 47; cf. Wildung, 1968, pp. 20, 100, and 213). In the early Middle Kingdom, roughly a thousand years after Djer had been laid to rest, his tomb at Umm el Qaʿab, Abydos (Dreyer, 2013; Dreyer & Regulski, 2015; Dreyer et al., 2018; Petrie, 1901, pp. 8–9), was reinterpreted as that of Osiris himself (U. Effland, 2013) and, consequently, restored and adapted to fit the cultic necessities (Müller, 2006) within a wide-ranging cultic landscape (Effland & Effland, 2010). The veneration of Osiris (Smith, 2017) at Djer's tomb continued for more than two and a half millennia until the triumph of Christianity in the sixth century AD (A. Effland, 2013; Effland et al., 2012). The starting point for this development may have been a posthumous epithet of Djer, presumably Wennefer 'existing of perfection' (Gundacker, 2017, pp. 127–131, 2018b, p. 168), although his Horus name Djer might have contributed as it can be understood as 'ancestor, forefather'. It is uncertain whether king Djer was remembered as a facet of Osiris at Abydos or whether he was totally absorbed into that deity, but it is interesting to note that, in the third century BC, Manetho compiled a king-list (Jacoby, 1958, no. 619, F2, F3a–b) and called the third king of the First Dynasty *Ouennephis* (Wennefer), which, in the sequence of kings, is exactly the place expected for Djer (Fecht, 1960, §§ 85–109; Helck, 1956a, pp. 9–11).

In some instances, tomb owners asked for more than just a prayer or an offering with the particular intent of perpetuating their memory. In the New Kingdom, Khaemhet, owner of a rock tomb at Thebes (TT 57: Brock, 2001; Helck, 1957, p. 1845; Loret, 1889; Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 113–119), asked his visitors to look at the walls of his chapel and read out his sayings, and Nefersekheru, owner of a tomb at Zawiyet Sultan (Osing, 1992, pp. 43–52), encouraged visitors to proclaim the texts from his chapel's walls so that those unable to read and the workmen may learn about him. Ibi, a high official during the mid-first millennium BC, invited visitors to come into the chapel of his tomb in Thebes (TT 36: Graefe, 1990; Kuhlmann & Schenkel, 1983; Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 63–68) in order to copy texts there for future use (cf. Heise, 2007, pp. 116–120). Fully aware of potential harm to reliefs and paintings, Ibi aimed at regulating future activities and left precise advice for visitors.

Ex. (15) May you copy from wherever you want onto empty papyrus so that my name will come forth (i.e. be known) in the future [eternally], be it many things which catch attention, (be it) inclination to (only) a single thing here. Wherever you want, (there) you may write so that one man will pass on to another the text, (even) after it has been razed to lacunae, so that one may find (portions) thereof as a guideline for posterity. (Table 2.1)

Judging from the many graffiti and dipinti, exhortations like that of Ibi were eagerly followed (cf. Assmann, 1983). Also Ibi himself had previously reproduced scenes from a distant namesake of his, Ibi, whose tomb had been built at Deir el-Gebrawi more than one and a half millennia earlier during the Sixth Dynasty (Davies, 1902a, pp. 36–40, pls. XIII–XVI and XXIV–XXV; Kanawati, 2007). Altogether, there is ample evidence for the copying of scenes and motifs from ancient tombs in the Late Period (Kanawati, 2011), which is indicative for archaism as a major movement in funerary art and beyond during the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties (Der Manuelian, 1994; Tiradritti, 2008).

The custom of writing a dipinto or a graffito continued all throughout Egyptian history until the end of the Roman Period. Greek and Roman tourists (Adams, 2001, 2007; Foertmeyer, 1989; Perrottet, 2009) were very active and left inscriptions in many places such as the temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel (Bernand & Aly, 1956), the pyramids and the Sphinx, which was freed from sand for Nero, at Giza (Perrottet, 2009, pp. 303–304, 307–308; Rutherford, 2012, p. 710; Searby, 2016), the temple of Sethos I at Abydos, which had been erected as a temple for the royal mortuary cult and the cult of Osiris (Perdrizet and Lefebvre 1919), and the colossi of Amenophis III at Thebes, which once had marked the entrance to his mortuary temple (Krumeich, 2016). By the third century BC, those monolithic statues had been reinterpreted as representations of king Memnon whom the Greeks knew from Homer's *Odyssey* (XI.522: Hartmann, 2010, pp. 202–210; Rosenmeyer, 2018, p. 12). The statues were extremely famous because, following an earthquake in the first century BC, the northern colossus produced a sound at sunrise which was interpreted as Memnon's voice greeting his mother Eos. Accordingly, there are vast numbers of inscriptions, including four by Balbilla (Bernand & Bernand, 1960, nos. 28–31; Rosenmeyer, 2008, pp. 336–337), lady-in-waiting at Hadrian's and Sabina's court, who visited the colossi in AD 130 with the emperor (Holum, 1990).

Ex. (16) By Julia Balbilla, when Augustus Hadrian heard Memnon: Memnon the Egyptian, I have learned, when warmed by the sun's rays, utters a sound from Theban stone. And when he saw Hadrian, the king of all, before the sun's rays, he greeted him as well as he could. But when the Titan, driving through the skies with his white horses, held into shadow the second measure of hours, Memnon sent forth a cry again like ringing bronze, sharp-toned. Greeting he sent out his cry for a third time. Then the emperor Hadrian himself offered greetings to Memnon and left on stone for posterity this inscription which indicates all he had seen and all he had heard. And to all it was clear that the gods love him. (Table 2.1)

In the Valley of the Kings at Thebes (Černý, 1973; Wilkinson & Reeves, 1996), the royal tombs of the New Kingdom formed another attraction (Wilkinson, 2016). The Greeks called those tombs *syringes* ('flute tubes') because of their halls and corridors arranged to form long tunnels (Coppens, 2016, p. 471). Between the third century BC and the sixth century AD, the tombs in the easternmost portion of the

Valley of the Kings attracted vast numbers of visitors who left more than 250 Demotic and 2000 Greek and Latin graffiti and dipinti (Baillet, 1926; Coppens, 2016 with further references; Weeks, 2016, p. 559). The most famous of the tombs, which the Greeks also attributed to Memnon (Łukaszewicz, 2010), was KV 9 of Ramesses VI, in which c. 700 inscriptions can be found. Though mostly full of admiration, they record dissimilar perceptions of the paintings after all (Abitz, 1989; Piankoff, 1954).

> Ex. (17) I, Dioskorammon, looked at this nonsense, and I found it bewildering. (Table 2.1)

> Ex. (18) I, Hermogenes of Amaseia, have seen the other *syringes* and admired them, but when I saw this one of Memnon, I gazed it in amazement beyond all measure. (Table 2.1)

> Ex. (19) I have admired the Theban *syringes* and venerable Memnon because of their artistic technique, (I,) Ouranios the cynic. (Table 2.1)

The tombs in the Valley of the Kings were so famous that several authors of classical antiquity, among them Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca historica* I.46.7–8: Vogel, 1888), Strabo (*Geographica* XVII.1.46: Radt, 2005), and Pausanias (*Graeciae descriptio* I.42.3: Pereira, 1973), made mention of them with precise knowledge about their original dedication to house the burials of kings (Coppens, 2016). At least by the time of Ammianus Marcellinus, a Roman historian of the fourth century AD, this information had been lost. In his *Res gestae* (XXII.15.30: Seyfarth, 1978), the historian explains that the *syringes* sheltered the knowledge of rituals and rites from the approaching deluge.

2.3 Usurpers

Royal building projects could totally change landscapes and thereby eradicate entire necropoleis. From meager remnants, for example, it has been convincingly deduced that the famous Fourth-Dynasty pyramids at Giza were erected on the Mokkatam rock formation after it had been cleared from a pre- and early dynastic cemetery (Bock, 2007; Jánosi, 2005, pp. 75–76). Similarly, Unas constructed the causeway to his mortuary temple in Saqqara right over a refilled quarry in which some officials' tombs had been built only a few decades earlier, among them the famous tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep (Moussa & Altenmüller, 1977).

In particular, however, there was fear that tomb structures would be dismantled stone by stone in search of building materials (Loth, 2007, p. 223; Málek, 1992), and, as outlined further above with the aid of Old Kingdom tomb inscriptions, this was not unsubstantiated. The monumental tomb structure of Maya, overseer of the treasury under Tutankhamun and Haremhab, and his wife Meryt at Saqqara (Martin, 2012; Raven, 2001) was in part erected by reuse of blocks from earlier monuments in the near vicinity. Among the spolia, blocks with excellent Old Kingdom reliefs were found, which most likely stem from the nearby pyramid complex of king Unas (Harpur, 1994, 2009). The nearby tomb of Haremhab, constructed when he was

generalissimo of Tutankhamun's army and still far from ascending to the throne, was likewise built in part with spolia (e.g. Harpur, 1996; Martin, 1989), and the same holds true for the tomb of Tia, sister of Ramesses II, and her husband Tia, overseer of the treasury (Martin, 1997). As it seems, the temptation to take advantage of abandoned monuments or at least to drag off stone blocks from a crumbling edifice was too big to resist.

Besides the illegal removal of stone blocks for reuse on a small scale, which was a common phenomenon, the systematic plundering of entire necropoleis can be observed. Early in the Middle Kingdom, Amenemhet I had systematically removed the precious white limestone casing from private and royal monuments of the Old Kingdom for reuse in his own pyramid at Lisht (Arnold, 2016), which is a rich source for spolia (Goedicke, 1971; Jánosi, 2016). Eight centuries later, the exploitation of earlier monuments peaked once more under Ramesses II in order to obtain building materials for his own construction projects (Málek, 1992). The systematic removal of the limestone casing from the pyramid of Sneferu at Meidum, where storage places with stone blocks prepared for transport were found (Posener-Kriéger, 1991), resulted in the partial collapse of the pyramid by the time of the Twentieth Dynasty (Rowe, 1931, pp. 22–23). Since the temple, in which Horus Sneferu was venerated, was buried in debris, the previously steady influx of visitors and their inscriptions ended abruptly. The heaps and hills of rubble and sand lay bare for more than a century, before the site was reopened as a cemetery for the lower classes (Petrie, 1892, pp. 5, 9, 19, and 34; Rowe, 1931, pp. 22–23).

Not only were abandoned tombs and mortuary chapels exploited as sources for building materials, but the sarcophagi and statues placed within them also were objects of interest. Mainly from the New Kingdom onwards, statues found in temples and tombs were reinscribed for reuse both by private individuals and by kings (e.g. Eaton-Krauss, 2015; Fischer, 1974; Helck, 1986; Magen, 2011). In a similar manner, sarcophagi and coffins were taken away from the tombs of their original owners and prepared for reuse. This phenomenon culminated in the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasties (cf. Kitchen, 1995), when the kings at Tanis systematically reused sarcophagi (Dodson, 1988; Montet, 1947, 1951, 1960). Recent research has affirmed the common assumption that, besides religious motives and tendencies to connect with the past, the precarious economic situation of Egypt at the turn of the second to the first millennium BC was a driving force for this development (Cooney, 2017, 2018a, b, c, 2019). Consequently, it is not surprising that the mummy of Psusennes I was laid to rest in a silver coffin, which firstly was placed in a usurped anthropoid black granite sarcophagus of an unknown official of the Eighteenth or Nineteenth Dynasty and secondly in a pink granite sarcophagus of Merenptah of the Nineteenth Dynasty (Montet, 1951, pp. 111–126, pls. LXXV–XCVII). The name of the original owner of the anthropoid sarcophagus was replaced with the names of Psusennes I on all occasions, and the same holds true for the pink granite sarcophagus—with the exception of a single instance. The lid of this sarcophagus displays the dead king lying in state as Osiris, and it is precisely the belt of this representation which preserves the name of Merenptah. As it seems unlikely that this most prominent mention of the first owner's name was overlooked in the

process of reworking, the name must have been spared intentionally, perhaps in honoring commemoration of the distant predecessor who had reigned 200 years earlier. In the same fashion, Amenemope was buried at Tanis in a sarcophagus, the lid of which was brought from Giza and, more than one and a half millennia earlier, had belonged to the burial equipment of prince Kadjeded, perhaps a son of Mycerinus (Holden, 1981, p. 101; Montet, 1951, pp. 173–175, 1960, p. 73). Even though this lid was recut to fit a chest of different origin, the name of the first owner, though not a king's, was spared. Similarly, Takeloth I was entombed in a sandstone sarcophagus which once formed part of the funerary equipment of Imeny, a high official of the Middle Kingdom about a millennium earlier (Jansen-Winkeln, 1987; Montet, 1947, pp. 81–82, pls. XLVII, 1960, p. 74). This fashion of reuse was not confined to the kings of that time, but it was also followed by their highest officials such as general Wendjebawendjed who reused the sarcophagus of Amenophis, third prophet of Amun during the reign of Merenptah, for his own burial at Tanis (Montet, 1951, pp. 70–71). In various ways, this phenomenon continued over centuries until the end of the autochthonous Egyptian culture. The monumental tomb of Ankhhor at Thebes (TT 414: Bietak & Reiser-Haslauer, 1978, 1982) is an excellent example from the Ptolemaic period, when Saite anthropoid coffins of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty were reused by officials without replacement of the first owners' names. It is interesting to see that the reusers had demotic name plaques attached to their mummies in order to have their identities specified in spite of the names on the coffins (Budka, 2008, pp. 58–61, 2010). Accordingly, they must have retained those names deliberately, perhaps in order to commemorate the original owners.

It is futile to speculate whether in all those cases of reuse the sarcophagi were no longer needed by the original owners, be it that the burials had been totally devastated or be it that they were restored in a substantially different manner, or whether they were obtained by plundering *prima facie*. At least it can be safely stated that tomb robbery posed a particular problem all throughout Egyptian history (Aston, 2020; Clark, 2016; Näser, 2001, 2004).

In the late fourth millennium BC, 'Scorpion I', one of the earliest kings of Egypt, was laid to rest with rich possessions in tomb U-j in the necropolis of Umm el-Qa'ab at Abydos. Yet at the time of discovery, the tomb structure had collapsed due to fire and the store rooms had been looted (Dreyer, 1998). In this instance, it is reasonable to assume that the plundering took place considerable time after the burial, perhaps in a period when the mortuary cult had already ceased to function. However, there is also evidence that, sometimes, the workmen responsible for building or closing and sealing the tombs were responsible for the theft not long after burial. A possible example for this is mastaba 17 at Meidum (Petrie, 1892, pp. 11–14), which served as the resting place for an unknown high-ranking official or prince in the reign of Sneferu early in the Fourth Dynasty (Gundacker, 2006, pp. 109–114). This man must have died while his monumental tomb was still under construction so that his mummy and the grave furnishings were interred directly into the burial chamber before the superstructure was erected. Accordingly, the mastaba, a massive cuboid building of 100 m in length, 50 m in width, and more than 10 m in height, was built right above the isolated burial chamber without a shaft or

corridor to the outside; yet the burial had been ransacked in antiquity (Petrie et al., 1910, p. 14). In fact, the excavators discovered a thieves' tunnel which had been dug in the shortest possible distance from outside the mastaba to the unfinished burial apartments. It is thus obvious that the intruders were fully aware of the architectural layout of the entire building and misused their knowledge to steal what they deemed valuable (Petrie et al., 1910, pp. 14–17).

During the Twentieth Dynasty, tomb robbers' activities in the necropoleis of Thebes grew to epidemic proportions (Caminos, 1977; Goelet, 2016; Strudwick, 2013). At that time, the evolving social and economic crisis certainly provided an ideal breeding ground for the rapid spread of that practice (Vernus, 1993). Already in the reign of Ramesses III, payment and supply had become so irregular that the workmen of Deir el-Medina (Davies, 2018a; Demarée, 2016; Endesfelder, 2018; Gabler, 2018), who were responsible for digging the rock tombs in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, came out on strike (Eyre, 1987; Janssen, 1992; Müller, 2004) and demanded compensation from the temple treasuries (Haring, 1997). In the reign of Ramesses IX, a first ground-shaking wave of robberies became known to the public and the highest state authorities (Peet, 1930, p. 28). The preserved records indicate that not only were the workmen (Davies, 1999; Romer, 1984) of Deir el-Medina heavily involved in the plundering activities, but also the priests of the local temples, their workmen, and the necropolis police. Even the highest local officials must have been aware of what was going on and must have tolerated this or maybe even presided over a network. It is not known who exactly was involved or not, and if so, to what degree (cf. Capart et al., 1936, pp. 187–188), and it may well be that the entire affair was only made public in order to get rid of rivals within the network. Anyway, at some point, Paser, the mayor of East Thebes, reported to the king about a list of plundered and damaged funerary monuments, but since his report did not match the account of Paweraa, the mayor of West Thebes and chief of the necropolis police (Vogel, 2016), it became inevitable to start an investigation. Ironically, this was directed by many of the entangled local authorities, among them Paser, Paweraa, and Khaemwaset, governor of the nome of Thebes and vizier (Peet, 1930, pp. 30–34; Vernus, 1993). The procedure of investigation included at least two on-site inspections, which in part produced manipulated results. It is unclear how this came about, but the sealing of some tombs may have been rigged since the authorities of West Thebes were in possession of the necropolis seals:

Ex. (20) Regnal year 16, third month of the inundation season, day 18, under the majesty of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, the lord of the Two Lands 'Neferkare whom Re has chosen' […], the son of Re, lord of the diadems 'Ramesses [IX] whom Re loves' […], beloved of Amun-Re, king of the gods, and of Re-Harakhte, may he be gifted with life forever and ever. Today were sent out the inspectors of the great and noble necropolis, the scribe of the vizier and the scribe of the overseer of the treasury of pharaoh, in order to investigate the tombs of the kings of the past and the tombs and resting places of the blessed deceased of the past which are in the west of the town (of Thebes) by the governor of the town (of Thebes) and vizier Khaemwaset, by the king's butler Nesamun, the scribe of pharaoh […] and superintendent of the house of the divine adoratrice of Amun-Re, king of the gods, by the king's butler Neferkare-emperamun, the herald of pharaoh, who (all) had the

thieves dragged to the west of the town (of Thebes), (namely the thieves) against whom the mayor of West Thebes Paweraa, the chief of the Medjayu (police) of the great and noble necropolis of millions of years of pharaoh on the west (bank) of Thebes, had made an accusation and about whom a report had been made to the vizier, to the officials, and to the butlers of pharaoh […]. The pyramid of king Sekhemre-shedtawi, son of Re Sobekemsaf [II] […]: It was found as having been violated by the thieves by tunneling into the burial chamber of its pyramid (superstructure) from the outer court of the (rock-cut) tomb of the overseer of the granaries of king Menkheperre (Tuthmosis III), Nebamun. The burial place of the king was found empty of its lord and (similarly) the burial place of the king's great wife Nebukhaas, his queen consort, the thieves having laid their hands on them. The vizier, the officials, and the butlers had this investigated, and the nature of the (assault of) having laid hand on them, which the thieves had made against this king and his royal wife, were discovered. […] Total: Pyramids of the kings of the past investigated today by the inspectors and found to be intact: 9 pyramids, (and such) found as having been violated: 1; total: 10. […] The tombs and graves in which the blessed deceased of past times who had lived in the town (of Thebes), and the people of the land, rest on the west (bank) of the town (of Thebes): They were found as having been violated by thieves all together, with their owners pulled out from their coffins and sarcophagi so that they (now) are thrown out onto the desert height, with their funerary furniture stolen which had been given to them together with the gold and silver and the equipment which had been in their coffins. […] (Table 2.1)

Even though the damage to the officials' tombs had become unmissable, a cover-up concerning the tombs of kings, queens, and princes was attempted with only a single king's tomb reported as having suffered damage. The reports are of particular interest as some of the tombs can be localized (Polz, 2007; Polz & Seiler, 2003), but the deplorable state of preservation of those monuments makes it difficult to examine the credibility of the ancient reports for the time of Ramesses IX.

The next day, the coppersmith Pakharu, who had been accused of having looted tombs in the Valley of the Queens, among them that of Isis, a queen consort of Ramesses III, was taken there in order to reveal which tombs he had violated.

Ex. (21) […] The officials said to him (i.e. the coppersmith Pakharu): 'Go ahead of us to the tomb which you mentioned (as that) from which you have brought the things.' And the coppersmith went ahead of the officials to a tomb of a couple of royal children of king 'Wesermaatre whom Re has chosen' […], the Great God, in which no burial had ever been made and which had been left open, and also to the house of the workman of the necropolis Ameneminet, son of Huy, which is in this spot, saying: 'Look, (these are) the places in which I was!' The officials had this coppersmith questioned in a most severe inquisition right in this great valley. And it could not be found that he was aware of any (other) places except for the two places to which he had directed (their) hand. And he made an oath to the lord […] on condition of being beaten with sticks, (having cut off) his nose and his ears, and being impaled, saying: 'I know no place here within these places except this tomb which is open and this house to which I have directed your hand!' And the officials inspected the seals of the great places at this site of beauty in which the king's children, the king's wives, the king's mothers, and the perfect male and female ancestors of pharaoh […] rest. They were (all) found intact. (Table 2.1)

This on-site inspection must have been a put-up affair from beginning to end, since the coppersmith Pakharu cannot have picked up the stolen objects from an unfinished tomb which had never seen a burial. It is also big a surprise that the tomb of queen Isis was recorded as undisturbed (Capart et al., 1936, p. 187). Nevertheless, the plan worked out, and thus a triumphal procession was performed, which

celebrated the good success of the inspection and marginalized the damage. In spite of this, Paser, the mayor of East Thebes, felt ridiculed by Paweraa, the mayor of West Thebes and chief of the necropolis police, and repeated his accusations in public (Caminos, 1977; Peet, 1930, pp. 31–36). His charges were nevertheless officially declined shortly after by a court consisting of the highest local officials who made reference to the inspection reports. As a result, only small fry were arrested, questioned, in part with bastinado, put on trial, and, eventually, punished in the way already indicated in the oath of the coppersmith Pakharu, i.e. death by impalement in the worst case (Müller-Wollermann, 2004). Pakharu himself was not sentenced to death, but he must have awaited some other kind of punishment according to the records.

The surviving testimonies of thieves who were questioned in court are a very interesting source of information as they relate first-hand how the tomb robbers proceeded (Capart et al., 1936; Peet, 1930).

Ex. (22) Regnal year 16, third month of the inundation season, day 22, under the majesty of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, the lord of the Two Lands 'Neferkare whom Re has chosen', the son of Re, lord of the diadems 'Ramesses [IX] who has splendidly appeared in Thebes, whom Re loves continually', beloved of Amun-Re, king of the gods, and of Re-Harakhte, may he be gifted with life forever and ever. Inquisition of the men who were found to have violated the tombs upon the west of Thebes, against whom an accusation has been made […]. There was brought Amunpanefer, the son of Onurisnakht, a stone mason of the temple of Amun-Re, king of the gods […] And he said: 'I was engaged with work under the supervision of Ramessesnakht who (then) was first prophet of Amun-Re, king of the gods, together with the other companions, the stone masons who were with me. And I developed the habit of plundering the tombs together with the stone mason […] Hapiwer, the son of Merenptah. And when regnal year 13 of pharaoh, our lord, had begun, this is four years before now, I joined with the carpenter Sethnakht […], with the decorator Hapiaa […], with the fieldworker Amunemhab […], with the carpenter Irienamun […], with the libation officiant Kaemwaset […], and with the boatman of the mayor of the town (of Thebes) Ahay […]; total: 8 men. And we went to rob the tombs according to our habit, to which we stuck incessantly. And we found the pyramid of king Sekhemre-shedtawi […], son of Re Sobekemsaf [II] […], this not being at all of the kind of the pyramids and the tombs of the officials to which we were used to go to rob incessantly. And we took our copper tools and broke through into this pyramid of this king right into its underground apartments. And we found its burial chamber, and we took ignited torches in our hands, and we descended downwards indeed. And we worked through the rubble which we found at the mouth of its aperture. And we found this god lying at the back of his resting place. And we found the resting place of the king's wife Nebukhaas, his queen consort, in the spot right at his side, and it was protected and shielded with plaster and covered with rubble. And we worked through this too, and we found her resting there in the like manner. And we opened their sarcophagi and their coffins in which they were. And we found this noble mummy of this king, it being equipped with a scimitar, and a large number of amulets and jewels of gold being upon his neck, and his head being covered with gold upon it; and this noble mummy of this king was adorned with gold over and over; and his coffins were sheeted with gold and silver on the inside and on the outside and inlaid with all kinds of precious stones. And we collected the gold which we found on this noble mummy of this god together with the amulets and jewels which were on his neck and (the sheeting of) the coffins in which he was resting. And we found the king's wife in exactly the same state. And we collected all which we found on her in the same manner. And we set fire to their coffins. And we took

their funerary furniture which we had found with them, namely objects of gold, silver, and bronze. And we divided them amongst us, and we made from the gold which we had found […] eight shares so that 20 deben of gold (i.e. roughly 1.8 kg) came to us per each man of the eight people, which makes 160 deben of gold (i.e. roughly 14.4 kg), with the fragments of the funerary furniture not being counted in. And we crossed over (the river Nile) to the town (of Thebes). And after a few days, the district commanders of the town (of Thebes) heard that we had been looting in the west. And they arrested me, and they imprisoned me in the office of the mayor of the town (of Thebes, i.e. Paser). And I took the 20 deben of gold which had come to me as (my) share, and I gave them to the scribe of the quarter of the landing place of the town (of Thebes) Khaiemipet. And he set me free. And I joined (again) my companions, and they provided me with a share once more. And I remained in the habit of robbing the tombs of the officials and people of the land who rest in the west of Thebes until today together with the other thieves who are with me. And a large number of people of the land rob as well, being companions, companions (indeed)!' Total: People who had been in the pyramid of this god: 8 men. Their inquisition was made with beating with sticks, and their feet and their hands were twisted. They (all) confessed in the same manner. The governor of the town (of Thebes) and vizier Khaemwaset and the royal butler Nesamun, the scribe of pharaoh […] had the thieves taken in front of them to the west of the town (of Thebes) in regnal year 16, third month of the inundation season, day 19. And the thieves directed (their) hand to this pyramid of this god which they had violated. […] (Table 2.1)

The questioning of Amunpanefer was particularly delicate as it revealed that personnel of Paser, the mayor of East Thebes, were corrupt and involved in the flight of a detainee. This is even the more true as another papyrus, Papyrus British Museum 10054 (Peet, 1930, pp. 52–71), records another incident of the same kind once more involving Khaiemipet. The gold he had accepted from Amunpanefer this time was robbed from the tomb of Tjanefer, third prophet of Amun during the reign of Ramesses III (TT 158: Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 268–271; Seele, 1959). Despite all that, it seems, all instances of tomb robbery were explained away as crimes of aberrant individuals, and thus the case was closed soon after. However, only a year later, in regnal year 17 of Ramesses IX, another case was brought to court and revealed that, above all, tombs in the Valley of the Queens, such as that of queen Isis, which already earlier had been subject of rumors, had indeed been devastated (Caminos, 1977; Vernus, 1993). Eventually, it was disclosed that a considerable number of people from Deir el-Medina were involved in looting and in receiving of and dealing in stolen goods (Peet, 1930, pp. 72–79; cf. Cooney, 2014; Gasperini, 2018; Phillips, 1992). As a result, the trials, over which the same officials presided as in the year before, continued and were followed by strict judgements and severe punishments. Even though, as a consequence, the number of workmen at Deir el-Medina was drastically reduced (Davies, 2017, 2018b), the problems persisted all throughout the Twentieth Dynasty so that further judicial steps against tomb robbers had to be taken (Vernus, 1993). For the reign of Ramesses XI, which in part suffered under civil war (Jansen-Winkeln, 1992, 2016; Niwiński, 1992), there are again detailed records (Peet, 1920, 1930), among them Papyrus British Museum 10052 (Peet, 1930, pp. 135–169) which openly refers to the death penalties executed under the authority of the vizier Khaemwaset under Ramesses IX, although it cannot be proven that they cost the lives of Amunpanefer and his gang (Peet, 1930, p. 151). As

indicated above, the background of the looting activities, the real extent of the damage, and the involvement of officials remain unclear, but the truth is certainly much more complicated and compromising than what can be found in the official documents.

Another phenomenon of interest is that of usurping an older tomb (Eaton-Krauss, 2015; Helck, 1986), be it abandoned or be it emptied and taken over by force. The characteristic feature of this kind of reuse is the total erasure of the former owner's name and titles so that the new possessor could pretend to use the tomb pristinely in his or her own name. Among the early examples for this is the mastaba of Ihy, vizier under Unas at the end of the Fifth Dynasty, which shortly after completion was usurped by princess Idut, a daughter of Unas. Ihy's names and titles were erased all throughout the tomb, and there are only a few instances, in particular on the sarcophagus, where scratching out was insufficient (Kanawati et al., 2003; Macramallah, 1935). In the Middle Kingdom, the mastaba of prince Zatju, perhaps a son of Userkaf in the early Fifth Dynasty, at Saqqara (Mariette, 1889, pp. 302–304) was taken over by Nefertememsaf (Spencer, 1982). The mortuary chapel of Zatju contained two false-doors, the smaller one of which was set against the north end of the west wall opposite the entrance. Nefertememsaf chose this to become the center of his mortuary cult and, for that reason, had its inscriptions totally replaced with his own name, titles, and depictions (Fig. 2.2). The larger false-door to the south thereof was preserved as it was but covered with thick layers of plaster which only fell off after a fire in the nineteenth century.

In the well explored necropoleis at Thebes, many more instructive examples of New Kingdom date can be found (Kampp, 1996, pp. 123–129; Polz, 1991). In the reign of queen Hatshepsut, Nebamun, overseer of the granaries, had a rock tomb (TT 65: Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 129–132) excavated and his mortuary chapel decorated with reliefs. Almost 400 years later, under Ramesses IX, Iimiseba usurped the tomb and had the reliefs covered with plaster and painted over so that no traces of the original owner remained (Bács, 1998; Vértes, 2015). Obviously, Iimiseba had no interest whatsoever in preserving the name and memory of this tomb's prepossessor, Nebamun, whose name is only known from a damaged wall where the plaster has spalled off (Kampp, 1996, pp. 285–287; Polz, 1991, p. 308). In the same way, Menkheperreseneb, first prophet of Amun under Tuthmosis III and Amenophis II, had his rock tomb (TT 112: Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 229–230) excavated and the greater part of his mortuary chapel decorated with reliefs (Dorman, 1995; Engelmann-von Carnap, 1999, pp. 115–124). More than 300 years later, during the Twentieth Dynasty, Aashefytemwaset took possession of this tomb. He then had the blank walls decorated, and even though he left the reliefs of Menkheperreseneb unchanged, the latter's name was replaced with Aashefytemwaset's in all instances. Menkheperreseneb's name is only known from the southern portion of the chapel's broad hall, which Aashefytemwaset had walled off. Since the walls there were inaccessible, it was unnecessary to rework the reliefs (Davies, 1933; Kampp, 1996, pp. 392–394; Polz, 1991, pp. 311–312). The centuries which had elapsed between the first and second owners of TT 65 and TT 112 render it likely that the families of Nebamun and Menkheperreseneb had abandoned the tombs. Iimiseba and
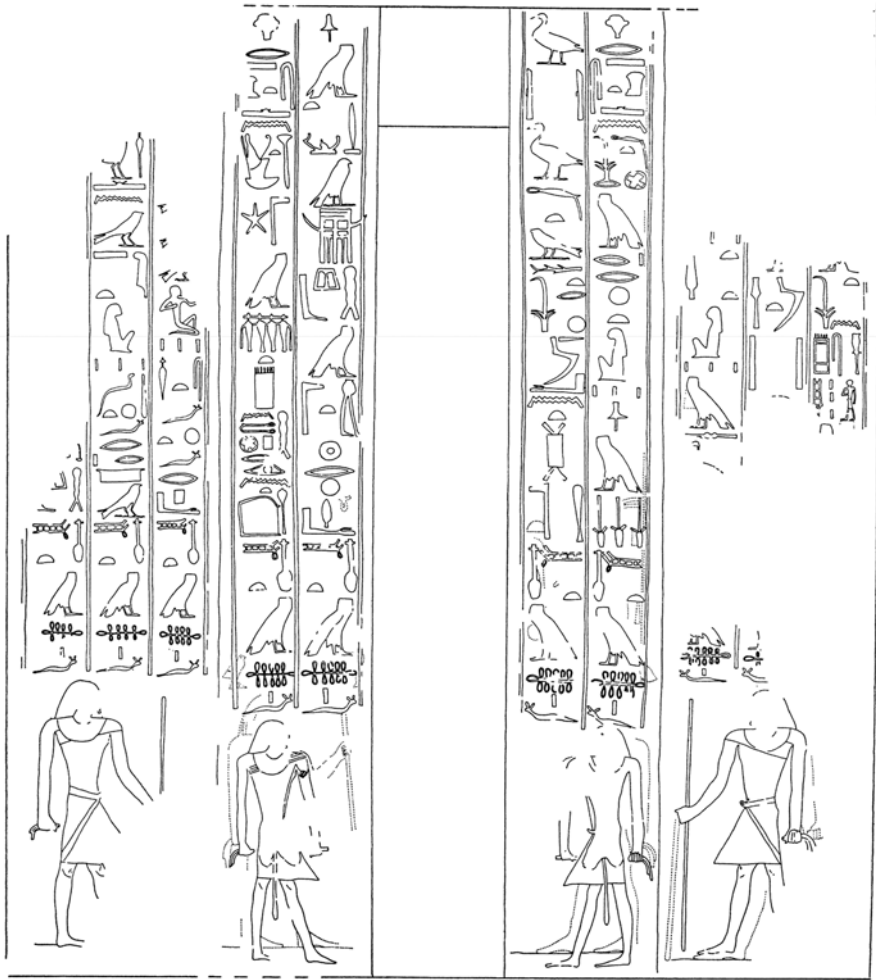
Fig. 2.2 False-door of prince Zatju, usurped and recarved by Nefertememsaf; dotted lines in lower portion indicate traces of first layout for prince Zatju. (Spencer, 1982, p. 23, fig. 2; courtesy of A. J. Spencer)

Aashefytemwaset thus took possession of practically ownerless tombs and decided to use them in their own personal interest.

At this point, the question may arise as to who could have granted the right to get hold of an abandoned tomb (Lippert, 2008, pp. 49–52). In the New Kingdom, people like Iimiseba and Aashefytemwaset were probably entitled to obtain a forsaken tomb by the king himself (Helck, 1963, pp. 345–349, 1975, pp. 73–75). In the case of the lower classes, by contrast, the local authorities must have administered and regulated the use and reuse of tombs (Polz, 1991, pp. 335–336). Affairs could grow rather complicated, as is illustrated by a lawsuit in the milieu of Deir el-Medina, which is known from two ostraca and a papyrus (Allam, 1973, pp. 43–45, 148–149,

and 277–280). In regnal year 21 of Ramesses III, Khainun had discovered that the burial chamber of the tomb in his possession was connected to the tomb owned by Amenemope. He thus cleared his neighbor's tomb, threw out the burials, and claimed possession of it in court. However, Amenemope knew that, 120 years ago, in regnal year 7 of Haremhab, the superintendent of the house of the town (of Thebes) Tuthmosis had transferred the tomb to Hay who, in lack of a son, passed it on to Hel, his daughter and Amenemope's foremother. Ever since then, Amenemope's family had been entitled to hold possession of this tomb. The case was finally settled via an oracular decision by the deified king Amenophis I so that Khainun had to revoke his claim by oath. An addition to the records from regnal year 24 of Ramesses III deals with a similar case raised against Amenemope by another man, Wennefer, but his attempt to take over Amenemope's family tomb was also eventually rebutted (Polz, 1991, pp. 335–336). In addition to the procedural aspects, the records demonstrate that quarrels over the possession and right to use a tomb were quite common. It is furthermore noteworthy that neither Khainun nor Wennefer shied away from removing burials in order to get hold of a tomb, though the fate of the bodies and the discarded grave goods remains unknown.

2.4   Renovators

As time went by, many monuments required restoration which either was carried out by (distant) offspring or benefactors (Grallert, 2001). Already in the Old Kingdom, inscriptions commemorating the renovation work carried out in predecessors' pyramid complexes were arranged, e.g. an inscription of Djedkare Isesi in the mortuary temple of his second predecessor Niuserre.

> Ex. (23) Horus 'with everlasting splendid appearance', the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, the Two Ladies 'with everlasting splendid appearance', the everlasting Golden Falcon Djedkare, he made this monument for the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Ni[userre ///]. (Table 2.1)

In the Middle Kingdom, when royal mortuary cults of the past were revived (cf. Wildung, 1968), much effort must have been spent to renovate the temples and shrines. However, it is unclear whether this was an undertaking organized by the central government or a series of individual decisions by local officials. For the New Kingdom, there is evidence for a renovation program initiated by the court royal and carried out by prince Khaemwaset (Fisher, 2001; Gomaà, 1973). Sometimes called 'the first archaeologist' (Collombert, 2016), Khaemwaset enrolled a vast agenda of restoring monuments of the past, which is commemorated in inscriptions on many structures in the Memphite region.

> Ex. (24) Horus 'strong bull, whom Maat loves', the king of Upper and Lower Egypt 'Wesermaatre whom Re has chosen', the son of Re 'Ramesses [II] whom Amun loves', may he be gifted with life like Re. Horus 'the flourishing one of the Two Lands', the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Unas, may he be gifted with life forever like Re. Command by his majesty unto the high priest of Ptah and *sem* priest, the king's son Khaemwaset: Making last

the name of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Unas, after his name could not be found on his pyramid, because of the huge extent of the desire of the *sem* priest and king's son Khaemwaset to make splendid the monuments of the kings of Upper and Lower Egypt, which they had made, but the firmness of which was now in the state of decline. And he had enacted for him (i.e. Unas) a decree for his divine offerings [/// the rest is too fragmentary for translation]. (Table 2.1)

Khaemwaset's activities were not confined to monuments of the kings of the past, but he was also concerned with those of officials and priests. Accordingly, he restored a statue of prince Kawab (Snape, 2011) and transferred it to the temple of Ptah at Memphis after the prince's tomb had been destroyed.

> Ex. (25) The high priest of Ptah and *sem* priest, the king's son Khaemwaset, [with a heart rejoicing] over this statue of the king's son Kawab, it was, who grasped it as something which had been left to the debris in the /// of his (fore)father, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Cheops. And the *s[em* priest and king's son Khaemwase]t commanded [to bring it to] a place in Memphis, the cool place of the gods, in companionship with the excellent transfigured deceased, before the cult chapel of Rosetjau because of the huge extent of his loving the primeval ones, the noble ones who were before, and the splendor of all they have achieved as a truly effective remedy, a million times. This here shall be compensation (for all that consisting) of all life, perdurance, stability, and multiplication of offerings in [the broad hall (?) for the *sem* priest and king's son Kha]emwaset, after he had reestablished all their sacred rites of this temple which had fallen into oblivion [in the memory] of all people, and (after) he had dug a lake at the side of the noble shrine as a work of his heartfelt desire so that there be purification priests going to purify and to fetch libation water from the well of Chephren; and he acted so that he may be given life! (Table 2.1)

It is, however, ironic that the devastation of many edifices which Khaemwaset restored was the result of the exploitation in search for building materials as initiated by his father, Ramesses II. Whether or not Khaemwaset's activities were carried out in order to compensate this damage remains unclear (Málek, 1992).

Under the heading of tomb reuse, cases of accidental discovery and secondary occupation of older funerary apartments must be mentioned. A particularly interesting instance for this is the tomb of Ninetjer, a king of the Second Dynasty, who had his tomb built at Saqqara (Lacher-Raschdorff, 2014). Already at the beginning of the Third Dynasty, the superstructure (Lacher-Raschdorff, 2014, pp. 153–198; Stadelmann, 1985) and part of an adjacent elite cemetery (van Wetering, 2004) must have been removed by Djoser in order to have his own pyramid complex erected there (Regulski, 2011). When, in the Fifth Dynasty, Unas chose the site immediately to the south of Djoser's step pyramid enclosure for his own pyramid complex, part of this was also built over Ninetjer's tomb of which most likely nothing more than the vast subterranean galleries had remained (Dreyer, 2007). Subsequently, high officials had their tombs built close to Unas' pyramid complex with their burial shafts excavated into the ground (Lacher-Raschdorff, 2011). Accidentally, some of those shafts, e.g. those of Nebkauhor and Iienhor, collided with parts of Ninetjer's burial apartments (Hassan, 1975a, b, pp. 59–67), which happened again during the New Kingdom and the Late Period (Lacher-Raschdorff, 2014, pp. 97–102). In all those instances, rooms and corridor segments of the underground chamber system were, in part after moderate adaption, used as burial chambers of suitably modest character for individuals who lived centuries or even millennia after Ninetjer

(Lacher-Raschdorff, 2011, 2014, pp. 95–102). Even though those intrusive burials did not aim at properly usurping the Second Dynasty galleries, the burial of king Ninetjer had been ransacked at an unknown point in time which is impossible to determine. However, some Second Dynasty chambers contained undisturbed offering depositions at the time of discovery (Lacher-Raschdorff, 2014, pp. 87–94), which renders it unlikely that workmen of later periods caused systematic devastation or aimed at clearing away all earlier remains. Ninetjer's burial was thus most likely robbed long before the first accidental access during the Fifth Dynasty, when his tomb's secondary use began.

Another kind of reuse was the deliberate taking over of a mortuary monument in order to make use of it without the erasure of the previous owner's name. Numerous instances of this kind of reoccupation can be found in the New Kingdom necropoleis at Thebes (Kampp, 1996, pp. 123–129; Polz, 1991). In the reign of Tuthmosis III, Nakhtmin, overseer of the granaries (TT 87: Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 178–179), and Menkheperreseneb, his son and successor in office (TT 79: Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 156–157), had their tombs dug next to each other. Perhaps during the reign of Tuthmosis IV or somewhat later, descendants of Nakhtmin reused the tomb with only minor architectural changes, leaving the decoration and proper mention of Nakhtmin untouched (Guksch, 1995; Kampp, 1996, p. 341). The same holds true for a second phase of reuse during the Twenty-second Dynasty, when additional funerals were performed. During the Twenty-fifth or Twenty-sixth Dynasty, Horemakhbit took possession of the tomb, presumably by then already abandoned, and added a narthex in brickwork. New texts and representations replaced those of Nakhtmin around the doorway from the outer hall to the longitudinal hall. Furthermore, some walls were covered with plaster indicating that Horemakhbit may have intended to decorate some walls but leave others with the original owner's design. It seems that he respected portions of the earlier decoration, but this could also be the result of an incomplete or abruptly discontinued usurpation attempt (cf. Guksch, 1995) to eliminate Nakhtmin's decoration altogether (Polz, 1991, pp. 311 and 315). At the same time, Menkheperreseneb's tomb was also reused, but in this instance the decoration remained entirely intact (cf. Guksch, 1995; Kampp, 1996, pp. 318–320). Unfortunately, it remains unclear for what reason Nakhtmin's and Menkheperreseneb's tombs were chosen for reuse outside their family.

The rock tomb of Djehuti (TT 45: Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 85–86), head of all weavers of Amun, was built during the reign of Amenophis II, but the owner's untimely death left it unfinished, with only the northern portion of the chapel's broad hall partly decorated in painting (Davies, 1948, pp. 1–10, pls. II–VIII). More than 250 years later, in the Twentieth Dynasty, Djehutiemhab, head of the weavers of the domain of Amun, appropriated this tomb and prepared it for his own burial (Kampp, 1996, pp. 243–244; Polz, 1991, pp. 304–307). However, Djehutiemhab did not remove or replace the decoration of Djehuti, but complemented it by decorating the southern part of the broad hall, by using the blank spaces in its northern part, and, more rarely, by introducing a new scene in place of the marginal scenes of the original decoration program. The only change commonly introduced is the repainting of details of dress and furniture for reasons of personal taste and
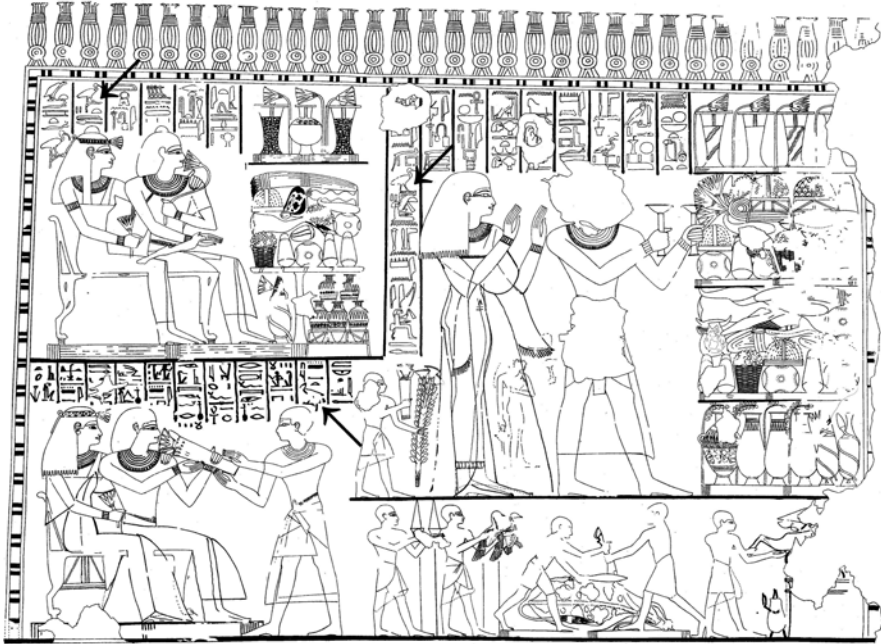
Fig. 2.3 TT 45, broad hall of chapel, east wall, northern portion (the two arrows pointing down indicate the name of Djehuti, the arrow pointing up indicates the name of Djehutiemhab). (Image adapted from Davies, 1948, pl. II; courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society)

contemporaneous fashion. In order to represent his entire family, Djehutiemhab furthermore had captions added to figures commissioned by and painted for Djehuti which had not yet borne a name. Accordingly, there are portions of wall which display scenes of Djehuti and scenes of Djehutiemhab side by side (Davies, 1948, pp. 1–10, pls. II–III). One such example is given here (Fig. 2.3) with, from right to left, Djehuti and his wife dedicating an offering above a sub-register with the preparation of meat, and, to the left thereof, Djehuti and his mother seated at a table with offerings in the upper register and Djehutiemhab presenting a lotus bouquet to his seated parents in the lower register. The reasons for Djehutiemhab's respectful treatment of Djehuti's scenes is unknown, but one can imagine that he reoccupied Djehuti's tomb for reasons of similarity of personal names and of profession (cf. Polz, 1991, p. 307).

Huy, decorator in the temple of Amun at Karnak, built a rock tomb with a single room chapel, half of which was decorated with scenes in his name (TT 54: Porter & Moss, 1960, pp. 104–105), in the reign of Amenophis III on the eve of the Amarna Period (Polz, 1997). In this period of turmoil, the traditional cults were closed and representations and mentions of Amun were erased. Like many structures in the Thebaid, Huy's chapel suffered damage from this process (Kampp, 1996, pp. 260–261). When in the Nineteenth Dynasty Kel, head of the granary of Khonsu, took possession of this tomb, he restored the texts which had suffered during the

Amarna Period and filled the empty wall portions with decorations in his own name (Polz, 1991, pp. 301–303). It is particularly remarkable that an unfinished scene, which Huy had only sketched, was completed by Kel with himself represented as *sem* priest performing rites in front of Huy and his wife. Not only had Kel added the names and titles of the previous owner of this tomb, but he fully adopted the role of the pious son, designating himself as 'his (i.e. Huy's) son who revives his name' (Polz, 1997, pp. 45, 51, and 126). Kel's son Khonsu inherited this tomb and had his name added to the decoration without harming anything, and even later users of this tomb left no traces in the decoration. The burial chamber of Huy, and presumably his and his family members' burials, were respected by Kel, who had a new crypt excavated for himself and his family.

In many instances, a closer look on the decoration, the inscriptions, and the prosopographic data allows us to trace the reasons for reusing tombs and mortuary chapels. These were very diverse and ranged from personal piety to superficial similarities of name and profession. In addition, of course, purely practical reasons such as the economic factor must also be taken into account, although this was certainly not the only and perhaps not even the most important motive for acquiring an old tomb.

Without doubt, the destruction of tombs and plundering of burials must have been a serious and recurrent phenomenon which often caused the need to restore burials and to renew funerary equipment. Periods of political turmoil with a decline of state institutions certainly posed a particular threat. As such it became necessary, in the reign of Haremhab, after the Amarna Period, to inspect and renew the damaged burial of Tuthmosis IV in his tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 43: Carter & Newberry, 1904; Newberry, 1904; Porter & Moss, 1964, pp. 559–562).

> Ex. (26) Regnal year 8, third month of the inundation season, day 1, under the majesty of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt 'Djeserkheprure whom Re has chosen', son of Re, 'Haremhab, whom Amun loves'. His majesty, may he live, be prosperous and healthy, commanded that the fan-bearer on the right hand side of the king, the king's scribe, the overseer of the treasury, the overseer of work in the Place of Eternity (i.e. the Valley of the Kings), the leader of the festival of Amun in Karnak, Maya, the son of the judge Iui, whom the lady of the house Weret has born, shall repeat the burial of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Menkheprure (Tuthmosis IV), justified, in the noble mansion upon the west of Thebes. (Table 2.1)

Apart from occasional thefts, which primarily targeted aromatic oils before they became rancid, cloth, glass, jewelry and amulets, statuettes, and other easily portable items (Goelet, 2016; Näser, 2001, 2004; Reeves, 1990, p. 275), and security problems during and immediately after the Amarna Period, the burials in the Valley of the Kings were by and large safe until the Twentieth Dynasty (Niwiński 2005). As economic problems increased (Vernus, 1993), the buried treasures caught people's attention and fell prey to tomb robbers on a growing scale (Aston, 2020; Peet, 1930; cf. Gasperini, 2018). At first, the central authorities were not ready to give up on the Valley of the Kings and the treasures entombed there with the kings but rather aimed at restoring, upholding, and securing the status quo. The investigations and judicial steps which are reflected in papyri of the time and have been mentioned

above, provide ample evidence for this effort notwithstanding their limited effectiveness due to corruption. However, towards the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, the political and economic crisis culminated in a civil war with Panehesi, viceroy of Kush, besieging Amenophis, first prophet of Amun, in the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu in the 'year of the hyenas' (Jansen-Winkeln, 1992, 2016; Niwiński, 1992; Selim, 2017). This altogether made it more and more apparent that conditions changed irreversibly, and so must the measures. Already then, the opulence of the funerary equipment vis-à-vis empty purses was compelling to thieves and state officials alike. The massive treasures of the past thus attracted organized looting by gangs of thieves and systematic despoiling on behalf of the state, not the least in order to pay mercenaries. Thus, it is not surprising that, from the very end of the Twentieth Dynasty onwards, the royal tombs were systematically emptied over a period of 100 years with countless gold and silver objects being smelted down and the state treasury refilled (Jansen-Winkeln, 1995; Niwiński, 2005; Taylor, 1992). The sacrosanctity of the Valley of the Kings having crumbled away, Ramesses XI decided not to use his tomb, the last one built there; his final resting place is thus unknown (KV 4: Ciccarello & Romer, 1979; Dodson, 2016, p. 226; Porter & Moss, 1964, p. 501; Reeves, 1990, pp. 121–123; Wilkinson, 2016, p. 351). His tomb in the Valley of the Kings may have been taken over by Pinudjem I, first prophet of Amun, who also adopted a royal set of names and regal attributes, but, again, it is undetermined whether or not he used this tomb (Dodson, 2000, p. 147).

Even though there was a strong economic motivation for the removal of the royal funerary treasures, this was not carried out with total lack of piety. The mummies of the kings and of the members of the royal families (David, 2016; David & Metcalfe, 2016; Habicht et al., 2016; Harris & Wente, 1980; Hawass & Saleem, 2016; Partridge, 1994; Smith, 1912) were not thrown out and left to the desert, but they were restored, rewrapped, which also allowed for the removal of jewelry and amulets, and buried again without their treasures. In order to identify the mummies and to place them into the correct coffins, many received dockets (Reeves, 1990, pp. 225–243) with names and short notes referring to this process (Näser, 2001, 2004; Taylor, 2016).

Ex. (27) Regnal year 6, third month of the winter season, day 7: On this day, the first prophet of Amun-Re, king of the gods, Pinudjem [I], son of the first prophet of Amun Piankh, and the overseer of the treasury Painefernefer proceeded to repeat the interment of king Aakheperenre (Tuthmosis II), may he live, be prosperous and healthy. (Table 2.1)

Ex. (28) Regnal year 13, second month of the summer season, day 27: On this day, the first prophet of Amun-Re, king of the gods, Pinudjem [I], son of the first prophet of Amun Piankh, the scribe of the temple, Shedsukhonsu, and the scribe of the place of truth, Butehamun, proceeded to transform the king Wesermaatre (Ramesses III), whom Amun loves, into Osiris so that he may endure and last forever. (Table 2.1)

Despite all efforts, work carried out on the mummies was in part quite harsh and some mistakes may have occurred, so that the identity of some mummies is disputed (Hawass & Saleem, 2016). Their reburial was, however, not carried out separately in the kings' respective tombs, but they were concentrated in only a few spots, in

part outside the Valley of the Kings. All that was not a straightforwardly planned task, but mummies and minor remains of funerary equipment must have been moved around for decades (Reeves, 1990, pp. 244–260; Taylor, 2016). Late in the Twenty-first and during the Twenty-second Dynasty, the majority of the removed mummies ended up in two royal caches. There they remained for about three millennia until the late nineteenth century, when both of them became known (David, 2016). One cache was situated within the Valley of the Kings in the tomb of Amenophis II (KV 35: Porter & Moss, 1964, pp. 554–556; Piacentini, 2005; Wilkinson & Reeves, 1996, pp. 100–103), where Victor Loret found 20 mummies, among them nine kings of the New Kingdom (Loret, 1899). The other was outside the Valley of the Kings, high up in the cliffs of Deir el-Bahari, where, in the tomb of the first prophet of Amun Pinudjem II (DB 320, also TT 320: Belova, 2003; Graefe, 2003; Graefe & Belova, 2010; Niwiński, 2009; Porter & Moss, 1960, p. 393), at least 53 mummies, among them 12 kings of the New Kingdom (Bickerstaffe, 2006; Trope & Lacovara, 2003), were found. The discovery of the Deir el-Bahari cache is a particularly thrilling detective story, since the Abdel Rassul family from the nearby village of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna (van der Spek, 2016) must have been aware of this tomb since around 1871, when they started to sell items from the cache on the antiquities market. Only by 1881, Gaston Maspero, then director of the Egyptian Museum in Boulaq (Cairo), and his assistant, Émile Brugsch, started to search for a tomb of the Twenty-first Dynasty because of the amassed appearance of high-quality artifacts (Brugsch Bey, 1889; Maspero, 1889). Finally, it was a quarrel within the Abdel Rassul family (Bickerstaffe, 2018; Hawass & Saleem, 2016, pp. 34–35), which led to the exposure of the find spot and the immediate transferal of the royal mummies and the scarce leftovers of their grave goods to Cairo. A third cache may have existed in the tomb of Haremhab (KV 57: Davis, 1912; Hornung, 1971; Porter & Moss, 1964, pp. 567–569; Reeves, 1990, pp. 75–79 and 271–278), but looting did much harm to the burial equipment and royal mummies there, which is the reason why no definite conclusion on this matter is feasible.

On the one hand, emptying royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings, separating royal mummies and funerary equipment, taking away the valuables, and translocating the mummies significantly increased the security of the royal mummies. On the other hand, this allowed for reusing sarcophagi and other objects. Accordingly, inter alia, sarcophagi were transported to the new royal necropolis at Tanis, as already discussed above, a wooden coffin of Tuthmosis I, which had been stripped of its gold foil, was reused for the burial of the first prophet of Amun Pinudjem I (Daressy, 1909, pp. 50–63; Dodson, 2000, pp. 36, 47–48, 147), and two ushebti figurines of Ramesses II were transformed into Osiris statuettes for worship (Taylor, 1992, pp. 193 and 197). Finally, albeit rather hesitantly, the royal tombs themselves were reused for some burials of commoners during the Third Intermediate and Late Period (Coppens, 2016; Taylor, 1992, pp. 200–202). Centuries later, the Graeco-Roman Period saw crowds of tourists visiting the Valley of the Kings, as mentioned above.

2.5 Epilogue

With the end of the traditional Egyptian religion and the predominance of Christianity and, subsequently, of Islam, the ancient Egyptian tombs and mortuary cult installations ultimately lost their purpose. However, this did not necessarily mean that those edifices were ignored or ruined beyond recognition. Many temples were reused as churches or monasteries, e.g. the famous mortuary temple of queen Hatshepsut, which became once more renowned as the monastery of Phoibammon (Naville, 1908, p. 1). The fame thereof was so immense that its name became the source for today's designation of the area, Deir el-Bahari 'the northern monastery' (Godlewski, 1986). Similarly, all along the western shore of the Nile at Thebes and in the Valley of the Kings, ancient rock tombs were used as hermitages and chapels by monks (Boud'hors & Heurtel, 2016; Coppens, 2016), and, in part, even as accommodations and stables. Of the latter, the village of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna (Simpson, 2003; cf. Fodor, 1989; Kriss & Kriss-Heinrich, 1960, pp. 112–115), which was the home of, among others, the Abdel Rassul family, is a famous example. This village was torn down by Egyptian government authorities only a few years ago and its inhabitants moved to el-Qurna el-Djadida 'New Qurna' (Fathy, 1973; Steele, 1997, pp. 191–192). Furthermore, stone blocks and bricks were removed from many sites in order to reuse them, e.g. in Saqqara where many spolia (Grossmann, 2010; Hovestreydt, 2017; Martin, 1994) were used to build the monastery of Apa Jeremiah (Quibell, 1909, 1912; Wietheger, 1992). Likewise, the limestone casing of the pyramids at Giza was taken off to supplement the building materials (Greenhalgh, 2012) for the edifices of Old Cairo (al-Fustat) (Sheehan, 2010) and the mosques and city walls of Cairo (Heiden, 2001, 2002, 2010; Maroko, 2015).

In the long run, all this is nothing more than the continuation of the events for which the ancient Egyptians tried to prepare their monuments and tombs. Whatever efforts they made to build spacious tombs, to fill them with plentiful grave goods, to erect magnificent memorials and cult installations, to celebrate a lavish funeral, and to instigate and regulate mortuary services, as time went by, they became more and more aware of the fact that nothing would last forever. As such, the despair concerning death and afterlife (*Jenseitspessimismus*) grew (Assmann, 1977a, 1991, p. 215; Hornung, 1990, p. 200) and brought about a blooming, though lamenting, literary genre, the so-called 'harpist's songs' which are often found next to depictions of musicians in tomb chapels, perhaps as a *memento mori*, but, at the same time, as a *carpe diem* (Assmann, 1977b, 1991; Fox, 1977; Lichtheim, 1945; Polz, 2003).

> Ex. (29) Flourishing is this great one! Good was the fate (of his), and good was the waning (of his). A generation passes, another one remains, since the time of the ancestors. The gods who came into being before long rest in their pyramids, and likewise are buried transfigured nobles in their pyramids. Those who built sepulchers: their (burial) places do not exist (any more)! Look at what has been made out of them! I have heard the words of Imhotep and Hordjedef, which are often quoted as proverbs of them: Look at their (burial) places! Their walls have fallen apart, they have no (burial) places, as if they had never come into being. No one has returned from there (i.e. the netherworld) so that he tell of their state, so that he tell of their needs, so that he comfort our hearts, before we hasten to the place whereto they

have gone. Be happy, and your heart (too), be forgetful about it (i.e. death)! It is beneficial for you to follow your heart as long as you exist: Put myrrh on your head, dress yourself in finest linen, anoint yourself with true perfume oil from the god's offering, provide an over-flow of your joy, let your heart not grow weary, follow your heart and your joy, carry out your things on earth, let your heart not wane, until there comes to you that day of mourning! The weary-hearted cannot hear their mourning, and their lamenting cannot save a man from the abyss (of the netherworld)! Refrain: Make (today) a holiday! Weary not of it! Behold, no one can prompt to take his property with him, behold, there is no one who has gone who will return! (Table 2.1)

Already in this lamentation, a way to cope with the predicament of *Jenseitspessimismus* can be found. It is paramount to be remembered, to have the name pronounced, which revives the name, and, consequently, the human being designated. Formulae such as 'reviving his name' (McCleary, 1991; Nelson-Hurst, 2010, 2011) thus became increasingly important. Apart from all efforts to prepare a tomb, a burial, grave goods, memorials, and mortuary cults, the Egyptians sought a new way of perpetuating their memory via immortal writings.

Ex. (30) Truly, if you do this, you are versed in the writings. As to those scribes who know the score since the time which came after the gods, who foretold what will come, their names will last forever, although they are gone, having completed their lifetime, and although all their kin are forgotten. They have not erected for themselves pyramids of bronze and their stelae of iron. They did not know how to leave heirs of [loving] children [who remember them (?)] by pronouncing their names, but they made heirs for themselves of writings, of wisdom texts they had composed. They made for themselves [the papyrus scroll as lector] priest, and the writing board as the loving son. Wisdom texts are their pyramids, the reed pen is their child, the surface of the stone is (their) wife. From great to small, (all) were given among their children. As for the scribe, he is their first. Doors have been installed on their sepulchers, they have fallen apart, their mortuary priests are [gone]. Their stelae are covered with dust, their tombs are forgotten. Their names are pronounced over their books, which they made while they were in existence. Good is the memory of their authors, it is for all time and forever! Be a scribe, put it in your heart, and your name will become the same (as theirs)! More beneficial is a book than an inscribed tomb stone and a solid wall. They (i.e. books) are chapels and pyramids in the heart of those who pronounce their names! Truly beneficent in the necropolis is one's name in the mouth of the people! Man dwindles away, his corpse is dust, all his kin have crumbled to dust! It is the writings which make him remembered in the mouth of the reciter. More beneficent is a book than a well-built house and a mortuary chapel in the west, better than a well-founded castle and a stela in the temple. Is here anyone like Hordjedef, or another one like Imhotep? No one from our kin has become like Neferti, or Khety, the first of them (all)! I will bring to your attention the name of Ptahemdjehuti and of Khakheperreseneb! Is there another one like Ptahhotep or Kairisu likewise? Those sages who foretold what will come—(all) which came from their mouth has occurred. It can be found as (their) sayings, it is written in their books. The offspring of others are given to them to be heirs as if (they were) their own children. They (themselves) are concealed, (yet) their magic is for the entire world who read in a wisdom text. They have passed away, their names would be forgotten, but their writings make them be remembered! (Table 2.1)

It is perhaps a lucky coincidence of history that modern research has finally become another way to preserve and keep alive the memory of many ancient Egyptians with Egyptologists taking on the role of the 'loving son'.

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Chapter 3
Literary Tombs and Archaeological Knowledge in the Twelfth-Century 'Romances of Antiquity'

Naomi Howell

3.1 Introduction

Twelfth-century literary romances of antiquity ('romans d'antiqués') such as the anonymous *Roman d'Eneas* (c. 1160), Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (c. 1165), and Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneit* (1170–1788), feature elaborate descriptions of the tombs of legendary heroes and warriors.[1] Entirely absent or perfunctory in classical source texts, these descriptions are highly detailed and imaginative. Although the romances of antiquity are works of fiction, I will suggest that their descriptions of ancient burial practices reflect the influence of more recent written accounts of actual tomb openings and exhumations in the preceding century. Thus, the description of the burial of Pallas in the *Roman d'Eneas* is partly modeled on the account of the discovery of the 'real' tomb of Pallas in Rome in c. 1045, written by the chronicler William of Malmesbury between 1125 and 1135.[2] In the *Roman de Troie*, the tomb of Hector with its distinctive enthroned burial is based in part on accounts of the opening of the tomb of Charlemagne by Otto III in the year 1000. Highlighting the sophisticated intertextuality and intermedial referentiality of these 'romans d'antiqués', this chapter will explore the interaction of imaginative

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[1] Except where noted, all references to *Eneas* are to the *Roman d'Eneas*, edited by Petit (1997), *Troie* to the *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, edited by Constans (1904–1912), and *Eneit* to the *Eneas Romance* by Heinrich von Veldeke, edited by Ettmüller (1852). Although Petit (1997) is accessible and reliable overall, Salverda de Grave (1891) remains an indispensable resource due to its detailed account of manuscript variants and editorial decisions.

[2] *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (William of Malmesbury, 1998, II.206).

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literature and archaeological knowledge in Western Europe in the middle decades of the twelfth century.

The unprecedented fantastical tombs that seemed to erupt Pallas-Athena-like as fully formed conceptions from the minds of medieval romance authors and their reader-/listener-communities may seem unlikely vessels of 'archaeological knowledge'. The excavations and exhumations described by medieval chroniclers, as discussed in this chapter, are not archaeological reports in the modern sense,[3] and may never have happened (at least not in the way they are described). And yet exploring a few of these textual tombs can shed light on the relationship between what we are used to thinking of as 'literature' and what is defined as 'historical archaeology', as well as yielding insights into medieval processes and perceptions of burial and exhumation, and the ways in which these can conceal or reveal the past to us and to past textual communities.

Recent decades of literary scholarship have troubled persistent long-held post-Reformation beliefs about medieval historiographical *naïveté*. Introducing his important 1974 translation of the *Roman d'Eneas*, John A. Yunck summarizes scholarly consensus by explaining that in the twelfth century authors and audiences utterly lacked spatial and temporal perspective:

> All this is to say—and we are perhaps belaboring the obvious—that the twelfth-century romancers lacked the historical sense or historical orientation[4] which dominates every educated man's world view today. The medieval romancer made no attempt to absorb and recreate the spirit of a historical past. Judgements of truth or falsehood were ethical, rather than historical, and perspective was pursued no more in time than in space. The historical past emerged, like the stylized background of the illuminators, as a depthless—or timeless—plane […]. (Yunck, 1974, p. 23)

The notion that medieval authors and audiences had no sense of perspective with regard to either physical space or the historical past directed scholarly interests for generations. The sepulchral features of the *Eneas* and the *Troie* romances (the "ultimate in garish bad taste and architectural instability", Yunck, 1974, p. 23) were particularly condemned by (and inaccessible to?) those guided by such assumptions. Even as Yunck brilliantly traces a number of textual influences on the *Eneas* tombs, observing that the *Eneas* poet "has discovered such features scattered throughout his readings and assembled them into a single fictional display for the education of his audience" (Yunck, 1974, p. 23), he, like other scholars of his time, rather reductively attributes didactic purposes to the poet. Even when—and this is not the case in the *Eneas*—a medieval poet asserts such a purpose, this often serves

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[3] Though the discipline would only begin to flourish in the eighteenth century (Maier, 1992, p. 12), the word 'Archaiology' (to refer to a range of ancient textual sources) makes its first appearance in English in 1607 (Hall, 1607, sig. G3r; see also Davis, 2009, p. 31; OED, 1989). In 1679 Jacob Spon introduced 'Archaeologia' as a discipline encompassing the range of sources relevant to the texts discussed here, including funerary rites and exhumations, epigraphy, iconography, and architecture (Spon, 1679, sig. á3r). Spon also shared the privileged focus on classical antiquity exhibited in these texts.

[4] On the lack of historical consciousness in the medieval period, Yunck cites Guy Raynaud de Lage (1961).

as a justification (rather than a motivation), and is sometimes demonstrably disingenuous. Rather than a haphazard composite of scattered attributes, the *Eneas* poet selects and deploys references based on shared knowledge and lived experiences for an audience which—it seems clear—was to a varying but undeniable extent equipped to receive, reimagine, and respond to them. Though the myth of the ahistorical Middle Ages has surely now been discredited (Otter, 1994), much remains to be reexamined. An investigation of the tombs of the *Roman d'Eneas* and later romances of antiquity is thus also an investigation into twelfth-century mentalities, and the archaeological consciousness of romance audiences.

3.2   The Tomb of Pallas in the *Roman d'Eneas*

A grieving king places his son in a tomb he had readied for himself. The vault of vivid stones is carved with beasts and flowers, and decorated with bright painting and costly enamel. The vault is surmounted by a spire of gilded copper and topped by a marvelous golden bird, seated on two balls of gold. Constructed with the greatest ingenuity, this bird is immoveable in wind and weather. The dead body of the beautiful, still-beardless boy is carefully prepared. Invested with the regalia he would have assumed had he outlived his father; his body is placed in a sarcophagus of clear green chrysoprase which is set on four golden lions. A pillow under his head tilts the head forward a little. Two golden tubes (« chalumiax », « fistrez »: *Eneas* ll. 6530 and 6541) are inserted into his nostrils. One leads to a golden vessel full of balsam; the other to a vessel of sardonyx full of turpentine. The vessels are hermetically sealed so that their preservative liquors course through the body. As long as water does not touch it, the body will never decay. Along the ridge of the sarcophagus' lid, fashioned of a single amethyst, gold lettering identifies the deceased, his attributes, and his manner of death. An ever-burning lamp hangs overhead on a golden chain. Last of all, the tomb is sealed by bitumen from the Dead Sea, a substance which can never be dissolved but by one little thing: something secret which cannot be named openly. When the mourners depart, the tomb is sealed off forever, so that no one can ever enter it again (*Eneas* ll. 6438–6591).[5]

This description of Pallas' tomb in the Anglo-Norman *Roman d'Eneas* is the first of many elaborate tomb descriptions in twelfth-century romance. Yet there is nothing like it in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the classical epic on which the romance is based. Book 11 of the *Aeneid* includes a funerary procession for Pallas, and Evander's lengthy lament for his dead son, but offers no description of Pallas' embalmment, burial or tomb (Virgil, 1918). By contrast, the description of Pallas' tomb in the *Roman*

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[5] In his introduction to the *Roman d'Eneas*, Aimé Petit (Petit, 1997) discerns a pattern in comparing the tombs of Pallas and Camille: death (Pallas 5734–5847, Camille 7045–7290); procession (Pallas 6168–6207, Camille 7494–7553); lament (for Pallas 6208–6288, for Camille 7427–7490); funeral (Pallas 6438–6471, Camille 7554–7694); tomb description (Pallas' 6372–6591, Camille's 7595–7790).

d'Eneas is over 100 lines long. Why this innovation? Inaugurating the tombs that suddenly emerge as objects of wonder and interest in twelfth-century romance, the tomb of Pallas raises questions that interrogate Anglo-Norman historical consciousness, conceptions of 'otherness', ideas of texts and bodies, of authors and their audiences, and of the entombers and the entombed.

Along with the love story between Eneas and Lavinia, the *Eneas* poet invents the tombs of Dido, Pallas, and Camille—each surpassed by the next, in a process of accretion that seems calculated to heighten the affective impact of each. Each of these tomb descriptions is longer than the one before. Each employs more elaborately the classical rhetorical technique *ekphrasis*, whereby physical objects and spaces were conjured in the mind's eye and implanted into the reader-listener's memories by evoking many—sometimes all—of the senses. Dido's tomb has an inscription, but Pallas' inscription is of gold, and circumscribes the single amethyst that forms the lid of the sarcophagus. Pallas' tomb has an ever-burning lamp, but Camille's eternal flame is connected with tripwires to a complex system of automata that is poised to self-destruct on the head of potential intruders. Each tomb recalls and surpasses the last, just as it recalls, surpasses, and contains the physical (/fictional) dead body and ephemeral absent life. Markers and signifiers of absence, the tomb descriptions insist on their materiality and tangibility. The intricacies of the infra-, inter-, and extra-textual references of the ekphrases accumulate meanings with what seems like gathering momentum and agency. As the poet Amaranth Borsuk has said with reference to Ander Monson and Jer Thorp's (Monson, 2006) collaborative 'Index for X',

> these details help build "a remembrance of the body" […] Just as the lines of the poem accrue meaning as we go on, they accrete images as well. (Borsuk, 2011)

She later quotes the poem directly: "Amalgamation. Accumulation. What comes down in time accretes" (Monson, 2006). Borsuk's own experiments in textual materialities and 'interfaces' (Borsuk & Bouse, 2014) suggest that the meeting points of multiple media and genres are peculiarly apt sites of such accrual.

Almost since its inception, the field of psychoanalysis has sought to understand such responses and repetitions in relation to human mortality. Sigmund Freud explicitly linked his observations of repetition compulsion (*Wiederholungszwang*) with what he conceptualized as the death drive (*Todestrieb*) (Freud, 1921, pp. 17–20 and 37–61). Sarah Kay has articulated the close-but-contrasting relationship between the tombs of the romances of antiquity and their hagiographical parallels using Lacanian language which seems peculiarly apt for expressing the superlative refinement, uncanny doubling, and transformation presented to the reader in romance tombs:

> Whereas the sublime body of the martyr is infused with the immortality of eternity, the sublime body of the warrior [in these romances] is set to endure throughout historical time […] Whereas in hagiography the body of the saint is the primary focus of the sublime, in the *romans antiques*, it falls to human artifacts to serve as the fantasmatic support of sublimation. (Kay, 2001, p. 236)

Kay neatly captures the uncanny slippage between the tomb and the body it contains; between signifier and signified, human artifacts and human bodies. These slippages and shifts have recently been further explored and unpacked in the field of sociology, where their impact on memory and emotion has been highlighted. Examinations of phenomena in social media have explored the effects of repetition and circulation, examining shifts between bodies, objects, and their representations; and within the realm of representation; between modes, media, and genres. Imogen Tyler observes that

> it is through *the repetition of a figure across different media* that specific figures acquire accreted form and accrue affective value. (Tyler, 2008, p. 19)

Observing the social and political impact that can result, Tyler advocates what she calls a 'figurative methodology' which

> is needed precisely because it is only when a range of different media forms and practices coalesce that these overdetermined figures materialize. (Tyler, 2008, p. 19)

One of my aims in this essay is to examine how tombs and their real or imagined reopenings accrue significance and affective urgency as they move across media (from materiality to the differing textualities of chronicle and romance), across languages, and across time.

With each accumulative iteration of sepulchral ekphrasis, the *Eneas* poet showcases proficiency and learning not only of Virgil, but of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and—even more markedly—of the *Metamorphoses* as well (see, for example, Baswell, 2000, pp. 31–35). Numerous other texts and practices, including those of pilgrimage, liturgy, church-building, and hagiography, would have also informed the sepulchral passages. The *Eneas* responds not only to texts from the distant Latin past, but to recent texts in both Latin and the vernacular, in prose and verse, whose content ranges from historical chronicle to lyric—texts, practices, and traditions circulating within, between, and beyond courtly contexts. The *Eneas* tomb-descriptions, for example, quote the anonymous *Roman de Thèbes* (Constans, 1890)—produced in French earlier within the same decade (c. 1150–1155)—as well as William of Malmesbury's prose Latin chronicles *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (similarities noted by Yunck, 1974, p. 183, n. 113), as further discussed below. In responding to the texts of both the classical and recent past, the tombs of the *Roman d'Eneas* initiate a set of conventions that are variously developed in later romances. Like the eternal lamp of Camille's tomb, these tombs could be—and, I will argue, were—understood to have been set up as an incitement and provocation for future texts.

There has been a certain amount of critical attention to the tombs in the *Roman d'Eneas* and, to a much lesser extent, to those in the *Roman de Troie*. Sarah Kay, for instance, reads the tombs of romance in light of hagiographical narratives and considerations of the sublime (Kay, 2001, pp. 216–258). Laura Ashe (2007, pp. 124–145) and Lee Patterson (1987, pp. 157–195) provide contrasting readings of the tombs in the *Eneas* in relation to Anglo-Norman historical identity and the *translatio studii and imperii* it claimed and aspired to. Christopher Baswell (2000, 2015) and Noah Guynn (2000) point to tombs as symbols of the text, noting their hermetic, rarefied,

and superlative qualities. Baswell articulates the capacity of these reflexive, ideal-ized spaces to showcase clerkly learning and ingenuity.[6] Guynn reads the tombs in the *Eneas* as attempts to seal the deviant 'Queer' body off from history, but sees this being undercut by the motif of the eternal flame, read as an allegory for non-procreative relationships.

The description of Pallas' tomb in the *Roman d'Eneas* includes a (literally) final motif which highlights a number of these themes, and paradoxically underscores both the impenetrability and the penetrability of the tomb:

> La tombe estoi alquetetes halte;
> Il ot du betumoi d'Afalte
> Al seeler la sepulture.
> Li betumoi a tel nature:
> La ou il est un po sechiez,
> Ja ne sera pui depeciez
> Ne mes que sole par une rien:
> Il n'est pas gent ne bel ne bien
> Que l'en le nont apertement
> S'a consoil non priveement. (*Eneas* ll. 6558–6567)[7]

> The tomb was quite high; it was sealed with bitumen, from the Asphalt Lake [the Dead Sea]. Bitumen has this property: When it has dried a little bit, it can never be cleft asunder, except only by one little thing. It is neither noble nor lovely nor good to mention this thing openly but only secretly, in private.

The author of the *Eneas* here seems to address the reader/audience in confidence, alluding to things that must only be spoken of in private. Bitumen, we under-stand, can be dissolved only by one little thing—inconsequential, hardly worth mentioning, « une rien » (*Eneas* l. 6564). Yet this 'rien' is so potent that the mere mention of its name openly (« apertement »: *Eneas* l. 6566) must be quadruply for-bidden in the name of courtesy, aesthetics, virtue, and modest discretion. As if swearing us to secrecy, the narrator's cautionary exhortations draw us into closer proximity and complicity—to consider the mysterious little (no)thing in conspirato-rial, ominous tones. These warnings against offensive openness impose constraint, and suggest that minds and mouths should be stoppered and sealed as tightly shut as the fluids coursing through Pallas' body, and as his tomb is sealed by Evander. At the very same time, the enigmatic emphasis on this mysterious agent of penetration and rupture implicates the reader—especially the clerkly reader—in the very destruction [/opening/excavation] its nameless singularity would seem to preclude. For if the poet is whispering to us in hushed tones, it is a stage whisper: a distinctly audible one calculated to entice our curiosity, at least as tempting as it is cautionary.

Ignited by means and in spite of passive, inanimate materials (text, corpse, tomb), this curiosity will remain unsatisfied within the bounds of the *Roman d'Eneas*, how-ever. The *Roman de Troie* reuses the trope for Achilles' tomb (marvelously held together by "strong bitumen and cement", « De fort betun e de ciment »: *Troie* l.

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[6] See also Baswell (1990, 1994, 1995) and Burgwinkle (2004).

[7] Unless stated otherwise, all translations into English are by the author of this contribution.

22,421[8]), but provides no further clarity. Only the poem's intertexts, then, may illuminate the implications of the riddling reference to bitumen here, and the kinds of readerly conjecture and shared frames of reference it activates.

Numerous classical and biblical sources, many of them summarized and synthesized by the enormously influential Isidore of Seville, testified to bitumen's marvelous and practical properties. A form of petroleum occurring naturally in the Dead Sea in Judea (Isidore XIII.xix.3–4: Barney et al., 2006; Lindsay, 1911), Tacitus describes it as "a dark fluid which […] swims on the surface" (*Historiae* V.6: Tacitus, 1931, p. 187; see Forbes, 1936, p. 31). Isidore (XVI.ii.1) describes how it would be collected by fishermen in skiffs. Buoyant, flammable, adhesive, hydrophobic, bitumen was sought-after and traded for a variety of uses ranging from engineering and construction, to medicinal, and to embalming. An ideal, almost impenetrable sealant for caulking ships (Strabo XVI.1.9), Galen (e.g. V.342 K) and Pliny the Elder (XXXV.51) also recommended it for sealing wounds and other medicinal purposes (Galen, 2011, pp. 56–57; Pliny, 1952, pp. 392–395; Strabo, 1930, pp. 206–207). Herodotus (I.179) tells of its use in enlarging the walls of Babylon (Herodotus, 1920, pp. 224–225), also related by Isidore (XV.i.4). Called mūmiyā (or 'mummy') in Arabic, Strabo (XVI.2.45) and Diodor (XIX.99.3) both mention its use in embalming (Diodor, 1954, p. 103; Strabo, 1930, pp. 296–297; see also Safrai, 1994, pp. 105–106). Recent gas chromatography-mass spectrometry analyses of Egyptian mummies from the Ptolemaic to Roman Periods (samples dating from the late fourth century BC to the fourth century AD) confirm its ever-growing importance after the Late Period (Clark et al., 2016; Maurer et al., 2002). The function of bitumen as an embalming agent would seem to make it a particularly fitting sealant for a tomb.

In the Hebrew Bible, references to bitumen (chemar חֵמָר or chamar חָמַר) are manifold, but in Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation (used throughout the medieval Latin West), there are only four explicit mentions (Genesis 6:14, 11:3, 14:10 and Exodus 2:3). All of these occur in the Old Testament, and each one constitutes a striking feature in stories of cataclysmic destruction, preservation, and fragile but enduring legacy. The first instance occurs in the words of God to Noah, instructing him to make himself an ark "[…] and line it with bitumen inside and out" (Genesis 6:14: "fac tibi arcam […] et bitumine linies intrinsecus et extrinsecus"). Noah and his passengers are thus saved from the catastrophic annihilation of all other life. With its powerful images of enclosure, mortality, and salvation, Noah's ark was a favorite motif of early Christian sepulchral imagery.[9] In the fourth and final instance (Exodus 2:3), the baby Moses—placed in a bitumen-lined

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[8] Constans (1907).

[9] For example, on late Roman marble sarcophagi in the Vatican's Museo Pio Cristiano (Sarcofago con scene bibliche, inv. no. 31472 and Sarcofago 'di Giona', c. AD 300, inv. no. 31448); on the sandstone sarcophagus with relief of Noah's ark in Trier (Sarkophag mit Relief der Arche Noah, AD 300, Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, inv. no. 1987,20); and on the so-called marble Theusebios Sarcophagus (Sog. Theusebios-Sarkophag, early fifth century AD, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. no. 17/61.)

basket—escapes widespread infant massacre. The use of bitumen in the construction of the ill-fated tower of Babel (Genesis 11:3) evokes ancient feats of ingenuity and their destruction, accompanied by irredeemably splintered linguistic unity. But perhaps the most patently relevant biblical reference to bitumen occurs in Genesis 14:10, where the legions of Sodom and Gomorrah fleeing the Battle of Siddim by the Dead Sea (the Lacus Asphaltus, referred to above in *Eneas* l. 6559) perish in pits of the viscous substance.

For the fatal, unmentionable 'little thing', we must look to Isidore (XI.i.141) and Pseudo-Hegesippus (IV.18), who tell us that the only substance which could dissolve bitumen was menstrual fluid.[10] Recent criticism (Ferguson, 2008, especially pp. 1–49; Guynn, 2000, 2007) has recognized the oppositional relationship between this substance, the integrity of Pallas' tomb, and the triumph of Trojan/Roman/Angevin lineage and procreation over the deviant, non-procreative relations represented by Dido, Pallas, and Camille. Whilst Guynn (2007, p. 70) notes that the reference to unspeakable things could also implicitly evoke sodomy, the close association of bitumen with both menstruation and sodomy is unmistakable in the poem's intertexts. In Pseudo-Hegesippus (IV.18) the solubility of bitumen is linked in textual sequence and metonymically through the Dead Sea with the "shameful crimes" ("flagitia") (Ussani, 1932, p. 271) of Sodom; in a comparable passage, Isidore notes of the Dead Sea:

> mare Salinarum dicitur, sive lacus Asphalti, id est bituminis […] usque ad viciniam Sodomorum. (Lindsay, 1911)

> called the Salt Sea, or Lake Asphalti, that is, 'of bitumen,' […] it stretches […] up to the neighborhood of Sodom. (Barney et al., 2006, p. 279)

The author of the *Eneas*, then, found in classical and biblical references to bitumen a substance which condensed associations of female procreative power and Sodom, anticipating the very accusations leveled at Eneas, first by Lavinia's mother, who calls him a 'sodomite' (*Eneas* ll. 8635–8637), and then by Lavinia herself (*Eneas* ll. 9182–9192). Bitumen thus emerges as a profoundly multivalent substance which comments poignantly and ironically on the rare and remarkable boy, and why he had to go.

Although scholars have argued that the tombs of the *Eneas* have the intended function of sealing off the Other from the historical narrative, they must also be recognized as functioning, paradoxically, in the opposite way, providing a shortcut to the world of the past very different from the serial progression of lineage and narrative. As Guynn says of the tombs of Pallas and Camille:

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[10] Pseudo-Hegesippus follows and expands on Josephus (*The Jewish War* IV.viii.4: Josephus, 1927, pp. 298–299) and Tacitus (*Historiae* V.6: Tacitus, 1931, pp. 186–187), both of whom mention the power of menstrual blood to dissolve bitumen (though Tacitus also ascribes this capacity to blood generally). Pliny the Elder, by contrast, notes the power of bitumen to dissolve coagulated blood and hasten menstruation (XXXV.51: Pliny, 1952, pp. 394–395).

> Both tombs are elaborately fortified to immobilize deviance in a seemingly indomitable, immovable literary architecture; and yet they are also adorned with a strikingly conflictual, volatile symbol: the eternal flame. The perpetuity of the flame initially suggests an ekphrastic, allegorical suspension—frozen movement, logocentric presence—but it cannot suppress the fluctuation of meaning intrinsic to all signs, including ekphrasis and allegory. (Guynn, 2000)

Yet it is not simply a matter of being open to multiple interpretations. These tombs of putatively historical figures are also left open to archaeology. Though they are described as being perfectly sealed off forever in a state of impenetrability, we are aware in advance that they are not impenetrable. Any twelfth-century reader of the *Eneas* who was also familiar with the work of the English chronicler William of Malmesbury would be aware from the outset that Pallas' tomb had been opened in the recent past. As William records near the conclusion of his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*:

> Tunc corpus Pallantis, filii Euandri, de quo Virgilius narrat, Romae repertum est illibatum, ingenti stuore omnium quod tot secula incorruptione sui superauit; quod ea sit natura conditorum corporum, ut carne tabescente cutis exterior neruos, nerui ossa contineant. Hiatus uulneris quod in medio pectore Turnus fecerat quattuor pedibus at semis mensuratum est. Epitaphium huiusmodi repertum:
> Filius Euandri pallas, quem lancea Turni
> Militis occidit more suo, iacet hic.
> […] Ardens lucerna ad caput inuenta arte mecanica, ut nullius flatus uiolentia, nullius liquoris aspergine ualerat extingui. Quod cum multi mirarentur, unus, ut simper aliqui sollertius ingenium in malis habent, stilo subtus flammam foramen fecit; ita introducto aere ignis euanuit. Corpus muro applicitum uasitate sui menium altitudinem uicit; sed procedentibus diebus, stillicidiis rorulentis infusam, communem mortalium corruptionem agnouit, cute solute et neruis fluentibus. (*Gesta Regum Anglorum* II.206)

> It was at that time that the body of Pallas son of Evander, of whom Virgil tells, was discovered intact in Rome. The way it had lasted for so many centuries incorrupt caused universal astonishment; for the nature of embalmed corpses is such that, while the flesh decays, the outer skin holds together the sinews, and the sinews hold together the bones. The great gaping wound made in his breast by Turnus measured four feet six inches by the rule. An epitaph was also found, that ran somewhat as follows: / Here Pallas lies, Evander's son; By Turnus' lance he was undone. / […] By his head a lamp was found burning, so artfully contrived that no violent blast of wind and no sprinkling of water could put it out. While many were wondering at this, one man, with the ingenious cunning some people always show when they are up to mischief, made a hole with a bodkin below the flame; and when he thus let in the air, the flame went out. The body was leant against the wall, and was so huge that it overtopped the battlements; but as time went on, and it absorbed the drops that came down like dew, it acknowledged the common law of our mortality, the skin gave way, and the sinews disintegrated. (William of Malmesbury, 1998, pp. 384–385)

William's description is noteworthy for a number of reasons. As in the *Eneas*, Virgil is explicitly cited, and also verified by the reference to the gaping chest wound inflicted by Turnus (e.g. *Aeneid* 11.40: "patens in pectore vulnus"). The whole passage is self-consciously artful and poetical, with numerous examples of flamboyant alliteration ("stilo subtus flammam foramen fecit; ita introducto aere ignis euanuit"). The passage also abounds with watery imagery, contextualizing and foreshadowing the body's fate when exposed to moisture, moving from a state of incorruption

("illibatum," literally "unspilled") to liquefaction ("fluentibus"). This aspect of the text in particular seems to have caught the eye of the *Eneas* author.[11]

In the *Eneas,* Pallas' tomb-description concludes with the closing up of his tomb:

> si fist li roys l'uis estouper
> que l'en n'i peüst mais entrer. (*Eneas* ll. 6590–6591)

> The king had the door blocked up,
> so that no one could ever enter it again.

Laura Ashe remarks that, "[p]reserved eternally, Pallas is also permanently cut off from the world" (Ashe, 2007, p. 137). Crucially, however, the *Eneas* author knows that Pallas is not permanently cut off from the world, and will not be preserved eternally. The detail that « jamais li cors ne maürroit/desi que eve i tocheroit » (*Eneas* ll. 6546–6547: "The body would never decay/As long as water did not touch it"), along with the further emphasis on the durability of the eternal lamp (*Eneas* ll. 6580–6581: « ja pui estointe ne sera,/ne nule foiz ne deffera »; "It could never be extinguished, nor ever undone"), seem designed to specifically recall William of Malmesbury's account of the discovery of the body, and thus to remind us of the body's eventual fate. Like the inscription in William's account, the inscription given in the poem tells us that Pallas was killed by Turnus. Both accounts emphasize the remarkable preservation of the body; both draw attention to the danger posed by water; and both draw attention to the miraculous ever-burning lamp. William's account of the discovery of Pallas' tomb is thus not only a source for the description in the *Eneas*, but an intertext (Guynn, 2007, p. 70) which the romance gestures to as a dramatic and intensely ironic sequel to its description of the tomb's construction. The unsealing of Pallas' tomb precedes its creation, and is inscribed into its very structure. The very terms in which the romance describes the efforts to preserve Pallas' body and seal it away for all eternity depend upon and archly remind us of the tomb's subsequent violation, and the disintegration of the body it contains.

3.3   The Tomb of Hector

A similar dialogue between real medieval archaeology and the tombs of literary romance is found in the epic romance *Roman de Troie*, the work of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, a chronicler and poet of the Norman court of Henry II. A dedication to the « riche dame de riche rei » (*Troie* l. 13,468)[12] has been understood as signifying Eleanor of Aquitaine in the period between her marriage to Henry Plantagenet in 1152 (Henry II as of 1154) and her imprisonment in 1173 (also the year of Benoît's

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[11] Although the tubes in Pallas' nostrils are not mentioned by William of Malmesbury, they feature in several twelfth-century accounts of the opening of his tomb, including the *Status Imperiii Judaici* (c. 1137–1147), which may have been an additional source for the *Eneas* author, or they may share a common source (see Patzuk-Russell, 2019; for the text see Hammer & Friedmann, 1946, pp. 58–60, with translation in Colavito, 2015).

[12] Constans (1906).

death) (Constans, 1912, pp. 189–190); the romance is generally dated by scholars c. 1160–1165. Benoît based his work on the two supposedly eyewitness accounts of the Trojan War provided by Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, yet the *Troie*'s lavish and remarkable tomb ekphrases, like those of the *Eneas*, have no classical source.[13] Instead, composed close on the heels of the *Eneas*, the *Troie* echoes the earlier romance in its descriptions of marvelous tombs. In this romance of antiquity, Patroklus' death and burial in a seamlessly sealed tomb closely echoes Pallas' in the *Eneas*.[14] Both beautiful young men are passionately loved and mourned by one of the protagonists (Eneas and Achilles); both Pallas and Patroklus are placed in sarcophagi of costly green stone; and both are perfectly preserved in sealed tombs. Although the description of Patroklus' tomb is comparatively spare, occupying only 16 lines (*Troie* ll. 10,383–10,398),[15] it initiates a series of descriptions of lavish tomb structures which punctuate the *Troie*. The tombs of the *Troie* also reflect on current events, specifically on Imperial and Anglo-Norman rivalries expressed in the tombs of saintly antecedents. The descriptions of the tombs of Hector and Achilles reprise the themes of remarkable craftsmanship, impossibly perfect preservation, and strangely amorous interpenetration that emerged in the *Eneas*. As in the *Eneas*, where Norman conceptions of history informed and enriched the power of the tomb descriptions, the tomb of Hector in particular resonates with Norman aspirations and ideas of lineage.

Finally, after much deliberation and after the accomplishment of the greatest feats of craftsmanship and ingenuity, the dead Hector sits on his sepulchral throne. In a manner that clearly recalls the embalming of Pallas in the *Eneas,* two slender tubes marvelously fashioned out of gold reach from precious vessels into his nostrils so that the powerful green balsam courses through his body.[16] His feet are also placed in this liquid, so that we might imagine him to be hooked up like a battery

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[13] Though the Trojan history of Dictys Cretensis features no examples of sepulchral ekphrasis, the text was itself the subject of a narrative of grave reopening, having been supposedly discovered in the author's tomb when it was revealed by an earthquake in the reign of Nero (see ní Mheallaigh 2016, pp. 45–46).

[14] In some respects Patroklus' entombment also resembles Camille's death and burial in her splendid tomb in the *Eneas*. In this context it is worth noting the set of conventions employed in the *Eneas* as set out by Petit in the introduction: "Each of the episodes devoted to the death of the hero (or the heroine) is integrated into the narrative in the same way. It is preceded by a truce, and is followed by a council at Laurente" (Petit, 1997, p. 14, my translation). What is particularly relevant to my study, as I will suggest below, is that, through repetition, the *Eneas* seems to establish a set of forms and conventions for its descendants to follow. The *Roman de Troie* consistently preserves these funerary patterns, as Sarah Kay has observed (Kay, 2001, pp. 233–234).

[15] Constans (1906).

[16] As Truitt (2015, pp. 104–105) notes, the embalming methods employed in *Eneas* and *Troie* in some ways resemble those used on medieval popes, including the insertion of preservative substances through the nostrils, though the intention in the latter case was to preserve the body for a matter of months, not for all eternity.

(Figs. 3.1 and 3.2).[17] In addition to this treatment, which fixes his body in statue-like preservation, an additional statue is also erected.

> De fin or fu resplendissant
> E a Hector si resemblant
> Que nule chose n'i failleit. (*Troie* ll. 16,789–16,791)[18]

> It was resplendent with fine gold
> and resembled Hector so much
> that nothing was wanting.

This golden statue brandishes its naked sword at the Greeks, in threatening defiance. The hero of Troy will be avenged on them one day.

> De la chaeire que direie ?
> Ja tant ne m'en porpensereie
> Qu'ele fust ja par mei retraite
> Quel ert ne coment esteit faite;
> Mais l'emperere d'Alemaigne,
> Al mien cuidier, e cil d'Espaigne,
> Ço vos puis dire senz mentir,
> Ne le porreient tel bastir. (*Troie* ll. 16,737–16,744)[19]

> Of the throne, what shall I say? I cannot imagine that I could ever describe it, nor how it was made; but the Emperor of Germany, in my opinion, or that of Spain—I can tell you this without lying—they could not build one like it.

The possible relationship between Hector's fictional tomb and real tombs is at once denied and ironically highlighted by the poet's declaration that neither the Emperor of Germany nor that of Spain could build one like it. In fact, the Emperor of Germany was at just this point in time concerning himself with a tomb very much like it, the tomb of Charlemagne. As will be discussed below, in 1165 Frederick Barbarossa had ordered the exhumation in Aachen of his predecessor Charlemagne, in preparation for his redeposition in a grander shrine.

It is unlikely that this would have escaped Benoît's notice. It is to him that we owe our knowledge of the German education of Empress Matilda (Tyler, 2017, pp. 357–358), and diplomatic correspondence between the courts during and after her lifetime is well-documented (Hollister, 1976, p. 221; Leyser, 1975). Whether or not the translation of Charlemagne's relics was in the forefront of Benoît's mind, he would certainly have been aware of political significance of Charlemagne's tomb, and of previous occasions on which it had been entered.

The description of Hector's tomb strikingly resembles the description of the opening of Charlemagne's tomb in the Palatine Chapel of Aachen Cathedral more

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[17] Manuscript depictions of Hector's tomb vary greatly, and many disregard the seated position of the preserved body (depicting instead a standing statue). Even these, as Buchthal has remarked, "all somehow fail to do justice to [Benoit's] description of that prodigious sepulchre" (Buchthal, 1961, p. 31), though the sixteenth-century example in Fig. 3.1 does convey the grand but anxious, almost-animate qualities of Hector on his throne.

[18] Constans (1907).

[19] Constans (1907).

Fig. 3.1 Hector's corpse enthroned with his feet in tubs of balsam (*Livre de la destruction de Troye, et la vraye hystoire de Eneas*, sixteenth century, ms. Français 22,554, fol. 119; © Bibliothèque nationale de France)
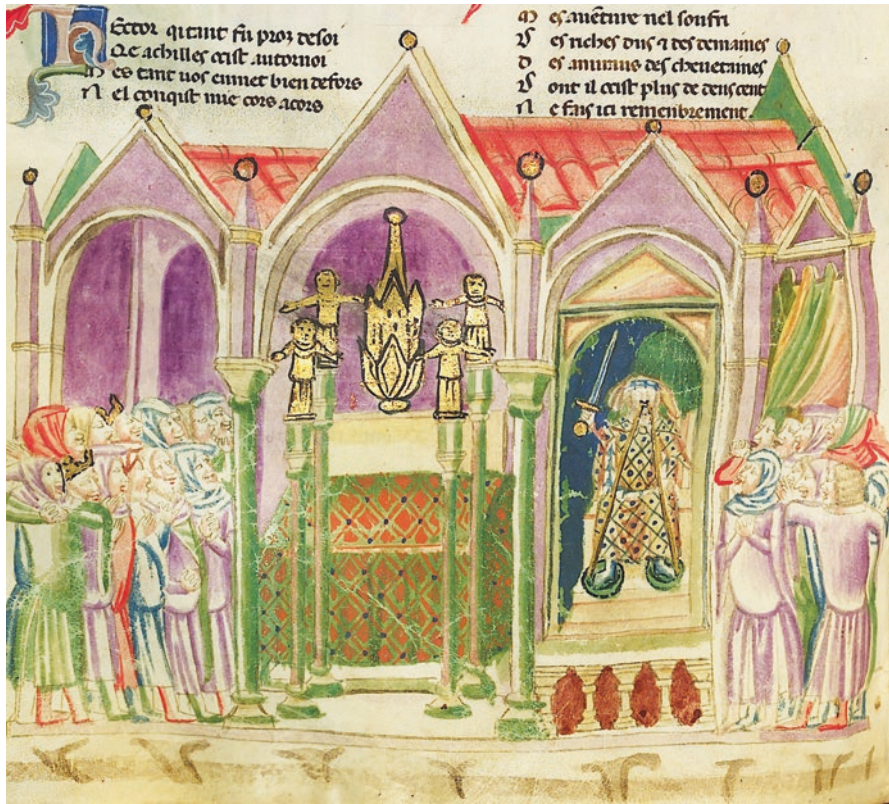
Fig. 3.2 Hector's corpse enthroned with his feet in tubs of balsam and tubes in his nose. This depiction featuring the tubes is rare (even unique?) (*Roman de Troie*, fourteenth century, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana MS fr. 17 (=230), fol. 131v. Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo – Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. Divieto di riproduzione)

than a century earlier, in the year 1000 (Fig. 3.3). The tomb was reportedly entered by the Emperor Otto III, accompanied by two bishops and Count Otto of Lomello, whose eye-witness account is recorded in the *Chronicon Novaliciense* (c. 1048) (Görich, 1998). Writing under Henry III, the second emperor of the Salian dynasty, the author of the *Chronicon Novaliciense* uses this anecdote to provide an almost corporeal link between the Salian, Ottonian, and Carolingian dynasties. The passage is short enough to quote in its entirety:

> Post multa itaque annorum curricula tertius Otto imperator veniens in regionem, ubi Caroli caro iure tumulata quiescebat, declinavit utique ad locum sepulture illius cum duobus episcopis et Ottone comite Laumellensi; ipse vero imperator fuit quartus. Narrabat autem idem comes hoc modo dicens: *Intravimus ergo ad Karolum. Non enim iacebat, ut mos est aliorum defunctorum corpora, sed in quandam cathedram ceu vivus residebat. Coronam auream erat coronatus, sceptrum cum mantonibus indutis tenens in manibus, a quibus iam ipse ungule perforando processerat. Erat autem supra se tugurium ex calce et marmoribus valde compositum. Quod ubi ad eum venimus, protinus in eum foramen frangendo fecimus.*

Fig. 3.3 The discovery of Charlemagne's tomb by Otto III on Pentecost, AD 1000. One of many nineteenth-century depictions of this scene, the fresco by Alfred Rethel (1847) knits together varying traditions, including that of the Persephone Sarcophagus (here depicted below Charlemagne's feet) (Coronation Hall, Aachen Town Hall, Germany; photo: F. Jungfleisch c. 1943, image file no. zi0010_0004 © Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Photothek)

> *At ubi ad eum ingressi sumus, odorem permaximum sentivimus. Adoravimus ergo eum statim poplitibus flexis ac ienua; statimque Otto imperator albis eum vestimentis induit, ungulasque incidit, et omnia deficientia circa eum reparavit. Nil vero ex artibus suis putrescendo adhuc defecerat, sed de sumitate nasui sui parum minus erat; quam ex auro ilico fecit restitui, abstraensque ab illius hore dentum unum, reaedificato tuguriolo abiit.* (*Chronicon Novaliciense* III.32: Pertz, 1846, pp. 55–56)

After the passage of many years the Emperor Otto III came into the district where the body of Charles was lying duly buried. He descended into the place of burial with two bishops and Otto, Count of Lomello; the Emperor himself completed the party of four. Now, the Count gave his version of what happened much as follows. 'We then came to Charles. He was not lying down, as is usual with the bodies of the dead, but sat on a sort of throne, as though he were alive. He was crowned with a golden crown; he held his scepter in his hands, and his hands were covered with gloves, through which his nails had forced a passage. Over him there was a sort of vault built, well fitted together of mortar and marble. When we came to the grave, we broke a hole into it and entered, and entering, we were aware of a very strong odor. At once we fell upon our knees and worshipped him, and the Emperor Otto clothed him in white garments, cut his nails and restored whatever was lacking in him. But corruption had not taken anything away from his limbs; only a little was lacking to the very tip of his nose. Otto had this restored in gold; he then took a single tooth from his mouth, and so built up the vault, and departed.'[20]

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[20] This translation was adapted by the author from that of A. J. Grant, *Early Lives of Charlemagne by Eginhard and the Monk of Saint Gall*, as quoted in Thorpe (1969, p. 187, n. 85).

Many similar details are found in the slightly earlier, Ottonian chronicle of Ademar of Chabannes, in which Charlemagne is also found bearing a sword and shield:

> sedens in aureo cathedra, intra arcuatam speluncam, infra basilicam Marie, coronatus corona ex auro et gemmis, tenens sceptrum et ensem ex auro purissimo, et ipsum corpus incorruptum inventum est. Quod levatum populis demonstratum est. (Ademar III.31: Adémar des Chabannes , 1897, p. 153)

> He was sitting on a golden throne in an arched crypt within the basilica of Mary, crowned with a crown of gold and gems and holding a scepter and sword of purest gold. The body itself was found uncorrupted. It was raised and shown to the people. (Callahan, 2008, p. 47)

Strikingly, Ademar's chronicle includes at an earlier point an account of Charlemagne's burial (II.25: Adémar des Chabannes 1897, p. 105) which carefully grants him the very grave goods which Ademar knows will be subsequently found in his tomb. Though he does not acknowledge it, Ademar is using his knowledge of the archaeological discovery to provide an authoritative account of the original burial. A similar imaginative leap is taken by the authors of the romances of antiquity, including Benoît.

The descriptions of Charlemagne's tomb in Ademar's chronicle and the *Chronicon Novaliciense* provide several points of comparison with Hector's tomb in the *Roman de Troie*. Both texts strikingly and exceptionally describe the figures as seated; both are heroic figures who would be claimed as ancestors of the reigning monarchs. In Ademar's account, Charlemagne bears a sword in his hand, just as Hector does. Both are associated with a powerful odor linked to their marvelous physical preservation (in Hector's case it is the odor of the embalming fluids, in Charlemagne's the odor of saintliness). Both have become curiously fused with precious physical substances, a detail which Sarah Kay reads in Hector's case as "confirming the sublime character of the preserved body" (Kay, 2001, p. 236), and which also anticipates the cyborgs of modern imagination.

Both the *Chronicon Novaliciense* and the romance make particular note of the structure[s] beneath which their figures are so meaningfully and regally enthroned. The *Chronicon Novaliciense* tells us that over Charlemagne's body there was a sort of vault built, well fitted together of mortar and marble, and it is through this vault that the two Ottos and two bishops, somewhat improbably, enter.[21] The account involves a curious and perhaps significant correspondence between the structure of the sepulcher and the miraculously preserved body it contains: just as entry into the tomb is accomplished by making a single hole in the vault (which is subsequently repaired), so the body of Charlemagne is found to be damaged in a single place near its top (the tip of the nose). Einhard's account of Charlemagne's tomb is also worth noting. Though it diverges from the description in the *Chronicon Novaliciense* on several counts, it too makes note of the splendid structure over the tomb:

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[21] The perfection of the joins is a recurring motif in descriptions of perfectly crafted objects: I would suggest that in this these objects are understood to rival naturally or divinely created objects which evidently have no joins or seams, or at least no imperfect ones.

arcusque supra tumulum deauratus cum imagine et titulo exstructus (*Vita Karoli Magni* 31: Einhard, 1911, p. 35).

a gilded arch was erected above his tomb with his image and an inscription (Einhard, 2010, p. 277).

In comparison, the canopy over Hector's fictional tomb equals and trumps accounts of Charlemagne's 'real' one. Described at length and in detail, Hector's tomb seems to combine and surpass the chronicle accounts of Charlemagne's structure. It is:

Un tabernacle precios,
Riche e estrange e merveillos. (*Troie* ll. 16,651–16,652)[22]

A precious tabernacle (canopy, enclosure), / rich and strange and marvelous.

We are told that three wise engineers, « trei sage engeigneor » (*Troie* l. 16,650), placed it « [t]res de devant l'autel major » right in front of the high altar (*Troie* l. 16,649). Of course, this was the place of honor for shrines and founders in medieval Europe which in the twelfth century was acquiring particular importance and sanctity in its association with the Eucharist. Possessing distinctly religious connotations, Hector's tomb is twice called a « civoire » (*Troie* ll. 16,707 and 16,715) and once a « tabernacle » (*Troie* l. 16,651). This terminology contrasts with Einhard's comparatively neutral "arcusque supra tumulum" and with the *Chronicon Novaliciense's* "tugurium" (most often a hovel or farmer's cottage as in the manuscripts of St. Gall). It is as if the terminology of Hector's tomb could compensate for the lack of sanctity of this pagan ancestor—sanctity which was however, intensely associated with Charlemagne. Hector's tomb is made (we are told) neither of lime nor of ivory, but of fine gold and precious stones. It shines and glitters so much that it resembles the starry sky in its brightness:

Mout par fu riche le civoire,
Qui ne fu de chauz ne d'ivoire,
Ainz fu de fin or e de pierres
Mout precioses e mout chieres.
D'iluec eissi grant clarté;
Plus resembla ciel estelé
Que nule rien que seit el mont.
Trop ont grant sen cil qui ço font
Sor le civoire ont fait maisiere
Tote marsice e tote entiere
De marbre de plusors colors:
Vint piez en dura la hautors.
Voute i ot faite d'or vousee. (*Troie* ll. 16,707–16,719)[23]

The tabernacle (canopy) was very rich / Which was neither of lime nor of ivory / It, too, was of fine gold and / Precious and costly stones / From thence issued such a brightness / It resembled the starry sky / More than anything in this world. / They had exceedingly good sense, who made it / On the tabernacle (canopy) they made the wall / Completely fitted together and completely / Of marble of many colors: / It stood 20 feet high. / There was a vault made of curved [vaulted] gold.

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[22] Constans (1907).

[23] Constans (1907).

As in the *Chronicon Novaliciense*, Hector's canopy also incorporates marble which is thoroughly fitted together (*Troie* l. 16,716). But surely the most striking, remarkable, and otherwise unheard-of similarity between the tombs of Hector and Charlemagne is the seated position of the corpses.[24]

3.4   Pallas, Again

The account recorded in the mid-eleventh-century *Chronicon Novaliciense* would have seemed freshly topical in the second half of the twelfth century, when the saintly status implied by Charlemagne's miraculous preservation would be officially confirmed. In 1165, Frederick Barbarossa both oversaw the *translatio* (translation) of Charlemagne's remains and arranged for his canonization by the antipope Paschal III.[25] His cult was being actively promoted; the ardor of devotion paid by pilgrims was fanned for political purposes. Divine and temporal power were invoked and made to seem focused upon the Palatine chapel at Aachen Cathedral: built by Charlemagne, adorned by Barbarossa. Whether or not these events were known to Benoît when he described the tomb of Hector, they soon filtered into the *milieu* of the romances of antiquity, when the exhumation of Charlemagne became associated, most surprisingly, with the discovery of the tomb of Pallas.

As I have argued, through repetition and amplification of sepulchral ekphrases, the *Eneas* seems to establish a set of forms and conventions for its descendants to follow. Perhaps the clearest example of a text responding to the *Eneas'* invitation is Heinrich von Veldeke's translation and reworking, the *Eneit* (Ettmüller, 1852; Schieb & Frings, 1964), probably produced between 1170 and 1188. Composed almost immediately upon the reception of the French *Eneas*, Heinrich's version testifies to some of the ways in which it was understood. While Heinrich von Veldeke invariably abbreviates and summarizes the tomb descriptions found in the *Eneas*, the tomb of Pallas includes a significant addition.

Without explicit reference to the account of William of Malmesbury, the French *Eneas* author silently triggers the audience's knowledge of the discovery and extinction of the ever-burning lamp in the tomb of Pallas and of the body it illuminates. The silence allows the lamp to burn in the imagination while at the same time creating a tension—the imaginary lamp flickers in the reader's/audience's mind with the memory of its own undoing, making the reader complicit with the mischievous

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[24] Charlemagne's seated burial has been much debated. While Ademar and the *Chronicon Novaliciense* state unambiguously that he was found enthroned, the earlier account of Thietmar of Merseburg has the body found "in solio regio" which could refer to either a throne or a sarcophagus (Thietmar von Merseburg IV.47: Holtzmann, 1935, pp. 185–186). The reading of "in solio" as enthroned is disputed by Beumann (1967) and Görich (1998, p. 393), but defended by Gabriele (2002, p. 117).

[25] See Kapolnasi (2007, pp. 22–23). His remains were translated again in 1215 to the shrine that still holds them today.

clerk. The flickering awareness of intersecting temporalities and narratives might seem conjectural, were it not for the testimony of Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneit*. Heinrich von Veldeke displays his own knowledge about the elaborate disposition of the tomb, the details such as the marvelous stone "bestêône" (asbestos) (*Eneit* l. 226.8) and the unstable temporalities of the ever-burning lamp it fuels. As if responding to the *Eneas* author's cues and prompts, Heinrich invites his readers to share his knowledge:

> Nû ir eʒ vernemen solt,
> als ich eʒ gelêret bin. (*Eneit* ll. 226.4–5)

> Now you should experience (/imagine) it, as I have been taught.

Narratorial interjections (*Eneit* ll. 226.28–29, 39 and 227.13) repeatedly bring us back to the moment of retelling and insist on its veracity even as Heinrich introduces his own innovations. We are invited to move from the moment of Pallas' burial to the moment of its rediscovery 'more than two thousand years' later over and over again. But whereas the French *Eneas* author silently relied on William of Malmesbury or a shared source for the discovery and un-doing of Pallas' tomb and its ever-burning lamp, Heinrich claims the discovery of Pallas' tomb for a still-reigning monarch, Frederick Barbarossa.

> eʒ werte unze an den tach,
> daʒ Pallas dâ wart funden.
> daʒ geschach sint in den stunden,
> daʒ der keiser Friderîch
> der lobebâre vorste rîch
> ze Rôme gewîhet wart
> nâch sîner êrsten hervart,
> die er fûr uber berge
> mit maneger halsberge
> ze Lankparten in daʒ lant.
> sint vant man den wîgant
> Pallantem in deme grabe,
> dâ wir haben gesaget abe.
> daʒ enis gelogen nieht.
> dannoch bran daʒ lieht,
> daʒ sîn vater dar in gab,
> dô geleget wart in daʒ grab
> der junge kunich Pallas. (*Eneit* ll. 226.16–33)

> It [the eternal flame] endured until that day on which Pallas was found there. This occurred later, at the time when Emperor Frederick [Barbarossa], the praiseworthy, powerful Prince was blessed in Rome (after embarking on his first journey forth which he led across the mountains with many armed soldiers to the land of Lombardy). After that the warrior, Pallas, was found in this grave/tomb of which we told. That is no lie. From then on the lamp burned, which his father gave him there where he lay in his tomb, the young king, Pallas.

The epic, foundational Eneas narrative is thus linked with the sacred, imperial anointment of the still-reigning emperor at whose children's courts Heinrich almost certainly served. The lyric, extra-narratorial aspects of ekphrasis are here linked with the almost-extra-temporal, nearly-eternal, ever-burning lamp:

> vil michel wunder daʒ was,
> daʒ daʒ lieht werde
> bran under der erde
> alsô manegen tach
> aldâ Pallas lach,
> daʒ wir wiʒʒen vor wâr,
> mêr dan zwei tûsent jâr,
> unze man Pallantem vant,
> und dannoch was unverbrant, (*Eneit* ll. 226.34–227.2)

> A very great wonder that was—that the light would continue burning under the earth for so
> many days as Pallas lay there, as we truly know, more than two thousand years, until Pallas
> was found there and it was still unexhausted.

Of course the mischievous clerk is removed from this narrative, and the extinction
of the lamp is attributed to a gust of wind:

> dô man die gruft engrûb
> und den stein ûf hûb
> und der wint drin slûch,
> daʒ is wiʒʒenlîch genûch,
> do erlasch eʒ von dem winde. (*Eneit* ll. 227.3–7)

> when the crypt was dug up/excavated, / and the stone was lifted up, / and the wind rushed
> in /—as is certain enough—/ it was blown out by the wind.

In these, the last two instances of a cluster of some twenty-four references to wind
in the *Eneit*, it seems as if the wind let in by Barbarossa's party, which quenches the
ever-burning flame, might finally appease the winds which hitherto have
plagued Eneas:

> ouch haʒʒent mich die winde,
> als ich eʒ wol bevinde, (*Eneit* ll. 209.37–38)

> Even the winds hate me, / as it seems to me.

Following this gust, though, the light seems to rekindle:

> man sach an dem ende
> den rouch und den aschen
> und den stein unverlaschen. (*Eneit* ll. 227.8–10)

> That is what was seen in the end: / the smoke and the ashes, / and the unextinguished stone.

Finally, as the tomb is sealed almost-forever, the poet/narrator brings to full circle
the interlinking events and narratives around Pallas' young, ancient, body:

> Dô der hêre Pallas
> alsô bestatet was,
> als man û sagete dâ bevor,
> dô wart vermûret daʒ tor
> mit kalke und mit steinen
> grôʒen unde kleinen,
> die veste wâren unde hart.
> sint daʒ der mortar troken wart,
> son mohte man sîn niht gebrechen.
> alsô hôrde ich sprechen,

daȝ eȝ wâr wâre. (*Eneit* ll. 227.11–21)

When the Lord Pallas / was disposed (appointed) in this way, / as you were told before, / then the door was walled up / with chalk and stones / great and small / which were secure and hard. / After the mortar was dry / it could not be broken / so I've heard tell / that this was true.

The historical Barbarossa did not, of course, visit Pallas' tomb (which, if it ever existed, was discovered and destroyed decades before his birth). However, as we have seen, he was present at the opening of the tomb of Charlemagne. The account in the *Eneit* of Barbarossa encountering Pallas is thus in some sense a fusion of the Malmesbury story that lies behind the *Eneas* and the Charlemagnic intertexts of the *Roman de Troie*. Grasping the accrued power of the images of tombs and tomb openings passed down from the *Eneas,* the *Troie,* and their classical and earlier medieval sources and intertexts, Heinrich adds his own element of contemporary political observation and relevance, in a way that seems to epitomize Imogen Tyler's description of how figures through repetition and translation "acquire accreted form and accrue affective value" (Tyler, 2008, p. 19). The verses describing the lamp repeatedly move back and forth between the moment of its placement in the tomb by Pallas' father, and the moment of its discovery, 2000 years later. In a kind of temporal flickering—appropriate to a lamp—each moment confirms and lends meaning and poignancy to the other. Like Ademar in his account of Charlemagne's burial, Heinrich is able to picture the precise details of Pallas' burial because of what was found in his tomb, and is able to give meaning to the discovery on the basis of what he knows about Pallas' burial. As Matthias Däumer observes, comparing this passage in *Eneit* to an episode in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec,* it is

as if the ontologies of the images, of the fictional and the real world, approached one another so closely that one could be witnessed by means of another.[26] (Däumer, 2014, p. 204)

3.5   Conclusion

The intertextual arc of romance/archaeology explored in this chapter challenges boundaries between materiality and textuality, and between 'history' and 'fiction'. Only by crossing boundaries with some of the same agility and imagination displayed by medieval romance authors can we begin to appreciate the richness and complexity of their achievement. Earlier scholarship was too often content to paint a picture of haphazard, 'scattered', unruly influences, to infer reductive authorial motivations, and to ignore the complex ways in which these intertextual and inter-subjective references might be received. Denied full recognition of their skill, intentionality, and difference, medieval reworkings—of classical subject matter and of classical rhetorical techniques like ekphrasis, used to describe architectural

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[26] „als hätten sich die Ontologien der Bilder-, der fiktiven und der realen Welt im performativen Akt so sehr einander angenähert, dass man die eine durch die andere beweisen könne."

features—were invariably found sadly lacking in comparison with classical precedents. But what if the communities producing and enjoying romances were more canny, complex, and self-aware? Scholars have begun to recognize that these and other precedents—far from being haphazardly plundered and patched together—could signal complex intertextual meanings to romance poets, patrons, and audiences.

Patrick J. Geary underlines the importance of taking into account the array of twelfth-century texts which shed light on past events, and of the range of practices, personal experiences, and artifacts which might feed into their creation:

> [W]e must understand the double process of memory systems—*Traditionsnotizen*, necrological entries, personal recollections, on the one hand; and the logical, theological, and circumstantial contexts within which these transmissions were reformed and reinterpreted. (Geary, 1994, p. 176)

Building on this, I have observed the ways in which motifs and memories are reproduced across the boundaries of language, genre and discipline, and of objects, texts, and senses. The insights of psychoanalysis remind us that such reproduction may be generated by the most intense drives and mortal anxieties. But if we are to fully recognize these motifs as reciprocal signifiers—not merely misreadings, misunderstandings and misrepresentations, nor mere devices in a jostling for authorial voice and power, but as readings, receptions, and responses on the one hand, and as stimuli, prompts, cues, and provocations on the other—then recognizing their transgeneric, transsensory, and intersubjective cues is crucial. Recent studies of twenty-first century media and social media offer an illuminating perspective on the accelerating, cumulative potential of such repetitions in instigating as well as expressing accumulated emotion. As Imogen Tyler (Tyler, 2008, p. 19, 2013, pp. 36–37, 165, and 210–212) suggests, it is precisely in the shifts between media that such affect is accrued, and attains not merely individual, but social and political power.

As Geary observes,

> Like the ghosts in […] the *Chronicon Novaliciense*, bits of the buried past refuse to stay buried. Texts, names, traditions, inscriptions, and objects continued to haunt the landscape of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, wraiths of earlier ages that fit uneasily into the constructed pasts of our memory specialists. (Geary, 1994, p. 180)

Geary's metaphor hovers between the supernatural (ghosts and wraiths) and the archaeological (burial and exhumation); and although the 'memory specialism' of archaeology did not exist in the Middle Ages, it may offer the best description of what is going on in these romance texts. Although they have gone unnoticed by most literary scholars, the methods I ascribe to medieval writers in this chapter—studying accounts of recent tomb openings and exhumations, and using these accounts to imaginatively recreate the original circumstances of interment—will be familiar to modern archaeologists. Both chroniclers like Ademar and the authors of the 'romans d'antiquités' employ reports of mortuary excavation and encounters with human remains to reconstruct the distant past and the lives of the long dead. Funerary spaces, marvelously preserved bodies, and artifacts offer them a means of moving restlessly yet purposefully between the ancient past and the medieval

present, using each to interpret and give meaning to the other. Even as they acknowledge the extinguishing of the eternal flame, they use it to illuminate the darkness of antiquity.

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Chapter 4
Anachronic Entanglements: Archaeological Traces and the Event in *Beowulf*

Andrew James Johnston

4.1 Introduction

Beowulf can boast an abundance of traces. Indeed, one might even argue that the trace constitutes the poem's single most important trope. The text repeatedly draws attention to traces in a literal sense, especially bloody traces: for instance, the bloody trail Grendel leaves behind as he returns to the mere after losing not only the fight against the poem's eponymous hero, but a whole arm with his shoulder attached to it in the process. In the same vein, Grendel's mother leaves bloody traces after her night-time attack on the royal hall of Heorot, where she rips off the Danish councilor Æschere's head and takes it with her, only to abandon it at the edge of the lake.

> Lastas wæron
> æfter waldswaþum   wide gesyne,
> gang ofer grundas,   [þær] gegnum for
> ofer myrcan mor,   magoþegna bær
> þone selestan   sawolleasne
> þara þe mid Hroðgare   ham eahtode. (*Beowulf* ll. 1402b–1407b)[1]

> The traces were seen wide along the forest paths where she had gone over the ground, gone forward over the dark moor, she bore away the lifeless body of the best of the retainers who watched over the residence with Hrothgar.

It is precisely these traces that later lead Beowulf to her underwater cave. But this is by no means all. Arguably, the trace assumes an importance unparalleled by any of the poem's other symbolic concepts, especially if one is prepared to accept a more

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[1] All quotations from *Beowulf* are taken from Fulk et al. (2008). All translations are the author's, unless stated otherwise.

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metaphorical notion of the trace. Thus, Æschere's head—the highly significant and entirely physical trace of a man now visibly dead—perfectly encapsulates the theme of this paper, i.e. the manifold ways in which material artifacts in medieval literature possess a capacity for shaping meanings and events, the ways in which they actually come to embody these events.

4.2 *Beowulf* and the Traces of Archaeology

There are moments when one feels that *Beowulf*, the Old English epic poem, has a particularly trace-like character itself. Surviving in a single tenth-century manuscript (Cotton MS Vitellius A XV) that nearly perished when the Cotton library went up in flames in 1731, the poem is set in a sixth-century Scandinavian past that would have been almost as archaic and distant to its tenth-century English manuscript audience as it is to its twenty-first century readers. The epic tells the story of its eponymous hero in two parts divided by a gap of 50 years. In what critics have identified as the first part, the protagonist, a Geatish warrior-aristocrat from what is now southern Sweden, travels to Denmark to rid King Hrothgar of an evil monster, Grendel, who is harassing his court. After having successfully dispatched Grendel in the king's great hall, Beowulf must face the monster's mother who has killed a prominent Dane in an act of revenge. He seeks her out in her underwater cave and, with some difficulty, manages to kill her. The second part of the epic takes place in the land of Geats, where the now ancient Beowulf has been king for five decades. When his kingdom is attacked by a dragon, Beowulf confronts the dragon and kills it, but is himself mortally wounded in the process.

    To some extent, the remarkable prominence of the trace in *Beowulf* has to do with the supremely archaeological nature of Beowulfian tropes and aesthetics in general. I do not, of course, use the term 'archaeological' to mean the modern scholarly and scientific approach to historical materiality. What I mean is a mode of approach to and conceptualization of the past that relies heavily on the symbolic uses of material remains. In *Beowulf*, ruins, swords, cups, necklaces and all manner of objects from the past are frequently mentioned, and in a few significant instances they are even discussed at length. The objects in question often bear particular physical traces of the past or are themselves presented as traces of the past. As traces, they may trigger acts of reading and interpretation. As traces, they often draw attention to the flimsiness of our knowledge of the past, since they are constantly under threat. They are always in danger of diminishing or else are already in the process of vanishing. This calls to mind the way in which Jacques Derrida has understood the trace, namely, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's words, as the "mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present" (Spivak 1974/1997, p. xvii). As traces, moreover, these objects encapsulate particular forms of temporal experience, because their very presence gestures not only towards the past, but also towards the future as the 'not yet present.'

This specifically archaeological nature of *Beowulf*'s engagement with the past is part of a larger pattern. As scholars have remarked again and again, the poem itself can be seen as a complex and sophisticated meditation on the nature of the past and the experience of history. Roy Liuzza observes:

> *Beowulf* is a profoundly retrospective poem: when we look back towards it, we find it too looking back to a vanished age, for all we know seeking the same things we are hoping it will provide. (Liuzza, 2005, p. 92)

And in a similar vein, Eileen A. Joy and Mary K. Ramsey have assessed the poem's particular sense of history as follows:

> *Beowulf* does not make sense of the past so much as it calls the supposed coherence of the past […] into question. (Joy & Ramsey, 2006, p. xxxiv)

In the space allotted to me here, I will attempt to provide a reading of traces—and especially of archaeological traces—in *Beowulf* that shows how the epic deals with and makes use of the notion of an always-already absent presence not in the singular, but in the plural. I shall attempt to investigate how, through negotiating the notion of the trace, the epic produces a palimpsestic interplay between various levels and layers of absence-cum-presence—layers that are imagined, however, in very material terms. Jonathan Gil Harris has employed the concept of the palimpsest to denote "a complex, polychronic assemblage of material agents" (Harris, 2009, p. 17). This idea of temporality, I argue, is very similar to the archaeological notion of temporality we encounter in *Beowulf*. In a second step, I wish to trace the various notions of history that this interplay contributes to generating. In particular, this article is interested in the ways in which, within the poem, the network of traces associated with a given object may, in fact, help to constitute a specific concept of the historical event. In *Beowulf*, I contend, a historical event is characterized as such through the particular density and complexity of the entangled traces that mark it in a manner that resembles what Carolyn Dinshaw has called "multiple temporalities" (Dinshaw, 2007, p. 4). The epic, I argue, conceives of an event in terms of a node that binds together a multiplicity of traces, and hence, a multiplicity of entangled temporalities. A multiplicity of historical perspective appears to be woven into the very fabric of the text, since in Gail Owen-Crocker's words, a

> late Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Viking poet is invoking, in flashes, a culture which existed three centuries earlier, in order to tell a fictional story which incorporates real historical material over a century older. (Owen-Crocker, 2009, p. 123)

But let us first briefly remind ourselves of the fundamentally archaeological nature of *Beowulf* as a whole. The poem's landscapes are strewn with debris from ancient pasts, such as the Roman road leading up to the royal hall of Heorot—"stræt wæs stanfah" (l. 320a), "the road was paved with stones"—the tessellated and thus apparently pre-Germanic floor, the *fagne flor* (l. 725), gracing that same building (Lerer, 2005), or the stone arches, the *stanbogan* (l. 2545), that support the Dragon's lair. Emily V. Thornbury has suggested convincingly that the stone arches in the Dragon's lair—twice referred to as *enta geweorc* (ll. 2717 and 2774)—are deliberate allusions to a specifically Roman past, reinforced as they are through another

reference to Roman culture, the *segn eallgylden* (l. 2767), whose Romanness has persuasively been argued on etymological grounds (Thornbury, 2000).[2] On top of all these architectural features, we encounter a considerable range of smaller artifacts, sometimes in decrepit or fragmentary form, but just as frequently in what appears to be a state of perfect preservation. It is these objects in particular—the ones apparently untainted by age and decay—that confirm a sense of the past as a constant, living presence in *Beowulf*'s fictional world. In fact, a detail that is worthy of note in this context is that the poem makes repeated reference to the necessity of polishing precious objects in order to preserve their shine and prevent them from rusting: as the materiality of the past is maintained in all its sensuous luster, history is virtually kept alive. Encapsulated in beautifully shiny and glinting metal artifacts, this past—and the emphasis here is on *this* past—appears not to come in the form of a specter that remains irrecoverable even as it haunts the present. Instead, it presents itself as a phenomenon that is materially anchored in a specific kind of historical experience—a historical experience whose very materiality promises to keep the past present. The reasons why the past should be kept present are shown to be manifold: ancient heirlooms, for instance, lend legitimacy to their owners in the present, and as soon as these heirlooms are exchanged as gifts, they create powerful bonds of loyalty and obligation. In some instances, however, they may also be capable of spelling doom for their owners.

In the poem, the fictional culture's material heritage thus consistently claims a contemporary currency, one that permits the objects involved to establish links to tradition, allowing them to play a role in the present and to participate in propelling the action further into the future. To a certain extent, this is what John M. Hill has in mind when he says that the epic conceives of

> objects and of social relationships as having identity through time, essentially as being what they are only in virtue of their entire history or, if applicable, of their cycle. (Hill, 1995, p. 41)

Whereas Hill sees the poet establishing "seamlessly […] a basic continuity with that past" (Hill, 1995, p. 40), the perspective favored here focuses less on continuity than on the multiplicity and plurality not only of the pasts involved, but of the temporalities constructed by the text. In the purely material existence of the artifacts that matter in *Beowulf*, we witness, therefore, a complex economy of temporalities through which an object must be understood not merely as a thing to be transmitted in time, but as a thing that actually transmits time itself, that makes temporality available for cultural and political appropriation. Hence, the material object from the past is, in fact, located at a nexus of entangled temporalities and possesses something close to historical agency of its own. Due to its 'anachronic' character, the ancient artifact simultaneously cuts through levels of time and binds them together. The term 'anachronic' is used by Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood to describe the ability of a work of art to create temporalities of its own, to "hold

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[2] A comprehensive analysis of the various ways in which Anglo-Saxon poetry was capable of deploying the metaphor *enta geweorc* is to be found in Garner (2011, pp. 112–168). For a recent discussion on the way this metaphor works within *Beowulf* see Neidorf (2019).

incompatible models in suspension", to "'fetch' a past, create a past, perhaps even fetch the future" (Nagel & Wood, 2010, p. 18). This is something that appears to be true of the archaeological objects in *Beowulf*, the overwhelming majority of which are described as possessing the status of sophisticated aesthetic artifacts. The epic imagines the artifact's particular power to reside in its capacity to become charged with temporality and also to pass on that charge, linking past, present, and future—often in unexpected ways. In the words of Nagel and Wood:

> No device more effectively generates the effect of a doubling or bending back of time than the work of art, a strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural. The artwork is made or designed by an individual or by a group of individuals at some moment, but it also points away from that moment, backward to a remote ancestral origin, perhaps, or to a prior arte-fact, or to an origin outside of time, in divinity. At the same time, it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a future event. The work of art is a message whose sender and destination are constantly shifting. (Nagel & Wood, 2010, p. 9)

While Nagel and Wood developed their ideas in the context of the early modern work of art, archaeological theorists like Yannis Hamilakis have developed similar ideas by adopting the notion of the 'assemblage' with its many different forms of interpenetration between humans and the material world, focusing especially on the multitemporal implications of these diverse interrelationships. In Hamilakis's view, "multitemporality" (Hamilakis, 2017, p. 174) is marked by the

> commingling and the contingent co-presence of diverse temporal moments; this is a multi-plicity of times, of various pasts and various presents, but also a multiplicity of temporal modalities: geological times, archaeological/historical times, human experiential times, non-human animal experiential times. (Hamilakis, 2017, p. 173)

It is this entanglement not only of different temporalities, but also of what Hamilakis calls different 'temporal modalities' that constitutes the generative and transformative dimension of the assemblage, a dimension that produces new futures.

One such object in *Beowulf* that appears to be producing a future—grim and futile though that future may look—is the famous necklace Beowulf receives from the Danish Queen Wealhtheow. Beowulf hands it on to his own king, Hygelac, who will wear it on his ill-fated expedition against the Frisians. In this case, too, we witness a past being kept alive, though we cannot always be sure what kind of past it is—the poem does not spell it out—that remains in the present. At the end of the day, the notion of the specter that haunts the present is never far away, even as it seems to be outshone by the brightness of precious metals, the brilliance of spar-kling jewels and the seductive sheen of glittering gold surfaces.

At the same time, not all of *Beowulf*'s material objects participate fully in the poem's preferred temporal economies. Some of the artifacts mentioned apparently operate in clear defiance of any notion of circulation. These objects refuse to become absorbed into the endless reciprocities of gift-giving and, consequently, they avoid being drawn into the ambivalent dynamics of the treasure-laden future-perfect of inheritance.

4.3   The Sword as Trace

Paradoxically, it is the very object in the epic that possesses the highest and most venerable degree of antiquity that appears also to be the one most aggressively bent on remaining outside the circulation of ancient heirlooms. The artifact in question is the "ealdsweord eotenisc" (l. 1558), the 'ancient giant sword', that Beowulf spots in the nick of time, just as he appears to be losing his fight against Grendel's mother. At the precise moment when she seems to be gaining the upper hand, Beowulf espies the weapon glinting in the semi-darkness of the cave. It is this monstrous sword—monstrous in terms both of its size and weight and of its origin, forged as it was by giants—that saves the hero's life. He pulls it from what seems to be a heap of armor and kills Grendel's mother, moving on, for good measure, to decapitating the dead Grendel lying in the underwater cave. But then something unexpected happens: the sword's blade melts and the weapon becomes unfit for further use. All that is left is the sword's hilt. On his return from the cave, Beowulf presents the hilt to Hrothgar, who merely stares at it. Ultimately, his response remains unreadable, though it is quite possible to assume that the king's extreme verbal economy—he does not comment on the sword at all—represents little more than stupefaction. We, the readers, are informed that the sword hilt bears an inscription telling the story of the giants destroyed by the Flood. Hence, the reason for Hrothgar's bewilderment may, in fact, be very simple: the text inscribed refers to an event, the Flood, that must, to all intents and purposes, be unknown to the pagan Danish king. Adding an intriguing perspective, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has suggested that the Flood in question need not have been the one that necessitated the construction of Noah's Ark. The letting of Ymir's blood by the Old Norse gods, which led to the drowning of all the giants save Bergelmir and his wife, might serve as an alternative explanation. Given the cyclical structure of Old Norse mythical history, in terms of periodization, the effects of this deluge would not have been quite as impressive as those of the biblical Flood (Cohen, 2006, p. 366).[3] But since the epic as a whole insists on a more general biblical frame of reference, it is probably safer to assume that, here, we are dealing with the biblical Flood, after all.

In all probability, the language in which that text on the sword hilt is written is equally strange to Hrothgar.[4] And we are possibly even meant to assume that the very medium this message is conveyed in—that is, script—is just as unfamiliar to Hrothgar, or at least, that he does not recognize that the engravings on the hilt do,

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[3] Originally published in Cohen (1999, pp. 1–28).

[4] The language and lettering on the sword have sparked some controversy. While H. R. E. Davidson considered the inscription to be runic—an opinion shared by a large majority of subsequent scholarship (Davidson, 1962, pp. 137–138), Christine Fell has suggested that the letters on the sword ought to be understood as Latin script (Fell, 1995). Fred C. Robinson has rejected this view, arguing that runes are the one and only possible interpretation (Robinson, 1999, p. 18). In his graphic novel *Beowulf*, the artist Gareth Hinds has highlighted the problems surrounding the inscription by depicting it as cuneiform (Hinds, 1999, no pagination).

indeed, constitute some form of lettering.[5] Consequently, Hrothgar remains silent about the object that has been placed in his hands.[6]

It seems only appropriate that, as a weapon, the sword should become useless immediately after having served in the killing of Grendel's mother and in the decapitation of her son. As an object from biblical history, it fulfils an entirely fitting purpose in ridding the earth of God's monstrous enemies, the kin of Cain, "Caines cynne" (l. 107): Grendel (and his mother) (Fig. 4.1). But having wreaked the execution required, the sword refuses to become involved in the never-ending cycles of gift-giving that constitute the economic system of the poem's fictional Germanic society. Those cycles of gift-giving encapsulate the ethics of reciprocity that dominates *Beowulf*'s system of morality, and they encapsulate, moreover, the manner in which a predominantly violent past is not only appropriated by the present, but also continues to haunt that present. By switching to a 'self-destruct mode', the giant sword essentially defies the circularity of pagan history and opts instead for a notion of temporality one might choose to associate with Christian teleology.[7]

What has just been referred to as the giant sword's 'self-destruct mode', directs our attention to this paper's central topic, that is, to the special role that traces play within *Beowulf*'s performative negotiations of complex notions of history. After all, it is through the melting of its blade, that the giant sword moves from one object category to another; in other words, it changes from the category of ancient, but

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[5] Even the exact nature of the representation is in doubt. Michael Near assumes that the description of the sword consists of two parts, the first of which contains a visual representation of the Flood while only the second is constituted by runic lettering (Near, 1993, pp. 320–332). Near's reasoning is based on syntactic evidence; evidence disputed by Seth Lerer who interprets the 'swa' linking the two passages as one that establishes a relation of sameness between them and not, as Near posits, one of difference (Lerer, 1991, p. 171). The German scholar Haiko Wandhoff has read the description of the script in the context of the tradition of ekphrasis and thus assumes that what we encounter is a deliberate depiction of script that transforms into a visual impression (Wandhoff, 2003, p. 18). Annina Seiler has recently developed an interesting argument which suggests that our understanding of Hrothgar's response to the inscription is colored by too narrow and too modern an approach to reading as a cultural practice. She argues that for the purpose of interpreting medieval acts of reading the visual and magical qualities of script need to be taken into account. Fascinating as this argument is, it does not actually explain the huge gulf that exists between Hrothgar's words and the biblical story inscribed on the sword hilt, nor does Seiler tell us exactly which visual and magical properties of the sword hilt prompt Hrothgar's speech (Seiler, 2016).

[6] James Paz offers an intriguing comment on this scene—one which he admits to be entirely speculative: Paz argues that Æschere's being singled out for revenge by Grendel's mother could be of special significance here, since the counsellor is described in terms that seem to emphasize his capacities as a reader of texts and an interpreter of mysteries. Hrothgar calls him "min runwita ond min rædbora" (l. 1325), "my rune-knower and advice-bearer." Without his hermeneutic expert, Hrothgar must remain ignorant of the sword's message (Paz, 2017, pp. 37–39).

[7] Allen J. Frantzen has proposed a different way in which the Giant sword contributes to complicating the poem's temporalities. Rather than casting Beowulf in the role of a hero who wreaks God's vengeance on Cain's descendants and thereby effectively brings the biblical narrative to its ultimate conclusion, Frantzen argues that the presence of the sword might, in fact, suggest that the Flood never achieved its purpose. According to this reading, Beowulf's killing of Grendel and his mother would not show us a teleological history drawing to its logical close, but rather the initial stages of a new cycle of violence pointing into the future (Frantzen, 1990, p. 188).
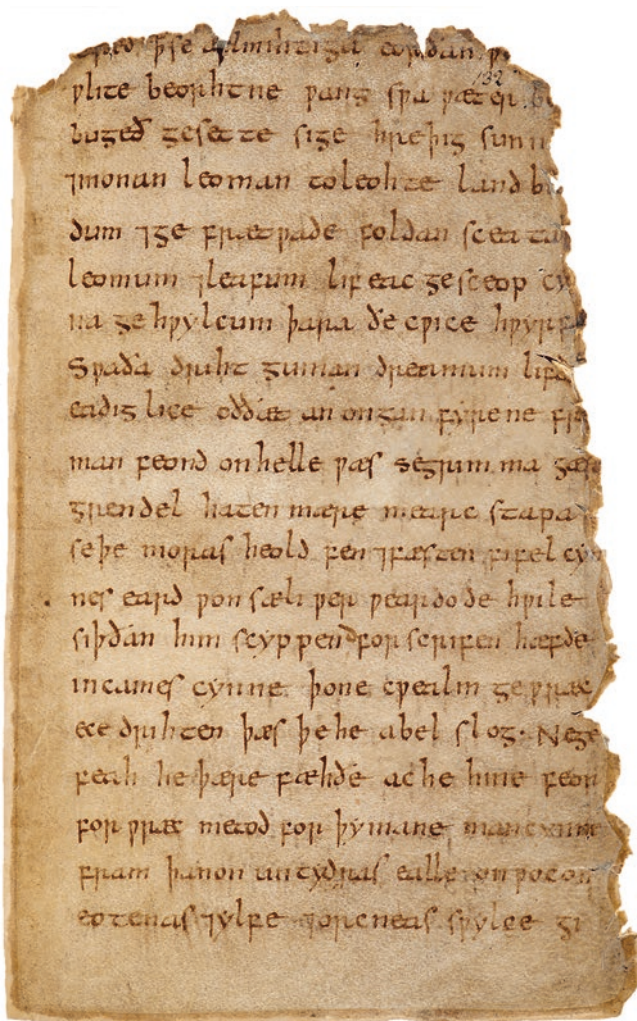
Fig. 4.1 *Beowulf* refers to Grendel as Cain's descendant ("in Caines cynne", line 6 from below) (Cotton MS Vitellius A XV, f. 134r, The British Library, UK)

perfectly preserved historical artifact to that of a mere archaeological fragment. As it does so, the sword considerably increases its trace-like character. As its blade vanishes before our very eyes, the sword as object acquires that sense of an absent presence so characteristic of the trace. In purely material terms, more than three quarters of the sword are gone once the blade has melted away. Indeed, what has disappeared is that part of the weapon which most obviously embodies the essence of what one might, for lack of a better term, refer to as its 'swordness'.

As far as actual archaeological evidence is concerned, swords without blades are quite a common feature in Anglo-Saxon treasure hoards. The Staffordshire Hoard

Fig. 4.2 Twelve items from the Staffordshire Hoard: gold strip with Latin inscription; helmet cheek piece; folded gold mount of two eagles grasping a fish; gold hilt plate with zoomorphic decoration; gold and garnet object with interlace animal panels (probably from a headdress); gold sword hilt fitting with inlay of cloisonné garnet (see also right); gold and garnet sword pyramid; gold and garnet sword button; gold, garnet, and glass sword pyramid; gold horse head terminal; Millefiori glass stud (probably part of the same headdress); folded panel from gold great cross (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, UK; photos: D. Rowan and D. Buxton, Creative Commons license CC BY 2.0)

(Fern et al., 2019) (Fig. 4.2), for instance, as James Paz reminds us, "turned up an extraordinary quantity of pommel caps and hilt plates—but no blades" (Paz, 2017, p. 50). Both early Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian graves frequently contained magnificent sword hilts richly decorated with patterns of interwoven serpents and often bearing runic inscriptions revealing the owners' names, but without the blades themselves which may have been kept "for another generation" (Webster, 1998, p. 192). In a more recent discussion of the Staffordshire Hoard, Leslie Webster explains that as opposed to some typical Scandinavian hoards containing bladeless swords, there is no indication of a ritual context for the Staffordshire Hoard. It seems to have been buried in a hurry for purely pragmatic reasons and the absence of objects associated with women points to a specifically military context (Webster, 2016, pp. 26–30).

Thus, without its blade, the sword effectively ceases to be a sword and becomes a mere trace of a sword. The sword hilt still testifies to the sword's former purpose, it bears and conveys the memory of the blade now vanished and, hence, of the events this sword may have been involved in. But the blade has become an undeniably absent presence. This sense of the absent presence is further reinforced by the narrative written on the hilt, the story of the giants and their destruction. They, too, have vanished, but the splendid artifact wrought by their hands has not—or rather: not entirely. What we witness is a complex, palimpsestic layering of history on the sword hilt. This layering begins with the odd anachronism of the hilt's depiction of a narrative of the Flood, of that very event in history that supposedly eradicated the sword's actual makers, an anachronism that, by extension, may in fact turn both Grendel and his mother into anachronisms, too. If they belong to the race of giants then they, too, should have been dead long ago. Their survival would thus be flying in the face of history, or, at the very least: in the face of Christian teleology.

So, while the destruction of the giants *as a race* is inscribed on the sword in written form, the destruction of the two individual monsters, Grendel and his mother, is inscribed into the sword as the material trace of a historical event. After all, it is the act of the killing of mother and son itself that destroys the sword by causing the blade to melt. The hilt is, therefore, a material trace not simply of the sword itself, but of the historical event of the destruction of the giants. Beowulf's slaying of the two monstrous creatures inscribes itself into the sword physically just as the story of the giant-kin as a whole was originally inscribed into the hilt in merely symbolic and linguistic form. Thus, doubly inscribed, the sword bears traces and is itself a trace of two different yet related historical events. The weapon proves to be loaded with a double charge of history as it both physically participates in, and materially signifies, an event. The archaeological object possesses a form of material continuity with the events it represents through written language.

4.4   The Dragon's Treasure

Such a sense of a historical overload is by no means confined to the giant sword. There is, at the very least, one other scene, or sequence of scenes, in *Beowulf*, which contains a similar phenomenon. This scene occurs roughly 50 years later, when Beowulf, now king of the Geats, must face the greatest challenge of his reign, the challenge that will seal not only his own fate but that of his kingdom as well: the Dragon.

The Dragon, we must remember, is roused by a Slave stealing a cup from his hoard. Responding to the theft, the Dragon, who had been sleeping on his vast treasure for 300 years, awakens and seeks revenge for the damage done to his treasure. Dragons live in barrows and tend to be fascinated by treasure, as *Maxims II* suggests:

> Draca sceal on hlæwe,
> frod, frætwum wlanc. (*Maxims II*, pp. 55–57, ll. 26–27)

> The dragon shall dwell in a barrow, / Old and treasure-proud.[8]

But how do they acquire their monstrous wealth in the first place? In *Beowulf*'s case, the Dragon had simply happened upon it by chance. A lucky find led him to an unguarded treasure, the wealth of a former civilization long gone. The treasure had been hidden by a nameless character referred to in *Beowulf*-criticism as the "Last Survivor", the last representative of a vanished nation. The degree to which that nation has in fact been obliterated is emphasized by their lack of a name. The narrator makes no mention of who they might have been or what they might have done. What matters is merely that they may have been pagan—though this is something we are not actually told—that they became extinct due to warfare and that they left behind a hidden treasure, apparently waiting for a Dragon to claim and guard it.

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[8] Translation Williamson (2017).

When the Dragon strikes against the Geatish kingdom, Beowulf seems to feel a personal responsibility for the Slave's actions—a responsibility hard to understand—and assumes that he might have offended God through the breaking of an "ealde riht" (l. 2330), an ancient law. If Beowulf has, indeed, broken an ancient law, then it may well have been an ancient pagan law, but we cannot, ultimately, be sure. Once again the poem seems enigmatically to fuse the pagan and the Christian in a manner that makes it difficult for us to disentangle the two strands. What does become clear, however, is that the *ealde riht* has something to do with the treasure and, in all probability, with its original owners now perished. The words spoken by the Last Survivor as he buries the treasure do not, however, suggest an actual curse, but rather the supreme melancholy of the demise of an entire nation:

> Heald þu nu, hruse, nu hæleð ne m(*o*)stan,
> eorla æhte. (*Beowulf* ll. 2247–2248a)

> Hold now, you earth, now that men may not, / the possession of warriors.

At the end of the day, it does not even seem to be relevant whether the treasure is cursed or not.[9] When Beowulf refers to his having potentially broken an *ealde riht*, he is not providing objective information on the treasure—which he would have been very unlikely to possess in any case. He is speculating on the reasons for his own nation's misfortunes. Yet precisely because his words do not provide a reliable commentary on what has actually happened, but give us insight merely into his own frame of mind, do they tell us something important. Beowulf assumes that he himself has broken an ancient law. From Beowulf's point of view, the treasure is thus revealed as something from the past that has power over the present and potentially even over the future. While the treasure may be a thing of the past, it is clear that that past has not yet departed. In this sense, the treasure displays a particular form of agency, since it exerts influence on the present and the future. But that is by no means all. We must remember that the treasure changes hands, and part of it, the fateful cup, changes hands more than once. The Dragon takes possession of the hoard after literally finding the door to the hiding place open:

> Hordwynne fond
> eald uhtsceaða   opene standan,
> se ðe byrnende   biorgas seceð,
> nacod niðdraca,   nihtes fleogeð
> fyre befangen; (*Beowulf* ll. 2270b–2274a)

> The ancient nocturnal predator found the delightful treasure standing open, he who burning seeks barrows, the smooth malicious dragon, who flies at night enveloped in fire;

This turn of events is truly remarkable because at this point in the narrative we have already been told twice that the entrances to the barrow had originally been skillfully concealed: "[…] þanchycgende þær gehydde" (l. 2235), "[someone of

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[9] For a recent suggestion that it is Beowulf's men who curse the hoard after the killing of the Dragon see Cooke (2007).

mankind] taking careful thought hid there," and "nearocræftum fæst" (l. 2243), "firmly fixed through the arts of rendering difficult of access."

Like the giant sword that switches into self-destruct mode, the treasure seems to have a desire to be found, since supposedly perfectly hidden doors appear to display a paradoxical propensity for remaining invitingly open. And this appears to represent something close to a pattern: first, it is the Dragon who finds the entrance to the treasure, and then, 300 years later, the unnamed Slave, too, discovers the secret door. Thus, the Last Survivor's purposes are defeated twice. Despite his attempts to bury the treasure without a trace, that treasure resurfaces by attracting finders. And the second finder sets in motion a sequence of events that will come to an end only with Beowulf's death and funeral—and with what is presented as the final burial of the pagan treasure.

What is so remarkable about this narrative is that the treasure's destructive power remains a latent force to be activated centuries later: the treasure reaches out into the future by attracting the Dragon, who will, after 300 years have passed, become an instrument of destruction. Just as the treasure's first owners have vanished from the face of the earth, so will the Geats vanish when their king is killed by the Dragon. After all, we are informed that the neighboring nations will now invade and destroy the Geatish kingdom. Given the repetitive nature of these events we are reminded once again of the circularity of history that seems to be embodied in the circulation of treasure. And since the Geats, too, bury the treasure, one cannot help but wonder who the next finder will be.

4.5   The Event in History: An Entanglement of Traces

At this point in the discussion it may appear that this interpretation is getting dangerously close to the conceptual binary of linear vs. circular narratives of history, a binary this article has been very much intent on avoiding. Without wishing to deny entirely the circular structure implied in the story of the Last Survivor's treasure, I would argue that the concept of the trace might help us to reveal other temporal dimensions to this narrative. These dimensions do not necessarily stand in stark opposition to the binary of linear vs. circular, but they do open up perspectives easily obscured by that all-too-simple set of opposites.

One key to these other perspectives, I would like to suggest, appears to lie in an, admittedly metaphorical, notion of the trace. Like the giant sword, the Last Survivor's treasure is marked by a complex network of traces. In the case of the sword, these traces are actually quite literal and fully visible as well as deliberately foregrounded in the narrative: first, through the melting of the blade that becomes so obvious an absent presence, and second, through the ekphrastic description of the hilt. In the case of the Dragon's hoard, the network of traces already begins with the architecture of the Dragon's lair itself, since, as Howard Williams has demonstrated, the building's structure combines features inspired by a whole variety of different historical and architectural traditions. Some of these evoke decidedly prehistoric

associations—via a megalithic funerary monument from the Stone Age—while others obviously resemble advanced Roman engineering or early medieval ecclesiastical construction work. All being present simultaneously, these different associations clearly suggest a palimpsestic use of the space (Williams, 2015). That an Old English poem should be capable of imagining the multiple repurposing of a historical site in such an almost obsessive fashion does not really come as a surprise, as it fits well with the archaeologist Sarah Semple's comments on the intensity and creativity with which Anglo-Saxon wielders of social, cultural and political power were active in adapting the archaeological remains of previous cultures to their own ideological requirements. Semple emphasizes

> the sheer scale, in temporal and selective terms, at which the ancient past was recognized and harnessed to the purposes of tradition-making by communities and elite families and individuals in Anglo-Saxon England. (Semple, 2013, p. 224)

Within this specifically archaeological context, we witness once again the Anglo-Saxons' creative ability to develop and explore complex notions of history. As Nicholas Howe points out,

> there is no inherent reason to assume that those who lived during the period were somehow less alert to the complications of their own history than we are some twelve hundred years later. (Howe, 2005, p. 40)

The Last Survivor's treasure, too, is, of course, itself a trace of its erstwhile owners. But it also bears traces itself. Admittedly, as far as we can tell on the basis of the information imparted by the poem, none of the treasure's three known owners leaves any *visible* imprints or markings on the hoard and the objects it contains, but all the different owners do, nevertheless, add to and further specify the treasure's historical significance and thereby propel the action forward. First, the treasure bears the traces of its original owners who were trying to hide it and whose historical catastrophe is relived in the demise of the Geatish kingdom. Indeed, the treasure itself constitutes a trace of its erstwhile owners. Then the treasure bears the traces of the Dragon, whose very presence both ensures and testifies to the treasure's completeness. And, finally, the Slave, too, adds his traces to the treasure, by diminishing it by that single cup and taking the cup into the kingdom of the Geats, thereby triggering that kingdom's destruction. The Last Survivor, the Dragon and the unnamed Slave all constitute links in a chain of events that ultimately leads to historical catastrophe. They all leave their traces on the treasure, if only in terms of the memories that are invoked at discrete stages in the narrative.

When the Slave hands over the stolen cup, that vessel invokes the memory of a nation long perished and thus foreshadows the end of the Geats, but the cup also invokes the memory of the Dragon who will commit the first act of destruction within the final sequence of catastrophes. The relation between these events is causal and symbolic at the same time, and the traces the treasure bears come in the form of memory but also in the form of something close to the supernatural—at least this is what seems to be involved if a fire-breathing reptile awakens after three centuries of sleep because a single cup has been extracted from the vast mound of wealth it has been reclining on.

But there are events and there are events. In the second half of *Beowulf*, the real, the true event that all the other events lead up to is the destruction of Beowulf, the heroic king, and the destruction of his people, a nation doomed.

All the other elements of this part of the narrative—that is, the demise of the nameless Last Survivor's equally nameless people, the finding of the hoard by the Dragon, the stealing of the cup by the Slave—acquire their significance exclusively because they contribute to the one great event that the epic's second part is all about: the downfall of Beowulf and the Geats. As a consequence of these individual, but ultimately subordinate events, Beowulf's end, that is the Big Event, bears the traces of these previous events. The destruction of Beowulf and his kingdom is not merely the culmination of a sequence of events, but is rather the node at which all the other narrative strands become entangled. It is the result of the inactive or hidden charges of history being activated in their interaction.

In *Beowulf*, or more precisely: in the second half of *Beowulf*, the truly historical event—the Big Event, the one event that all the minor ones lead up to—is the result of an overlapping of variously entangled historical traces that gain their true significance within the narrative only through the way they make the final tragedy possible. Significant events in *Beowulf* are thus marked as bearing multiple traces of history. The greater the number of these traces, the more complex their interweaving, the more meaning will the Event they contribute to ultimately possess. Thus, an event in *Beowulf* is defined by its ability to participate in a variety of overlapping layers of history whose interaction both makes that event happen in the first place and at the same time confirms its status as an event. Such a view would fit well with Roberta Frank's observation that tenth-century Anglo-Saxons were fascinated by pagan culture both Roman and Germanic and that the *Beowulf*-poet, in particular, appears to be intent on portraying a historical panorama that is multi-facetted and, above all, multi-layered (Frank, 1982).

In *Beowulf*, the historical event is literally defined as representing a fullness of time, a fullness consisting in the overlapping of different temporalities. Since each and every trace comes with its own temporality, since each and every trace establishes a relation to time of its very own, the truly historical event in the epic is conceived of as being charged with the greatest number of different temporal relations. The event in *Beowulf* thus is the moment in time when temporalities most significantly overlap and intersect. And these overlapping and entangled temporalities are each embodied in a trace. In this interaction between the various entangled temporalities linked to their different traces, we witness an intriguing paradox: as they all contribute to the sense of a truly historical event, indeed, as their multiplicity constitutes that event in the sense of a node bearing multiple charges of history, these traces simultaneously contribute to unravelling the very event that they constitute.

Precisely because the historical event in *Beowulf* derives its significance from the way it combines multiple temporalities, the meaning of that Big Event can never fully be reduced to any single one of the traces and their temporalities that it is made up of, just as none of these temporalities can be completely neutralized, cancelled out or superseded by any of the others present in the Big Event. At its core then, the Big Event in *Beowulf* must always remain unstable, since it ultimately owes its

existence to a tension-ridden multiplicity of temporalities. So, it seems as though it were high time to trace the events in *Beowulf*.

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Chapter 5
The Distant Past of a Distant Past …: Perception and Appropriation of Deep History During the Iron Ages in Northern Germany (Pre-Roman Iron Age, Roman Iron Age, and Migration Period)

Robert Schumann

5.1 Introduction

Ancient monuments and artifacts are not only of interest to archaeologists; they also attract the public, be it in the form of burial mounds, ruins or other things from the past. This is not only true for present-day societies but applies to other periods, too (e.g. Driscoll, 1998; García Sanjuán & Díaz-Guardamino, 2015; Newman, 1998 for pre-modern times; Dietler, 1998; Hakelberg & Wiwjorra, 2010 for the early modern period). Multiperiod sites, excavated ever since the beginning of prehistoric archaeology, reveal that prehistoric and early historic communities came into contact with the remnants of the (distant) past and interacted with these. Such deliberate reuse may have taken place because sites were recognizable as a result of their previous use; but conversely, it may have happened coincidentally, too.

This phenomenon has been the topic of a fruitful debate in prehistoric archaeology in the last decades (e.g. Bradley, 1987, 2002; Díaz-Guardamino et al., 2015; Holtorf, 1998, 2005; Williams, 1998). It calls attention to several cultural and societal practices and the archaeology of memory (e.g. Jones, 2007; Veit, 2005), ancestor veneration (Hill & Hagemann, 2016), appropriation and negotiation of the past (Sommer, 2017; Weiss-Krejci, 2015), and other topics related to the awareness of time and tradition (Sommer, 2014). This is based on the mnemonic character of monuments that preserve aspects of the past for later times (Wendling, 2016, pp. 100–102). Monuments such as megaliths or burial mounds were not only of significance for the communities who constructed them, but also for those who succeeded them (Bradley, 1987, pp.14–15). This is reflected in the biography of such

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monuments as indicated in many excavations and diachronic analyses (Cooney, 2015, p. 57; Holtorf, 1998, 2000–2008). Monuments are therefore not only interesting in terms of their erection and use during pre-/historic times, but also as regards their potential to provoke reactions in later periods (Bradley, 2002, p. 113; Díaz-Guardamino et al., 2015, pp. 6–8; Holtorf, 2008, pp. 413–414). The biographies of monuments thus offer different narratives dependent on the perspective of archaeological investigations. The same multilayered character must also be taken into account for the whole cultural landscape (see e.g. Arnold, 2002) beyond the single monument as well as for artifacts inherited or rediscovered in times after their initial manufacturing and use (Lillios, 2008, pp. 239–241). Therefore, the whole archaeological record may provide insights into how the past was perceived, (re)interpreted, and negotiated in different times and regions.

Whereas theoretical and in-depth analyses on the past in the past were conducted for large parts of Europe (e.g. Bradley, 2002, 2015; Díaz-Guardamino et al., 2015), German-speaking archaeology still mostly focuses on single sites for which this phenomenon is testified (with the exception of e.g. Sopp, 1999 and Wendling, 2016). This situation offers a good point of departure for an integrative analysis of the perception of the past in the Iron Ages of northern Germany (Pre-Roman Iron Age: c. 600–1 BC; Roman Iron Age: c. AD 1–375; Migration Period: c. AD 375–600; mostly associated with Germanic tribes). I will first discuss the tradition of the reuse and appropriation of ancient burial sites for funerary activities and how that connects to notions of the past (see Fig. 5.1 for the location of all mentioned sites). Subsequently I will put this phenomenon into the wider context in which the distant past is perceived and used throughout the Iron Ages, to draw a more complete picture of how Iron Age communities arranged themselves in a landscape partly shaped by older times.

5.2   Burying Alongside the Long-Dead: The Reuse of Ancient Burial Grounds for Burial Activities

The evidence from graves is one of the main sources for the study of the Iron Ages in northern Germany, as burial grounds from these times were investigated ever since the beginning of archaeology. In the Pre-Roman Iron Age, though regional differences exist, the deceased were predominantly cremated and their burnt remains then inserted into urns and deposited in cemeteries of up to several hundred urns ('urnfields'). The graves partly feature stone constructions and grave goods are generally relatively scarce (Bräunig, 2014). While the overall burial rite does not change from the Pre-Roman Iron Age to the Roman Iron Age the amount and the variety of grave goods increase to a large extent and inhumations become more regular (Derks, 2012, pp. 23–54; Schultze, 1992). The Migration Period is characterized by a continuity in the burial rituals but also by a diversification and regionalization, which
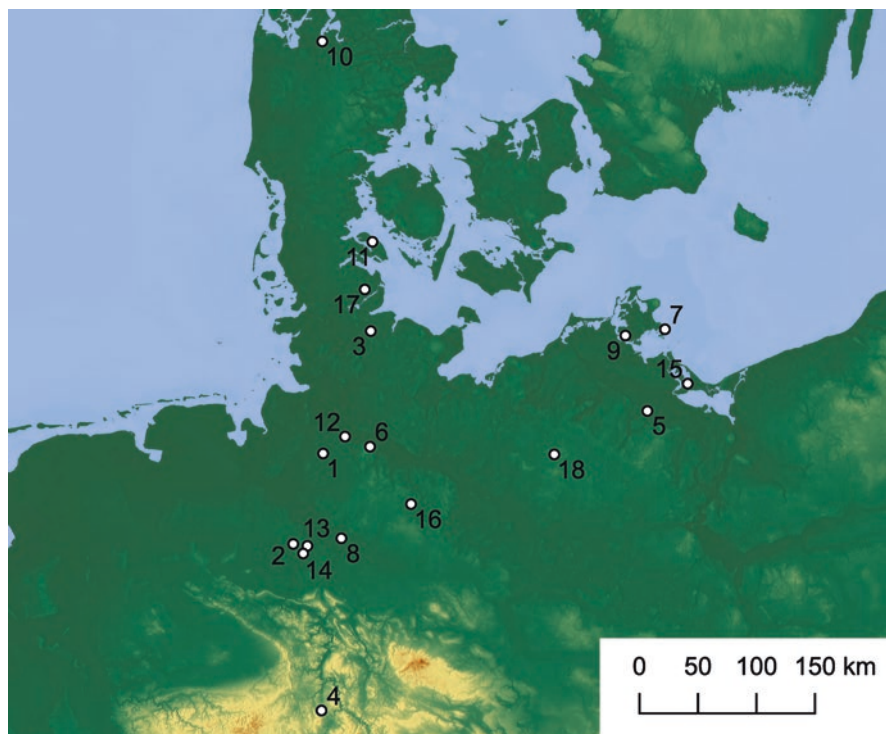
Fig. 5.1 Location of the sites mentioned in the text: 1 = Anderlingen (Rotenburg district, Lower Saxony); 2 = Borstel (formerly Nienburg/Weser district, today Diepholz district, Lower Saxony); 3 = Kronsburg-Glinde, Bredenbek (Rendsburg-Eckernförde district, Schleswig-Holstein); 4 = Calden (Kassel district, Hesse); 5 = Dishley (formerly Neubrandenburg district, today Mecklenburgische Seenplatte district, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern); 6 = Ehestorf-Vahrendorf (Harburg district, Lower Saxony); 7 = Göhren (Vorpommern-Rügen district, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern); 8 = Grethem (formerly Soltau-Fallingbostel district, today Heidekreis district, Lower Saxony); 9 = Gustow (Vorpommern-Rügen district, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern); 10 = Hedevang, Kobberup (Viborg municipality, Central Denmark); 11 = Hjortspring bog (Sønderborg municipality, Southern Denmark); 12 = Horneburg (Stade district, Lower Saxony); 13 = Lemke (Nienburg district, Lower Saxony); 14 = Liebenau (Nienburg district, Lower Saxony); 15 = Mellenthin (formerly Wolgast district, today Vorpommern-Greifswald district, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern); 16 = Melzingen (Uelzen district, Lower Saxony); 17 = Thorsberg moor (Schleswig-Flensburg district, Schleswig-Holstein); 18 = Twietfort (formerly Lübz district, today Ludwigslust-Parchim district, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). (Image adapted by L. Eckert from https://maps-for-free.com/, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license CC BY-SA; © OpenStreetMap contributors)

makes it hard to draw a concrete overall picture of the burial rituals (Schach-Dörges, 1970; Schultze, 1992).

The reuse of ancient burial grounds for funerary activities is attested in many burial sites throughout northern Germany and adjacent regions and has been known since the beginning of archaeology as a discipline. Evidence for later burials in

earlier barrows were especially useful for creating relative chronologies and as such gained much attention, such as the well-known 'Three period barrow' of Melzingen (Lower Saxony) (Jacob-Friesen, 1959, p. 4). With issues of chronology mostly solved, the debate shifted to focus on the types, the meaning, and the frequency of this practice (Hofmann, 2008; Sopp, 1999).

The reuse of long abandoned burial grounds is different from the multiperiod continuous use of a cemetery and it can take different spatial expressions. Matthias Sopp differentiates between burying directly into an ancient burial mound, burying at the mound, and adjacent to an ancient burial mound (Sopp, 1999). Kerstin Hofmann makes a distinction between minimal reuse for the placement of urns and large-scale intrusions and changes, such as the construction of a whole new embankment on the mound (Hofmann, 2008, pp. 279–280).

Even though the phenomenon is mostly discussed in the context of (mainly Bronze Age) burial mounds, other notable features also deserve consideration. Most recognizable of course are the megalithic tombs (Holtorf, 1998, 2000–2008), but much shallower traces of older burial grounds were also reused (Krüger, 1961, p. 15). Natural elevations also attracted funerary activities during the Iron Ages and therefore it is not always clear whether places were chosen because of former human activities or because of their topographic qualities (already indicated by Schwantes, 1911, p. 98). Burial mounds, however, are a very specific landscape feature and the frequency of their reuse (see below) indicates a general interest in that type of construction amongst ancient societies.

In terms of the number of burials installed on older burials grounds, the phenomenon of reuse of such sites can be divided into two different types: On the one hand, we can observe the foundation of entire new burial grounds at the location of ancient cemeteries, such as the Migration Period cemetery of Liebenau (Lower Saxony), which comprised inhumation, cremation, and bustum graves[1] and was established in the area of a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cremation cemetery (Hässler, 1999) or the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age urnfield of Ehestorf-Vahrendorf (Lower Saxony), which was founded adjacent to an Early Bronze Age burial mound (Wegewitz, 1962). On the other hand, at several older burial sites only a handful of deceased were buried, such as at Twietfort (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) where two urns of the Pre-Roman Iron Age were inserted into a megalithic tomb (Rennebach, 1975), or at Anderlingen (Lower Saxony) and Gustow on the island of Rügen (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) where only very few graves of the Migration Period were dug into older mounds (Blaich, 2006; Schach-Dörges, 1970, p. 188).

As already indicated by the few examples mentioned, the reuse of ancient burial grounds is practiced throughout the Iron Ages (and beyond). Still, vast regional differences can be discerned in terms of distribution and quantity of sites. For example, 60% of all Pre-Roman Iron Age burial sites in the district of Rotenburg were founded in long abandoned burial grounds (Eichfeld, 2005, p. 66) whereas in the area of the

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[1] In a 'bustum grave' the pyre is built directly over the grave whereas in a 'cremation grave' burnt human bones and pyre debris are recovered from a pyre site and placed in an urn or scattered in the grave.

rivers Elde and Karthane the numbers are much lower (Keiling, 1969, p. 23). Sopp's (1999) compilation of reused ancient burial sites in northern Germany provides a useful basis for a diachronic perspective. While the phenomenon is regularly documented in both the Pre-Roman and the Roman Iron Age in northern Germany, with dozens of documented sites (Fig. 5.2 top), only about 20 ancient burial grounds were reused during the Migration Period (Fig. 5.2 bottom), and the practice was almost completely abandoned in northeastern Germany (see also Blaich, 2006 on this phenomenon).[2] However, a concentration is evident in the area of the lower Elbe. This more regional distribution has been discussed as part of the ethnic identity of the Saxons and as evidence of Anglo-Saxon migrations (Thäte, 1996; but see the critical comment by Härke & Williams, 1997).

Therefore, despite the fact that ancient burial grounds were reused throughout the entire Iron Ages, regional and temporal differences, as well as different combinations, are evident at different sites of the same region and period. As such, we can hardly speak of a uniform phenomenon. Rather, a range of different practices took place following the foundation of a burial ground, involving the decision to bury at a long-abandoned cemetery. The tradition of reusing ancient burial grounds and thus referencing the distant past was important during the Iron Ages, yet it may have been but one element in a more widespread process of interacting with the past, transcending the domain of funerary activity.

5.3 Beyond Burial(s): The Wider Context of the Perception and Appropriation of the Past During the Iron Ages in Northern Central Europe

5.3.1 Reuse of Old Burial Sites for Non-Funerary Activities

During the Iron Age, ancient mounds, burial grounds, and megalithic tombs were also used for non-funerary activities. These appear to have been conducted in a ritual context, for they do not match the necessary features of regular settlement activities. One example is a burial mound of the Bronze Age at Kronsburg-Glinde, Bredenbek (Schleswig-Holstein) where pits with traces of fire from the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Ages were discovered, thus indicating ritual activities at the burial ground (Kneisel & Rode, 2014). Fire pits were also detected around megalithic tombs, like in Horneburg (Lower Saxony), with a large amount of such pits in the vicinity of the tomb (pers. comm. Daniel Nösler, Agathenburg). As such, ancient mounds and burial grounds were not only reused to bury the dead, but also for

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[2] I have reinvestigated the reuse of ancient burial sites in the Iron Ages of northern Germany, thereby updating the results of Sopp (1999). In the course of this work, a reevaluation of the sites selected by Sopp showed that many do not deserve the designation 'reused'. This is especially true for the Migration Period where only half of the sites are confirmed by the renewed investigation.
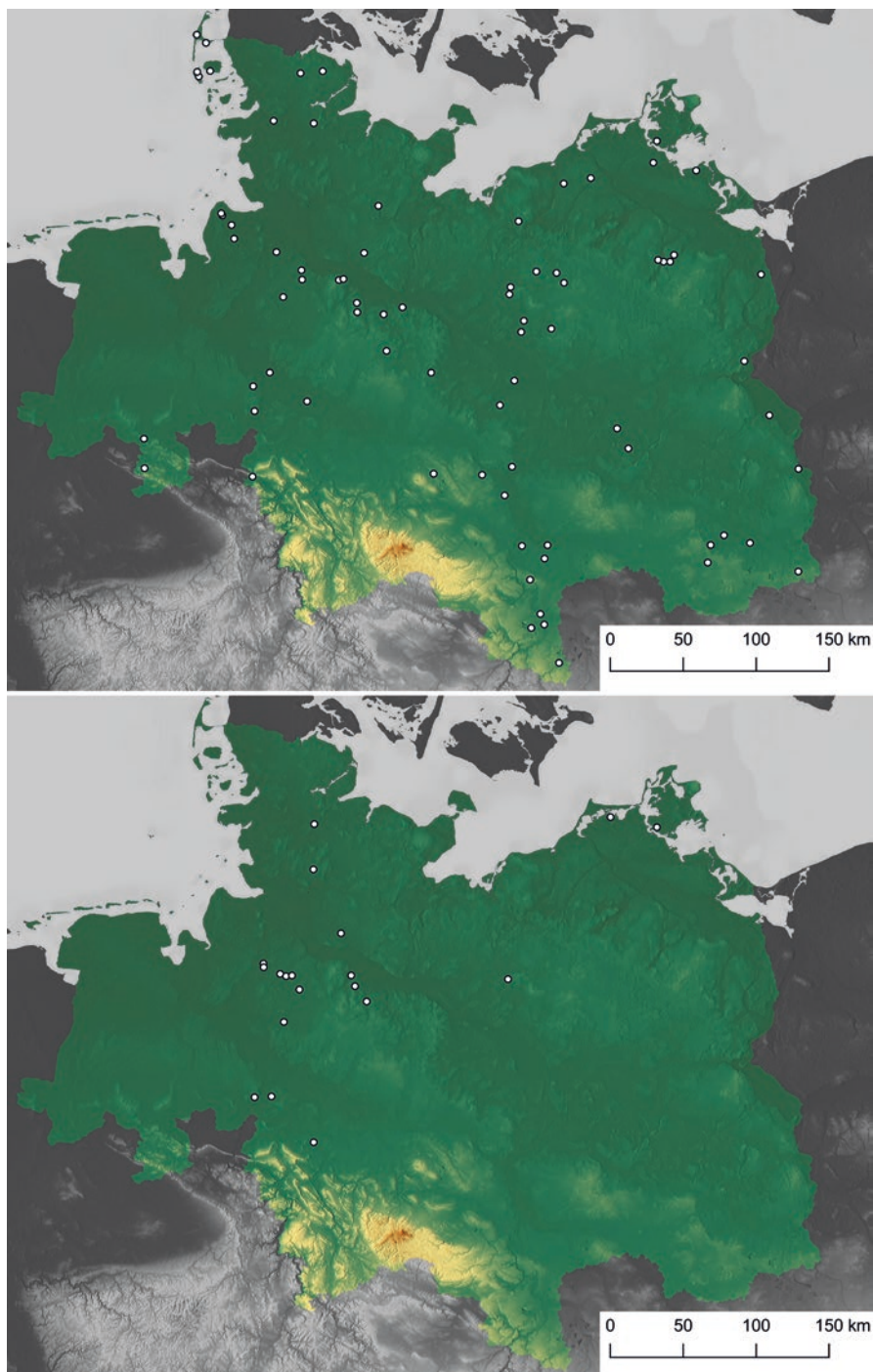
Fig. 5.2 Prehistoric burial sites of northern Germany reused in the Roman Iron Age (top) and the Migration Period (bottom). (Image adapted by L. Eckert from https://maps-for-free.com/, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license CC BY-SA; data based on Sopp, 1999; © OpenStreetMap contributors)

non-funerary gatherings and rituals. Thus, Iron Age pottery excavated from several megalithic tombs (Holtorf, 2000–2008) might not always indicate the remnants of cremation urn deposits but also of other events.

Rituals aside, such single finds might also reflect settlement activities directly located at older burial mounds. Sites like Horneburg in Lower Saxony (Fig. 5.3) and Mellenthin or Dishley in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern clearly illustrate settlement activities around the monuments in the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Holtorf, 2000–2008).
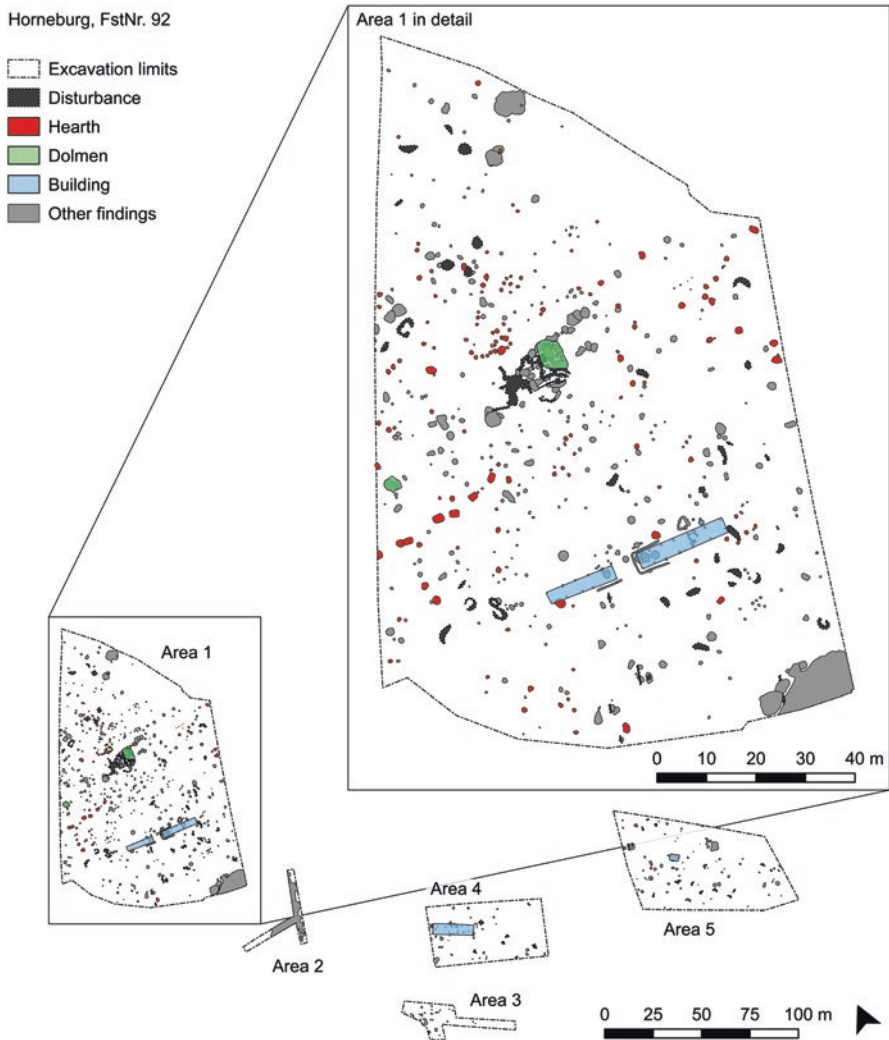
Fig. 5.3 The excavation plan of Horneburg (Stade district, Lower Saxony). Surrounding the remains of a dolmen, several Iron Age contexts were documented. Among these are fire pits and houses. (Image adapted from ArchaeoFirm)

This location of settlements is also known from the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period and is testified in other regions as well, like at Calden (Hesse) (Raetzel-Fabian, 2000, pp. 97–99) or at Hedevang, Kobberup (Central Denmark) (Aner et al., 2008, p. 16).

5.3.2   Reuse of Non-Burial Sites

Besides ancient burial grounds, other sites might have been reused as well. The problem is that the evidence for such practices is harder to come by, especially for settlements. Their positioning in the landscape may have been shaped by many additional factors and older settlement remains are hard to recognize on the surface after some decades. Yet other sites might also play a role in this context. For example, the votive deposits in the Thorsberg moor on the peninsula of Anglia (Schleswig-Holstein) yielded pottery from the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Raddatz, 1957, 1970) in addition to the well-known weapon offerings from the Roman Iron Age (Blankenfeldt, 2015; Carnap-Bornheim, 2014; Lau, 2014; Matešić, 2015). There are also some single finds from the Bronze Age, illustrating the use of the bog before the Iron Ages. This might indicate that the bog was well known as a special site for the communities of the Roman Iron Age and therefore the decision to carry out sacrifice in this specific location might have been influenced by the ancient use of this landscape.

Furthermore, several of the sacrificial sites of the Roman Iron Age in southern Scandinavia show different phases of ritual activity with periods in between during which these sites—at least according to our current state of knowledge—were not used. This is thus an example of how such sites were known and reused (see Bemmann & Hahne, 1992, p. 65, fig. 9). Comparable Pre-Roman Iron Age practices with depositions of weapons and boats are known from the Hjortspring bog on the island of Als (Southern Denmark), pre-dating the classic examples from the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period by some 400 years (Kaul, 2003, p. 175). Hence, the whole phenomenon might be related to ancient ritual practices already conducted generations earlier and rooted in people's collective memory.

5.3.3   Heirloom Objects

In addition to the reuse of single monuments during the Iron Ages, two other categories of perception and appropriation of the past require attention. First, we need to shed light on how artifacts were reused during these periods. Archaeological finds ('heirloom objects') that are older than the structures in which they were found have puzzled archaeologists since the very beginning of typochronological dating and provide an interesting link to the questions discussed in this paper. Heirloom objects have been found at reoccupied sites such as Göhren on the island of Rügen (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) where a settlement of the Pre-Roman Iron Age was

built adjacent to a megalithic tomb and where stone axes, supposedly taken from the tomb at some point in the Iron Age, were deposited in a hearth (Hollnagel, 1963). Apart from such cases, heirloom objects have also been encountered at sites that show no former occupation history, which suggests that these objects circulated among Iron Age communities to a certain extent.

One striking example derives from Borstel (Lower Saxony) where a Pre-Roman Iron Age urn with cremated remains was found (Gutmann, 1954). The urn which was covered by a reversed cup held a bronze axe, dating around Period II/III of the Bronze Age (second half of the second millennium BC) (Fig. 5.4). That means that the axe was already several hundred years old before it was finally deposited in the urn. Therefore, even though further information remains scarce, the bronze axe can be seen as an heirloom that was deposited in the course of the burial ritual. Additionally, the deposit had been inserted into an ancient burial mound and hence conforms to the already outlined reuse of ancient monuments. Sadly, the precise date of the mound is not known as it was not excavated further.

Another interesting case of an heirloom object comes from a Roman Iron Age cremation grave at Grethem (Lower Saxony). Amongst the burnt remains of an adult woman and several other grave goods, a Roman comb fragment made from
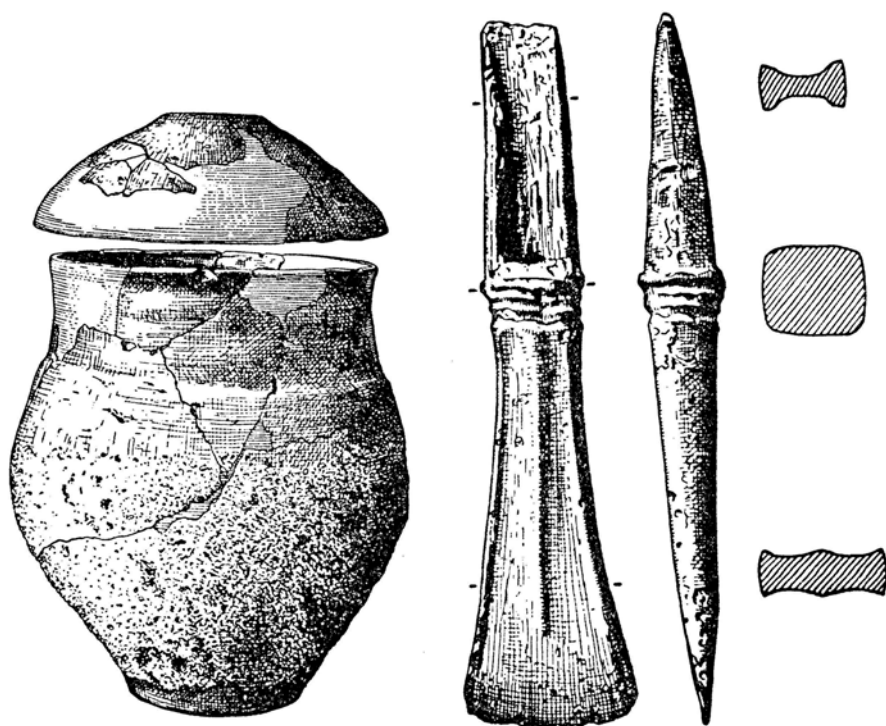
Fig. 5.4 The finds from Borstel (Diepholz district, Lower Saxony). The urn and cup date to the early Pre-Roman Iron Age whereas the bronze axe dates to the earlier Bronze Age. (Gutmann, 1954)

Fig. 5.5 The Augustan period comb from Grethem (Heidekreis district, Lower Saxony) was deposited in a Roman Iron Age cremation grave postdating its manufacture by centuries. (Hannover The WorldMuseum; © Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover, Landesmuseum)

ivory (Fig. 5.5) was found. The comb was originally manufactured during the times of Emperor Augustus and hence already an antiquity when deposited in the grave (Ludowici & Meyer, 2008).

Another example, this time from a non-funerary context, has been reported from the Roman Iron Age settlement of Lemke (Lower Saxony) where a posthole associated with an Iron Age building revealed a grinding stone, a piece of flint, and a pot dating from the late Neolithic Single Grave Culture (Scholz, 2015). Thus, these Neolithic finds might represent a ritual deposition in the course of the construction of the building, a phenomenon that is well known from the Roman Iron Age (see Beilke-Voigt, 2007 for an overview). As such, the example is not particularly unusual, but the artifacts clearly stand out, for, upon their deposition, they were already several thousand years old.

Sadly, it remains entirely unclear at the moment how these artifacts were obtained by Iron Age societies (see some possible explanations debated by Mehling, 1998 for the Early Middle Ages in southern Germany). Several possibilities present themselves. Thus, the Bronze Age axe was probably retrieved during activities on Bronze Age burial grounds, the Roman comb may have been an heirloom, and the Neolithic pot may have been accidentally recovered during settlement works.[3] Yet all these interpretations cannot be verified in the archaeological record and based on the current state of research we do not know a sufficient number of such cases to see patterns in the material. As such, these artifacts complement the reuse of monuments,

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[3] The latest excavations in Lemke have led to the discovery of a Neolithic house and additional Neolithic artifacts (pers. comm. Tobias Scholz).

but rarely offer possibilities for a far-reaching interpretation. In fact, it is worth considering whether they were perceived as antiquities at all. While a bronze axe in the Iron Age was most likely perceived as some old tool, the Roman comb is a less clear example. Roman luxury goods of this kind were of great demand in the Iron Ages, even as antiquities (Ludowici, 2019, pp. 68–69). However, we need to keep in mind that we do not know when the comb found its way into northern Germany. It was surely perceived as exotic and probably of Roman origin, but we can only speculate whether or not the Iron Age community was aware of its antiquity. Nevertheless, the examples given here indicate that antiquities were known in the Iron Ages of northern Central Europe and, as such, add another perspective to the perception of the past in these periods.

5.3.4   Field Systems and Monuments

With the focus on single sites and finds, and in contrast to other archaeological traditions, German archaeology has often neglected the rural landscape of Iron Age societies as regards traces of previous periods. However, single sites and settlements are embedded in a wider settlement system and therefore the role of ancient features between individual sites should be investigated, too. One such type of feature are field systems surrounding the settlements, so called 'Celtic fields'.[4] Celtic fields are prehistoric farmlands divided into square plots by means of wide and shallow ramparts. They played a major role in Iron Age farming. LiDAR technology has revealed several Celtic fields in northern Germany and adjacent regions (Arnold, 2011, 2012). Even though long recognized (see several examples in Müller-Wille, 1965), examinations of LiDAR scans brought to light a link between Iron Age field systems and older barrows. These barrows had been incorporated into the agricultural fields; in some cases they marked edges and borders (Fig. 5.6; e.g. Nösler, 2018).

   Yet, it also seems fruitful to go even further beyond the sites and pursue a landscape approach that specifically looks at the whole cultural landscape and integrates the Iron Age sites into the wider context (see e.g. Ballmer, 2018 for aspects of mounds and landscape relations). For even though some older monuments might seem distant from later sites, that does not mean that they were not incorporated into pathways and known and perceived in everyday life during the Iron Ages. GIS analyses form a good basis to apply landscape archaeology diachronically to that specific issue, whilst providing an opportunity to utilize big data from heritage organizations (Fig. 5.7).

   To sum up, despite the problem of traceability and the circumstance that we lack the most prominent aspect of this phenomenon, i.e. the oral histories connected to

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[4] 'Celtic fields' is a somewhat unfortunate name for prehistoric field systems that were first discovered in England by plane and—erroneously—assigned to Celtic times. Today it is known that they date from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Roman Imperial Period and existed throughout the heathlands of Northern Europe (Arnold, 2011, p. 439).
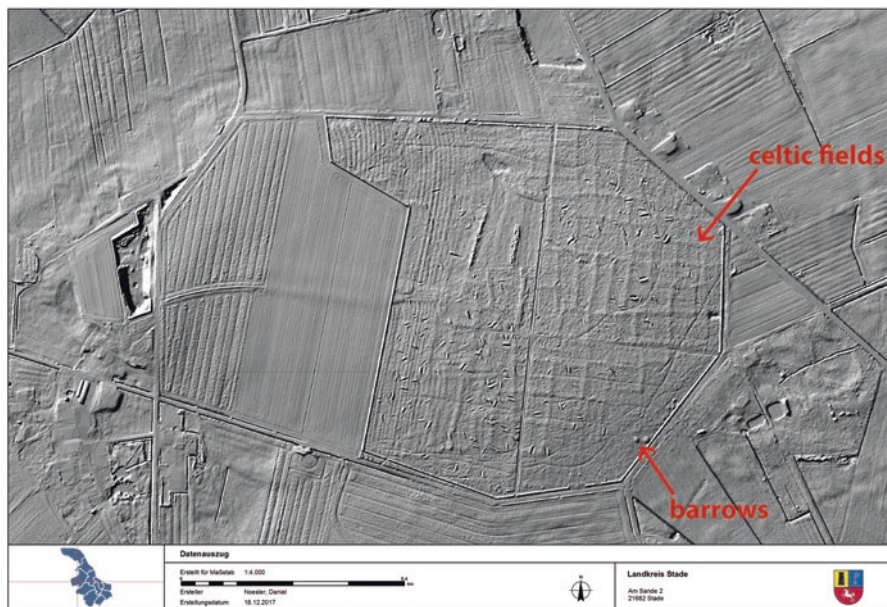
Fig. 5.6 LiDAR scan of Celtic fields in the municipality of Oldendorf (Stade district, Lower Saxony) with older barrows in the southeastern vicinities of the field systems. (Image adapted by Daniel Nösler from Geobasisdaten des Landesamtes für Geoinformation und Landesvermessung Niedersachsen; © Landesamtes für Geoinformation und Landesvermessung Niedersachsen 2018)

ancient monuments, the different archaeological examples clearly illustrate the significance of the distant past for Iron Age communities in northern Germany. Thereby it becomes evident that ancient monuments and finds were dealt with in various ways, however they seem to have played an important role in these Iron Age societies.

5.4 Possibilities of Interpretation: Between Ancestor Veneration, Identity, and Distinction

So far, the focus of this chapter has been on how Iron Age communities perceived the distant past and how they interacted with the remnants of earlier periods. It is evident that the remains of the past were regularly recognized and dealt with throughout the Iron Age, implying their important role during that period. The questions of why that may have happened and how to interpret such activities have not been addressed so far, but they are of course one of the most intriguing parts of work on this phenomenon. Richard Bradley pointed out that the reuse of ancient monuments was linked to either interpretation, confrontation or legitimation (Bradley, 2002, pp. 122–124). Furthermore, ancestor veneration (Hill & Hageman, 2016),
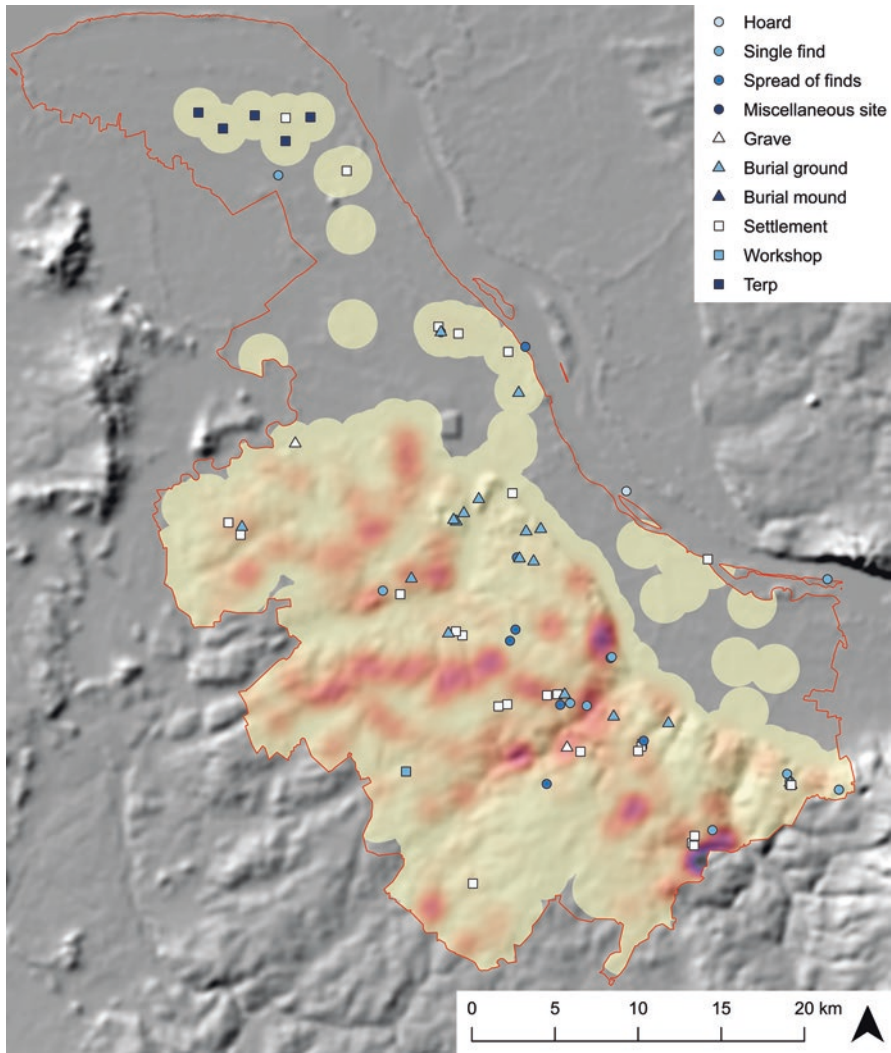
Fig. 5.7 Distribution of sites from the Migration Period in the Stade district (Lower Saxony) superimposed on a heatmap of superficially recognizable sites pertaining to earlier periods. The heatmap not only indicates the denseness of older monuments in contrast to the mapped sites of the Migration Period but also reveals which Migration Period locations had already been in use before. (Image adapted from GeoBasis-DE/BKG 2019, https://www.bkg.bund.de/; © Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie)

invention of traditions, and appropriations of monuments and the past (Weiss-Krejci, 2015) are aspects that need to be considered in this context, though all these issues naturally overlap to some degree. Some major aspects of the debate will be pointed out, which touch on the subject of cultural memory.

Most evidence presented in this chapter deals with burial sites, including both funerary and non-funerary activities that took place there. This does not come as a big surprise as funerary monuments—be it megaliths or burial mounds—comprise the majority of visible older monuments in northern Germany. Still, the appropriation of things from the distant past goes beyond the dead and the different aspects sketched out above indicate a much broader process of recognition and appropriation.

One interpretation that is mostly connected to the reuse of burial grounds and possible heirlooms is that the past is used as a part of social distinction (Bradley, 2002, pp. 119–122). In that sense the reuse of ancient monuments intends to legitimate power through forging links to a distant past (Cooney, 2015, p. 70), which is especially evident in societies where social status is inherited. This aspect features heavily in discussions about Iron Age groups in the more southern regions of Central Europe, focusing on elaborate systems of social and political organization in conjunction with the appropriation of the past (e.g. Fernández-Götz, 2014a; Müller, 2016). For northern Germany, this aspect is rarely considered because societal reconstructions indicate more egalitarian structures, e.g. for the Pre-Roman Iron Age (see Brandt, 2009). Nor is it reflected at the level of the sites, as burials at ancient mounds do not stand out from other contemporaneous burials and the frequency of the phenomenon indicates a much broader reuse of such places. Furthermore, besides single graves or small burial communities, whole burials were erected adjacent to ancient sites, and this too reflects a broader societal phenomenon. Here material culture seemingly is not representative of classic heirlooms and objects of genealogical meaning (see Lillios, 1999, pp. 251–252 on the archaeological identification of heirlooms) as indicated for other regions in the Iron Ages of Central Europe (e.g. Tomedi, 1996; Wendling, 2016, p. 104). These objects rather seem to be occasional finds, and, as such, they do not seem to reflect a direct social distinction connected to a remembered remote past. Nevertheless, they seem to be curated artifacts with a mnemonic character (Lillios, 2008, 239). Therefore, the use of the distant past does not seem to have been directly associated with societal distinction in the Iron Ages. Still, occasional practices related to and performed at ancient sites might have been part of a process of social distinction and therefore this topic cannot be completely ruled out for the Iron Ages in northern Germany.

The second issue that is regularly discussed in this context is ancestor veneration that is especially reflected in burials. Here it needs to be pointed out that in German-speaking archaeology the term 'ancestor worship' is often used as a shorthand to describe potential (re)uses of the past, without being further investigated (see Müller, 2016, p. vi). Naturally, ancestor veneration is a very plausible interpretation for some of the phenomena discussed here; still a more nuanced approach is desirable (Hill & Hageman, 2016; Whitley, 2002). First, it needs to be investigated whether real ancestors could be addressed with the practices performed. This seems plausible for sites with a continuous use or only short gaps in the sequence, the Iron Age of southern Central Europe being a prime example. Here communities of the Late Iron Age (La Tène Period, c. 450–1 BC) regularly interacted with mortuary monuments of the Early Iron Age (Hallstatt C and D, c. 800–450 BC) by

constructing their landscapes with reference to these earlier burial places (Arnold, 2002) and reusing them for funerary as well as non-funerary activities (e.g. Wendling, 2016; Müller-Scheeßel, 2013, p. 80). Ancestor veneration is also a plausible interpretation for Iron Age activities in northern Germany, for example in burial grounds that were continuously used from the Bronze Age, as shown in the examples above. Sites abandoned for many centuries or millennia could have also served to promote the veneration of mythical ancestors, though it needs to be critically discussed whether such a finding is compatible with a veneration of real ancestors, often (partly) defined as being related in a genealogical way to the venerating communities (Hageman & Hill, 2016, pp. 5–8). Therefore, this sort of reuse might serve for the appropriation of land and/or history and legitimation of power (Bradley, 2002, pp. 119–122; Weiss-Krejci, 2015, pp. 307–309). The tombs and mortuary landscape represent a form of 'ancestor time' in which landscape and people become fused (Murray, 2016, p. 149). This heavily touches on the topics of memory in archaeology, a well-debated field in the last decades (e.g. Jones, 2007), as well as time awareness and perception (Sommer, 2014; Weiss-Krejci, 2015, p. 308). Thus, we may cite memory and remembrance of the distant past as decisive factors in bringing about the examples discussed here; or we may ascribe particular importance to the rediscovery and reinterpretation of forgotten places during the Iron Ages. That, in turn, may lead us to inquire into the cultural invention of tradition, lineage, and memory. Here Neolithic sites that were reused only in the Iron Ages in northern Germany are particularly noteworthy, for they give us more insights into how the past was negotiated and appropriated based on a process of rediscovery and reinterpretation rather than active remembrance (Díaz-Guardamino et al., 2015, pp. 10–11). Such sites therefore tell us more about the present than about the past in the Iron Ages (Holtorf, 2008, pp. 412–414). All these possibilities are significant in our identification of ancestor veneration in the Iron Ages and, more generally, furnish our understanding of how the past was renegotiated during that period. Therefore, this needs to be investigated for single monuments, single phenomena, and entire landscapes. In any case, the use of the past calls for an intensive discussion.

Such considerations challenge superficial interpretations and call for an in-depth analysis of the agency of the (long) dead, the perception of ancient sites and monuments, the preservation and construction of memory and time, and many other aspects connected to the past in the past. Yet, though outside the scope of this chapter, detailed analyses of the phenomena mentioned here can surely reveal more insights into these practices and open up possibilities for less broad-sweeping and more fine-grained interpretations. Nevertheless, the spectrum of perceptions and appropriations of the remains of the past in the Iron Ages of northern Germany already indicates that the past and the long gone played an important role in the lives of Iron Age communities and certainly were key to forging collective (e.g. Fernández-Götz, 2014b) and individual identities. Therefore, the past in the past remains a vibrant research topic for prehistoric archaeology to explore.

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Chapter 6
In Search of an Acceptable Past: History, Archaeology, and 'Looted' Graves in the Construction of the Frankish Early Middle Ages

Astrid A. Noterman and Alison Klevnäs

6.1 Introduction

The memory of France's origins is complex, with the search for an appropriate past for the French state and nation animating debates since the eighteenth century. Considerable recent research has shown how modern political-nationalist conflicts have crystallized in the early medieval period in particular. Its narratives of the fall of Roman power in the West, mass migrations of barbarian peoples, the rise of the Catholic Church, and the emergence of royal houses have all played into competing constructions of France as of other European nations (e.g. Citron, 2008; Díaz-Andreu, 2007; Effros, 2003, 2012; Graceffa, 2009a; Perrin-Saminadayar, 2001; Pomian, 1992). Moreover, as elsewhere, the evolving sense of the French past has been closely intertwined with the creation and development of academic disciplines and the country's scientific institutions (e.g. Gran-Aymerich, 2007; Schnapp, 2005). This essay will trace ways in which material remains, which for the Early Middle Ages come mainly from the richly furnished cemeteries, have been brought into play in shifting historical accounts of the period. In particular, it focuses on the unwelcome realization that as well as beautiful artifacts, the burial grounds also contain inescapable evidence that the living frequently carried out a form of grave robbery, in which they interfered with the bodies and possessions of the recent dead.

The early medieval period has provided material for imagining selves and groups in a wide range of contexts since the beginnings of the archaeological and historical

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disciplines (e.g. Frantzén & Niles, 1997; Lucy, 2002; Hills, 2003; Williams, 2008). In particular, attempts to locate a golden age which defines a place or a group have a long and rich history (e.g. Andrén, 2013). Meanwhile archaeologists and historians of the Early Middle Ages have emphasized how, long before modern nation-building brought its impetus, competing and often contradictory roots were already being traced in the historical record by those seeking a self-image and a source of social power in the ancient past (Beck, 2016; Billard et al., 1996; Effros, 2001; Semple & Williams, 2015; Williams, 2006, pp. 145–178). Most relevantly for this paper, the Merovingian dynasty which so spectacularly dominated Europe from its base in France from the sixth to mid-eighth centuries AD used both the written record and distinctive material culture to anchor its ruling prerogative in ancestry claims which have colored interpretations of its legacy to this day.

Indeed, while ethnonationalist anxieties are a major focus of the later nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography, concerns about the right to rule and rightful forms of law and governance are an even longer-term theme throughout attempts to root the present in aspects of France's past. For the modern era, Agnès Graceffa (2009a) in particular has argued that the lack of consensus on a common origin story is grounded in a series of longstanding confrontations between the social estates of the realm (nobility vs. Third Estate), classes (aristocracy vs. bourgeoisie), and institutions (learned societies vs. universities). Intertwined with and at times surpassing the need to define the French people against their German neighbors, internal disputes over the conception of the citizen and how and by whom he should be governed are deeply tied into the imagery of France's history.

For this reason, in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1789, the issue of France's origins became critical in the construction of the new polity, with conflicting visions of the French past playing out in the work of historians over subsequent generations. The diverging historiographical trends reveal the divisions that existed in a country deeply affected by the consequences of revolutionary upheaval, producing a series of different conceptions of the definitive French historical narrative, all drawing on the centuries of Roman occupation and its aftermath. As we will see, the nobility and Catholic historians held fast to the early medieval pedigree traditionally traced for the ruling house. They claimed forebears in the Merovingian dynasty, which was said to have emerged from barbarian tribes known as Franks who had entered Gaul during the collapse of Roman rule. Meanwhile the intellectual elite and academics placed the highest value in a classical, Roman heritage, and liberal historians and advocates of the working populace increasingly drew on an image of a rebellious indigenous population of Gauls resisting first Roman imperial control and then the Frankish aristocracy.

The new discipline of archaeology was drawn into these lines of debate chiefly as an auxiliary science to history. The historical record relates that, in the decades around AD 500, the Frankish tribes were united in northern Gaul under king Clovis of the Merovingian dynasty, who subsequently became the first Christian king in Western Europe. The Merovingian kings came to rule not only Gaul but also lands to the east of the Rhine, and exerted their influence much further across Western and Central Europe. In the material record, increasing finds of burials furnished with

weapons and other finely crafted grave goods dating to the post-Roman centuries were taken to represent this incoming, conquering population of Germanic Franks, and were viewed through the shifting lenses of national self-projection.

Early publications of these Merovingian-period burials are illustrated with plates celebrating the richness and variety of the grave goods and costume elements, which provided a fittingly splendid early medieval past. Yet from the first antiquarian excavations, it was also apparent that many of the handsomely furnished and carefully arranged interments seemed to have been reopened and ransacked only years after burial. Instead of proud forebears, had the Franks been shameful tomb robbers, desecrating the resting places of their own relatives? As this paper will show, commentators have persistently struggled to reconcile these traces of robbery with their understandings of the period. The disturbed burials jarred especially with the narrative of a proud Merovingian royal past, in which free-spirited Frankish people were justly and lightly ruled by consent.

Putting the debate about the excavated dead and their place in France's origin stories in its historical context, this chapter discusses how national identity was built from the work of historians and other scholars, and how contemporaries interacted with past societies and their mortuary practices. In particular, we will trace reactions to evidence of grave reopening in early medieval cemeteries as a route into exploring the development of discourse concerning France's origins and the relationship between history and mortuary archaeology. At the same time we bring into focus a practice that has long been perceived as an obstacle to understanding early medieval society, but which nevertheless occupies a prominent place in the historiography of Merovingian archaeology.

6.2   The Franks Before 1789: Origins of the French Monarchy

Today, the ancestors of the archetypal French citizen are unquestionably Gauls. Presented in school textbooks as brave warriors challenging the Roman conquerors, they embody the modern French nation (Brunaux, 2008; Dietler, 1994; Pomian, 1992) (Fig. 6.1). Their presence in the national imagination can be traced back to the fourteenth-century rediscovery of classical texts, especially the writings of the Greek geographer Strabo (e.g. IV.4.2–5: Strabo, 1923) and the Roman historian Tacitus (e.g. *Historiae* IV.57–62: Tacitus, 1931), which included descriptions of Western European peoples. These resonated at a time when Italian Renaissance historians were claiming the Roman past for themselves, pushing back against the traditional claims of classical inheritance, which were widespread among European nobility, often through lineages linking back to the legends of Troy. Outside Italy it became desirable for scholars to present a sense of a deep and honorable history within their own territories, often drawing on images of past military prowess, especially against the might of Rome (Pomian, 1992, pp. 64–65).

Fig. 6.1 School notebook front cover (c. 1900) with illustration representing Gaul's chiefs gathered by Vercingetorix to fight off the Roman invaders. The emblematic elements that have shaped the popular imagination are all present: the wild boar, the winged helmet, the Gaulish rooster, the moustache, the long hair. These symbols are well-known from the very popular Asterix comic strip. (Imprimerie Ducourtieux & Gout, Limoges; © Réseau-Canopé – Les collections du Musée national de l'Éducation, inv. no. 1979.32146.11)

Yet it was to be many centuries before the Gaul came to be seen as the definitive ancestor of the French people. For one thing, until the development of archaeological excavation practice began to unearth and identify the settlements of the native Gallo-Roman population, largely a twentieth-century development, the Gaul was an indistinct figure with historical grounding for the most part only in texts by outsiders. But more pressingly, the legitimacy of the power of the French monarchy had long been based on its Frankish origins and the conquest of Gaul by Clovis. For several centuries, France's royalty had been taking up major events in Merovingian history and integrating them into their own public ceremonies and self-representations. Thus, the French coronation rite was an explicit reference to the baptism of Clovis in Reims. Invoking the writings of Hincmar—a ninth-century archbishop of Reims, great canonist, theologian, member of a prominent family, and close to King Charles the Bald—who had portrayed the baptism of the first king of the Franks as a royal coronation, the city of Reims became the official place of the coronation of the French kings from the twelfth century (Citron, 2008, p. 132). Then again at a time of unrest in the fifteenth century, we see the young Charles VII reaffirming his position as the future king of France by being represented on coins sitting in majesty on the celebrated eighth/ninth-century bronze chair then known as the 'throne of Dagobert', after the last powerful Merovingian king (Le Jan, 2006, p. 32). This chair is still preserved in the Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris.

Yet this was by no means simply a question of an aristocratic Frankish, Germanic past set against classical heritage. France had a visible and highly valorized Roman past in the form of the many standing monuments in its cities, not least in Reims itself. The Merovingian dynasty, which like several other European monarchies had sought to establish a legendary classical existence for itself in its supposed barbarian homelands, was also framed as the inheritor of the Romans, with its worth demonstrated by conquest, and as carrying on classical traditions, not as in opposition to the earlier imperial powers. Furthermore, in a similar way to the Bretons and the Normans, the Merovingians claimed a mythical lineage back to prestigious Troy: in the seventh-century *Chronicle of Fredegar* an ancestor of the dynasty is a certain Francion (Francus), son of a brother of Aeneas, who founded a kingdom between Rhine and Danube after he left the legendary city (Kıvılcım Yavuz, 2015, pp. 136–138). This plotline, which gave the Merovingians a shared ancestor with Romulus and Remus, persisted through the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century, Rigord and Guillaume Le Breton added to its prestige by making Francion the son of Hector (Burguière, 2003, p. 44; Delaborde, 1882, pp. 55 and 170), thus positioning the Merovingian family as the heirs of Troy (Coumert, 2006, 2016, pp. 1123 and 1335; Le Jan, 2003, pp. 1239–1240).

The fractures in the national story traced above persisted for generations, especially where the legitimacy of royal power was concerned, leading to competing but also entangled narratives which have drawn on different nuances and associations. But it was above all increasingly critical approaches to ancient history which, from the middle of the fifteenth century, started to undermine the Trojan origins of the Franks. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Gauls became vehicles for

the expression of political views and attempts were made to integrate them into the history of the Frankish monarchy. For example, François Hotman presented the Gauls and the Franks as two allied peoples struggling against the Roman invaders, but at the same time consigned the Trojan origin of the Franks to the realm of fiction (Hotman, 1573, pp. 22 and 34).

After the Bourbons inherited the French throne from the House of Valois at the end of the sixteenth century, the Trojan myth was revived, but with less prominence for the claim to a Germanic origin of the Franks. Thus when the magnificently furnished grave of Childeric I, father of Clovis, was discovered accidentally during refurbishment works in the church of Saint-Brice in Tournai on 27 May 1653 it was the governor of the Spanish Netherlands, archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Habsburg, who commissioned a study of the treasures (Chiflet, 1655), rather than the French royal house (Effros, 2003, pp. 31–35; Pomian, 1992, pp. 48–50; Wagner, 1973, pp. 23–24). In line with rival Habsburg interests, this publication used the many golden 'bees' with garnet wings that had been found among the objects to support a suggestion that bees and not the *fleur-de-lys* had been the insignia of the Merovingians and thus that there was no link between Merovingians and Bourbons (Fig. 6.2).

Fig. 6.2 Of the objects discovered in Tournai in 1653, only a few remain today following the 1831 burglary at the Cabinet des Médailles de la Bibliothèque impériale where the 'treasure of Childeric' was kept (left); enlarged image of one of the two remaining 'bees' (top); fourteenth-century illumination *Grandes Chroniques de France* (c. 1375–1379, ms. Français 2813, fol. 3v) depicting King Charles VI wearing the *fleur-de-lys* embroidered coronation robe at Reims in 1380 (right). (Bibliothèque nationale de France, public domain)

During the mid-eighteenth century, ongoing arguments about the legacy of the Frankish invaders are typified by two prominent authors: Henri de Boulainvilliers, count of Saint-Saire, and Jean-Baptiste Dubos, abbot, diplomat, and historian. For the former (Boulainvilliers 1727), France's history began with the conquest of Gaul by the Franks in the fifth century AD. A new political entity and a cohabitation between two peoples emerged: a people of conquerors (the Franks) who constituted the state, and a conquered people (the Gauls) without political and legal rights, reduced to enslavement by the new masters (Pomian, 1992, pp. 67–68; Venturino, 1999, pp. 50–51). Following Montesquieu's reading of French society, Boulainvilliers depicts the Franks not as subjects of a king, but as free nobles living in an aristocratic regime. The right of conquest ensured their legitimacy. Yet rather than eulogizing force and violence, he considered that when successful, the act of force acquired a form of legitimacy (Venturino, 1999, p. 51). The aristocracy's right to own land and dominate the Gallo-Romans was thus presented as an inherited right.

Dubos' narrative is, by contrast, much closer to today's dominant line of interpretation. He refuted the position taken by Boulainvilliers: he described the Merovingian period as a succession of treaties that gradually bound the Franks and the Gallo-Romans together (Dubos, 1734). The Franks did not impose themselves by force, but by a legitimate transfer of power from the Roman authorities (Graceffa, 2016, p. 1151). Likewise, the Frankish nobility should not be perceived as an elite using coercion to settle in Gaul. In the absence of conquest, the nobility could not legitimize its domination over other social classes on this specific criterion. However, the traditional approach represented by Montesquieu and Boulainvilliers was largely maintained; only in recent decades has an analysis resembling that of Dubos gained currency (Pomian, 1992, pp. 67–71).

6.3 The French Revolution: Questioning of a Frankish Past

The French Revolution brought about a profound change in the meaning of the legitimacy of royal power. As Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Agnès Graceffa have both emphasized, the new meaning given to the word 'nation', that of a body formed by citizens, with the state as the political expression of collective sovereignty, led to a rejection of the nobility's inherited right of conquest over the people (Díaz-Andreu, 2007, p. 64; Graceffa, 2009a). The figure of the Frank changed from conqueror to violent usurper, as illustrated by a speech delivered by theorist and politician Abbé Sieyès in the year of the revolution. The abbot wondered:

> Why would it [the Third Estate] not send back to the forests of Franconia all those families who still have the mad claim of being from the race of the conquerors and of having succeeded to *the right of conquest*? The nation, then purified, will be able to console itself […] to be reduced to believing that it is now composed only of the descendants of the Gauls and the Romans. In truth, if we want to distinguish between birth and birth, could we not reveal to our poor fellow citizens that the one we get from the Gauls and Romans is worth at least

as much as the one that would come from the Sicambres, Welches, and other savages from the woods and bogs of ancient Germania?[1] (Sieyès, 1789, p. 17)

At the end of the eighteenth century, the opposition between Gauls and Franks in the national imagination thus reflected a greater confrontation in the country. Above all, this was a conflict between two estates of the realm, on the one hand the Third Estate, for whom only the descendants of the Gauls were the true French, and on the other hand the aristocracy, seen as heirs of the Frankish warlords (Burguière, 2003). The figure of the Merovingian was deeply marked by this change of perspective. All the elements initially attached to the greatness of the period (the Trojan origin myth, right of conquest, Clovis' conversion, Salic law, and so forth) were gradually deconstructed, rewritten, and set in opposition to Gallo-Roman civilization (Graceffa, 2008, 2009b).

Despite these shifts, the Merovingian royal precedent retained enough credit that upon the ascent of the House of Bonaparte as Emperors of France in 1804, the first dynasty of France again became a historic reference point. The throne of Dagobert was transported from Paris to the Camp de Boulogne for Napoleon I's use during a military ceremony on 16 August 1804 (Anonymous, 1805, p. 126) and Childeric's bees replaced the *fleur-de-lys* (Fig. 6.2) as the monarch's personal symbol (Masson, 1908, p. 67). During Napoleon's coronation ceremony on 2 December 1804, golden bees adorned the velvet mantles of the Emperor and Empress, the robes of princes, and officers of the Crown, as well as various objects such as carpets, wall-hangings, and the cushion on which the crown of Charlemagne had been placed (Masson, 1908, pp. 293–326).

Antiquarian attention was simultaneously turning to symbolic places linked to the earliest French kings. In 1807, in anticipation of the demolition of the Parisian abbey of Sainte-Geneviève, which had been confiscated by the revolutionaries in 1791 and converted into a Neoclassical Pantheon, excavations were organized to find the graves of Clovis, his wife Clothilde, and their daughter. From this early 'rescue excavation', we still have the notes and drawings made by Alexandre Bourla (Fig. 6.3), one of the government architects responsible for the work (Périn et al., 1985, p. 151; Velay, 1989, p. 35).

The figure of Clovis in particular had always been relatively spared, even by the revolutionaries who worked intensively to discredit the Franks and their role in the construction of France. Clovis was seen as the first significant barbarian king to convert to Christianity in the history of Western Europe (Fig. 6.4), whose baptism by Saint Remi was a deeply embedded national myth (Citron, 2008, pp. 127–128; Dumézil, 2005, pp. 152–155). After the First French Empire, the figure of Clovis

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[1] « Pourquoi ne renverrait-il [le Tiers] pas dans les forêts de la Franconie toutes ces familles qui conservent la folle prétention d'être issues de la race des conquérants et d'avoir succédé à *des droits de conquête*? La nation, alors épurée, pourra se consoler […] d'être réduite à ne se plus croire composée que des descendants des Gaulois et des Romains. En vérité, si l'on tient à vouloir distinguer naissance et naissance, ne pourrait-on pas révéler à nos pauvres concitoyens que celle qu'on tire des Gaulois et des Romains vaut au moins autant que celle qui viendrait des Sicambres, des Welches et autres sauvages sortis des bois et des marais de l'ancienne Germanie. » (All originally French texts in this chapter were translated by the authors.)

Fig. 6.3 During demolition work on the old church of Sainte-Geneviève, in 1807 Alexandre Bourla unearthed a large number of Merovingian sarcophagi in the crypt. (*Vue générale des fouilles exécutées en 1807 dans la crypte de l'abbaye Sainte-Geneviève*, A. Bourla 1850; Bibliothèque nationale de France, public domain)

remained unifying in a profoundly Catholic France until the 1840s. The prompt adoption of the new religion by Clovis was invoked in the epithet 'eldest Daughter of the Church' (« fille aînée de l'Église ») used by historian Frédéric Ozanam in 1836 to describe France, and more spectacularly in 1841 by preacher Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, refounder of the Dominican order after the Revolution, in a speech in the cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris (Barbiche, 2015, p. 171).

6.4 The Nineteenth Century: A New Representation of the Frankish Past

Throughout the nineteenth century we see continued disputes, often bitter, between the rival currents of thought set up in the Revolutionary period. On the liberal side, the historian Augustin Thierry's writings had the greatest impact on French collective memory. His *Récits des temps mérovingiens* (Thierry, 1842), was reprinted more than thirty times in large print runs for the period 1867 to 1888 and often presented to successful pupils as a prize in republican schools (Amalvi, 1994, pp. 315–316; Graceffa, 2010b, p. 21). In Thierry's telling, the historical figure of the German was synonymous not with freedom but with ferocity (Fig. 6.5). His arrival in Late Roman Gaul was accompanied by a return to the state of nature and consequently a form of wildness (Graceffa, 2008, p. 89). Far from the position defended

Fig. 6.4 Portrayal of Clovis as king of the Franks and first Christian king by Antoine L. F. Sergent, painter and engraver close to the revolutionaries, 1791. (*Portraits des grands hommes, femmes illustres, et sujets mémorables de France*, P. Blin 1786–1792, pl. 1; Bibliothèque nationale de France, NA-33-4, public domain)

Fig. 6.5 School textbook narrating the history of France in the form of illustration. The Merovingian period is represented by four vignettes: 1. A chief, Clovis; 2. The Franks as looters; 3. The cruel Franks; 4. King Dagobert. (*Histoire de France, apprise par l'image*, E. Devinat and F. Raffin 1926, Courtesy of Auraria Library)

by Boulainvilliers, the historian perceived no legitimacy in the French royalty or in the right of the nobles to own the land. On the contrary, the violence of the conquest, the usurpation of power by the Franks and the moral decadence that characterized the Merovingian kings were all arguments presented in support of Thierry's anti-nobility, anti-royalist, but also anti-Germanic position. And he goes even further: the Revolution and political unrest that undermined France at the beginning of the nineteenth century were the direct consequence of the conquest of the Franks and the suffering they brought with them (Rignol, 2002, pp. 89–90). These positions were based largely on textual criticism, and in particular that of the works of Gregory of Tours. The contribution of archaeology was minimal in his work (Schnapp, 2005, p. 54) and little attention was being paid to Merovingian finds at the time Thierry was writing (Effros, 2012, p. 315).

Aspects of Thierry's narrative landed well: for Benjamin Guérard, director of the École des Chartes from 1848 to 1854, the incoming Franks

> destroyed […] the authority, ideas, monuments, institutions of a vast empire; [they] erased, as far as possible, the lessons of experience acquired through social life, and turned off the lights of the human spirit applied to the government of peoples.[2] (Guérard, 1844, p. 276)

Other sides of Thierry's theories were not completely embraced by Guérard. Most significantly, he refused to associate the Franks as a Germanic people with modern Germans. However, as we will see, subsequent political events—the 1870–1871 war with Prussia; the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine; the trauma of World War I—would challenge Guérard's restrained approach by fostering a lasting Germanophobia on French territory.

The approach of another influential liberal historian and politician, François Guizot, was more moderate. By establishing a link between the emergence of European civilization and the arrival of the Germanic peoples in Gaul, Guizot gave the latter a central place in the issue of France's origins (Graceffa, 2010a). He argued that on the eve of the fall of the Western Roman Empire, four fundamental elements were in place which would lead eventually to the French Republic: the Roman imperial tradition, Christianity, the idea of individual freedom (one of the few positive contributions credited by Guizot to the Franks), and the man-to-man bond (Graceffa, 2010a, p. 292). This moderate analysis should not, however, obscure his negativity towards the Merovingians. The criticism was still the same: by the violence of the conquest, Clovis and his successors removed all political legitimacy of the Franks in Gaul, and therefore also from the French monarchy.

By contrast other writers, mainly with royalist or Catholic backgrounds, responded to the liberal rejection of the Merovingian as ancestor by offering a diverging vision of the Frank: a being who is certainly undisciplined, but far from the savage depicted by Sieyès. René de Chateaubriand, a leader in French Christian historiography, offered a positive image of the Merovingian period. For him the

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[2] « [ils] ont détruit […] le pouvoir, les idées, les monuments, les institutions d'un vaste empire; [ils] ont, autant qu'il leur était possible, effacé les leçons de l'expérience acquise par la vie de société, et éteint les lumières de l'esprit humain appliqué au gouvernement des peuples. »

behavior of the Franks should not be associated with that of savages but rather with that of children in the infancy of their development. The Merovingian dynasty was the heir of the Roman Empire (Chateaubriand 1831, p. 230) and a precious ally of the Church, which had made it possible to complete the process of Christianization of the West, in which the French people became the very first Christian people in Western Europe. Ozanam followed in the same vein, taking up the idea of Frankish barbaric innocence which Christianity would discipline (Graceffa, 2008, p. 91).

During the second half of the nineteenth century the historiography of Frankish origins would retain little from these moderate approaches, with a primitive vision of the Germans gaining ground. Architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc expressed the general feeling of the French about the Early Middle Ages in particularly strong terms:

> when the barbarians broke into Gaul, the ground was covered with Roman monuments, the indigenous populations were long trained in Roman life. It took three centuries of disasters to make people forget Roman traditions.[3] (Viollet-le-Duc, 1858, p. 116)

Viollet-le-Duc saw nothing worthwhile in the Franks; on the contrary, their lack of civilization kept them from any possibility of possessing their own art and know-how (Gourdin, 1989, p. 23). Merovingian architecture was described as a pale reflection of Roman artifice, with debris heaped by unskilled workers barely capable of laying rubble and brick, making ceramics "of a coarseness that is similar to the first attempts of the most barbarian peoples" (« d'une grossièreté qui rappelle les premiers essais des peuples les plus barbares ») (Viollet-le-Duc, 1874, p. 144).

6.5   Nation, Legacy, and the Material Past

French scientific communities began to structure and institutionalize themselves from the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, with their forms and directions heavily shaped by self-understandings in relation to the nation state and its past (Gran-Aymerich, 2007). Graceffa has demonstrated how the Revolution of 1789 gave rise to national sentiment, transforming the word 'nation' into "an autonomous concept of substitution in relation to the king" (« un concept autonome de substitution par rapport au roi ») (Graceffa, 2009b, p. 59). Previously focused on royalty, the nation now defined itself in relation to its citizens: an entity that aimed to be unifying and should share a common history. The monumental expression of this new feeling was formed through the emergence of a new notion, that of legacy: a past, including a material past, belonging to the nation.

This new interest in national heritage had two main consequences: the first was the creation of institutions designed to preserve and enhance France's treasures; the second was promotion of "the cultural education of the people" (« l'éducation

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[3] « Lorsque les barbares firent irruption dans les Gaules, le sol était couvert de monuments romains, les populations indigènes étaient formées de longue main à la vie romaine. Aussi fallut-il trois siècles de désastres pour faire oublier les traditions romaines. »

culturelle du peuple ») (Gran-Aymerich, 2007, p. 133). In this context the first Commission des monuments was set up in 1790 by the newly formed Assemblée nationale, with the aim of listing and preserving national heritage in the form of standing remains. The same year, Alexandre Lenoir was authorized to collect portable objects worthy of being preserved by the nation, and in 1791, he was entrusted with the Musée des monuments français, located in the cloister and gardens of the convent of the Petits-Augustins in Paris (Poulot, 1986, pp. 497–531).

In her comprehensive account of the history of French archaeology, Ève Gran-Aymerich (2007) highlights the long development of the discipline, showing that its initial legitimacy was built on archaeological research conducted outside the national territory. Archaeology in France was from the start an archaeology of the Great Civilizations, and even as the nation began to refocus its origins more and more within the limits of its geographical space, it was the remains of monuments linked to the classical Roman past which were most highly valued, for both their architectural achievement and imperial associations. Even spectacular discoveries such as Childeric's grave, which aroused the curiosity of antiquarians for a time, did not raise any real archaeological consideration for early medieval remains (Pomian, 1992, pp. 48–50).

As the eighteenth century came to a close, Lenoir had to fight for the recognition of medieval art and its preservation. Only Greek and Roman art, according to nineteenth-century historian Camille Jullian, attracted crowds to the Musée central des Arts from its opening in 1793 (Jullian, 1897, p. VI). The situation began slowly to change in the following years, when antiquarian Aubin-Louis Millin inaugurated the first teaching of archaeology in France at the Cabinet des médailles in 1795 (Gran-Aymerich, 2007, p. 37), including high medieval as well as Roman monumental remains. Indeed, a high-status interest in visiting and viewing national and regional antiquities had long been developing in France as in many other European countries, and this included prehistoric and medieval remains. Books dedicated to the country's monumental heritage were published and 'touristic' travels led people—mostly from the bourgeoisie and aristocracy—along the route of their own past (Díaz-Andreu, 2007, pp. 318–337). However, the focus here remained the aesthetic appreciation of picturesque aboveground buildings and ruins, rather than an urge to dig into the national soil.

Connectedly, as the Romantic movement gained ground at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the origin of the nation was increasingly sought in its land, in an older past whose exaltation came to be embodied under the expression *nos ancêtres les Gaulois*. The Merovingian moment, while remaining a significant element in the history of France, now definitively lost its founding character. This contribution of nineteenth-century historians to the construction of French identity is considerable, judging by the durability of the expression even in the current political sphere: in 2016, during the election campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy declared "as soon as you become French, your ancestors are the Gauls" (« Dès que l'on devient français, nos ancêtres sont gaulois ») (Morin, 2016), while three years later, at a conference in Denmark, President Emmanuel Macron referred to the French as "Gauls resistant to change" (« Gaulois réfractaire au changement ») (Le Monde, 2018).

6.6 Learned Societies and National Archaeology

Under the Restoration and the July Monarchy, the rise of archaeological research was chiefly driven by the development of learned societies, rather than being promoted by the state. This gave French archaeology a degree of independence, in particular by allowing it to gradually free itself from the influence of historians. Considered one of the fathers of field archaeology in France, Arcisse de Caumont founded the Société des antiquaires de Normandie in 1824. A scholar with a great curiosity, he played a key role in the development of archaeology in Normandy, encouraging the exploration of prehistoric, Gallo-Roman, and Merovingian archaeological sites. He was largely supported by Guizot (Effros, 2012, pp. 37–38). De Caumont's main interest was in synthetic works and in particular those relating to monuments and objects constituting 'national antiquities' (Verron, 2004, p. 133). The Middle Ages were at the center of his concerns, as attested by his *Cours d'antiquités monumentales* (published from 1830–1841): almost half of the volumes were dedicated to the medieval period (Verron, 2004, p. 133). Aware of the need to go beyond the local framework of Normandy, in 1833 he invited scholars from the various provinces to a scientific congress based on the model offered by Germany (Bercé, 1986, pp. 542–547). The following year, he founded the Société française pour la conservation des monuments nationaux—the future Société française d'archéologie—and organized the first archaeological congress in France (Gran-Aymerich, 2007, p. 61).

Nevertheless, the increase in the number of studies on the medieval period should not mislead about the place of the Merovingian era in the building of France's history. The attention of historians and archaeologists in the years 1860–1910 was mainly focused on the Gothic high medieval period from the twelfth century. The Merovingian age continued to suffer a negative image, reinforced by a political situation that linked together the barbarians of the classical world, historical Germanic tribes, and modern Germans. Before the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), German historical science was well-regarded by French historians. Even just after the French defeat, some historians, such as Ernest Renan, argued that France must reconsider its education and university system based on the German model if it wished to regain its place among the great European nations (Schnapp, 2005, pp. 57–58). However, the defeat and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine soon brought about a change in the process of nation-building: the French sought to prove their difference to Germany. The theory of a culturally advanced Germanic antiquity, which had brought a certain form of freedom and social equality to the Roman world, was rejected by the majority of French historians, or simply ignored (Graceffa, 2008, 2009a). The Franks now generated historical interest only from the moment they became part of French history.

The years from 1860 to 1910 saw the first excavations officially supported by the Government and academic institutions. However, it was France's Gaulish past which was highlighted with the excavations of Alesia (1860–1865), Gergovia (1861–1862), and Bibracte (1867–1895), supported by Napoleon III to enhance his

Histoire de Jules César (Napoléon, 1865). Moreover, by instituting the Commission de topographie des Gaules in 1858, the Emperor encouraged research into the pre-Roman past, moving France's origins back beyond Merovingian royalty.

Growing curiosity for France's material heritage thus prioritized the classical and the Gothic, continuing to disregard the greater part of underground remains, and leaving the Merovingian period in semi-darkness. However, some key pioneers saw valuable information in funerary remains, beyond the opportunity to recover artifacts for display. These forward-thinkers promoted the kinds of legal protections and careful excavation methods which we have only recently started to see as standard. As early as 1824, Pierre Jean-Baptiste Legrand d'Aussy, a member of the recently founded Institut national des sciences et des arts, was the first scholar to propose a chronological classification of archaeological remains in France based on the observation of the different burial practices from prehistory to the seventeenth century (Legrand d'Aussy, 1824). He recommended that archaeological discoveries be supervised with a protocol adapted to each stage of the excavation. Legrand d'Aussy's suggestion gained little traction at the time, with real interest in the excavation of Merovingian cemeteries only developing in conjunction with the many discoveries linked to the construction of the railway in the later part of the century (Effros, 2003, p. 60). On the other side of the Rhine, the situation was different. In 1848 Wilhelm and Ludwig Lindenschmit published the excavations of the Merovingian cemetery of Selzen, which represents the first reference work on the Frankish funeral and is still widely cited (Lindenschmit & Lindenschmit, 1848).

6.7   Merovingian Archaeology: The Contribution of Urban Planning Work

Subsequent advances in Merovingian archaeology in France were largely due to the great urban development and modernization work that began in the second half of the nineteenth century. In Paris, medieval sites appeared one after another as the city was modernized with old streets removed or modified with new traffic lanes, the construction of a complete sewer system, and numerous other works (Velay, 1989). Prolific Parisian excavator Théodore Vacquer revealed hundreds of Merovingian sarcophagi and numerous artefacts at the churches of Saint-Marcel and Saint-Gervais-Saint-Protais (Périn et al., 1985). Beyond Paris, the country's modernization was led by the development of the railway, and with it the unexpected discovery of many early medieval cemeteries. These discoveries drove the evolution of French archaeologists' view of the Merovingian period. Far from the impression of Viollet-le-Duc, who had perceived no form of art and therefore no civilization among the 'barbarian' peoples, the exploration of these vast cemeteries provided archaeologists with a wide range of objects attesting to the artistic skills and technical abilities of the Franks. Collectors were also becoming more and more numerous and avid, leading to an ever-increasing number of digs in search of beautiful objects (Effros, 2003, pp. 60–61).

Scientific publications reflected this newfound interest in the artifacts of the post-Roman 'invaders'. Grave goods from each burial were carefully listed and detailed, often stating the composition of each object, its size, state of conservation, and location in relation to the body (Cosserat, 1891, p. 5). The skeletons and graves themselves were of lesser interest as sources of information. While plates of illustrated grave goods regularly appeared in the publications of learned societies, the bones and their contexts were rarely depicted. In the absence of official standards in the excavation of burial sites (Effros, 2012, pp. 109–125), archaeologists recorded only aspects which engaged their attention. Human remains were typically mentioned only when they could be linked to a historical figure or, as we will see below, were being used to define national identity through the study of their morphological characteristics.

However, further observations began to be made at some excavations of large cemeteries. Notably, the construction of the boulevard Arago was an opportunity for Vacquer to explore the former church of Saint-Marcel on rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève and its cemetery between 1868 and 1874 (Jones, 2007; Périn et al., 1985, pp. 183–199) (Fig. 6.6). His field notes describe how the state of preservation of skeletons could be seen to vary according to the type and state of their grave:

> In sarcophagi empty of soil the bones are consumed and fallen into dust or at least, very reduced and very friable; they have taken on a purplish hue or wine lees. It is only in sarcophagi empty of soil that we find bones impregnated with violet crystallizations that have divided their molecules. It is mainly the large bones, especially those of the lower limbs, that show these crystallizations. In pits, or in sarcophagi full of soil and especially sand, the bones are very well preserved.[4] (Vacquer, n.d.).

6.8   Archaeologists and the Practice of Grave Reopening

One of the most striking contexts in which observations about human remains and the state of their burials began to be made is in the growing number of references to 'robbery of Merovingian graves' seen in the publications of the second half of the nineteenth century. The abbé Jean Benoît Désiré Cochet, a central figure for the founding of the archaeological discipline in France, was one of the first archaeologists to accurately describe evidence of grave disturbance, recording it repeatedly during his numerous excavations. Cochet was able to bring together observations of a number of elements to identify and understand how the 'robbery' was carried out. He based his determination of past reopening on the evidently displaced bones seen

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[4] « Dans les sarcophages vides de terre les os sont consommés et tombés en poussière ou du moins, très réduits et très friables; ils ont pris une teinte violacée ou lie de vin. C'est seulement dans les sarcophages vides de terre qu'on rencontre des os imprégnés de cristallisations violettes qui en ont divisé les molécules. Ce sont principalement les gros os, surtout ceux des membres inférieurs qui présentent ces cristallisations. Dans les fosses, ou dans les sarcophages pleins de terre et surtout de sable, les os sont très bien conservés. »

Fig. 6.6 Excavation under the direction of Théodore Vacquer, presumably at Saint-Marcel (Paris) during the second half of the nineteenth century. (*Fouilles à Saint-Marcel* [Paris], Fonds Théodore Vacquer, ms. 222, fol. 224: excavation of the old Saint-Marcel cemetery, Boulevard Arago; Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France)

in the disturbed graves, but also on observations of the unusual positions of artifacts, the presence of iron fragments in grave fills (Cochet, 1854, p. 193) and, new for the time, by the evidence of intrusive cuts dug into the graves. For example, during the excavation of the Merovingian cemetery of Envermeu (Seine-Maritime) in September 1854, Cochet noticed a square pit located in the middle of a disturbed grave, whose shape reminded him of a funnel. He made a connection between this

opening and holes observed in Merovingian stone sarcophagi, as well as in Carolingian and Capetian tombs (Cochet, 1854, p. 169).

It seems quickly to have become an established fact in the French archaeological community that Merovingian graves had been desecrated by their contemporaries, or at least in a very remote period (Cochet, 1854, pp. 264–265). Relaying a general feeling within scholarly circles, Cochet wrote that

> […] grave violation is an elementary thing in archaeology. A Merovingian cemetery that has come to us in its integrity must also be considered a rarity and a piece of good fortune.[5] (Cochet, 1857, p. 144)

Auguste-François Lièvre, librarian of the city of Poitiers and president of the Société archéologique et historique de la Charente, reported similar practices south of the Loire (Lièvre, 1894, p. 7), while Auguste Nicaise left quite detailed descriptions of reopened graves from archaeological explorations around the small village of Saint-Quentin-sur-Coole (Marne), in 1882. Informed of the discovery of bones in the area, Nicaise began to investigate with a long probe used to feel for likely burials. By this method, which was widely used in the province of Marne as elsewhere in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (e.g. in Kent, southern England: Brent, 1863, p. 309), he identified several Merovingian graves, some of which were reopened:

> a third research made me discover three more burials: I only found bones in disorder and providing clear evidence that these graves were robbed at a time that is already very far away. In the two previous explorations, I had noticed that some burials had similar evidence, the bones no longer in their anatomical position, the head sometimes in the middle of the body or on the legs. This probably explains the poor quality of the grave goods in this site, where only the worthless objects were left.[6] (Nicaise, 1882, p. 122)

Prohibitions against the sacrilege of disturbing the dead and against removing objects from graves seen in some of the Germanic early law codes were taken to refer to the reopening now widely recognized in French cemeteries (Cochet, 1855, p. 156; Lièvre, 1894, p. 7). This provided a readymade historical interpretation of the apparent evidence that the Franks were stealing valuables from burials and led to negative commentary across the reports of reopening. Following his description of disturbed graves in the cemetery of Quentin-sur-Coole, Nicaise adds:

> Located, like most Merovingian cemeteries […] on a height that dominates a vast horizon, this site, whose graves were at most 60 to 80 cm deep, must have easily attracted the attention of these robbers, tomb raiders, who were threatened in vain by the many edicts of our

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[5] « […] la violation des sépultures est chose élémentaire en archéologie. Aussi l'on doit considérer comme une rareté et une bonne fortune un cimetière mérovingien qui serait arrivé jusqu'à nous dans son intégrité. »

[6] « une troisième recherche me fit découvrir encore trois sépultures: je n'y rencontrai que des ossements en désordre et attestant avec évidence que ces tombes avaient été violées à une époque déjà fort lointaine. / Dans les deux explorations précédentes, j'avais remarqué que quelques sépultures portaient de semblables traces, les ossements n'étant plus dans leur position anato-mique, la tête se trouvant parfois au milieu du corps ou sur les jambes. Cette circonstance explique probablement la pauvreté du mobilier funéraire de ce gisement, où l'on n'avait laissé que les objets sans valeur. »

first-race kings and even the criminal laws of the invaders themselves.[7] (Nicaise, 1882, p. 122)

Similarly, in his *Sépultures gauloises, romaines, franques et normandes*, Cochet attributed the removal of grave goods to the greed of Merovingian plunderers, seduced by all the objects that could "flatter their eyes" (« flatter leurs yeux ») (Cochet, 1857, p. 135). The sepulchral interventions also made it into publications by historians, though the degree of grounding in the archaeological material is sometimes doubtful. In his *Étude sur la civilisation française*, Albert de Marignan mentioned at length

> the habit [of the Merovingians] of burying the dead with their jewels [...]; [encouraging] theft and grave violations, thieves [...] being sure to take a rich loot in gold and jewelry […].[8] (Marignan, 1899, p. 341)

Meanwhile in eastern France, according to antiquarian Édouard Fleury, the deposition of rich and precious objects in graves was the cause of numerous reopenings because "there was sometimes more interest in robbing the dead than in robbing the living" (« On eut plus d'intérêt parfois à voler les morts qu'à voler les vivants ») (Fleury, 1878, p. 142).

This immediate and overriding perception of the reopening evidence as the Merovingian population stealing from the dead has had lasting consequences for archaeological research. For one thing, the certainty of being confronted with the practice during each excavation of a Merovingian site often led archaeologists to overlook the scientific potential of these 'damaged' cemeteries. Since the evidence was already understood, no value could be gained by examining it further. A comment by the excavator of the cemetery of Audun-le-Tiche (Moselle), typifies the general feeling that persisted for many decades in the archaeological world: the practice of grave robbery seems to have been a local sport practiced at all times (Simmer, 1988, p. 97).

6.9 Merovingian Archaeology in the Nineteenth Century: Auxiliary Science of History

The negative perception of the figure of the Merovingian in the nineteenth century is key background to the reception of the grave reopening evidence. As described above, the Merovingian moment was defined in this period by critical historians like Thierry and Guizot, with the added impetus of rising anti-German sentiment in the

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[7] « Placé, comme la plupart des cimetières mérovingiens […] sur une hauteur qui domine un vaste horizon, ce gisement, dont les sépultures avaient, au plus 60 à 80 centimètres de profondeur, a dû facilement attirer l'attention de ces pillards, violateurs de tombeaux, vainement menacés par les nombreux édits de nos rois des premières races et même par les lois pénales des envahisseurs eux-même. »

[8] « L'habitude [des Mérovingiens] d'ensevelir les morts avec leurs bijoux […], [encourageant] les vols et les violations de sépultures, les voleurs […] étant sûrs de faire un riche butin en or et en bijoux […] »

decades leading up to World War I. As the century progressed, scholars, institutions and curricula were all reaching agreement on the importance of Gaul in the history of France. The spirit of the end of the nineteenth century is expressed in a book in praise of France's Gaulish past, *L'archéologie, son domaine et son influence sur les progrès matériels et moraux du XIXᵉ siècle*, written by the excavator of the Saint-Quentin-sur-Coole site mentioned above (Nicaise, 1894). Nicaise defended a glorious Gaulish past, these "archives contained in our soil" (« archives renfermées dans notre sol ») (Nicaise, 1894, p. 265) that only archaeology could disclose, revealing all its potential for "the glorious history of our national origins" (« la glorieuse histoire de nos origines nationales »). The arrival of German peoples into the Roman Empire was as a "torrent of barbarians" (« une trombe de barbares »), ravaging and devastating everything in their path (Nicaise, 1894, p. 266).

The signs of widespread desecration of graves seemed to support this discourse, providing material proof of the decline of Gaul under the Merovingians. Undermining the more sympathetic view which had been defended by Chateaubriand and Ozanam, grave reopening could not be seen as testifying to the wild innocence of the Franks, nor their role in the completion of Europe's Christianization process. On the contrary, Fleury and Lièvre drew upon the sacrilege of the reopening practice and the Church's desire to put an end to it, as seen in the early prohibitions, to further depreciate the image of the Merovingian ancestor (Fleury, 1878, p. 149–150; Lièvre, 1894, p. 7).

This period also sees the (lamentable) moral characteristics of the Frankish incomers as described by historians increasingly linked to their physical manifestations in the skeletons excavated by archaeologists. In the excavation report of the Merovingian cemetery at Saint-Quentin-sur-Coole, Nicaise undertook an osteological analysis of the skeletons discovered, taking up the idea that the 'barbarian' physically carried in him the evidence of his savagery. Morphological observations of long bones and jaws indicated that individuals belonged to "a vigorous [...] stubborn, tenacious, energetic [...] race in a word, a race of conquest and prey" (« une race vigoureuse [...] entêtée, tenace, énergique [...] en un mot, une race de conquête et de proie ») (Nicaise, 1882, p. 123).

Nicaise also mentioned the large size of the individuals, a characteristic regularly associated with the Germans. As far back as 1842 Cochet had already seemed surprised by the stature of the skeletons excavated at Étretat (Seine-Maritime), which he described as gigantic (Cochet, 1842; Flavigny, 1989, p. 33).

Cochet was active in Normandy, where a long-standing tie between archaeologists and physical anthropologists existed since the mid-nineteenth century (Effros, 2012, pp. 173–174). Cochet corresponded with physical anthropologists and sometimes invited them to his excavation sites. For example, Étienne Serres, professor of anatomy and physical anthropology at the Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Paris, joined Cochet on the site of Londinières. In return, Cochet sent him several bone samples for his studies.

These studies contributed to a nationalist discourse on the figure of the Frankish warrior. Large in size and strength, the Frank was rough, courageous, and intrepid. In this respect, he was similar to another much later 'invader' of Gaul, whose historiographical trajectory has many similarities with that of the Germans: the Norman.

Like the Frank, he had been described in the pre-Revolutionary period as a fearsome warrior whose right of conquest allowed him to ensure his legitimacy of settlement and power in France, but also in England. After the Revolution of 1789, the Norman took on the appearance of an invader and oppressor (Guillet, 2005) and was explicitly linked to the earlier Germanic incomers in both ethnicity and character. Thierry, in his *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands*, attributed the same primitive origin to the Normans, Franks, and Anglo-Saxons. However, the Norman violence surpassed that of the Germans on the continent, whose Christian religion seems to have softened morals somewhat, unlike the Scandinavians, who remained faithful to the old gods of Germania (Thierry, 1830, p. 95–96).

6.10   Merovingian Archaeology in the Twentieth Century: Gradual Independence

Around the start of the twentieth century a number of changes were set in motion which all contributed lastingly to the development of archaeology in France, including the reform of the university system, which gave the discipline professorial chairs; the inclusion of prehistoric periods in the national narrative; and the increasing involvement of scientific fields in archaeological investigation. A dramatically widening range of questions came to be asked of funerary remains, with detailed studies of artifacts and increasingly also skeletal remains (Treffort, 2010, p. 216).

Unfortunately, this new era for the Merovingian past did not benefit the issue of grave reopening, which tended to become a bare mention in excavation reports, most of the time to justify the disappointing absence of grave goods in affected burials. At the same time as the question of the origins of France was moving away from the concerns of archaeologists, the matter of the responsibility for grave disturbance was also losing interest (e.g. Roland, 1908). Concerning the cemetery of Villevenard (Marne), for example, Léon Coutil and Augustin Roland simply concluded that the graves had been the object of an "old violation" (« violées anciennement ») (Coutil & Roland, 1913, p. 139). The same incuriosity is visible at Selles (Marne) on the eve of World War II: the many acts of reopening were attributed to "a period that is probably very remote" (« une époque sans doute très reculée ») (Tassin, 1938, p. 75).

Only the work of Édouard Salin stands out as equal in this regard to that of Cochet a century earlier. The scope of Salin's research on Merovingian cemeteries is still visible today in many publications (Fig. 6.7). In particular, he was one of the first archaeologists to recognize the diversity of the profile of reopeners. Beyond the Merovingian phase, grave robbery could occur at 'any time' and be the result of diggers acting without professionalism and destroying sites of significant dimensions in search of beautiful objects (Salin, 1939, p. 35, 1952, p. 262), or "greedy grave diggers" (« la cupidité des fossoyeurs ») taking advantage of the installation of new graves to partially plunder the oldest ones (Salin, 1960, p. 233). In his book *La civilisation mérovingienne*, Salin links grave disturbance with the testimony of
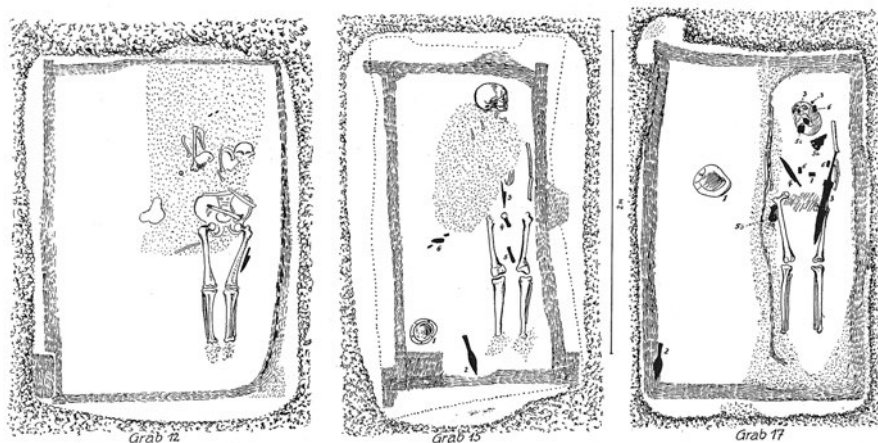
Fig. 6.7 Graves 12, 15, and 17 from the Frankish cemetery of Rheinsheim (Germany). Grave 12 is reproduced in the second volume of *La civilisation mérovingienne* (Salin, 1952, fig. 50), and is one of the earliest drawings of a disturbed tomb in an archaeological publication in France. (Garscha, 1936, p. 455; courtesy of Landesamt für Denkmalpflege im Regierungspräsidium Stuttgart, Esslingen am Neckar)

ancient texts (Salin, 1952). He cites in particular the early laws, but also Cassiodorus and Gregory of Tours, as well as Paul the Deacon, making the book a longstanding reference publication on the question of the looting of Merovingian graves in France (Chenal & Barrand Emam, 2014, pp. 489–490; Demolon, 2006, p. 20; Liéger & Marguet, 1992, p. 101).

Meanwhile for historians, the trauma of the world wars reactivated the figure of the wild Merovingian. In 1915 historian Camille Jullian did not hesitate to draw a parallel between the trenches dug in northeastern France and those dug by the Gauls and Romans to block the way from Germanic invasions (Jullian, 1931, p. 10). A few years later, he compared the arrival of the Germanic populations to an invasion in which Gaul was "sacked […] from top to bottom" (« saccagée […] de fonds en comble ») (Jullian, 1922, p. 191). For his part, Ferdinand Lot refused to consider the arrival of the Franks in Gaul as a conquest, but rather as a stranglehold or takeover (« mainmise ») accepted by the Gallo-Roman substrate (Lot, 1927, p. 347). However, in many ways the Merovingians remained barbaric beings, dominated by "a suspicious, capricious, cruel, selfish despot" (« un despote soupçonneux, capricieux, cruel, égoïste ») (Lot, 1927, p. 379). The formalism of Germanic law, "a non-misleading sign of a backward civilization" (« signe non trompeur d'une civilisation retardataire »), is an example of the "narrow mind" (« esprit étroit ») of this people (Lot, 1927, p. 425). Armed conflicts between the two countries radicalized divisions and left scholars with little choice but to behave like patriots (Graceffa, 2009a, p. 195).

This image of the German did not (entirely) survive the post-war period. Under a new generation of researchers, the historical discipline was rethought, refocused on social realities. A new periodization emerged at the end of the 1950s, with Late Antiquity and medieval France henceforth divided between pre-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian times (Graceffa, 2009a, pp. 289–297). The dissolution of the Western Roman Empire was no longer the result of a flood of barbarians in Gaul, but of a multitude of factors both internal and external to the Late Roman Empire. The textual sources were revised and published in new series with evocative titles: *Les Classiques de l'Histoire de France au Moyen Âge* (1923–); *Sources chrétiennes* (1942–); *Sources d'histoire médiévale* (1965–). Nationalist ideologies gradually faded. However, this renewal of the historical discipline should not mask the reality that the Early Middle Ages remained a period which was little invested by medievalists (Graceffa, 2009a, p. 301).

Following its own path, Merovingian burial archaeology in France experienced significant development in the 1970s and 1980s. The discipline was increasingly professionalized and extensive cemetery digs were carried out by a new generation (Landes, 2009, pp. 61–65). Following Salin's lead, archaeologists began to reproduce the assumption the reopening had happened after the cemeteries were abandoned (e.g. Bayard et al., 1981, p. 158; Simmer, 1988, p. 97). The figure of the barbarian Merovingian looting his own dead moved away somewhat. However, this observation must be qualified by the relative lack of interest of archaeology in reopened graves. Indeed, the frequency of the practice in Merovingian cemeteries was mainly mentioned as a disadvantage since it 'deprived' archaeologists of valuable information on burial practices. This situation is visible in the archaeological reports of this period: for example, the report of the excavation of 25 graves in Sannerville (Normandy) in 1979 contains only drawings of the undisturbed tombs (Pilet, 1981).

It was not until the 1990s that the study of 'grave robbery' began to take a more prominent place in archaeological publications. This was also a time when medieval written sources were being gradually reintegrated into more holistic archaeological perspectives, after largely disappearing in the 1960s in a desire for complete self-reliance in the interpretation of the material record. Now those responsible for post-depositional interventions became once again the Merovingians themselves: increasingly detailed assessment of the evidence in the graves led archaeologists to review their first impressions and it became an established fact that reopening went back to the period of use of the site. For example, many graves in the cemeteries of Haudricourt (Normandy), Gaillon-sur-Montcient (Ile-de-France), and Royaumeix/Menil-La-Tour (Lorraine) were reported as disturbed while the sites were still in operation (Liéger & Marguet, 1992, p. 101; Mantel et al., 1994, p. 183; Regnard, 2001, p. 36).

The increasingly important place of 'grave robbery' in archaeological publications coincided with a reinvestment by historians in early medieval questions from the 1980s onwards. A distancing from the subjectivity of written sources is noticeable. The vocabulary changed: the term 'conquest' was no longer used, but instead 'integration'. Religious identity became an essential concept in Merovingian

history: The Franks evolved into 'civilized' beings thanks to the Church (Graceffa, 2009b, p. 304) which progressively framed the most important stages of human life (birth, marriage, death). In studying 'Christian death', historians could not ignore the practice of reopening burials. Far from giving rise to negative remarks, it seems to have been accepted as a fading part of Merovingian history, which the evolution of Church-led burial practices would soon override. Moreover, in the historiography of the final part of the twentieth century the figure of Clovis alone seems to embody the whole of the Early Middle Ages, to the detriment of the material evidence offered by the large numbers of Merovingian dead then being retrieved from the widespread and often large field cemeteries. The commemoration of his baptism in 1996 in particular occasioned numerous publications (Dumézil, 2019; Sot, 2000).

For decades after Salin no archaeologist would publish an in-depth study on the disturbed tombs. Salin remained the essential reference in all French publications mentioning disturbed early medieval burials, usually cited alongside German archaeologist Helmuth Roth, who in 1978 published a wide-ranging survey of the evidence for reopening among the different ethnic groups traditionally delineated in the material culture of early medieval Europe. It is typical of approaches until nearly the present day that for Roth the ethnic group is the main unit of analysis, and even the main cultural agent, with rates of reopening in cemeteries compared between 'Frankish' and 'Alammanic' areas, for example (Roth, 1978).

Here we see perhaps the most profound shift of all in the role of the Frank as ancestor. Over the last decades, early medieval society has been the subject of major new reflections and studies which profoundly alter understandings of what it means to talk about the Franks as a 'people' and their place in ancestral lineages (e.g. Graceffa, 2009a; Halsall, 2007; Le Jan, 2003; Wood, 1994). Most substantially, the idea that the furnished burial rites which appear in post-Roman Gaul are evidence of an incoming Germanic population bringing in their traditions and material culture from *Barbaricum* has been largely dismantled within academic discourse (for entry points into these long-running discussions see Halsall, 2007; Périn & Feffer, 1997; Wood, 2013 and references therein). Recent approaches have instead taken a constructivist line, emphasizing that elements of artifact styles, dress, and customs were actively selected and deployed in order to create specific associations and build group identities on a variety of scales. The early 'Frankish' populations thus become residents of northern Gaul laying claim to Germanic associations, with perhaps a fairly minimal input of influential elite incomers. Material culture long said to be associated with Germanic incomers, even the furnished inhumation rite itself, actually lacks origins outside the empire, and is instead argued to have arisen in the specific circumstances of the post-Roman power vacuum (e.g. Halsall, 2007). Going further, James Harland (2019) has questioned whether in understanding the associations which early medieval people wished to invoke in their material culture, Germanic is in fact a relevant category, or whether a widely shared sense of Germanness as a cultural ethos has a basis in the material record.

An increased freedom to operate at scales both much smaller and greater than that of ethnic groups has had a significant impact on the study of post-depositional interventions in cemeteries. At the closer end of the scale, new excavation methods

and much more detailed analyses of individual burials have made it possible to reconsider the reopening evidence in terms of a human-scale practice. The increasing number of studies on the topic grounded in close analysis of material evidence in recent years attests to this new interest (Aspöck, 2011; Chenal & Barrand Emam, 2014; Dobos, 2014; Klevnäs, 2013; Noterman, 2016; van Haperen, 2010; Zintl, 2020), while more source-critical approaches are also being made to the written sources (e.g. Dierkens, 2011; Guillot, 2013; Nótári, 2012).

Previously largely dismissed as either a simple act of greed or as damage to the burial record, the reopening of Merovingian-period tombs is nowadays interpreted as a complex custom, or set of customs, and as common to many early medieval European regions. The recent studies emphasize the selective nature of the removal of artifacts, as well as possible manipulations of the human remains themselves. Moving away from conceptions of the Early Middle Ages in terms of peoples, with ethnic groups as the main ancestral actors, there is a new interest in the elements of social customs and material culture which were shared over wide areas or actively used to differentiate groups (Wood, 2013, pp. 310–329). Bringing together the recent studies of the reopening practices in different regions, we now see that this may have been an activity which linked communities across the far-flung areas of Merovingian influence (Klevnäs et al., 2021). In France, the practice no longer highlights the barbaric character of the Franks, but on the contrary attests to the richness and complexity of the funerary, religious, and social practices of early medieval people.

6.11   Conclusions

France's Frankish past seems to have been more easily assimilated and accepted by archaeologists than by historians. The increase in the number of excavations of Merovingian cemeteries in the second half of the nineteenth century confronted researchers with the materiality of a historical period which had been perceived until then only through textual sources. The development of learned societies in the nineteenth century contributed significantly to the renewal of approaches to the Merovingian issue. Excavations carried out by enlightened amateurs such as Cochet, Fleury, and Vacquer proved that the Early Middle Ages were not a period of total regression, at least in terms of the arts and funeral practices. In particular, the ability of the Merovingians to produce beautiful objects through the skill of their craftspeople changed perceptions of these 'barbarians'. Interest in the Merovingian period was first of all an interest in its material culture, which sometimes appeared contradictory in the eyes of scholars: how could such a barbaric society produce such beautiful objects? The regular discovery of richly furnished burials throughout the nineteenth century gradually led archaeologists, and to a certain extent historians, to reconsider the people from across the Rhine. Nor was the general public insensitive to Merovingian skill. Reflections on France's national identity by

historians had positive effects: their choice to enrich their discussions on the savagery of the Franks with archaeological data gave an impetus to the discipline. Critical enquiry thus developed around methods for excavation, observation, and recording of archaeological remains. In terms of the reopening evidence, one element stands out: descriptions of disturbed burials were more numerous and precise in the nineteenth century than in the middle of the twentieth century, only to be surpassed in very recent years.

Despite the many archaeological discoveries and the critical reflection carried out by historians and archaeologists in the last decades, the image of the Merovingian is still apparently attached to that of the barbarian in the popular imagination. This is reflected in a number of recent museum exhibitions in France which, as the catalogues highlight, seek to deconstruct the myth of the violent Merovingian, the destroyer of Roman civilization, and the dynasty of « rois fainéants » ('do-nothing kings'). The exhibition organized by the Musée de Normandie in Caen in 2018 is particularly revealing of this persistence in the collective imagination with its title *Vous avez-dit barbares?* ("Did you say Barbarians?"). Some exhibitions, on the other hand, maintain the myth of the Frank coming out of the German forests and bogs, just as described by Sieyès during the French Revolution. In the promotional video for the 2017 exhibition *Austrasie, le royaume mérovingien oublié* ("Austrasia, the forgotten Merovingian kingdom") at the Musée d'Archéologie nationale de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, for example, a warrior armed with a shield and a spear is repeatedly seen apparently scouting in a dark forest (Fig. 6.8).

Fig. 6.8 Extract from the promotional video for the exhibition *Austrasie, le royaume mérovingien oublié*. (Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication)

As this paper has shown, by emancipating itself from historical accounts, early medieval archaeology has not necessarily transformed Merovingians into acceptable ancestors, but rather has contributed to their acceptance in France's long history. The increasing number of exhibitions focusing on them in recent years, despite the ambiguity of some portrayals, attests to this continuing interest by the French in their Frankish past.

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Chapter 7
From Saint to Anthropological Specimen: The Transformation of the Alleged Skeletal Remains of Saint Erik

Anna Kjellström

7.1 Introduction

A physical 'lived' body is both a screen and a medium through which social processes manifest themselves. Although neither uniform nor static across different societies, through experience and activities our bodies reveal our identities and personhood (e.g. Mascia-Lees, 2011; Turner, 1995). Upon death, possession of the body is lost and the cadaver is at the mercy of the actions of the living. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances a dead body may exert agency—agency herein defined as the capacity of social agents such as dead bodies and things to act with respect to the living (e.g. Arnold, 2014, p. 524; Gell, 1998, pp. 16–19; Harper, 2010; Tung, 2014, pp. 438–442).

This study illustrates how several shifts in the "cultural paradigm" (Arditi, 1994, pp. 602–604) that took place between the twelfth and the twenty-first centuries AD affected the perception and handling of a dead body that belonged to both a medieval king and a saint—Saint Erik of Sweden. These paradigm shifts can be related to the introduction of new social and religious ideals that lead to the renouncement of old religious and political systems. This contribution centers on the changing narratives and the fate of the physical remains of Saint Erik. His political role as a historical character in medieval Sweden, his postmortem reputation, and his reliquaries, though dealt with in detail in a multitude of other studies (e.g. Ågren, 2012; Bengtsson & Lovén, 2012; Oertel, 2016), will also briefly be discussed.

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7.1.1   King Erik: History and Legend

From a historical point of view very little is known about King Erik's life because there are no records from his own lifetime. Born as Erik Jedvardsson he was a Swedish king from c. 1155 to 1160. No reliable information is available about his origins. All we know is that he was married to Kristina, who seems to have been of royal descent, and that he was the father of King Knut Eriksson (Canute I) of Sweden (Ågren, 2012, p. 70; Lovén, 2014, p. 80; SDHK, no. 268).

The oldest detailed account of Erik's life is a legend that is part of the *Registrum Upsalense* of 1344, a collection of various ecclesiastical documents at Uppsala Cathedral. This legend is most likely based on an earlier text by Israel Erlandsson, a canon at Uppsala in the late thirteenth century and later ordained Bishop of Västerås (Ågren, 2012, p. 69; Bengtsson & Lovén, 2012, p. 24–25). Saint Erik's hagiography paints a picture of a just king and a devout Christian who, together with Bishop Henry of Uppsala, went on a crusade to Finland to baptize the Finns. On 18 May 1160[1] after mass in Östra Aros (the present Uppsala) he was slain and beheaded by Danish prince Magnus Henriksson who succeeded him on the throne (Lovén, 2014, p. 86). Two miracles are said to have taken place at once: a spring appeared at the spot where his blood had been shed and a blind woman regained her sight after coming in contact with the blood from his wounds (Bengtsson & Lovén, 2012, p. 24; Oertel, 2016, pp. 117 and 207). Following his violent death, Erik was interred in a grave in the church of Gamla Uppsala (Old Uppsala) where his body seems to have remained until 1257 (Lovén, 2014, p. 96).

7.2   Becoming a Saint in the Middle Ages

Saint Erik belongs in a specific category of royal saints labeled martyrs because they had suffered a bloody death due to a political conflict (Bartlett, 2013, p. 215). Processes by which these murdered kings and princes were being promoted as saints had been underway in Scandinavia since the eleventh century, suggesting a strategy by royal families to consolidate supremacy and legitimize royal dynasties through their sacred ancestors. These royal dead bodies became a kind of 'currency' that could help legitimize claims to the throne and, once kingship was established, were conceived as providing protection for the ruling family as well as the entire kingdom. Among these martyred kings we find King Olaf II of Norway who was killed in battle in 1030 and beatified by Bishop Grimkell in 1031, and King Canute IV of Denmark who died in 1086 and was officially canonized by Pope Paschal II in 1101 (Bartlett, 2013, p. 55; Sands, 2008, p. 207; Tunberg, 1950, p. 132).

Erik's cult was utilized by various groups within medieval Swedish society to further their political goals. The exact circumstances and the date of the spread of

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[1] On the historical accuracy of King Erik's death date see Lovén (2012, pp. 46–47).

his cult, however, are still a matter of debate. The original burial in the church of Gamla Uppsala underlines Erik's royal status, but there are no indications implying the existence of any plans for a future translation.[2] According to the majority of scholars, the establishment of Saint Erik's veneration as martyr and ancestral royal saint was initiated by his son, Knut Eriksson, who reigned in Sweden from 1167 to 1196. During that time the House of Erik was entangled in a power struggle with the House of Sverker and the Erik cult may have benefitted the former (Bengtsson & Lovén, 2012, p. 38; Lundén, 1972, p. 56; Sands, 2008, pp. 207 and 209). Christian Oertel, however, considers Saint Erik as originally a parochial saint who lacked support from his royal successors. He assigns the promotion and breakthrough of the Erik cult to a time after the middle of the thirteenth century (Oertel, 2016, pp. 75–81).

Early references to Erik's postmortem sanctity appear in the *Calendarium Vallentunense* (Vallentuna Calendar) from 1198 which notes his feast day, and in the Norwegian *Sverris Saga* (Björkvall, 1998; Ellis Nilsson, 2015, p. 173 and fig. 13; Lovén, 2012, p. 75; Oertel, 2016, pp. 72–74). The saga states that

> King Sverre married and received Margret, daughter of the Swedish King Erik Jedvardsson, the saint. Erik rests in a casket in Sweden at Uppsala.[3] (*Sverris saga*, 1834, pp. 244–245)

Written proof that the Holy See authorized Erik's veneration as a local martyr derives from several papal letters. Indulgences to those who visited the church with the saintly remains were granted by Alexander IV and Clemens IV in 1256, 1266, and 1268 (Line, 2007, p. 374; SDHK, nos. 740, 866, and 882).[4] Although Erik was never officially canonized,[5] the papal references to Erik as *beatus* (blessed), *martir*, and *sanctus* confirm his saintly status (Tunberg, 1950, p. 134).

While some researchers have argued that a first *translatio* of Erik's remains most likely took place in the second half of the twelfth century at Gamla Uppsala (Ågren, 2012, p. 75; Carlsson, 1944, pp. 87–92; see also Sands, 2008, p. 207), others have suggested that even though the cult may have started earlier, the first *translatio* only occurred in 1257 and was triggered by the papal letter of 1256 (Bengtsson & Lovén, 2012, p. 26–27; Lovén, 2014, p. 95–96). Either way, in 1273 the relics of Saint Erik were moved from Gamla Uppsala[6] to the new cathedral in Östra Aros. An essential document for this event is King Valdemar's letter of 28 July 1273 which confirms a

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[2] In Christianity the translation (*translatio)* is the movement of the remains of a saint from one locality to another.

[3] „kvângaðist Sverrir konúngr, ok fékk Margrètrar, dóttur Eriríks Svíakonúngs Játvarðarsonar, hins helga. Eiríkr hvílir í skríni í SvíÞjóðu at Uppsölum." (All translations into English are the author's.)

[4] In their indulgence letters of 1256 and 1268, popes Alexander IV and Clemens IV refer to Erik as "Henricus" (see Heikkilä, 2013, p. 350).

[5] Originally, the papacy left particular bishops the power to pronounce on the sanctity of a candidate. First steps towards papal control of the cult of saints were taken in the mid-twelfth century and again in 1234, when papal canonization was included in canon law. However, veneration and translation of local saints without papal canonization went on well beyond that date within and outside Scandinavia (Ellis Nilsson, 2015, pp. 35–37; Vauchez, 1997, pp. 24–32).

[6] The church of Gamla Uppsala had been partially destroyed in a fire during the first half of the thirteenth century (Oertel, 2016, p. 105).

generous donation to Uppsala Cathedral "on the translation of the relics of blessed Erik, king and martyr" ("in translacione reliquiarum beati erici regis & martiris") (SDHK, no. 932). Östra Aros also became the new seat for the archbishopric and was renamed Uppsala (Oertel, 2016, p. 105–106). Moving the relics back to the site of Erik's murder must have appeared like the triumphant return of a victimized ruler.

7.2.1   Body Politic and Body Economic

A further step in the development of the status of the saint king was the elevation to *rex perpetuus*, an eternal ruler of the kingdom. Alongside the sacral legitimation of kingship, the notion of *rex perpetuus* promoted the transpersonalization of the royal office thereby consolidating the institution of kingship (Oertel, 2016, p. 63). The differentiation between an actual and an eternal king is similar to the concept of the king's two bodies. According to Ernst Kantorowicz, over the course of the Middle Ages the high-medieval idea of a *gemina persona*, where the king is human by nature but divine by grace, transformed into the idea that the king had two bodies: the mortal body, the *body natural*, and the *body politic* which was immortal (Kantorowicz, 1997, pp. 7–23 and 42–86; Nordberg, 2007, p. 15). Kantorowicz points out that the *body politic* was of greater importance than the *body natural* because

> there dwell in the former certain truly mysterious forces which reduce, or even remove, the imperfections of the fragile human nature. (Kantorowicz, 1997, p. 9)

While Norway's Saint Olaf has been worshiped as a sacred ancestor up to the first half of the twelfth century, and as *rex perpetuus* by the second half (Oertel, 2016, p. 103), Saint Erik probably achieved the latter status at a much later point in time, either around the middle of the thirteenth century (Lönnroth, 1959, pp. 278–279) or in the years leading up to the deposition of Erik of Pomerania[7] in 1439, who was perceived as a foreign ruler and an unjust king (Oertel, 2016, pp. 196–197; Schück, 1984, p. 67). Saint Erik retained his role as *rex perpetuus* until the Reformation, which was mainly due to the fact that Sweden was ruled by administrators for long periods and thus had no real king.

Ecclesiastical material interests may also have been at stake when promoting the cult of Saint Erik (Sands, 2008, p. 209). While Erik's vita functioned both as a political tool and as a guideline for other kings, his physical body provided religious institutions not only with political but also with economic power. The relics of a popular saint can be looked upon, in a more functional sense, as a *body economic* that had the capacity to draw large crowds of pilgrims and lead to economic wealth. Owning Saint Erik's relics, Uppsala Cathedral was able to compete with other important Scandinavian Christian centers such as the nearby dioceses of Strängnäs

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[7]Ruler of the Kalmar Union under which the three kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway were united under one monarch.

and Skara and, in Norway, the important archdiocese of Trondheim (Niðaróss)—all of which had their own martyrs and saints. Hence, the relics not only contributed to the interests of the church but also to the wealth of the lay community that benefitted from the influx of pilgrims.

Although Saint Erik's relics were distributed from Uppsala to other countries in northern Europe, the saint never received great international recognition. This is reflected in the number of requests for relics, which was lower than for the canonized Saint Birgitta (Bridget) (Kjellström, 2017, p. 167, 2019). As a matter of fact, the body of Saint Erik was something more than that of a martyr; it was also that of a king with a firm connection to the local area. This was likely one of the most important factors for his becoming the patron saint of Uppsala Cathedral—at the latest in 1268 (Oertel, 2016, p. 106). The double role of Saint Erik—that is, the relationship with his region and his patron status—demonstrates the importance he had for the local community.

7.3 Saint Erik's Physical Remains in the Middle Ages

The corporeality of medieval saints was of a complex nature; like other human dead bodies they were subject to decay but as relics they often displayed durability and resistance to decomposition. Although saints' bodies rested in graves or reliquaries, at the same time they were believed to be in heaven. If translated or divided, each part of the body and anything that touched it encapsulated the person in its entirety (Bynum, 1995, p. 23–24; Walsham, 2010, p. 11).

The historic records demonstrate the strict control of any relics maintained by the church which cared for and administered their dissemination. Each request for relics needed to be considered and managed according to the prevailing protocol. Requests for relics usually came from other Christian institutions, but also from lay individuals, most of whom belonged to the aristocracy. Like pre- and perimortem events, translations and divisions left visible evidence on the skeletal remains.

7.3.1 The Condition of the Bones

In connection with an exhibition in 2014 for which the saint's crown was to be removed from the reliquary, an anthropological investigation of the osteological material was carried out under the direction of Sabine Sten of Uppsala University (Sten et al., 2016). This was the third of three anthropological investigations within 100 years. According to the 2014 and previous investigations (Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954, pp. 233–236), the human remains at Uppsala Cathedral are far from complete. They comprise 24 bone elements that, with the exception of one element, appear to belong to one adult male individual: one cranium (without teeth) (Fig. 7.1); one incomplete cervical vertebra; two lumbar vertebrae; one sacrum; eight costae (five

Fig. 7.1 The cranium from the shrine of Saint Erik at Uppsala Cathedral. (Photo: A. Kjellström)

left, three right); one right humerus; one left ulna; two innominate bones; two femora; two tibiae; two calcanei; and one tibia from a second individual (Sten et al., 2016, p. 29). The bones display healed (antemortem) lesions and perimortem sharp force trauma. Among the later lesions is a horizontal blade wound that cut through the corpus of the only remaining cervical vertebra supporting the notion that this individual suffered a violent death (Sten et al., 2016, p. 37; see also Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954; Kjellström, 2017, pp. 160–161).

Nothing is known about the treatment of Erik's dead body immediately after death but scratch marks on several of the bone elements indicate that they were not completely free from soft tissue and had to be cleaned, probably when exhumed for the first time (Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954, p. 239; Sten et al., 2016, pp. 37–38). Since the rate of decomposition depends on the temperature and factors associated with the contextual environment, the scratch marks do not allow any specification of how long the body was left untouched in its original grave. As the inception of local veneration and first translation took place before the move to Östra Aros, it is likely that some smaller bones had already been removed and distributed before the skeleton was transferred to the new cathedral.

Notably, at some point in time Saint Erik's bones had been covered with albumen tempera, which created a film and functioned as a varnish, presumably for the purpose of preservation (Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954, p. 246) and from at least the fourteenth century, the bones were wrapped in linen cloth (Geijer, 1954). This treatment stands in stark contrast to most relics from beneath ordinary altar slabs, which are usually small and barely identifiable fragments, often found in lead containers (Kjellström, 2017, p. 156). It is difficult, however, to make comparisons with the relic collections of other prominent saints, because it is not clear whether today's condition is representative of earlier periods.

With the exception of one extra tibia, the remains of Saint Erik seem to have been kept apart from other relics. Usually, in larger shrines remains of several named and unnamed saints could be kept together, as for example in the shrine of Saint Birgitta at Vadstena (Bygdén et al., 1954, p. 30; Kjellström, 2017, p. 159). That no other named saints were placed in Saint Erik's sanctuary implies that the shrine was probably looked upon as more of a proper tomb. Erik's body seems therefore to have received special treatment, most likely due to his royal status and the fact that his cult was of a more national character.

Erik's skeleton lacks the type of postmortem damage, such as artificial breakage or surfaces polished by the touch of devotees, that have been noted on relics from other saints such as on the ones in the Saint Birgitta shrine (Bygdén et al., 1954, pp. 14–30; Kjellström, 2017, p. 159). Overall, Saint Erik's bone elements today are surprisingly complete although it is also evident that the teeth, the mandible, several long bones, as well as the majority of the smaller bones (especially those belonging to the hands and feet) are missing, probably due to the *translatio* and several shrine openings.

7.3.2   Inspections, Divisions, Processions, and Coronation Ceremonies

Throughout the Middle Ages Saint Erik's bones were checked during regular visual inspections, each time offering an opportunity to remove bone fragments. One such opening took place in 1303, when the shrine was inspected by Archbishop Nils of Uppsala at the request of Duke Erik Magnusson of Sweden. A document (SDHK, no. 2021) notes that the archbishop, before removing some of the bone elements, confirmed the presence of the "head with the other members of the body" ("caput cum ceteris corporis membris") that "were tied together in six bundles or clumps" ("connexa fuerant in sex ligaturis siue massis") (see also Bygdén, 1954, p. 322; Lahti, 2019, p. 87).

When the reliquary was inspected on 17 July 1359 on the occasion of a planned procession from Uppsala to Gamla Uppsala on Saint Magdalene's feast day, it was found unfit for procession and therefore instantly restored by a carpenter and a goldsmith. During the temporary removal of Erik's "head" ("capud") "with the other

members of his body" ("cum ceteris sui corporis membris") from the shrine, the lack of some "tiny particles" ("minutis particulus") was noted and interpreted as a result of the custom of relic distribution (SDHK, no. 7564; see also Bygdén, 1954, pp. 323–324; Lahti, 2019, p. 87).

In a letter dating to 1367, Archbishop Birger Gregersson asks for relics that had been cut off by the canons from Saint Erik's "arm" ("de brachio") on the occasion of its placement into a silver 'hand' reliquary which was probably shaped like an arm with a hand (SDHK, no. 9037; see also Lahti, 2019, pp. 203–204). Since no such marks could be identified on the bones of the upper limb (or other elements) in the course of the 2014 investigation, it must be assumed that the bone fragments had been cut from a now missing element that was provided for the long-lost arm reliquary. This might have been a usual practice as evidenced by the postmortem cuts and breaks observed on a male humerus from the silver arm reliquary of Saint Birgitta which is part of the 'Linköping Treasure' at the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm (SHM 6) (Kjellström, 2017, pp. 161–163 and fig. 2; Lahti, 2019, p. 231).

Apart from being carried around during regular processions on Erik's feast days—18 May, the alleged day of his death, and 24 January, the day of his translation—his relics were taken out of the church for public processions in response to epidemics or to secure good harvests (Lundén, 1972, p. 66). The above-mentioned planned procession in July 1359 was a direct response to a plague that had ravaged the country (Bygdén, 1954, pp. 323–324; SDHK, no. 7564). As attested by miracle stories and historic documents, Erik's relics were carried back and forth in processions from Gamla Uppsala to Östra Aros before 1373 and from Uppsala to Gamla Uppsala after that date (Lovén, 2014, p. 96). Several miracle stories allude to the healing of the sick during these events. During the Rogation Days, when a procession moved from Old Uppsala to Östra Aros, a sick friar allegedly was healed after praying to Saint Erik. On another occasion a blind woman instantly regained her sight when standing in front of the shrine (Vita et Miracula, 1828, pp. 278 and 301). These miracle stories and ceremonies demonstrate the bones' strong agency. Just to visually experience or to be close to the sacred body could lead to miracles—the work of a divine agency.

The records also show that the bones themselves were used in royal ceremonies. Around the mid-fourteenth century, King Magnus Eriksson (Magnus IV) gave the order to prepare a new law for the country (*landslag*). In the section in which the election of the king is regulated, it states that a newly crowned king should swear his coronation oath to God, Virgin Mary, and Saint Erik holding relics in his hands (*Konung Magnus Erikssons Landslag* 5.8: Schlyter & Collin, 1862). Here it is suggested that it was Saint Erik's relics that were used, which also is implied by other scholars (Lundén, 1972, p. 67; Oertel, 2016, p. 272). According to the earlier so-called *valstadgan* these bones could derive from unspecified saints (Oertel, 2016, pp. 157–158 and 272).

To summarize, during the Middle Ages Erik's physical remains exerted strong agency and were of such importance that many ecclesiastical and political events revolved around them. As attested by various letters (e.g. SDHK, nos. 1303, 2021,

9037, and 22,327) and other documents, it was as relics that the bones served their imperative function during this era. The strong agency of Saint Erik's body is further underlined by the fact that the original tomb at Gamla Uppsala, rediscovered by Archbishop Nils in 1302 and henceforth a pilgrimage destination (Lovén, 2014, pp. 97–98), was considered sacred through its contact with Erik's body, long after the removal of the skeletal remains.

7.4   From the Reformation to the Age of Enlightenment

Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries the attitude towards Saint Erik gradually changed. Due to the cultural paradigm shift that took place during the Protestant Reformation, society drastically changed within a few generations. The break with the Roman Catholic Church led to a successive expulsion of the objects associated with Catholicism from all churches. Relics, which belonged in this category, were thrown out or even burned as they, according to the Protestant belief, should be regarded as idolatrous. Surprisingly, throughout this period the remains of Saint Erik (last carried in a procession in 1521) remained untouched at Uppsala Cathedral. It was only in 1573, by order of King Johan III, that the medieval shrine was melted down. The king was indebted to Denmark and had to finance the war with Russia (Lahti, 2019, p. 378). Shortly after, Johan III, probably inspired by his Catholic wife Catherine Jagiellon of Poland, commissioned a new house-shaped silver reliquary with engraved plates and relief figures. It was made between 1574 and 1579 (Fig. 7.2) (Bygdén, 1954, p. 360). After King Johan III's death the clergy made the decision in 1593 to hide the shrine from view in order to prevent its continued veneration. However, the plan never materialized, and the shrine remained in the cathedral (Bygdén, 1954, p. 370; Zachrisson, 2017, p. 139).

Saint Erik's relics probably survived the Reformation because Erik was more than just a Catholic saint. As Erik's status as saint started to fade, his royal prominence was reaffirmed by contemporary historians. Even battleships were named after him (Glete, 2010, p. 357). Entirely dismissing Erik would have questioned the full legitimacy of the Swedish monarchy (Ågren, 2012, p. 244).

As several written sources dating between the mid-seventeenth and the end of the nineteenth centuries indicate, visitors to Saint Erik's shrine at Uppsala Cathedral were driven both by devotion and curiosity. Not only were they allowed to look at the relics but also to touch them without supervision from church officials (Bygdén, 1954, pp. 381–382; Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954, pp. 236–237).

The Age of Enlightenment seems to have had a greater effect on Saint Erik's reputation than the Reformation and post-Reformation forces (Ågren, 2012, p. 261). When people began to question long-held traditions and became critical of written sources, the identity of the individual in the reliquary was also doubted. The severed cervical vertebra, which had been one of the most valuable relics in the shrine, was now regarded as a prank by the sacristan. A brief inventory list from 1791 reflects this change of stance because it states that the bone elements were "held under the
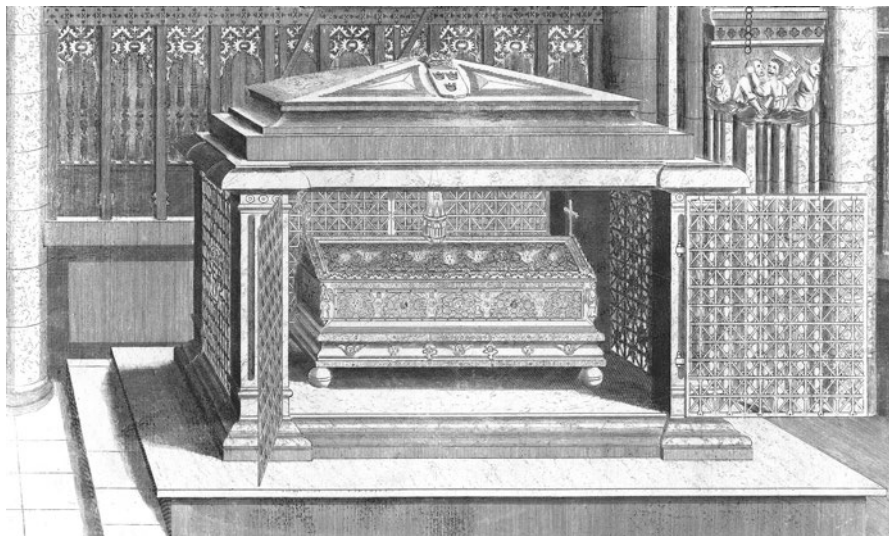
Fig. 7.2 Saint Erik's late sixteenth-century silver reliquary at Uppsala Cathedral depicted in a 1697 engraving made by Truls Arwidsson. (Detail from Peringskiöld, 1719, pp. 48–49; Creative Commons CC0, Public domain)

name King Erik the IX or the holy" ("förvaras under namn af konung Eric den IX:s eller heliges") (Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954, p. 262).

Within just two centuries the human remains had transformed from sacred bones to objects of curiosity. The shrine was no longer believed to hold a saint but rather elements from an individual that was once called a saint. This shift from saint and eternal king with mythical qualities to ordinary man can also be related to the ongoing general marginalization of Saint Erik among contemporary historians who favored later kings as symbols for the Swedish nation (Ågren, 2012, p. 247).

7.5   From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries

During the period of Romanticism Saint Erik was rediscovered as a national symbol (Oertel, 2019, p. 142) and the authenticity of his physical remains was assessed less critically than in the previous period. The nineteenth-century nationalist discourse, which eventually culminated in scientific racism and eugenics, fueled the scientific investigation of living beings and the skulls of the dead. Similar to Sven Nilsson's distinction between 'Gothic' and Sámi prehistoric skull types (Nilsson, 1838–1843, ch. 2, pp. 2–5), Anders Retzius divided prehistoric crania into longheads (dolichocephalics) and shortheads (brachycephalics). The division was based on the so-called cephalic index (the ratio between greatest length and the greatest breadth of

the cranium) (Retzius, 1843, p. 5), a method which became an important tool in craniology for decades to come and remained in use until the mid-twentieth century.

Throughout the nineteenth century Swedish anthropologists grappled with the questions of who the original inhabitants of Sweden had been, whether there existed a 'pure' Swedish race, and, if so, what physical characteristics defined it. The foundation of the Swedish Anthropological Society (Antropologiska sällskapet) in 1873—refounded as Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography (Svenska Sällskapet för Antropologi och Geografi) in 1877—aided this line of investigation. In 1896, the society's board entrusted Gustaf Retzius, Anders Retzius' son, and Vilhelm Hultkrantz with the task of bringing about a "comprehensive statistical-anthropological investigation" (Ramström, 1921, p. 42) of the current Swedish population. From 1897 to 1898 the researchers, assisted by a team of younger colleagues, measured cephalic index, shape of the face, body height (standing and sitting), and maximum stretch of the arms of about 45,000 Swedish conscripts who were 21 years of age, and collected information regarding hair and eye color and place of birth for each individual and his parents. The results were published in 1902 in *Anthropologia Suecica* by Gustaf Retzius and renown physician Carl Magnus Fürst, who also participated in the study. It was concluded that 87% of all Swedish conscripts were dolichocephalic (further divided into 30% 'true' dolichocephalic and 57% mesocephalic) and 13% brachycephalic (Retzius & Fürst, 1902, p. 290). However, the combination of 'true' dolichocephalics with body height ≥170 cm, light eyes, and fair hair (i.e. the Germanic race) only made up c. 11%. The fact that this combination was more frequent in central Sweden was seen as evidence for it being the location of the older and purer race (Retzius, 1909, pp. 303–305; Retzius & Fürst, 1902, pp. 190–191 and map XIII).

The results of the survey more or less confirmed what Gustaf Retzius had already stated in his previous work *Crania Suecica antiqua*. This study was based on the measurements of Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age skulls and concluded that the Swedish population had been overwhelmingly dolichocephalic in the Neolithic but over time experienced admixture with brachycephalic immigrants (Retzius, 1899). In concurrence with the views of Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius, Scandinavia was regarded the ancestral home of the Nordic, Teutonic (Germanic) race branch and as a point of departure for Germanic migrations into Europe (Montelius, 1921, p. 10; Retzius, 1909, p. 306). Both *Crania Suecica antiqua* and *Anthropologia Suecica* were praised by German anthropologist Julius Kollmann for fully setting out the anthropological characteristics of the modern Swedish population by: (1) providing a picture of the old Germanic people; (2) confirming the existence of multiple races, and; (3) showing their unchanging constancy to type (Kollmann, 1904, p. 379; Ramström, 1921, p. 43).

Since most anthropological investigations in the nineteenth century had been geared towards prehistoric and modern individuals, medieval human remains also began to arouse interest. A study of remains from Helgeandsholmen (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD) was published by Edvard Clason who observed the numeric dominance of mesocephalic crania over dolichocephalic types (Clason, 1896–1897).

Clason published some of the bone material from the 1905 excavation of victims of the Battle of Visby which was fought on Gotland in 1361 (Clason, 1925), adding

> yet another link in the chain of evidence that the same Germanic tribe, which now inhabits this country had during the Middle Ages as well as in earlier times, its dwelling place here. (Ramström, 1921, p. 44)

7.5.1   Anthropological Analysis of 1915: The Eugenics Movement

In 1915, Hultkrantz, who had measured some of the long bones from the Battle of Visby in 1909 in order to determine body height in comparison to series from other time periods (Retzius, 1909, pp. 308–309), and his colleague Martin Ramström, were given the opportunity to examine the contents of Saint Erik's reliquary. Since the two researchers did not find time to publish their data, they turned some over to Fürst who incorporated the results into his 1920 book *När de döda vittna* ("When the dead bear witness") (Fürst, 1920). The objective of the analysis of Saint Erik's remains is never clearly stated but the correspondence between Ramström, Hultkrantz, and Fürst, still preserved in the library archives of Lund University, reveals some of their underlying agenda such as the interest in medieval crania (e.g. letter from Ramström to Fürst from 2 April 1920).

Hultkrantz, Ramström, and Fürst belonged to the same social network of scientists whose goal was to institutionalize scientific racism and eugenics in Sweden. Although Fürst, like Gustaf Retzius, had initially been skeptical of the eugenics movement and did not participate in the foundation of the Swedish Society for Racial Hygiene (Svenska sällskapet för rashygien) in 1909 of which Hultkrantz and Ramström were members, he had a change of mind in later years. Fürst was one of the most prominent scientists to support the 1920 parliamentary motion for a eugenic reform to counter the threat of 'degeneration' within the Swedish population. This led to the opening of the State Institute for Race Biology (Statens institut för rasbiologi) in 1922, the first of its kind worldwide and well ahead of Nazi Germany (Björkman & Widmalm, 2010, p. 386; Kjellman, 2013, 2014). It is in this context that the investigation and interpretation of the remains from the reliquary at Uppsala Cathedral must be understood.

Naturally the focus was on the skull which was measured and classified in line with the theory and practice of craniometrics, race biology, and eugenics. It seems that the remains from Saint Erik's shrine were initially treated as specimens stripped of identity because the 1915 protocol, which was included in a letter sent from Hultkrantz and Ramström to Fürst on 23 September 1920 (Fig. 7.3), displays a neutral attitude. In another letter to Fürst from 1 April 1918, Ramström implies that the remains did belong to King Erik. In Fürst's 1920 book, Erik's skull is described as conforming to the regular Swedish, i.e. dolichocephalic length-breadth index with a facial profile which "cannot be said to be beautiful, but powerful" ("kan ej sägas

Fig. 7.3 The first page of the handwritten summary of the protocol from the examination in 1915 sent to Carl Magnus Fürst by Vilhelm Hultkrantz and Martin Ramström in 1920. (Manuscripts and Archives, Lund University Library; photo: A. Kjellström)

vara vacker, men kraftig") (Fürst, 1920, p. 78). It might be added that in the same book Fürst also assigns the alleged cranium of Saint Birgitta to the 'Nordic type'(Fürst, 1920, p. 131).

During an era when race attributions were considered indicators of intellectual superiority and the Nordic (Germanic) race "the most important constituent in the Swedish nation" (Lundborg, 1921, p. 27), the idea of a strong, Nordic, longheaded, and possibly fair-skinned and blond Saint Erik conformed to the Swedish race ideal. Only after Swedish anthropologists started to dismiss race ideology, a process that began in the mid-1930s, did this image became obsolete and new research questions came to the fore.

7.5.2 Anthropological Analysis of 1946: Forensic Approach

In 1946 a second anthropological study of Saint Erik's remains took place. The results were published in 1954 in a comprehensive volume which, besides the legend and the history of the cult of Saint Erik, includes detailed descriptions of the textiles, the crown, and the reliquary (Thordeman, 1954). Bo Eric Ingelmark, who performed the anthropological investigation, also X-rayed all bone elements for the first time. Although providing an exhaustive documentation of measurements and indices, he avoids any discussion of ethnicity. Ingelmark especially focused on the perimortem injuries. Being previously involved in the analyses of excavated skeletons from the Battle of Visby, he was familiar with the traces of sharp force trauma in osteological materials (Ingelmark, 1939). Although he shies away from speculating about the historic implications of the severed cervical vertebra, he does make assumptions about the mechanism and force behind the damage. Based on a consideration of the compiled data and following a lengthy discussion, he cautiously concludes that the remains probably belonged to the man known as Saint Erik (Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954, p. 261).

Although the publication is scientific in its structure, the tone in some of the text passages is somewhat solemn, with a touch of nationalism, e.g. when it says that several Danish churches house relics of "our sacred king" ("vår helgonkung") (Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954, p. 234). The strong focus on the perimortem injuries also lends it a clinical character, evident in phrases such "[the bone surface] adheres slightly to the palpating finger" ("[…] fäster något vid det palperande fingret") (Ingelmark & Bygdén, 1954, p. 239). In summary, the entire study is reminiscent of a forensic report of a crime victim.

7.5.3 Anthropological Analysis of 2014: Multidisciplinary Approach

The 2014 analysis of the bones from Saint Erik's reliquary (Sten et al., 2016) included state of the art techniques in medicine and archaeology such as computed tomography (CT) (Fig. 7.4), dual X-ray absorptiometry (DXA), peripheral

Fig. 7.4 CT-scanning Saint Erik's skeleton in 2014. (Photo: A. Kjellström)

quantitative computed tomography (pQCT), radiocarbon dating, and stable isotope and DNA analyses. This time the question of the individual's identity was yet again of interest, but attempts were also made to situate the skeleton in its wider historical, political, and economic contexts in order to contribute to research questions on a population level. Osteological analyses of known historical figures are rare in Sweden. Finding out whether the bones actually come from a medieval king was therefore also motivated by the fact that these data could allow comparisons with other high-status individuals and groups. In times of big data, it is from structured comparisons that information about larger population patterns can be extracted. Additionally, the remains also represent 'a medieval individual' whose physical measurements are of interest in comparison to modern clinical data. In this way, the bones (or body) are representative of both a specific social stratum and a collective. Both approaches go beyond the individual who was 'depersonalized' for the greater good.

The measurements derived from the CT and DXA scans show that the skeletal elements were robust compared to men today and had a high bone density (Sten et al., 2016, p. 30–31). After it was established that the individual had lived in the 1100s with a probability of 95% (Sten et al., 2016, p. 29), the isotopic results were compared to archaeological reference populations from the same time period. It was concluded that the man had probably spent some time of his life in south-central Sweden and that his diet followed medieval religious rules of fasting (Sten et al., 2016, pp. 31–33). The genomic data have not yet been published but are expected to provide a rough estimate of the individual's ancestry and possibly his affiliation with historically better-known Swedish kings.

7.5.4   The Public Interest in the 2014 Investigation

The 2014 research reflects the fascination of people of the twenty-first century with dead bodies in general and perhaps with relics in particular. Before the opening of the shrine a press release went out with an invitation to attend the opening of the shrine. The response was massive. In an interview, provost Annica Anderbrandt proposed:

> Perhaps the great media interest is due to our need for more history in an increasingly glo-balized world […].[8] (Sveriges Radio, 2014)

The church officials were in general very positive about the event. Gunilla Leffer, communicator at Uppsala Cathedral, stated that the survey increased people's interest in both the church and science.[9]

Journalists from some of Sweden's largest newspapers, national radio, and TV were present at Uppsala Cathedral on 23 April 2014, when a brief description of Saint Erik's life was presented, but there was also a moment of prayer and hymn singing, followed by the opening of the shrine (Fig. 7.5). Afterwards, the cranium and the royal funerary crown were lifted and reverently displayed to the assembly. The fact that human remains in a church enjoy respect and are treated with dignity follows Christian doctrines, although the attention to Saint Erik's bones may be seen as exceptional.

It is interesting, however, to relate the analysis and the interest in the bones from Saint Erik's shrine to another investigation that took place in April of the same year only a few hundred meters away from the cathedral, in a churchyard next to Holy Trinity Church (Fagerlund, 2018). At least thirty-six late medieval skeletons were discovered. Because the skeletons were located outside the seventeenth-century wall of the churchyard, the discovery of the graves was somewhat surprising. The investigation deadline was extended, but there was no budget for an extensive

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[8] "Kanske beror det stora medieintresset på vårt behov av. mer historia i en allt mer globaliserad omvärld […]."

[9] Email from 5 May 2014 to the members of the project.

Fig. 7.5 The opening of the shrine to the media before the 2014 investigation. (Photo: A. Kjellström)

osteological analysis (Fagerlund, 2018; Fagerlund, personal communication). The skeletons were carefully documented in the field, collected, and then placed in paper bags. The procedure is by no means unusual and was done according to standard Swedish archaeological practice. Still, in comparison with the attention given to Saint Erik's remains, the importance of narratives becomes evident. The persons, now skeletons but once bodies, found at the churchyard of the Holy Trinity Church, may have been almost contemporaneous with Saint Erik and were probably also once Catholic, but lacking a royal background or having been saints, their life stories remain unknown. In this context it was not necessarily due to their low social status that these individuals were treated differently, but their anonymity. Few or no tales can be connected to their bodies, which led to the remains being stored in comparatively simple boxes, while the medieval king's bones are wrapped in linen placed on velvet. This is a further example of how the differences in the handling of dead bodies are determined by the symbolic value those dead bodies represent for the living (Arnold, 2014).

7.6   Summary: Faith and Science

This chapter has strived to demonstrate how different groups have assigned different meanings and values to the bones in Uppsala Cathedral during the individual's posthumous life. The interaction with relics during medieval times was, in general, intense as they were expected to provide a direct connection to God, perform miracles, heal diseases, and provide comfort. Like living people, the bones of saints may be considered primary agents (Gell, 1998, p. 20) since they were believed to have the capacity to act. The translation of the bones from the old to the new cathedral in 1273 were a part of a political strategy through which a royal dynasty capitalized on its kinship with Saint Erik but there was also another incentive. The bones were treated as a treasure that provided the Uppsala Cathedral with prestige and, not the least, an economic advantage. So even within the medieval ecclesiastical ambiance the remains served different purposes.

By the time of the Reformation, the bones had lost their (Catholic) religious appeal, and with the Enlightenment, the remains also lost a bit of their royal mythical aura. However, even though the response from society changed and the agency of the remains was fading, they clearly kept their strong symbolic powers. The formal shift to Protestantism did not have a great impact on the practical handling and storage of Saint Erik's bones; instead the physical interaction with the reliquary seems to have gradually ebbed away. The remains had embodied a saint and a king for a long time, but only when the authenticity and identity of the individual were questioned in the eighteenth century were the bones once again considered a human person.

In the early twentieth century the reutilization of the bone elements for racial and nationalistic purposes assigned the individual a place in a specific race branch—once again superior and backed by so-called 'scientific' discourse. The ethnic interpretations of ancient crania (among these the cranium of Saint Erik) became a tool to strengthen political ideas about the risk of racial degeneration. The 1915 survey can in this respect be seen as a part of the European eugenics movement. Similar ethnocentric attitudes and the use of archaeological data for propaganda purposes were also a characteristic of later Nazi Germany (e.g. Arnold, 1990, 1992).

The forensic approach applied during analysis in the mid-twentieth century represents a shift from taking measurements and calculating indices for societal agenda to a more neutral scientific stance. Now the dead body was primarily treated as an object, and in combination with the more standardized terminology, instrumental analysis reduced the agency of the individual. This change is interesting because there exist some parallels with the bioarchaeology-oriented analysis of 2014 though from a different angle. In the latest investigation the bones were examined down to a molecular level, which runs the risk of depersonalizing an individual into a collection of measurements that can only be understood in relation to large archaeological data sets. On the other hand, the contextualization of the results also made it possible for the individual to regain its complexity and once again become something more than just bones in a reliquary. Whereas today the 'authenticity' of relics is a

matter of belief, the fact that the bone elements in the shrine belong to a documented historical person of importance has made them an object of interest for a wide spectrum of people, including Catholics, Protestants, and atheists. Having been kept separate, worshiped, and handled by thousands of people for a period of 800 years lends them an extra mythic quality.

Throughout the centuries, the agency and physical treatment of Saint Erik's relics changed with each new cultural paradigm and at each opening of the reliquary—regardless of the purpose—the actors involved were equally convinced that this time they had revealed the actual truth behind the bones.

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Chapter 8
Dissolving Subjects in Medieval Reliquaries and Twentieth-Century Mass Graves

Miriam Edlich-Muth

We sense the dead have a vital force still.

Mantel (2017)

8.1   Introduction

Those now living can be confronted with the physical remnants of those now dead in many different ways, ranging from seeing, touching or smelling human remains to encounters in which it is not the remains themselves but the idea of those remains that exert the most power. One of the premises of this essay is that such encounters have the potential to shape the inner lives and identities of those engaging with these artifacts in different ways.

This essay will examine accounts of medieval reliquaries and twenty-first century excavations of mass graves in order to consider the very different ways in which human remains can be encountered and contextualized and the extent to which such encounters are mediated through the senses or the imagination. I will first draw on approaches from thing theory and medieval conceptions of sight in order to explore the sensory and affective experience of encountering the 'things' that are the human remains contained in medieval reliquaries. I will then consider how these dynamics compare with modern encounters with the 'things' that are human remains found in mass graves. Finally, I will explore the interplay of faith and sensory experience shaping these medieval and modern encounters and discuss how this dynamic is influenced by the possibility of doubt and misunderstanding that attaches to engaging with objects from the past whose story is not available at first hand.

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The objects at the heart of this discussion are 'human remains'—in particular the bones and related human remains that were circulated in reliquaries in the later medieval period and the human remains contained in various examples of mass graves that continue to be excavated today. The manner in which these two forms of human remains have been framed varies widely—representing potential extremes of how differently the living might deal with the remains of the dead.

Medieval reliquaries, such as the thirteenth-century French reliquary shown in Fig. 8.1, which may have originated in Meaux, offer a well-worn example of how carefully human remains can be 'set in scene'. In this arm reliquary, the relic itself is hard to see, but its value is intimated by the precious metals the reliquary is made of, which recreate an idealized arm shape. The reliquary is made of silver, which has been gilded in parts and studded with glass gems, while the core is made of wood. The decoration and the material invested in the reliquary imply that the relic it contains is of a value so great that it must be protected from prying eyes and fingers, contributing to what Cynthia Hahn has termed "the visual rhetoric of sanctity" (Hahn, 1997, p. 1079). Indeed, the fact that the precious metals are deployed for the outside of the reliquary while the core is made of wood, emphasizes the performative aspects of the reliquary. The primary aim of the reliquary is therefore not to physically embed the relic itself with precious materials nobody can see, but to illustrate the value of the relic to the outside, even as the relic itself remains hidden.

Like many other reliquaries, this arm reliquary does not conceal the relic entirely, but offers a selective view of the human remains it contains. Here, the central aperture at the front provides a visual extract of the skeletal arm that was once inside—seen dimly through rock crystal, a medieval alternative to glass. This experience of the relic recalls the promise in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

> For now we **see through a glass**, **darkly**; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1. Corinthians 13:12, *King James Version*)[1]

Paul's promise, which was widely cited in late medieval theological homilies and treatises, encapsulates one of the fundamental principles of eschatology, which is that what can be seen on earth is only an inferior reflection of the greater glories of heaven.[2] In light of this teaching the presentation of the relic 'at one remove' in this reliquary has a particular significance for medieval encounters with relics such as this one, as it can be read as an echo of the promise inherent in relics: Although the body of the saint contained in the reliquary is only 'one part' of the whole body, it stands, metonymically, for the presence of the saint's body as a whole. At the same time, the beauty of the reliquary and the relic 'seen through glass' can only offer a dim shadow of the glory and power of heaven, to which the saint has access.

Reading the word 'glass' from a medieval perspective also adds a further nuance to the process of observing relics behind glass and glass-like materials such as rock

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[1] "videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem nunc cognosco ex parte tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum" (1. Corinthians 13:12, *Vulgate Bible*).

[2] See, for example, Matthew Levering's analysis of how this passage from the 1. Corinthians was deployed in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (Levering, 2014, pp. 236–266).

Fig. 8.1 Arm reliquary of Saint Fiacre, from France, thirteenth century with fifteenth-century additions. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Creative Commons license CC0 1.0 Universal, Public Domain Dedication)

crystal and mica. Thus, throughout the late medieval period the word 'glass' was also regularly used for 'mirror'.[3] This semantic ambiguity neatly captures the dual effect of the glass apertures on reliquaries in both allowing a view of the relic and reflecting the image of the viewer back onto themselves. The effect of refraction and

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[3] See Sara J. Schechner's discussion of the terminology and use of reflective glass and mirrors in the late medieval and Renaissance periods (Schechner, 2005).

visual distortion caused by the glass draws the viewer's attention to the glass as a 'thing'. This process recalls in very literal terms the 'dirty window' that is one of the central metaphors in Bill Brown's article on 'Thing Theory'. Brown draws on A. S. Byatt's description of a 'dirty window' as an example of how those things that we objectify by instrumentalizing them—which is to say using them for our own purposes—can assert their otherness and the ways in which they exceed their 'function' by simply 'not working'. A window that can only partially be seen through is only in part 'an instrument'. Brown suggests that this is a moment in which the subjugation inherent in 'subject-object' relationships is disrupted (Brown, 2001, pp. 4 and 8).

The basis of Brown's analysis goes further back than the advent of the term 'Thing Theory' in that it is based on Heidegger's extensive interrogation of the relationships between subject and object and the various possible places and roles of 'things' in the world. Thus, Heidegger identifies certain things as *Zeug*—which he describes as "das im Besorgen begegnende Seiende" (Heidegger, 1967, p. 68)—this can be understood as describing those things with which some task is to be undertaken.[4]

The logic of this definition rests on foregrounding the intended function of the 'things', lending them an identity based on the function attributed to them by an outside subject. This logic introduces an added shade of complexity to any potential binary distinction between subject and object as the relationship between the two is now partially defined by the intended use the subject associates with this *Zeug*. Thus, Bill Brown's discussion of instrumentality draws on Heidegger to emphasize the potential shift in power from subject to object. This potential lies in the association between the object and its intended function—the fact that such an object may **not** function makes it possible for the object to disrupt the subject/object binary and the power relationships it implies.

However, in the case of the reliquary, this analysis may be misleading. The most obvious 'purpose' of the reliquary might be to preserve and 'contain' the relic and the window is ostensibly intended to allow the relic to be seen. However, the distortions caused by the light reflecting on the window into the relic in fact draw attention to the reliquary itself and may thereby fulfil a function that is of equal importance. After all, the reliquary shown in Fig. 8.1 is a precious object, in which valuable resources have been invested in order to achieve a particular effect. The partial obfuscation of the relic should therefore be regarded not as exceeding the purpose of the reliquary, but as fulfilling a second, key purpose: that of drawing attention back to the reliquary and thereby reinforcing the 'rhetoric of sanctity' attached to the relic.

In the more particular case of monstrances, however, the distortion of the glass is only one of the ways in which the glass adds further layers to viewers' encounter with the thing inside the 'box'. Drawing their attention to the glass and the extent to

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[4] *Zeug* can be translated as 'equipment' and "das im Besorgen begegnende Seiende" can be translated as "the existent (beings) that are encountered in the course of taking care of a task."

which they can or cannot see the relic contained behind it also has the potential to heighten their awareness of how the encounter with the relic is being mediated by sensory experience. To encounter this relic in the context of this reliquary is thus an experience that is primarily mediated through sight. In keeping with Aristotle, many medieval thinkers cast 'sight' as the primary sense among the five senses (see Woolgar, 2006, p. 23). Indeed, popular medieval models of the brain assumed that processing information involved both outer and inner senses—allowing information from the outside world to 'penetrate' into the brain in a fairly literal sense. Avicenna's *De Anima*, which became available in Latin translation in the 1100's, elaborates on the different functions of the five ventricles of the brain (Woolgar, 2006, p. 19). This model differentiates between *imaginatio*, a short-term memory and *memorialis*, located at the back of the head, where these *imagines* are stored. Corinne Saunders describes these *imagines* as 'memory-pictures' that become "imprinted, literally marked on the body through the physiological process triggered by the senses" (Saunders, 2016, p. 413).

The idea of sight as having tangible effects was further supported by the idea that seeing was not a one-sided, purely receptive process. Rather, as Chris Woolgar notes:

> In the medieval world, perception was a more open process, where much might pass not only between perceived and perceiver, but also the other way round, from the perceiver to the object or individual who was the focus of perception. This was a two-way process, at the very least. […] Simply to look upon an object could bring advantage. (Woolgar, 2016)

This extended, reciprocal concept of sight expresses a more fundamental reciprocity between objects and subjects. Such reciprocity lends power to 'things' and makes it possible to detect the forms of 'agency' that can emanate from things or objects as they enter into relationships with the people and things around them.

This sense of agency is particularly pronounced in our engagement with the remains of the dead. Indeed, recent scholarship on distributed forms and networks of agency has prompted scholars such as Zoë Crossland to investigate the 'agency of the dead' in the field of forensic anthropology and conclude that it is necessary

> to move away from a view of agency as inhering only in the living and instead to view it as a collaborative semiotic project that is also shaped and constrained by the dead. (Crossland, 2017, p. 183)

As Crossland's conclusions imply, the 'things' that are left behind when life departs from a body must be regarded as liminal objects in that they inevitably dissolve the subject/object boundary. Thus, as time goes by the 'person' who was buried might become de-subjectivized in the eyes of society. If, years later, the skeleton that person has become is removed from the ground, it would be regarded as an object—'the remains'—rather than as a subject or person. However, the temporality involved in that process already indicates how subjective and debatable that shift from subject to object is. Opinions and feelings may differ as to when such a shift takes place—one grieving relative may feel very differently about this than another grieving relative, and both will have a response to the decomposing body whose emotional complexity far exceeds that of the graveyard attendant with no

connection to the deceased. At the same time, the gradual process suggests that all of these figures will recognize on some level the different stages a dead body must pass through on the journey from being perceived as a full subject to becoming the 'remains' of a subject.

Nor can we feel fully confident that that process is ever complete. Rather, as the renowned historical novelist Hilary Mantel put it in her first BBC Reith lecture on mortality: "We sense the dead have a vital force still" (Mantel, 2017). Her point is not solely that the dead have a vital force, but that we, the living, sense that this is so. As with the relics, it is our senses that prompt us to review the binary distinction between death and vitality. Of the many questions this proposition raises, the two that are most relevant to the following discussion are: Firstly, in what ways is the perceived 'vitality' of the dead predicated on relationships with the living? And, secondly, how does reassessing the vitality or even agency that the dead might develop through such relationships affect the broader boundaries between object and subject, and the networks of social identity, that arise out of those relationships?

One way of approaching these questions is to consider not just reliquaries, but the relics themselves as objects that have been credited with powers that transcend the barriers between the living and the dead. As Julia H. Smith has noted, these "stones and bones cannot be fitted into a world view which sunders materiality and belief, or enforces a rigid distinction between subject and object" (Smith, 2012, p. 144). In order to explore how these hybrid objects interrogate distinctions between subject and object, I will now consider concrete examples of past and present interactions with the remains of the dead and reflect on the dynamic identities that arise out of these encounters.

8.2   Unearthing the Dead at the Free University Berlin

In the summer of 2014, building works in the grounds of the Free University of Berlin unearthed a cache of human bones, buried in what used to be a garden of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute.

The findings attracted particular attention because the location of the bones and their proximity to specimen tags of the type used in biological analysis and experimentation suggested that these were the remains of victims of the Holocaust (*B.Z. Berlin* 2014; *neues deutschland*, 2014). Interest in the finds was compounded by the fact that the scientist known to have been involved in experiments on human bodies at Auschwitz and at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute was the notorious Josef Mengele. Thus the majority of reports on the story mention Mengele and the nearby location of his research institute, while the newspaper *Die Welt* even ran the report under the headline "Did Josef Mengele Dispatch these Grisly Finds?"

(Barthélemy, 2015).[5] While the bones had not been formally identified, they had the potential to stand as tangible evidence of the horrors of Auschwitz remaining buried in the grounds of the Free University, creating a compelling media narrative.

This narrative gained further traction when it emerged that after the university had sent the human remains to a forensic laboratory, they had then been cremated without further examination. It has not been fully clarified how the cremation came about, whether there had been an intention to eventually cremate the bones or whether there was some more fundamental miscommunication between the laboratory and the university (Krause, 2015; Kühne, 2015a). What is clear, however, is that the cremation of the bones shifted the direction of the media narrative within Germany.

Most notably, voices such as those of the historian Götz Aly, were quick to present themselves as being engaged in the exposure of an institutional cover-up. Writing in the *Berliner Zeitung*, Aly claimed that:

> The president of the Free University, Peter-André Alt had important traces of the victims of Josef Mengele surreptitiously destroyed. Now the FU-President Alt, who claims to be aiming for excellence, has ensured that the human remains of these people have ended up in the crematorium after all.[6] (Aly, 2015)

Aly went on to point out that:

> Nonetheless, the FU-President prevented the remains of these people from being analyzed more closely. He let them be cremated on the quiet and when asked about it he explained that 'unfortunately' it had not been possible to obtain 'further details' 'due to the bones having lain there for so long'. That was a blatant lie.[7] (Aly, 2015)

Following the appearance in the *Tagesspiegel* of an article including a vigorous rebuttal from Peter-André Alt—Alt described Aly's accusations as "grossly misleading and untrue" (Kühne, 2015b)—the *Berliner Zeitung* went on to print a retraction of the claims made by Aly (*Berliner Zeitung*, 2015).

This chain of reactions to the bones found at the Free University is a case in point for how remains like these skeletons can generate narratives that shape the institutional and individual identities of those who engage with them. And yet even as cases like this one lend weight to the idea that the dead can exert a form of agency, that power and potential for agency remains dependent upon the unstable association between the bones as objects and the narratives to which they have become attached, in this case partly through the medical tags that were found lying close by

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[5] „War Josef Mengele Absender des grausigen Fundes?" (If not stated otherwise, all originally German texts in this chapter were translated by the author.)

[6] „Der Präsident der Freien Universität, Peter-André Alt hat wichtige Spuren der Opfer von Josef Mengele klammheimlich vernichten lassen. Jetzt hat der vorgeblich auf Exzellenz bedachte FU-Präsident Alt veranlasst, dass die körperlichen Reste dieser Menschen am Ende doch noch ins Krematorium geschoben wurden."

[7] „Dennoch verhinderte der FU-Präsident, dass die Reste dieser Menschen näher untersucht wurden. Er ließ sie stillschweigend einäschern und auf Anfrage erklären, ‚weitere Details' seien ‚aufgrund der langen Liegezeiten der Knochen' ‚leider' nicht zu erfahren gewesen. Das ist plump gelogen."

the bones. In order to explore this interdependency from a cross-period perspective, I will discuss a well-known medieval account of some dubious relics and draw on the work of Sara Ahmed and Gilles Deleuze to anatomize the questions of identity at stake in encounters with objects that have been attached to affective narratives.

8.3   Emotion, Identity, and Encounters with Liminal Objects

Within medieval studies, the so-called 'affective turn' of the past two decades has drawn great attention to the dynamics of affect and the consequences of emotion. Scholars such as Barbara Rosenwein have shed light on the role of emotions in regulating relationships and shaping social structures focused on various aspects of the relationship between piety and affect (Rosenwein, 2007). This relationship is particularly interesting in the context of recent considerations of the social agency and function of objects. For example, one of the central assumptions of Ahmed's theory of 'sticky affect' is that the moment in which a subject encounters an object does not represent a moment of 'infectious affect' in which the subject absorbs atmospheres, moods or impressions from the 'outside-in'. Instead, she regards the boundary between object and subject as permeable in both directions, creating a moment of temporary fusion, in which affect is conjoined. She writes:

> We are moved by things. And in being moved we make things. An object can be affective by virtue of its own location and the timing of its appearance. To experience an object as being affective or sensational is to be directed not only toward an object, but to 'whatever' is around that object, which includes what is behind the object, the conditions of its arrival. (Ahmed, 2010, p. 33)

This concept dovetails with some of the core elements of actor-network theory and, indeed, Deleuze's theory of relational identity, according to which identity continually arises out of the relationship between one object or subject and another (see Deleuze, 1998, p. xxix). This implies that subject-object relationships form a network that generates transient shared identities. In other words, X does not constitute a pre-formed identity with which to encounter Y, rather the encounter between X and Y results in a fused identity, which is superseded by an encounter between X and Z or Y and Z.

This approach has significant repercussions on how we can conceive of the emotional power of objects and the ways in which the narratives to which they are attached can generate identity. Medieval relics offer an interesting example of this dynamic in that they are objects that are associated with emotive narratives. And it is worth noting that these narratives, concerning the suffering or miracles of saints, were often 'attached' to the relics in a surprisingly literal sense, in the form of tags or labels identifying the putative saint from whom the relic derives. Such tags are reminiscent of the specimen tags found on the buried bones at the Free University,

in that they create a tangible link between the human remains as objects and a particular narrative of past suffering, be it historical, as in the case in Berlin, or of more imaginative origin. In doing so, the tags create a doubled reaction to the object of the relic—or 'bone-plus-tag'—which may be *temporally* layered. In those cases where relics were not contained within a reliquary, our very first encounter takes place simply with human or animal remains—this is a moment of generic '*memento mori*' which is not associated with any particular story beyond the universal experience of journeying toward death. However, the link between the bones and the tags creates a second more reflective encounter with the bones as objects representing a tangible link to highly emotive past events.

The link established by the tags is fragile and negotiable in that it depends on how well the tag is attached to the object and on the authenticity of the labelling. If we read the relics as objects that constitute a part of the temporary relational identity of the person observing or interacting with them, then the narratives to which they are attached become vital components of a transient identity. However, there is a constant risk of being forced back upon the initial—the first—encounter with the object as the pre-narrativized or de-narrativized object—just a bone!—and this risk is contingent upon the question of authenticity. If the link between the objects and their narrative is undermined, if, for example, the information on the tags is lost, or doubted to be true, then the first encounter with the anonymous human remains reasserts itself, creating an oscillating identity for the observer engaging with the objects.

In the relic catalogues of the twelfth-century cathedral of Sens, this problem becomes most apparent when the monks come across human remains whose tags have been lost and which now appear to be at risk of losing their power as relics. As Julia H. Smith recounts:

> Faced with two unidentified relic bundles, a Carolingian cleric at Sens compromised by noting that one contained hairs, and the other a bone 'of a certain saint'. Another Sens label simply states: 'here are relics, we do not know what they are.' (Smith, 2012, p. 152)

The implication of retaining and cataloguing these unnamed relics is that if relics are intrinsically sacred objects that have powers, they must continue to have them even when the narrative to which they are attached is not known. And yet knowing the story of the saint whose relics they are represents a key step in the process of identifying with the saint's life and experiencing a transfer of affect from their suffering and fortitude. In this context, a relic that cannot be attributed becomes a paradox that reveals the fault lines underlying the desirable cohesion between the human remains as object and the powerfully affective narratives to which they have been attached. Such fault lines erupt out of anxieties surrounding the possibility of a disconnection between object and narrative and the repercussions that would have for the identity of the person engaging with the purported relic. They also grow out of the oscillating temporality that threatens to develop as soon as the authentic connection between object and narrative is thrown into question.

Just such an oscillation can be seen to unfold in an infamous medieval description of relics: the prologue to Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale*.[8] In introducing himself to his audience, the Pardoner (Fig. 8.2) first recounts how he arrives in new parishes and establishes his authority by producing bills signed not only by popes in the plural, but by bishops, cardinals, and patriarchs. He tells how, building on this wealth of authorization, he swiftly moves on to other sacred objects: relics.

Thus he produces:

> cristal stones,
> Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones —
> Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon. (*The Canterbury Tales* ll. 347–349)[9]

Emphasizing the large number of objects that are then termed relics immediately raises doubts concerning their authenticity. These doubts are confirmed in the following half-line: "Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon" (l. 348), "They are all relics, or so they think." The Pardoner's description of these objects as relics has already been undermined before it has been voiced and the claim is then immediately framed as a supposition on behalf of his audience. He continues:

> Thanne have I in latoun a sholder-boon
> Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheep. (*The Canterbury Tales* ll. 350–351)

In this case, the shoulder bone is literally framed as a relic or holy object by being presented as encased in brass ("in latoun"). Once the object is identified as a relic in the form of a large bone, the following sentence seems set to bear this out by reporting who it belonged to—somebody holy? Somebody Jewish? But no—it's the holy Jew's sheep! This delayed revelation functions as the kind of punchline that contributes to the humorous overtones of Chaucer's style. However, the effect is not simply one of comic deflation. If we conceive of an encounter with objects, even fictional objects, as constituting a transient identity in the observer or reader, then there is much more at stake in Chaucer's evolving presentation of this particular object. In just these five lines, readers have been presented with an openly dissembling speaker, who presents the objects he carries with him in a persistently misleading light. Accordingly, the reader or listener is forced to switch between engaging with the object as a potential relic and being thrown back upon the fact that this is just a bone that has been attached to a deceptive narrative.

This scene reveals Chaucer's interest in the instability with which the relic object and its authenticating narrative are linked. Furthermore, the nuances of pacing and syntactical arrangement in this brief extract suggest that Chaucer is aware of the layering of temporality created by the gradual unfolding of the Pardoner's fraud. Chaucer never makes explicit the full implications of the seeds of doubt planted by

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[8] Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* is one of the tales in his famous fourteenth-century story collection *The Canterbury Tales* in which a group of pilgrims tell each other stories on their way to Canterbury. In the prologue to his tale, the Pardoner recounts how he swindles people out of their money by selling false relics.

[9] All Chaucer references are to *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry D. Benson (1987, pp. 194–195).
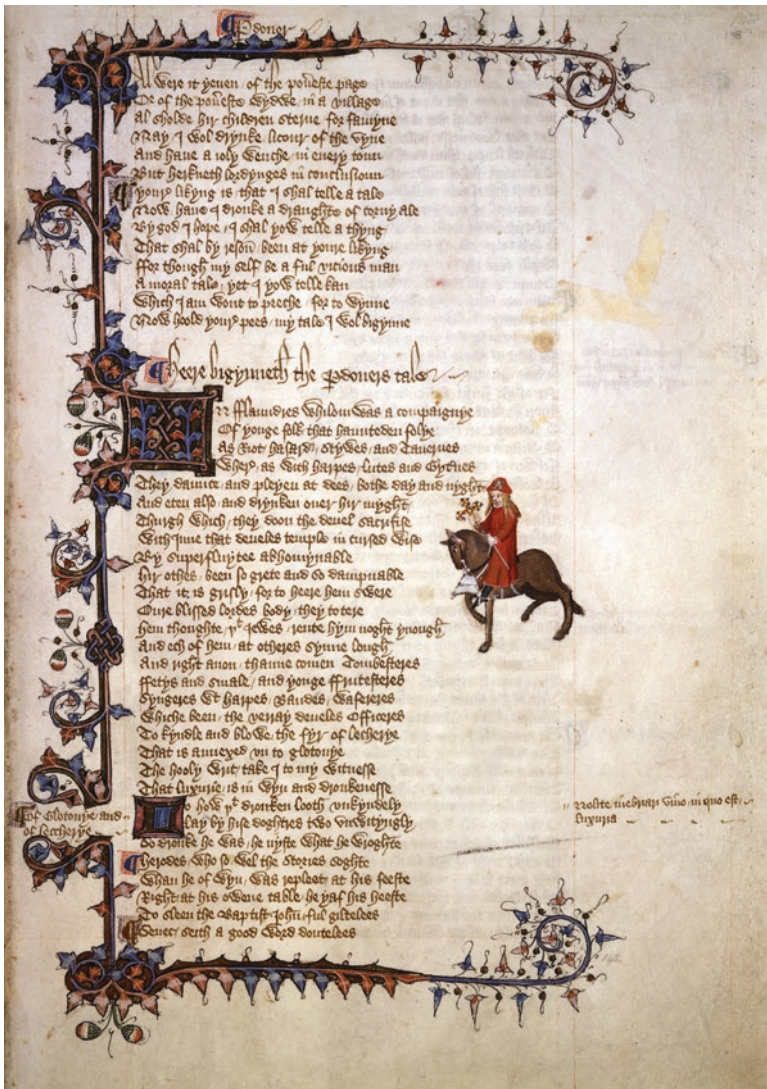
Fig. 8.2 The Pardoner. (*The Canterbury Tales*, Egerton family papers, Ellesmere, f. 138r, mssEL 26 C 9; The Huntington Library, San Marino, California)

the introduction of the Pardoner into his collection of tales. Nonetheless, he leaves room for fundamental religious doubt by not only destabilizing the link between the objects presented as relics and the religious narrative associated with them, but by allowing the Pardoner to openly demonstrate how and why such a link can be fraudulently established for the sake of personal gain. Nor does he stop there. At this point in *The Pardoner's Tale* the fake relics have been extensively contextualized in

terms of the man purveying them. However, the Pardoner goes on to present the relics' power as directly dependent on the moral worth of those seeking access to them:

> If any wight be in this chirche now
> That hath doon synne horrible, that he
> Dar nat, for shame, of it yshryven be,
> Or any womman, be she yong or old,
> That hath ymaked hir housbonde cokewold,
> Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace
> To offren to my relikes in this place. (*The Canterbury Tales* ll. 378–384)

On one level this part of the Pardoner's speech further showcases his duplicitous mastery by illustrating how he pressurizes his audience into buying access to his relics and pre-empts complaints from disappointed buyers. However, it is also predicated on the notion that the power of the relics arises out of the relationship between the object, the holy figure to whom the object is linked, and the contemporary subject engaging with the object.

The Pardoner implies that if that relationship is disturbed, for example by the buyer being in a state of sin, the power of the relic will be out of reach. Where readers might expect to be reassured of the power and grace being channeled through the relics and offered to the person encountering the relic, the role is suddenly reversed and the question raised is not what powers the ostensible relic has, but whether the potential customers are morally able to access the relic's power.

However little we might trust the narrator, this model of reading the relationship between relic and subject suggests that the concept of objects such as relics unfolding their agency in relation to the actions of the living was familiar to medieval readers. That, indeed, to return to Sara Ahmed, the relationship between the relic and the faithful can be read as permeable in both directions in terms of the grace that might pass between them (Ahmed, 2010). Based on this premise, the relic might be said to develop a relational agency not just through offering access to saintly power and divine grace, but also through a denial of that power and grace to those who are not fit to access them.

It seems, then, that the fake relics of Chaucer's Pardoner encapsulate some of the ways in which the dead can retain the kind of 'vital force' that we might read as 'agency'. However, the agency involved here is predicated on the networks of relationships that unfold between the remains of the dead and the people or institutions engaging with them. So it is that hybrid objects, like relics or the bones excavated at the Free University invite us to develop a world-view in which the boundaries between subject and object are dissolved in order to encompass the transient, conjoined social identities such objects engender.

In the case of the reliquaries discussed above and the relics in *The Pardoner's Tale*, those relationships and identities are strongly mediated by the senses and by vision in particular. The act with which the Pardoner produces the fake relics from his bag is arresting because he is allowing the viewer to lay eyes on a purported relic. Yet at the same time, the extent to which the supposed relics are fully available to be accessed by all the senses—they are jumbled up in bags and could conceivably be felt, smelt and heard as well as seen—offends the presumed sanctity of valuable relics, sensory access to which would more usually be controlled by a reliquary.

Where the Pardoner's bag suggests disorder and entanglement, the reliquary speaks of a deliberate *mise-en-scene*, which hides and reveals the relic to a calculated degree and guides the observer's responses by embedding the relic within a visual or verbal narrative. By creating the figure of the Pardoner and placing the fake relics in his bag, Geoffrey Chaucer in turn performs a more literary *mise-en-scene*, which guides the reader to be skeptical of the Pardoner's offerings.

By contrast, first encounters with mass graves are rarely presented as having been set in scene. Rather, even when a mass grave is being described in carefully calibrated audio-visual media reports, the language used is that of surprise and revelation. Such graves are presented as having been 'discovered' or—less frequently— 'uncovered'—either following forensic investigations or historical evidence. And, indeed, one of the first moments of dislocation concerning the mass grave must be the moment in which such a grave is uncovered, and its contents are exposed to view. The act of opening a grave has the potential to invoke the shame of grave robbery. Depending on who is encountering the grave and how the grave came about, observers may risk breaking a taboo by uncovering the bodies of the dead and invading what many cultures call 'their peace'. For that reason alone, 'laying bare' a mass grave implies an act of desecration.

The potential shock effect of the mass grave is also influenced by questions of scale—where the single bone that might be contained in a reliquary is shown to be precious, delicate and above all sacred in part because of its rarity, the mass grave presents us with an excess: a pile of bones whose haphazard burial presents a risk of reducing the bones, and by implication the deceased lying in the grave, to an undifferentiated mass. The meaning of a relic, on the other hand, is constructed upon the idea of the extraordinary. The exceptional qualities associated with a relic are emphasized by the reliquary in which it might be encased, and it is given unique meaning by its association with a specific hagiographical narrative. The implication is that engaging with a relic requires some form of acknowledgement of the sanctified biography it results from and places the onus on the person encountering the relic to have the necessary knowledge to respond correctly. In this encounter, the bone itself figures as meaningful through its contextualization and the story associated with it. To come across the same bone without that contextualization would be to 'misunderstand' it and to disturb the link between the object and its sanctity. The human remains in a mass grave evoke very different responses. One of the defining features of bodies in mass graves is that the link between the skeletons and the biographies of the deceased is at risk of being lost or eroded. If a relic is honored as a very specific human remnant, then a mass grave illustrates how human remains can become stripped of their biographical ties.

8.4   Encounters with Mass Graves in Jamlitz, Brandenburg

In order to explore the individual and social responses evoked by such a threatened stripping down of identity, I will turn now to the excavations in the Brandenburg village of Jamlitz. Jamlitz is situated practically on top of the former site of the Nazi

satellite concentration camp Lieberose. Until the end of the German Democratic Republic, the events that had taken place there were known to the State Security Service (Stasi) but had been largely kept quiet. In 1971, the Stasi's first response to discovering a mass grave containing 544[10] of the 1342 previously missing victims of Nazi genocide was to extract and melt down the gold fillings from their teeth, producing just over a kilogram of gold that was dutifully documented and handed over to the department of finance (Kulick, 2008). The rest of the human remains they had uncovered were cremated. However, while these events took place out of the public eye, between 1998 and 2008 the village became the focus of increasing media attention, as local historians and archaeologists planned to have a site near the center of the village excavated (Jähnel, 2009). Their aim was to recover and properly commemorate the missing bodies of the remaining 700 Holocaust victims who had been imprisoned in the concentration camp and were known to have been shot and buried somewhere in the vicinity in February 1945.

Public opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of the excavation. Historians, archaeologists, politicians, administrators, survivor groups, and members of the German Central Counsel of Jews, among others, were unanimous in calling for the bodies thought to be buried there to be identified and properly commemorated (Jähnel, 2009; Schlichtermann, 2009). The central figure who was against an excavation was the absentee owner of the plot of land on which the mass grave was believed to be located, Hans-Jürgen H., who refused to sell his property and successfully denied the archaeological team access to his land for ten years, insisting above all that no memorial should be erected on the land (Berg, 2007). His point of view was supported by locals including his neighbor, Mr. N., who demanded that a line should finally be drawn under the matter in order to achieve closure (Möller, 2008).

A lengthy legal battle followed, in which the interior ministry of Brandenburg took the view that

> it is justified that the survivors and descendants should seek certainty concerning the fate of their relatives, to facilitate an appropriate and dignified rest for the dead and an appropriate honoring of their memory.[11] (Kulick, 2008)

This point of view was rejected by the regional court, however, which concluded that the mere supposition of a burial ground did not offer a sufficient justification for disowning a private property owner (Kulick, 2008). This ruling was met with widespread criticism, Anetta Kahane, from the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, described the case as illustrating

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[10] Other reports mention 577 skeletons (e.g. Möller, 2008).

[11] „[e]s sei das berechtigte Anliegen Hinterbliebener, Gewissheit über das Schicksal ihrer Angehörigen zu erlangen, diesen eine würdige Totenruhe und sich selbst ein würdiges Gedenken zu ermöglichen."

how thin the layer of ice covering the German history of unique crimes is. There are corpses buried just a few centimeters below the surface of our everyday life.[12] (Kulick, 2008)

Moreover, Kahane was eager to point out the historical continuities between the GDR government's hushing up of the existence of the mass graves and the current court ruling hindering the excavation. She pointed out:

The cold-hearted indifference of this course of action, the distortion of history and the silence surrounding the Jewish victims may have been characteristic of the GDR, but has anything really changed?[13] (Kulick, 2008)

Kahane's response exemplifies the broader implications of this discussion where the court's decision suggests that the property rights of the living, in this case of Hans-Jürgen H., have precedence over the rights of the dead to have their resting place known and honored.

Finally, Hans-Jürgen H. was persuaded to sell the land to the local authority for an undisclosed sum of money, making the excavation possible. Throughout the negotiations, the case was extensively reported on, and a second narrative theme began to emerge alongside the question of where the grave might be found. Increasingly, journalists and others speculated as to why Hans-Jürgen H. and many of his neighbors were so opposed to the excavation, giving rise to the suspicion that not all residents of Jamlitz were sympathetic to the suffering of the Holocaust victims whose grave was being sought (Berg, 2007; Wendler, 2008).

8.5   Encounters with Mass Graves in Bosnia

Over the past two decades, similarly emotional issues concerning national and local history have been raised by the mass graves that have been excavated, in some cases repeatedly in Bosnia. In this context, a 2016 Mosaic Report (Vulliamy, 2016a) which was also featured in the *Guardian* (Vulliamy, 2016b) is illuminating. The article describes the mass graves that are now being exhumed in Bosnia and the genocide and grave-robbing the reassembled bodies bear witness to. "Who were these people?" asks the author, Ed Vulliamy, describing how the clothes and possessions the bodies have been matched with have been laid at the foot of each set of bones (Vulliamy, 2016b). The photograph that accompanies the report is initially jarring: the rows of human skeletons shown seem familiar, but the cheap trestle tables on which they are arranged present an incongruous setting for human remains.

In the picture at the top of the *Guardian* article, the setting has been blacked out so that we see only one disjointed skeleton, lying as if in darkness or inside the earth itself. The result is a widely recognizable image of death—broadly reminiscent of

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[12] „wie dünn das Eis über der deutschen Geschichte einzigartiger Verbrechen ist. Nur wenige Zentimeter unter der Oberfläche unseres Alltagslebens liegen die Leichen."

[13] „Die kaltherzige Gleichgültigkeit dieses Vorgehens, die Geschichtsverdrehungen und das Verschweigen jüdischer Opfer mag für die DDR charakteristisch gewesen sein. Doch hat sich daran etwas geändert?"

the figures that dance across the foreground in medieval images of the *danse maca-bre*. The difference is that these are not complete, animated skeletons imagined in some riotous dance. They are not abstract images of death, but the remains of real bodies, whose violent deaths become visible in the incompleteness of the skeletons. And yet, the details of the report show that these assemblages of bones are themselves as much implicated in processes of storytelling as the animated skeletons of the *danse macabre*.

As the article describes, the skeletons that have been recovered in Bosnia were not all found intact, rather, many of them have been reassembled on the basis of DNA evidence (Vulliamy, 2016a). They bear the traces of having been buried in mass graves and then reburied in new mass graves, whose location closer to areas of military conflict was apparently intended to cover up the implication of genocide (Vulliamy, 2016a). It seems that the very location of the bones has been instrumentalized by one group involved in the Bosnian conflict to tell a misleading story about how the people buried in these mass graves met their death. Yet, the implied narrative was not believed, and the bones have been exhumed to allow them to tell another story on the basis of DNA samples and the evidence offered by the possessions found nearby. Clearly the hope for survivors and relatives is that this story will be a more 'authentic' one and will identify the bodies of the dead sufficiently to bury them and bring about a sense of closure.

As survivor Zijad Bačić explains:

> I never thought I'd come back here, but I couldn't sleep without knowing […] what happened? Where were they? I had to find my missing father, all my uncles, and to find where they had buried my mother, younger brother and sister. (Vulliamy, 2016a)

As this case suggests, the 'voices' of the dead are particularly loud and contradictory where the official version of the history in which they play a part has not yet been settled to the satisfaction of all the stakeholders still living.

The bodies being exhumed in Bosnia, like the increasing number of relics circulating in thirteenth-century France, have been contextualized in ways that offer cause for doubt or even anxiety to those invested in truly identifying the remains they are confronted with. Thus, a diverse group of medieval stories, ranging from fabliaux to Helgaud's biography of King Robert II of France (996–1031) include descriptions of the purposeful use of empty reliquaries to swear dishonest oaths, suggesting that contemporary Christians were well aware of the uncertainty attached to honoring unseen relics (Bartlett, 2013, pp. 313–314). In the case of the Yugoslav Wars, the people who reburied the bodies in new mass graves were attempting to rewrite recent history and the part they may have played in it. Meanwhile, later medieval accounts of the affective piety associated with medieval relics suggest that medieval Christians who believed in salvation history also felt that the moral battles in which their saints took part were still unfolding, making them stakeholders with similarly acute anxieties and desires concerning the authenticity of the relics they had access to and the stories with which they were associated (McNamer, 2010, pp. 1–21).

However, as the excavations in Bosnia show, what stands at the center of the social effects unfolding out of the excavation of mass graves is not the graves themselves, but their potential to change the self-perception or self-presentation of those engaging with them. This potential can take unexpected forms, as responses to mass graves are surprisingly varied, ranging from shock and outrage to curiosity and amusement. This, for example, is how the urbanism magazine *CityMetric* reported on the discovery of a mass burial of early modern plague victims in London in 2015:

> The 1665–6 plague outbreak in London, called the Great Plague, killed an estimated 100,000 people, around a quarter of the city's population. If the Crossrail skeletons do turn out to be from that time, the dig could end up being a groundbreaking one, both for historians, and for virologists working on the virus today. (Boland, 2015)

The caption on the picture accompanying the report brings in an element of black humor, writing "Well, doctor, I've felt better." Another picture from the same report is captioned "I see dead people" (Boland, 2015). In this instance, the emphasis is not on shame, but on scientific and archaeological curiosity, leavened by a more distanced, historicizing perspective on the plague. Clearly, the immense difference between a mass grave containing the long-dead victims of disease and a mass grave containing somewhat more recent victims of murder or genocide is significant in shaping any public response. Indeed, the shock of discovering mass burial of murder victims, such as those discussed in Jamlitz already represents a response not to human remains in themselves, but to the historical events that they bear witness to. What appears to be an immediate and unmediated response to the 'thing' that is a remnant of humanity, is in fact already a response to an implied narrative, within which the thing has become an object.

At this point it is illuminating to consider Ahmed's discussion of 'happy objects'—objects that become attached to a happy affect or emotion. She describes the association between object and affect, in this case happiness, as arising out of and being shaped by the intent of the subject encountering that object. She writes:

> Orientations register the proximity of objects, as well as shape what is proximate to the body. Happiness can thus be described as intentional in the phenomenological sense (directed toward objects), as well as being affective (contact with objects). (Ahmed, 2010, p. 32)

This implies that a thing that is not associated with affect on our first encounter with it can become a 'happy object' through proximity to happiness. It follows that some form of temporality plays a role in how objects that become associated with affect are experienced, as our first encounter with them will involve attributing affect to an object that is at first sight neutral. This raises the question of how one might engage with such dualism. Is it perhaps like a brainteaser picture, where you can see either the two heads in profile or the vase but never both at the same time?

Such an oscillating, temporally layered effect has vital consequences for encounters with objects that evoke strong emotional responses. In the case of a relic, experiencing the 'thing' as a 'thing'—for example a piece of bone—rather than an 'object' attached to a narrative calls into question not only the presence of the saint,

but the entire apparatus of religious symbolism that bridges the chasm between the faithful and heaven itself. More worryingly, perhaps, it disrupts the chain of signification that justifies the value of the reliquary and the acts of faith associated with it. Similarly, every encounter with a fully enclosed relic raises on some level the possibilities that the relic itself is not real, that a real relic might not have the powers ascribed to it, or, perhaps even, that the reliquary is empty and contains no relic at all. As we have seen above, these possibilities are a key factor in shaping encounters with things that have become attached to affective narratives.

The same is true of mass graves, which evoke very different responses depending on the form and context in which they are encountered and the events that led up to the mass-burial. The moment of laying open these graves can be followed by very different reactions. These depend on the pre- and postmortem biographies implied by the context that the location and contents of each grave offer. Thus, how the living engage with the 'things' that are human remains is already shaped by a biographical lens that turns those things into affective objects. That lens might be, for example, either the scientific curiosity associated with the plague pit, or the sense of tragedy associated with the mass graves of Holocaust victims.

If we adopt Gilles Deleuze's model of identity as consisting of a series of transient states generated by shifting and overlapping networks of relationships to people and things, then these objects and the affect associated with them can be regarded as generating a transient identity in conjunction with the observer (Deleuze, 1998; Prodgers, 2013). As with medieval relics, modern observers of mass graves enter into a triangulated relationship with powerfully affective objects and the narratives that they are attached to, which provide ample room for positive and negative identification.

The suffering embodied by mass graves that testify to mass murder echoes in part the narratives of suffering in saints' lives, many of which depict innocent victims of extreme injustice and inhuman cruelty. Engaging with objects that have been at the 'living center' of these events allows people from later eras to position themselves within these narratives of intense human suffering, while remaining on the right side of history. It follows therefore, that for those engaging with the remains of the dead in reliquaries and mass graves such as the one discussed at Jamlitz, the stakes in terms of identity are very high. The difference between experiencing yourself as the owner of a precious relic that can offer you saintly protection and experiencing yourself as someone who has been duped into a buying a fake or empty reliquary is immense. In Jamlitz, where the events of 1945 have been closely documented, the question is not what happened, but where the remains of those murdered can be found. Nonetheless, this question too has the potential to shape the relationships and identities of the people engaging with the land and landowners in question.

Famously, the dead tell no stories—so the transient identities and powerful emotions engendered by engaging with the human remains are at constant risk of becoming dislocated through a disruption of supposed links between the remains, their location, and the biographies with which they are associated. The historical

stories in which onlookers and participants believe themselves to be involved are therefore at risk of becoming intangible or unexpectedly changing course. This is what occurred in April 2009, when the excavations in the disputed area of Jamlitz commenced, accompanied by a furore of media attention and in the presence of political and religious representatives, only to find that there was no second mass grave at that site. In this respect, the discussion surrounding that particular piece of land resembles the many medieval reliquaries that we now know to have remained empty. In both cases the belief that they contained human remains associated with powerfully affective past events was sufficient to generate intense effects on contemporary observers, testifying to the great power exerted not only by human remains but by the very idea of their physical presence or proximity (Bartlett, 2013, pp. 313–314).

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Chapter 9
The Graves When They Open, Will Be Witnesses Against Thee: Mass Burial and the Agency of the Dead in Thomas Dekker's Plague Pamphlets

Sarah Briest

9.1 Introduction

In 2015 archaeologists accompanying the construction of the Crossrail railway line—cutting through London on an east-west axis—were tasked with the excavation of the New Churchyard (also known as Bethlem or Bedlam burial ground), a municipal cemetery in use from 1563 to 1739. In the southeast corner of the former graveyard (now the site of Liverpool Street Station), they discovered a seventeenth-century mass grave containing plague victims (confirmed by molecular paleopathologists at the Max Planck Institute, Jena, Germany). It was notable that those buried in the grave (originally circa one hundred individuals) had been placed in orderly stacks and rows and that care had been taken to ensure that uncoffined individuals and child burials would not be disturbed by subsequent coffin placements (cf. Hartle, 2017). Recent work by Cessford et al. (2021) also suggests that, contrary to previous perception, victims of the second plague pandemic not infrequently received funerary treatments indistinguishable from non-plague burials. Their analysis of Cambridge gravesites from the later medieval period, moreover, revealed that

> [i]ndividuals in mass burials, at least those dating to the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, were generally laid out in a careful and respectful manner in an extended supine position with their heads to the west replicating the practice of individual burials as far as possible. (Cessford et al., 2021, p. 513)

Contrary to the respectful and orderly treatment of the plague dead suggested by these finds, Thomas Dekker's descriptions of plague-time burial emphasize practices so dehumanizing that even the dead themselves perceive them as shameful

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and humiliating. Inconsistencies and contradictions almost inevitably arise where archaeology meets literary studies yet these do not attest to the incompatibility of the disciplines. Rather, the complexities of thought and practice they hint at clearly show the desirability of synergetic engagement. In the following pages, an examination of Dekker's plague pamphlets demonstrates how the written word—neither to be discounted nor to be taken at face value—engages with mortuary practices and artifacts in a way that may not, after all, be so foreign to the archaeological enterprise.

Dekker's pamphlets recount devastating, large-scale outbreaks of bubonic plague in early modern London, chronicling a metropolitan state of crisis in which normality is suspended and a majority of Londoners live in mortal fear of the dead and the dying—while country folk live in mortal fear of Londoners. *The Wonderfull Yeare* (Dekker, 1603/1924) is Dekker's account of the terrible 'visitation' that reached London in 1603 and which, by the time it had run its course, had killed at least 20% of the city's population.[1] Dekker collaborated with Thomas Middleton on *Newes from Graves-end: Sent to Nobody*, a further literary processing of the 1603 plague (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a). The pair combined their efforts once more on *The Meeting of Gallants at an Ordinarie* (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925b). Dekker's satirical solo-effort *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* (Dekker, 1606) contains illuminating references to the plague and to burial practices though the text is not first and foremost a plague text and was not published in a major plague year (still, the plague continued to claim victims in London from 1606 to 1610). While his *A Rod for Run-awayes* (Dekker, 1625/1925) commemorates the urban catastrophe occasioned by the epidemic of 1625 when the plague killed upward of 15% of the ever-increasing metropolitan population, *London Looke Backe* (Dekker, 1630/1925) is a retrospective handling of that year's great mortality. There were both practical and ideological impulses compelling Dekker to pen and publish these pamphlets. First of all, plague in the city inevitably led to the cessation of much public life, including theatre-going. To secure their livelihoods, playwrights had to adjust their output to the circumstances and many turned to writing poetry, prose or verse narratives directly for the print market. In addition to these practical financial imperatives, Dekker used the medium of the pamphlet to communicate his unease (in a variety of styles and voices) about goings-on in the disease-ridden city. He indicts sins—committed in a climate of utter crisis—against the infected and their mortal remains. In his pamphlets Dekker laments that plague victims may be treated in death like convicted criminals or suicides but his especial horror is reserved for

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[1] The plague often entered via seaports and was subsequently carried along trade routes. The 1603 London epidemic was anticipated by outbreaks in Hull and Great Yarmouth in 1602 (Slack, 1985, p. 13); the 1625 epidemic was preceded by an outbreak in Scarborough in 1624, while an epidemic in 1635 in North Shields preceded the 1636 outbreak in London. The plague was once more in Great Yarmouth in 1664 before the final major London epidemic of 1665 (Slack, 1985, p. 66). Still, Slack also notes that "even if we ignore years in which less than hundred casualties were notified, plague was present in 28 of the 64 years between 1603 and 1666. It was therefore endemic in London for much, perhaps most, of the early seventeenth century" (Slack, 1985, p. 147).

the mass grave which he understands as the worst possible affront to the dignity of the deceased.

9.2 Narrating the Plague

As a 'plague narrator' Dekker adopts a stylized personality matching his melancholy role. The dead—with whom he claims to have an intimate connection—haunt and inspire him and they reveal their late and ongoing suffering to him. Not only is Dekker their mouthpiece and advocate, he is equipped with all the paraphernalia befitting that position. Fittingly, his ink is kept in a human skull and consists of "teares of widowes, (black as Stix)," while for parchment he makes use of "a folded winding sheete" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 82). As 'advocatus mortuorum' Dekker's self-professed aim is to solicit compassion for the dead and induce even the most hard-hearted to "shead ∕ One drop (at least) for him that's dead" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 82). Dekker-the-plague-writer is well aware that the dead have unfinished mortal business and he is eager to help communicate this to the survivors.

Furthermore, Dekker levels harsh criticism at well-off city-dwellers who desert London, their "disconsolate Mother (the City) in the midst of her sorrowes" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 145), to seek personal safety in the country.[2] The reasons for this condemnation are twofold: first, the plague-time exodus from London is characterized by social injustice (the poor must remain behind and the toll it takes on them is disproportionately high) and, secondly, it demonstrates insufficient faith in divine omnipotence. The plague is God's scourge, after all, and the wrath of the deity neither can nor should be outrun. Dekker does not give credence to the idea of plague-spreading miasma (toxic fumes in the air), nor does he subscribe to the idea of contagion, i.e. the interpersonal transmission of the disease. If the plague really were in the air (miasma), he argues, it would "[i]n flakes of poyson drop on all" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 83) and there would be no survivors at all. If it were passed directly from person to person—by infectious breath, for instance—contact with the infected would always result in illness and, quite possibly, death. Since some people do survive close contact with plague victims, however, and since it is impossible to trace the disease back to a specific human originator, Dekker concludes that the contagionist position must also be inaccurate (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 84).[3] Instead, sin at the core of each individual

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[2] Luther's *Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague* (1527) discussed the same conundrum, as did Calvin in 1560 (Slack, 1985, p. 41).

[3] While theoretically incompatible, in practice there was no conflict between concepts of miasma and contagion in English discussions of plague until the later seventeenth century (Slack, 1985, p. 28).

(conceivable like a 'plaguey worm') provokes the disease.[4] What is more, a disease which is not transmitted by natural means is not curable by natural means. Instead of seeking medical help, so Dekker, one should rather look toward Christian humility and repentance as the true "Physitian" (Dekker, 1630/1925, p. 188).[5] Although his refutation of contagion was at odds with the establishment credo—which generally sought a compromise position between religious and natural explanations and sought to contain the plague by containing the infected—Dekker's perspective was not uncommon. As a matter of course, his contemporaries pondered the relative importance of first causes: direct divine intervention, and second causes: natural channels through which God works indirectly; they applied themselves to questions of theodicy and the earthly responsibilities of men and women.[6] On the one hand, despite the risk of infection, one was duty-bound to administer Christian charity to those in need. On the other hand, self-preservation and the protection of one's family were powerful, legitimate motives and biblical evidence for both positions was cited. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, the voice of the clerical elite, argued for avoiding infected people and places (Gilman, 2009, p. 146), while low-church writer Henoch Clapham fervently opposed this stance (Gilman, 2009, p. 150, 174).

Plague orders, first printed in 1579, introduced measures intended to check the spread of the disease in London by identifying the infected and isolating entire households for a minimum of 4 weeks.[7] Self-interest—the wish to avoid economic disaster and, at its most basic, the will to survive—meant that many cases of plague were not made known to the authorities so as to avoid the misery of quarantine.[8]

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[4] Thomas Moulton's c. 1475 adaptation of John of Burgundy's fourteenth-century plague treatise popularized a view of the plague as divine retribution that was to be dominant throughout the following centuries across Europe (Keiser, 2003, p. 300).

[5] There are rare exceptions to this strictly pious attitude, however, such as the dedication of *A Rod for Run-awayes* to surgeon Thomas Gilham, whose surviving patients are likened to works of art: "Many of your excellent Pieces haue beene (and are to bee) seene in this City" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 137).

[6] Gilman surmises: "At the point of its inadmissible failure, theodicy can only fall back on Luther's argument that as long as there is no higher standard of justice against which the divine conduct can be measured, '[w]hat God wills … must be right because He so wills it'" (Gilman, 2009, p. 145).

[7] As early as 1518 infected houses in London were to be marked by straw bundles hung from windows for 40 days and anyone who left a marked house was to carry a white stick when out (Slack, 1985, p. 201). The first book of plague orders was reprinted with only minor alterations in 1592, 1593, 1603, and 1625 (Slack, 1985, p. 209). It was included in statutes on social policy in 1609, 1630, 1636, 1646, and "radically revised" only in May 1666, when the plague had run its course in the British Isles (Slack, 1985, p. 209). The Plague Act of 1604 introduced sanctions against the infected. Any inhabitant from an isolated house found in the street could be treated as a vagrant rogue and whipped, while a person found with plague marks on their body was principally a felon and could face death by hanging (Slack, 1985, p. 211). However, there is no evidence that any plague victims were in fact ever punished as felons (Slack, 1985, p. 212).

[8] In William Muggins' *London's Mourning Garment* (1603), a father laments, "I cannot sell today, / One jot of work that all of us have wrought. / In every shop, I have for money sought, / And can take none, your hunger to sustain" (Muggins, 1603/2012, ll. 556–559); waterman John Taylor confirms that in plague time, "[a]ll trades are dead or almost out of breath, / But such as live by

Even if one was so lucky as to escape death (as roughly one third of those infected with bubonic plague did), the experience of the disease itself was an ordeal to say nothing of the trauma of enforced quarantine. While fear of the plague could be the reason for wary estrangements between all manner of people, servants, both male and female, and apprentices were especially vulnerable. While, in general, masters were deemed responsible for their ailing underlings, plague jeopardized all social ties and dependents often found themselves turned out when they were suspected of carrying the infection. This, laments Decker, led to people dying "in the open Streets," in "Entries, and Stables," "in the common High-wayes, and in the open Fields, on Pads of Straw […], vnpittyed, vnrelieued, vnknowne" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 166). Having been turned out from their own abodes, these unfortunate outcasts would have been hard pressed to find charity elsewhere, with all of London and the surrounding counties wary of potential sources of infection.

In his pamphlets, Dekker illustrates sin and suffering in plague-ridden London both by reference to the exploits and hardships of individual city-dwellers (husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, merchants, servants, or physicians) and with the help of a common personification metaphor: the infected urban body of the anthropomorphic city can become a proxy for the populace.[9] This she-city delivers ailing or stillborn children and suffers widowhood—again and again—while her own diseased corpus struggles to reabsorb her dying offspring. Whereas anthropomorphic London is celebrated in paeans and pageantry—Dekker himself had penned the Lord Mayor's Shows of 1627, 1628 and 1629—it is this morbid version of the metropolis that Dekker is concerned with in his guise as a plague narrator. London's metaphorical widowhood and general state of bereavement are recurrent images in his pamphlets (and early modern writing on the plague in general). Ernest Gilman has argued that, in the absence of plague saints like Palermo's Rosalia and Venice's Thecla, London itself becomes "a pale replica of these powerful female saints" (Gilman, 2009, p. 248). Yet London is never wholly saint. 'She' is always a dual entity—saint *and* whore: chaste wife, caring mother but also depraved, licentious hag. Nor does plague-time London have the power to intercede with an angry god. The city is as much at the mercy of the disease as her constituents are.

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sickness, or by death: / The Mercers, Grocers, Silk-men, Goldsmiths, Drapers, / Are out of season, like noon-burning Tapers" (Taylor, 1625/2012, ll. 257–260).

[9] The personified city, as the feminine face of the infection, frequently serves as an illustration of urban corruption by reference to pregnancy and childbirth: The year 1625—witnessing both the death of James I and a major plague epidemic—is described as "a yeare, great with Childe of wonder," moving toward a "Prodigious Birth" (Dekker, 1630/1925, p. 176). In the epidemic of that year, "[t]he Citty so much of her Body lost, / That she appear'd, a ghastly, headlesse Ghost" (Dekker, 1630/1925, p. 178). In *The Seven Deadly Sinnes*, Dekker accuses: "There is a Cruelty within thee (faire Troynouant) worse and more barbarous then all the rest, because it is halfe against thy owne selfe, and halfe against thy Dead Sonnes and Daughters. Against thy dead children wert thou cruell in that dreadfull, horrid, and Tragicall yeere, when 30,000 of them (struck with plagues from heauen) dropt downe in winding-sheets at thy feet" (Dekker, 1606, p. 87). The city is rendered "[d]isrobd'e, disgracte" and "scornd of all the world" in the outbreak of 1603, a prisoner inside her "owne walles" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 90).

As a citizen waiting out the epidemic in his London quarters, Dekker occasionally highlights his precarious position, arguing that "albeit, no man at any time is assured of life, yet no man (within the memory of man) was euer so neere death as now" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 166). He stresses a nearness in space and time to the recounted events and remarks on his vulnerability vis-a-vis the destructive force of the disease. Whereas, in principle, this vulnerability should be unaffected by proximity to infected people and places (after all, Dekker sees in the plague the direct hand of God), in practice he cannot entirely discount the empirical evidence. Flight did offer protection from the plague, as did affluence. The poor were hit hardest by the plague and not—as authorities warned—because of their lewd morals.[10] Crowded housing and the greater presence of rats in poorer neighborhoods contributed to the high incidence of plague there. Especially in seventeenth-century epidemics poor parishes were hit harder than prosperous ones. There were also notable differences in mortality within parishes depending on such local features as the construction of buildings and population density (Slack, 1985, p. 168). By the 1660s the correlation of poverty and plague was common knowledge, to the point that the town clerk of Norwich noted: "We are in greater fear of the poor than the plague" (cit. in Slack, 1985, p. 143).[11]

The disproportionate presence of the disease among the poor—combined with the knowledge that it could not be relied on to respect social distinctions—certainly had an influence on the countermeasures devised and implemented by the Crown and civic authorities. Like the plague itself, they hit the poor the hardest.

The combined effects of epidemic disease and social inequality all too often left the poor "in sorrow, in sicknesse, in penury, in vnpitied disconsolations" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 147), prompting Dekker and Middleton to dub the plague of 1603 "the Beggers plague" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 97). It is before this background that the recent warnings of historian Paul Slack and bioarchaeologist Sharon DeWitte are pertinent: Slack points out—recalling the argument laid out forcefully by Susan Sontag (1978/2009) in *Illness as Metaphor* with regard to cancer—that in discourses of disease we should beware of inadvertently (and erroneously) scapegoating its victims (Slack, 2012, p. 117). DeWitte, meanwhile, takes a stance against the misinterpretation of the work of bioarchaeologists as demonstrating the 'benefits' of epidemic disease for the surviving population—supposedly illustrated by general improvements in health post-Black Death (DeWitte, 2019, p. 114). In truth, living standards improved after 1350 but the plague never functioned remotely like a Malthusian check on insupportable demographic growth.

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[10] At the same time, the mass flight from the metropolis of the well-off contributed to the relatively higher plague mortality among the poor in seventeenth-century outbreaks. In previous centuries mass flight had not been as common a phenomenon (Slack, 1985, p. 167).

[11] Rat fleas transmitted plague bacteria (*Yersinia pestis*) from rodent to human. It is unclear whether human fleas might have played a role in interhuman transmission (Slack, 1985, p. 11). In any case, contemporary medical discourse is free of references to rats and fleas in discussions of epidemic transmission (Slack, 1985, p. 11). Domestic animals (cats, dogs, pigs), on the other hand, were suspected of spreading the disease and culled regularly during epidemics.

For DeWitte speculation on the alleged boon of the plague loses sight of the most important observation, namely

> that decreased social inequities in access to food or other resources might have resulted in lower mortality rates during the epidemic. (DeWitte, 2019, p. 119)[12]

Dekker—though generally sympathetic toward individual plague victims—also rehearses contemporary views eerily akin to the Malthusian fallacy criticized above. Together, Dekker and Middleton state:

> We would conclude (still vrging[13] pittie)
> A Plague's the Purge to clense a Cittie:
> Who amongst millions can deny
> (In rough prose, or smooth Poesie)
> Of Euils,[14] tis the lighter broode,
> A dearth of people, then of foode! (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 102)

In lines of iambic tetrameter, the duo argue that the plague wipes out a 'surplus' of people whose very presence supposedly constitutes the threat of famine—a fear-mongering scenario not borne out by contemporary records relating to agricultural production and epidemic disease at all. Furthermore, it is a certain kind of people who comprise an 'expendable' overpopulation: the poor and idle who would rather give

> Themselves to wast, deface and spoyle,
> Than to increase (by vertuous toyle) […] (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 103)

Writing on his own two decades later, Dekker invokes the common argument that the plague strikes when countries or cities "grow ranke and too full" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 143), but insists that it strikes first and foremost in punishment of collective sin, not as a means of population control. Yet, despite this acknowledgement of general human culpability, when he recounts the fates of ordinary Londoners affected by the disease (like a poor servant mistreated by his master or an ailing mother and child abandoned in the street), his attitude becomes immeasurably more humane. The stories Dekker recounts, however, are for the most part based on report and rumor (many hailing from a familiar stock of plague anecdotes), notwithstanding Dekker's first-hand knowledge of plague-time London and the eye witness persona he cultivates as a narrator. While this was a common writerly tactic, not all of Dekker's observations—especially those relating to funerary practices—are commonplace.

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[12] Furthermore, misperceptions of their work may paint bioarchaeologists "as callous scientists, impervious to the loss of life and psychosocial trauma associated with disease and other crises in the past and present" (DeWitte, 2019, p. 120), and more generally serve to discredit and vilify scientists in an increasingly anti-intellectual climate (DeWitte, 2019, pp. 121–122).

[13] "urging"

[14] "Evils"

9.3   Shaming Dead Bodies: Criminals, Suicides, and the Plague Dead

The plague fundamentally affected the relationship of the living to the dead. Burials were conducted under the cover of night, the number of mourners allowed at the gravesite was limited, and rituals of mourning and separation, such as wakes and funeral sermons, were curtailed. Dekker laments that

> the poore man is hurried to his Graue[15] by nasty slouenly Bearers, in the night, without followers, without friends, without rites of buriall commonly vsed in our Church (Dekker, 1625/1925, pp. 144–145).

According to John Davies' *The Triumph of Death*, the dead were collected on plague carts, conveyed to already crowded cemeteries "by cartloads" (Davies, 1603/2012, l. 346), and deposited in mass graves. Under normal circumstances, the dead were buried in single graves oriented toward the East (i.e. Jerusalem) (Tarlow, 2010, p. 105–106, 107).[16] At the height of plague epidemics, however, coffins and single graves could become luxuries. Even shrouds, laments Dekker, might be denied to plague victims. With supplies depleted, trade suspended, and demand sadly increasing, it is impossible for some to come by

>   linnen fold
> To make (so farre is pittie fled)
> The last apparell for the dead: (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 93)

This is not a minor snag but a serious breach of protocol. For Dekker, hasty, pared down interments are despicable on two counts: first of all, they are a disservice to the dead and, secondly, those who assume complicity in this disservice inevitably commit sins against their fellow Christians and therefore against God—ultimately increasing his wrath and, thus, perpetuating the plague. Dekker notes with unease how "there were neuer so many burials, yet neuer such little weeping" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 145), so many casualties of the plague but "not one eye […] so tender to wet the ground with a teare" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 159). As deaths increase, survivors are increasingly numb to the pain of bereavement. Emotions that persevere are of an overwrought, crazed variety. There is fear. There is despair. There is hysteria. There is much "wayling" but little weeping (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 145).

It is of particular concern to Dekker that the plague dead are routinely subjected—so he claims—to stigmatized forms of burial. They may, for instance, be treated like murderers and traitors. Having committed no crime except for sharing in the nation's general sinfulness, the infected, i.e. "the innocent Malefactors of *Troynouant*," are nonetheless turned into criminals and this is reflected in their interment (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 170). Hauled to the grave on carts and denied the honour of a proper Christian funeral, plague victims—though innocent—share the

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[15] "Grave"

[16] By the mid-sixteenth century coffin use had become the norm even for the poor (Tarlow, 2010, p. 107).

fate of "many a Fellon, after hee is cut downe from the Gallowes" (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 145). Often found unworthy of churchyard burial, the bodies of executed felons were transported on carts—as lesser loads, even animal carcasses, would be—rather than carried respectfully to their final resting places (Dekker, 1625/1925, p. 145). This made sense in view of the fact that the treatment of the criminal body after death was understood as an extension of the punishment exacted on the living body (Tarlow, 2010, p. 54). The plague dead, however, have not been convicted of any crime (by human agents) and still their treatment, i.e. their conveyance on plague carts, notably echoes the punitive handling of the criminal body.[17] The infection renders its victims untouchables, their remains "noysome carion" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 93). The indignity of this weighs so heavy precisely because—against Anglican dogma—a belief in the continuation of individual, material existence—tied to one's mortal remains—suffuses Dekker's plague pamphlets. When plague victims are treated like "felons that are cut downe from the tree of shame and dishonor," when they "receiue vnhansome buriall" (Dekker, 1606, p. 87–88), this constitutes such an injury to them because their individual identity is not removed by death.[18]

The same applies when the bodies of the plague dead are handled like suicides—an unfortunate category of the dead who were understood to have forfeited any hope of salvation by committing the grievous sin of self-murder. In *Newes from Graves-end*, the narrator argues that many plague victims and suspected plague victims, (especially in the country) are buried

> as the fashion is for those
> Whose desperate handes the knot vnlose
> Of their owne liues, […] (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 93)

While other writers condemn the quick and improper burial of bodies, *Newes from Graves-end* is an unusual text in making the connection between suicide and plague burial explicit.[19]

Before the year 1823, individuals who had committed suicide could be denied space in the churchyard and consigned to roadside burial (Tarlow, 2010, p. 183). This posthumous punishment was augmented by the confiscation of their property (Tarlow, 2010, p. 147). Plague victims, like suicides, might be buried not in

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[17] On the topic of maltreating the dead, Rebecca Totaro has proposed an interesting comparison: "The plague's denial of funeral rites for the dead recalls the many famous classical episodes in which heroes and the sons of kings are refused burial by the enemy" (Totaro, 2012, p. 19). In the early modern period, too, the refusal of a decent (Christian) burial signaled extreme contempt. Philip Schwyzer has noted: "To deny the dead the decency of burial was perhaps the deepest as well as the final rejection of which early modern society was capable" (Schwyzer, 2007, p. 121).

[18] A counter-position to Dekker's is embodied in the Gravedigger in *Hamlet* who denies the individuality of the dead—a dead body is no longer woman or man but only dehumanized matter (cf. Schwyzer, 2007, p. 135).

[19] John Davies writes of dead bodies in the road which are raked in "a rude hole" (Davies, 1603/2012, l. 574), and of "Ditches and Highways" which "must receive the dead" (Davies, 1603/2012, l. 654).

consecrated ground but "[i]n some hye-way / Or barren field" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 93) condemned and expelled from Christian society. Dekker bemoans that many travelers who sicken on the roads around London are

> buried neare vnto hye-waies […] in their cloaths as they were, booted and spurde euen as they lighted off, rowld into Ditches, Pits and Hedges […] (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925b, p. 133)

Fear of contagion prevents these unfortunates from being transported to more appropriate resting places, and it prevents them from receiving any of the customary preparations for burial: they are not undressed, not washed, not shrouded, not placed in coffins. Instead they are discarded as quickly and with as little contact as possible. This treatment is so

> vnchristianlike, that it would haue made a pittifull, and remorcefull eye blood-shot, to see such a ruthfull and disordered Obiect: […] (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925b, p. 133)

A 1641 woodcut (Fig. 9.1) laments that the "Countries Crueltie" is such that Londoners who succumb to the plague by the side of the road are pulled into ditches by locals who will not come near them, using ropes, poles, crude carts or sleds.

Fig. 9.1 This woodcut from the title page of a short anonymous tract called *Londons Lamentation, or, a fit admonishment for city and countrey* […] (1641) contrasts the proper treatment received by plague victims in London ("Londons Charitie") with the shameful handling of the dying and the dead outside the city ("the Countries Crueltie"). While this pro-urban propaganda neither accurately reflects the situation in the country nor the city, it offers illuminating representations of forms of burial deemed decent (upper part) and indecent (lower part) (Wellcome Collection; Creative Commons license CC BY 4.0)

This sad routine is contrasted with the proper handling of the dead: They should be dressed appropriately and placed in coffins—which, in turn, are covered in fabric—and respectfully carried to a place of interment, mourners following behind. Hasty roadside burial is deplorable to Dekker even for those cowardly escapees who would abandon the infected city, leaving the poor behind, but his especial horror is reserved for the mass grave. In the pamphlets mass graves figure as places where all privacy and all boundaries are lost.

9.4   Horrors of the Mass Grave

While parish authorities and all those who collude in rushed mass interments are to blame for the indignities which individuals are exposed to in the plague pit, the places of burial, too, are rhetorically implicated in the action. Dekker compares burial pits to hellmouths and has the animate earth itself actively gobble down dead bodies. In *The Wonderfull Yeare* he declares that

> a hundred hungry graues stand gaping, and euery one of them (as at a break-fast) hath swallowed downe ten or eleuen liuelesse carcases: before dinner, in the same gulfe are twice so many more deuoured: and before the sun takes his rest, those numbers are doubled: (Dekker, 1603/1924, p. 40)

Graves voraciously feast on bodies and those bodies are reduced to mere fodder. This description is widespread among plague writers: John Davies characterizes graves as "ravenous" and "insatiate" (Davies, 1603/2012, ll. 51 and 395), George Wither writes of the "greedy Grave," eager for more bodies to come its way (Wither, 1628/2012, l. 1563), and William Austin envisions "Graves' mouths gap[ing] wide" (Austin, 1666/2012, l. 979). Even greedy graves can reach a point of saturation, however. In Davies' *The Triumph of Death* (1603) the ground not only swallows the dead, it also emits them again: "The Graves do often vomit out their dead" (Davies, 1603/2012, l. 568); urban streets "vomit out their undigested dead" (Davies, 1603/2012, l. 345). This notion is echoed by John Donne—installed in 1621 as Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral—in a sermon preached in 1626. With reference to the previous year's epidemic, Donne notes that "the dead were buried, and thrown up again before they were resolved into dust" (cit. in Gilman, 2009, p. 202). Gravediggers must reopen ground that is already full of bodies and disturb human remains as they undergo the deeply troubling process of decomposition.

In *London Looke Backe*, Dekker writes of plague pits, still eager for more human fodder, which remain open of their own accord "[f]rom morne, till next morne, gaping still for more" (Dekker, 1630/1925, p. 177).[20] Pits could be seen 'gaping for

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[20] Thomas Vincent, a nonconformist clergyman who preached to deserted London congregations during the 1665 epidemic, describes cemeteries "stufft so full with dead corpses, that they are in many places swell'd two or three foot higher than they were before" in *God's Terrible Voice in the City* (1667) (cit. in Miller, 2016, p. 100). To Miller, Vincent's description turns the graveyard into a "Bakhtinian grotesque body" (Miller, 2016, p. 101).

more' when the expectation of more bodies for burial made their quick closure impractical. Mass graves might then be left open until filled to capacity—with multiple corpses already inside them and only a thin layer of earth or sand covering them, their bodily decomposition exposed to the living in sight, smell, and sound. This practice could be a source of frustration for neighbors exposed to the stench of decay and—for writers—a source of inspiration. Humorous anecdotes featuring drunken passers-by stumbling into pits were the stock in trade of metropolitan pamphleteers. For the dead in the grave, however, to be deposited thus without ceremony and left exposed was a serious slight. In a culture that valued the dignity of the dead body, the collection of bodies in open pits flouted all conventions and equaled utter humiliation. Kathleen Miller has argued insightfully that stories about accidental premature interment in the plague-ridden metropolis "strip[…] away the black and white division between life and death" (Miller, 2016, p. 47), hinging as they do on "a moment when the living and dead exist in a single body" (Miller, 2016, p. 46).[21] Yet, in Dekker's plague pamphlets there is no such "black and white division" in the first place. Individuals are in death precisely who they were in life and to mistreat dead flesh—for instance, by denying it proper burial—is therefore essentially the same as mistreating living individuals.

Irrespective of the orderly, respectful placement of bodies in the New Churchyard mass grave, referenced above, Dekker's vision of the plague pit is one in which bodies, without coffins or even without shrouds, are hastily and "rudely throwne" into pits and left to rot where they land, entangled with other bodies in grotesque positions (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 93). Individuals buried in this fashion must face the utter disgrace of being "thrust altogether into one close roome: a litle noisome roome […]" (Dekker, 1603/1924, pp. 40–41). Dekker's description of the grave as a room emphasizes the individuality of the 'inhabitants'—even after death—and posits the grave as a continuation of mortal existence. One room is merely exchanged for another. These grave-rooms, however, are often far from adequate. When "twentie shall but haue one roome" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 94), and a tiny sequestered one at that, even a modicum of privacy is impossible. When "nine and tenne" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925b, p. 78) or even three-score must "be pestred together, in one litle hole, where they lie and rot" (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 72), then the grave-room becomes a stifling torture chamber. Dekker's notion of the grave as a room is congruent with a new, post-Reformation "determination to lay claim to one's last resting place as permanent private property" (Schwyzer, 2007, p. 112).[22] However, the rooms allotted to the plague dead are an affront and the dead perceive them as such. The maltreatment of

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[21] Before this background, Miller applies Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection to plague writing (Miller, 2016, p. 7).

[22] The desire to preserve the privacy of the body after death is evident in the plays of Shakespeare as well as in the inscription on the playwright's own grave (cf. Schwyzer, 2007, pp. 114, 122). Yet, contrary to Dekker's belief in the potential agency of the dead, "the notion of the dead still being capable of interaction with the living and with one another […] seems to have aroused the scorn and horror of Shakespeare" (Schwyzer, 2007, p. 125).

bodies on their way to the grave and in the grave is so upsetting because Dekker conceptualizes the individual human being as persisting in the dead body. While bodies "rot" in their improper graves—adding insult to injury—the ongoing processes of decomposition, the eventual complete loss of flesh is not addressed in Dekker's pamphlets. After all, when bodies are reduced to bones (or even dust) it is hard to persevere in ascribing life-likeness, sentience, and individuality to them.

While it was acceptable and desirable even for family members to be buried close together, even to share one grave (Tarlow, 2010, p. 108), to be buried in close contact with strangers was an entirely different matter. The contemporary horror of forced but undesired and inappropriate proximity is exemplified by an emblem titled "Impar coniugium" in Geffrey Whitney's popular *Choise of Emblemes*. The emblem employs the image of a living person bound closely to a corpse as a metaphor for marriage between mismatched partners (Whitney, 1586/1988, p. 197). In his 'proto-novel' *The Unfortunate Traveller,* Thomas Nashe employs the same horrific but fairly conventional conceit in his description of a battle:

> as the tyrant Roman emperors used to tie condemned living caitiffs face to face to dead corpses, so were the half-living here mixed with squeezed carcasses […]. (Nashe, 1594/1987, p. 228)

Similarly, the mass grave also forces together what does not belong together. In its cramped confusion "[t]he gallant and the begger lay together; the scholler and the carter in one bed" (Dekker, 1606, p. 87). A husband may see "his wife, and his deadly enemy whom he hated, within a paire of sheetes" (Dekker, 1606, p. 87); enforced intimacy is experienced by

> friend, and foe, the yong and old,
> The freezing coward, and the bold:
> Seruant, and maister: Fowle and faire: (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 94)

Social hierarchies and distinctions, even bodily boundaries, all become void. A rich man may have to intimately support the body of a pauper in the grave. In a poetic articulation of this grotesque inversion, Dekker writes of

> one, who in the morne with gold
> Could haue built Castells: now hee's made
> A pillow to a wretch, that prayde
> For half-penny Almes, (with broken lim)
> The Begger now is aboue him; (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 95)

Not only rich and poor are forced into close communion, mortal enemies may find themselves in unwelcome proximity. In *The Wonderfull Yeare* Dekker asks his readers to imagine themselves in a crowded grave,

> bruisde and prest with three-score dead men, lying slouenly vpon thee, and thou to be vndermost of all! yea and perhaps halfe of that number were thine enemies! (Dekker, 1603/1924, p. 41)

In this fashion rich and poor, scholar and laborer, male and female become involuntarily and obscenely entangled and inverted. Worse, they are locked up indefinitely in this condition, conveniently out of the sight of survivors. While the trope of death

as the final great equalizer is evoked in these descriptions, it is also undermined. True that, in the words of emblematist Geffrey Whitney, "[t]he Prince, the Poore, the Prisoner, and the slave, ∕ They all at lengthe, are summonde to their grave" (Whitney, 1586/1988, p. 182), but, in Dekker's estimation, they remain prince, pauper, prisoner, and slave for all that.[23] Death does not make all alike. Individuality is perpetuated in the grave but severely humiliated by the undignified handling of the deceased and the involuntary intimacies inflicted on them. When strangers (and enemies) are buried together without any "elbow-roome" between them (Dekker & Middleton, 1604/1925a, p. 72), this is tantamount to living persons being held in horrendous captivity and experiencing physical molestation. Echoing Dekker's wording, George Wither describes a scene in which corpses "[t]hrust out their arms [from crowded, shallow graves] for want of elbow room" (Wither, 1628/2012, l. 956), but whereas Dekker is indignant on behalf of the dead, Wither is strengthened in his notion of the vanity and insignificance of everything that is of the world, including human bodies which are prone to sin in life and gross matter in death (cf. Wither, 1628/2012, ll. 951–967).

9.5   Rising from the Grave

The promise of resurrection did not in any real sense resolve the situation. As there was no consensus on when exactly the souls of the dead would face divine judgment and what sort of body they would assume on the occasion (spiritual or material), the unfortunate individuals deposited in mass graves were faced with the prospect of a potentially very long hiatus spent in cramped, unwished-for company. Conversely, Dekker's ideal grave is a private shelter. It may be shared with family in the manner of a household but it is always a space where individual existence is safeguarded. In *The Seven Deadly Sinnes* Dekker deplores the use of mass graves, the general unavailability of sufficient burial space, and the indecently crowded conditions in many urban cemeteries. There is an incontestable need, he states, for "conuenient Cabins to lay those in, that are to goe into such farre countries, who neuer looke to come back againe" (Dekker, 1606, p. 88). The good grave, the appropriate grave, then, is a cozy abode for the dead body: a room, a house, or a cabin that may be enjoyed in private or shared with family. In such a locale the waiting period between death and resurrection becomes bearable. When bodies arise from ideal graves come Judgment Day they can do so with dignity. They can get up as from a bed and leave their tomb as they would leave their house. Preacher Jeremiah Dobson endorsed this scenario in his 1665 spiritual discussion of the plague. Although Dobson stresses the severity of divine vengeance, he is also adamant about the promise of resurrection, quoting from 1 Corinthians 15: "and as for the *Body, though*

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[23] Cf. Job. 3.19 (*King James Version*): "The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master." In this biblical passage the grave is a place where earthly distinctions are dissolved.

it be laid in the dust and sown in corruption, yet it shall be raised in incorruption […]" (Dobson, 1665, p. 17). Decomposition will not get in the way of bodily resurrection from the very grave where the body is laid to rest.

This immediate connection between the grave and resurrection may also help to explain why the dead body and its final resting place are of such great significance to Dekker and his contemporaries. In *The Relique* John Donne, too, emphasizes the importance of the grave and its role in the resurrection. In Donne's poem the speaker envisions meeting his beloved at his grave site come Judgment Day. Aided by a bracelet of hair he wears on his wrist, his lover should be able to find her way to his side and,

> at the last busy day,
> Meet at this grave, and make a little stay? (Donne, 1633/1931, p. 40, ll. 10–11)

Elsewhere, for example in his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,* Donne also parallels the resurrection with waking from sleep: rising from the grave is only a version of rising from the bed (cf. Gilman, 2009, p. 192). This notion not only partakes in the death-as-a-long-sleep metaphor, it also evokes a certain familiar domesticity which is congruent with Dekker's description of the good grave as a private room. In *The Funeral*—a companion poem to *The Relique*—soul and body part upon death and the lock of hair functions as a material placeholder for the lover's soul on earth (Donne, 1633/1931, p. 43). Across his oeuvre, Donne imagines physical disintegration in the 'whirlpool' of the grave. The scattering of human fragments, of dust and ashes, and their intermingling with other substances and other bodies is a natural process for him. Yet, on Doomsday all bodies destined for resurrection will be reassembled from their original elements (cf. Schwyzer, 2007, p. 141).

In two poems dealing with the deaths of a son and a daughter respectively, Ben Jonson conceptualizes the state of the dead in two different ways. In *On My First Sonne* (Jonson, 1968, p. 20, ll. 9–10), he imagines his 7-year-old son Ben (dead of the plague in 1603) as a presence in the grave, capable of speech, whereas the body of his infant daughter Mary in *On My First Daughter* is a 'shell' only, her soul having ascended to heaven immediately upon death—to be reunited with her body at a later date (Jonson, 1968, pp. 11–12). In plague writing, this latter conception was not uncommon: Both John Davies (1603/2012, ll. 440–441), and John Taylor in *The Fearful Summer* (Taylor, 1625/2012, ll. 155–156) envision the soul and the body parting ways at the moment of death. For Dekker, however, the plague dead are not inanimate, sensationless objects, severed from their spiritual essences. Opposing the Protestant wariness of the flesh and the "instinctive reluctance to imagine the dead as being in any way active in their relationship with the living" (Schwyzer, 2007, p. 122), Dekker's descriptions place great value on the bodily constitution of the dead and suggest an ongoing union of body and soul in the grave. This vindication of dead flesh may owe something to the reformatory severance of ties with the souls of the dead in purgatory—an unintended consequence of which was an increase in the importance of bodies as the only accessible aspect of departed loved ones (cf. Tarlow, 2010, p. 26).

9.6   Agency of the Dead

It is not only those left behind who cherish their social ties to individuals beyond death, the dead themselves demand dignity. In *The Seven Deadly Sinnes* Dekker ponders the ramifications of a future plague epidemic. If a great multitude of Londoners should die suddenly then the culpable failure of authorities to properly prepare for (predictable) emergencies might mean that graves—containing victims of previous plague epidemics—might have to be reopened to receive yet more bodies; these reopenings would reveal ghastly scenes (cf. Dekker, 1606, p. 88). The dead inside the graves would be revealed to the living in humiliating postures, in indecently close embrace with strangers, robbed of their privacy and dignity. Inevitably, the sight would bear testament to the shameful maltreatment suffered by the plague dead. Out-of-sight wrong may easily be put out of mind. Immobile and buried (often less than) six feet underground, the dead can 'do' nothing about the wrong done to them. They can neither physically resist nor verbally protest against their burial. They must endure what is done to them and they must lie indefinitely where they are placed.

Should the graves be opened again, however, the dead become visible once more and this renewed visibility returns agency to them. Though they cannot speak, the silent tableau of their bodies will speak volumes. Their material presence will be an accusation against inept magistrates and against those innumerable frightened, selfish, carelessly indifferent Londoners who view the plague dead as contemptible criminals or even contaminated animal carcasses and dispose of them accordingly. It is these Londoners that Dekker addresses when he warns that "the graues when they open, will be witnesses against thee" (Dekker, 1606, p. 88). The plague dead may not have the ability to raise their hands and point at their abusers, a skill that folk belief attributed to murder victims (cf. Tarlow, 2010, p. 164), yet their devastating presence is in itself a form of agency. This potential of the plague dead to instruct the living is echoed—in muted form—in Daniel Defoe's early eighteenth-century documentary fiction *A Journal of the Plague Year* in which the semi-anonymous narrator H. F. encounters the "[i]nstructing" and "speaking Sight" of a plague-time graveyard, which, so he is told, "has a Voice with it, and a loud one, to call us all to Repentance" (Defoe, 1722/1969, p. 61).

Dekker's dead will certainly use their 'voice' to testify against the living should urban authorities not acquire enough land for the future casualties of epidemic disease "to dwell in" (Dekker, 1606, p. 90). If the dead are not laid to rest adequately in "convenient Cabins," they will not rest easy and they might eventually make their displeasure, their suffering, known and indict their abusers. Along these lines, in *The Seven Deadly Sinnes*, Dekker imagines visibility as the due of the dead and as a means for them to affect the living. He proposes that poor individuals whose deaths were hastened by the unkindness of creditors should be buried on the doorsteps of the latter (Dekker, 1606, p. 83). That way, forced to step over their debtors' graves upon leaving the house, creditors would be confronted with the consequences

of their own unkindness on a daily basis. This, in turn, would bring some slight vindication to the dead and subject the offenders to a deserved 'haunting' of the material kind.

While the speaking sight of the New Churchyard mass grave tells a somewhat different story than Dekker's pamphlets do, the final word on plague burial has not been spoken. At the same time as the excavation site revealed an orderly placement of the dead, it also confirmed the presence of a hundred bodies in one grave. Certainly, contemporary plague writers unanimously mention pits in which the plague dead are deposited en masse. John Davies writes of "trenches ram'd with Carcasses" (Davies, 1603/2012, l. 16) in his epic vision of the 1603 epidemic and William Austin asserts that "we're crowded in the tomb" (Austin, 1666/2012, l. 984) once again in 1666. Abraham Holland reports that the poor "in their Graves together lie by ten / By twenties or by more" (Holland, 1626/2012, ll. 70–71) and a real-life clerk for the parish of St. Saviour's Southwark reported finding 20 to 30 corpses in the local churchyard, simply placed there with no explanation (Slack, 1985, p. 149). In his plague pamphlet, John Taylor ups the ante, noting that "fifty Corpses scarce one grave doth fill" (Taylor, 1625/2012, l. 124), and Holland triples his own numbers later in the text, writing of

> Hundreds that never saw before but, dy'd
> At one same time, in one same Grave abide. (Holland, 1626/2012, ll. 587–588)

These voices unanimously testify to the "hungry" plague pit, yet, none of them shares Dekker's acute horror at the fate of the dead inside the grave.

9.7 Conclusion

Ultimately, the value of Dekker's pamphlets as expressions of his engagement with mortality lies beyond any claim to factual accuracy. Dekker demonstrates striking conceptions of postmortem agency and individuality; he does not turn away in horror from the dead body but values it in its capacity as a continuation of the living person. He recalls the dead from the convenient concealment of the grave and makes them visible once more (to the mind's eye) and it is in this visibility that their agency resides. In this way, the archaeological project blends fortuitously with Dekker's. When archaeologists function as revealers of hidden truths (cf. Schwyzer, 2007, p. 113), when they render the dead visible, not to disturb their rest but to enter into dialogue with them and, thus, to return agency to them, they do exactly as Dekker hopes to do in his writing.[24]

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[24] Contradicting Dekker's positive portrayal of the visible dead, the message in *Romeo and Juliet* is that the living should not see the dead: "To open tombs and lay bare the dead is to deny and to destroy whatever may be left of their individuality" (Schwyzer, 2007, p. 133).

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Chapter 10
Shakespearean Exhumations: Richard III, the Princes in the Tower, and the Prehistoric Romeo and Juliet

Philip Schwyzer

10.1 Introduction

In Shakespeare's early tragedy *Titus Andronicus,* the villainous Aaron the Moor boasts that "Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves" (*Titus Andronicus* 5.1.135).[1] Motivated by sheer malice rather than any form of archaeological curiosity, Aaron leaves these exhumed corpses at the doors of their loved ones as a ghastly surprise. Scenes of exhumation in Shakespeare's later works are only slightly less ill-omened and bizarre (Schwyzer, 2007, pp. 114–137). Hamlet watches with horrified fascination as a gravedigger roughly tosses up old bones and skulls to make room for the body of Ophelia; in *Romeo and Juliet,* the heroine imagines dismembering her dead ancestors in their family tomb and using "some great kinsman's bone" (*Romeo and Juliet* 4.3.53) to dash out her own brains. The playwright's enduring preoccupation with grave-robbing culminated in his epitaph in Holy Trinity, Stratford, addressed to any future gravedigger who might be tempted to interfere with his remains:

> Blessed be the man that spares these stones
> And cursed be he that moves my bones. (Shakespeare, 2016, A9)

Shakespeare, it seems, never contemplated the prospect of exhumation with anything but violent distaste; yet he could not get the idea out of his mind. It is thus both ironic and fitting that Shakespeare's works have so often been mentioned in the

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[1] Except where noted, all references to Shakespeare's plays are to *The Norton Shakespeare*, third edition (Shakespeare, 2016).

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discourse of mortuary archaeology, from the dawn of the nineteenth century to the present day. The particular focus of this chapter is on how Shakespeare's plays have been invoked and characterized, by journalists and sometimes by archaeologists themselves, in relation to three celebrated archaeological events: the exhumation of Richard III in 2012; the forensic examination of the putative remains of the Princes in the Tower in 1933; and the discovery of a pair of embracing Neolithic skeletons near Mantua in 2007. Although attempts to draw links between Shakespeare's plays and archaeological discoveries, especially in the media, often seem to rely on a reductive and limited set of stereotypical associations, the unfolding encounter between Shakespeare and mortuary excavation has the potential to teach us more about the cultural status of both.

10.2   Hamlet and Archaeologists

Shakespeare has been woven into the history of British mortuary archaeology almost from its birth. It could be argued that the graveyard scene in *Hamlet* constitutes one of archaeology's founding narratives—in a sense, all subsequent digging for the dead, every lifting of a skull from the ground, involves a reenactment of *Hamlet,* Act 5, scene 1. Watching the Gravedigger pull old bones from the earth, Hamlet speculates on the various professions once practiced by the dead, laments the rough treatment they receive at the Gravedigger's hands, questions the workman closely on the process and temporality of decomposition ("How long will a man lie i'th'earth ere he rot?" [*Hamlet* 5.1.147]), and finally involves himself in a one-sided dialogue with the skull of the jester Yorick. While the roots of the scene lie in the *memento mori* tradition, which counsels the living to remember the death of the body so that they may ensure the health of the soul, Hamlet's attention is fixed to an unusual extent on physical processes and material remains. His questions are not those of a spiritual seeker but of a would-be bioarchaeologist. The first English treatise dealing with pre-Christian mortuary remains, Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia, Urne-buriall, or, a discourse on the sepulchrall urnes lately found in Norfolk* (1658), inevitably glances back to this scene in *Hamlet*. When Browne writes of the pitiable fate of the exhumed body, "To be knav'd out of our graves," he is recalling Hamlet's comment on the Gravedigger: "That skull had a tongue in it and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground" (*Hamlet* 5.1.68–69; Browne, 1977, p. 295).

Hamlet's encounter with Yorick has cast a long shadow. No single image serves as such an immediately recognizable reference to Shakespeare's works in general (as well as *Hamlet* in particular) as that of a man holding a skull before his face, gazing keenly into its sightless eyes (Fig. 10.1). Since the eighteenth century, the encounter has been depicted again and again in paintings, engravings and, more latterly, photographs (Young, 2003). For well over a hundred years, the scene has been staged in a recognizably stylized way, the skull being held in profile, generally in the left hand which cups the base of the cranium, while the actor's body cheats out

Fig. 10.1 Postcard of Sarah Bernhardt as Hamlet. (Lafayette Photo, London, 1899; public domain)

slightly to present a three-quarter image to the audience. Yet even as certain conventions have endured, Hamlet's relationship with the skull has evolved over time. Whereas stage directions in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century editions emphasize Hamlet's disgust at the sight and smell of the skull, which he throws down at the first opportunity, modern productions and film versions tend to depict a more prolonged and even intimate encounter (Aasand, 2003). Rather than despising and rejecting the skull as gross, dead matter—flinging it aside precisely because it is *not* Yorick—the modern Hamlet contemplates the skull with a gaze that is at once tender and archaeological in spirit, striving to recapture Yorick's lost personhood from the material evidence of his remains.

If the Hamlet of modern stage and screen sometimes seems to play the archaeologist, modern (bio)archaeologists not infrequently find themselves playing Hamlet, recreating the classic Shakespearean pose for news articles and press releases.[2] The popularity of this specific pose is not accidental, and deserves some critical scrutiny. In these images, the archaeologists (frequently male, in these cases, and always alone) are not displaying the skull to the viewer in a straightforward way, but are instead displaying themselves looking at the skull, caught in a mute and

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[2] Examples include Chris Stringer holding the skull of Cheddar Man (Stringer et al., 2015, image 162), Mihály Bányai with the skull of Diarum (Coelho, 2017), Vera Tiesler with an elongated skull from the classic Maya period (Vance, 2019). See also Thompson (2014), with reference to Hamlet in the caption: "To be or not to be human? That's a question some scholars still feel is up for debate when it comes to Homo floresiensis."

private dialogue with death. These (bio)archaeologists *look like* Hamlet in a double sense—that is, they resemble him visually, and they mimic his way of looking, implying that his questions are also theirs.

Although the archaeologists depicted in photographs like these may not always be aware of the origins of the pose or its cultural connotations, many undoubtedly are. Reenacting Hamlet's scene with Yorick can even form part of the education of budding bioarchaeologists. In Debra L. Martin's osteology 'Boot Camp', students

> start memorizing Hamlet's graveyard monologue from the first week onwards. On the last day of class, a cart with a wide variety of mammalian, avian and reptilian skull casts are available, and students can choose one for their recitation of the full monologue as they stand in front of the class and gaze into their skull of choice. (Martin, 2016, p. 7)

These examples of the (bio)archaeologist-as-Hamlet, posing for the camera or in the classroom, exemplify the playful appropriation of a widely recognized cultural emblem. Yet there is arguably a more serious point to the performance. Archaeologists today are still asking many of the same questions Shakespeare's Danish prince posed four hundred years ago. Unsurprisingly, no other Shakespearean text is referenced so frequently in archaeological publications (though other plays such as *Julius Caesar* are sometimes invoked in similar ways, e.g. Usai et al., 2014). To take one example, Hamlet's query to the Gravedigger, "how long will a man lie i'th'earth ere he rot?" crops up repeatedly in studies of the processes of postmortem decay published over the last few decades (Boddington, 1987, p. 27; Cohen et al., 1994, p. 634; Pokines & Baker, 2013, p. 74). The Gravedigger's observations in response to Hamlet's question, bearing on differential rates of decomposition ("a tanner will last you nine year") and the role of environmental factors ("your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body"), are sometimes also cited in these studies (e.g. Cohen et al., 1994, p. 634; Turner-Walker, 2008, p. 11), where they are employed to illustrate general truths, if not precise facts, and to demonstrate long-standing cultural understanding of the processes under discussion. In a similar way, the Gravedigger's casual treatment of old bones may be referred to as an explanation for the wide scattering of skeletal matter in old graveyards (Henderson, 1987, p. 52; Rodwell, 2012). While the Gravedigger is clearly a font of practical knowledge, it is Hamlet, the elite amateur, who is usually seen as the figure of the modern or postmodern archaeologist *avant-la-lettre*, a point made by Frands Herschend in a playful parable:

> Hamlet—who is an early example of the royal Danish archaeologist, and a postmodernist—visits an excavation site and an interpretative context (the churchyard) with his assistant, Horatio. Hamlet starts to collect information by talking to the grave-digging sexton, who is an experienced field archaeologist insofar as his competence has the quality of being so limited that he is an expert, but in the graves of his graveyard […]. This clown is caught in the action, digging up the past as usual; he is satisfied to label only the remains which he takes for granted. Hamlet, on the other hand, enquires about the context, takes out the skull, and give us, and his audience (i.e. the present world), his much more intriguing interpretation of the find […]. (Herschend, 2015, p. 127)

If *Hamlet* continues to present a model for the human encounter with excavated bones, the text has also been cited by antiquaries and archaeologists across several

centuries as a source of potentially illuminating historical detail. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the archaeological study of early English graves advanced, the graveyard scene was frequently invoked, especially in relation to a particular 'pagan' practice. In 1793, in his *Nenia Britannica, or a Sepulchral History of Great Britain,* the Reverend James Douglas describes opening a tumulus in which he observed "several shards or pebbles […] which I have reason to think were intentionally thrown in with the body." "It is not improbable," he continues, "that this custom furnished Shakespeare with this line in Hamlet: 'Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her'" (Douglas, 1793, p. 10).

The lines are those of the Priest explaining to Laertes how his sister Ophelia ought to have been buried, given her death by suicide.

> Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
> As we have warranty. Her death was doubtful,
> And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
> She should in ground unsanctified been lodged
> Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayers,
> [Shards,] flints and pebbles should be thrown on her […]. (*Hamlet* 5.1.205–210)[3]

Suicides in Shakespeare's era, Douglas concludes, "being deprived the Christian rites of burial, were perhaps interred in this manner peculiar to the pagans." Writing less than two centuries after the composition of *Hamlet,* Douglas does not find it difficult to suppose that in Shakespeare's era pre-Christian burial rituals were still practiced. This unlikely hypothesis is enabled by the powerful tendency in the eighteenth century to credit Shakespeare with a deep insight into the national spirit, and a viewpoint, as some German critics were disposed to argue, "by nature Nordic and pagan" (Paulin, 2012, p. 324).

The application of a single line from *Hamlet* to the observation of broken ceramic objects in pre-Christian English graves became a staple of Victorian archaeology. In William Wylie's important 1852 report on the Anglo-Saxon burial ground at Fairford, the presence of broken Roman pottery in the graves prompted a reference to Ophelia's burial. John Yonge Akerman drew the same connection in his *Remains of Pagan Saxondom,* and remarked that it was worthy of note that Wylie, who was unacquainted with Douglas's earlier work, had independently been inspired to draw a link between the ancient burial practice and "the well-known passage in our great poet" (Akerman, 1855, pp. xvi–xvii; cf. Akerman, 1853, p. 265; and see Williams, 2008, p. 69). In later Victorian archaeological reports, reference to the phrase from *Hamlet* is all but ubiquitous. For George Rolleston, digging graves in Berkshire, "Shakespeare's well-known lines" proved that the pagan practice had

> strongly impressed itself upon the public mind […]. They show also that the presence of these shards cannot be explained as being due to accident. (Rolleston, 1869a, p. 428; see also Hall, 1867, p. 167; Johnson, 1912, pp. 286–289; Rolleston, 1869b, p. 177; Woodruff, 1874, pp. 27–28)

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[3] "Shards" occurs in the First Folio edition of *Hamlet*, but not in the Second Quarto, followed by the editors of *The Norton Shakespeare*.

It was left to the Reverend J. E. Jackson, a Wiltshire antiquary, to express a slight reservation, for, of course, "the passage applies in the first instance to Denmark, where Ophelia was buried" (Jackson, 1854, p. 202).

Victorian antiquaries certainly knew the difference between a play and an excavation report. They concluded, nonetheless, that the Priest's line in *Hamlet* must reflect a real practice—either an enduring custom in the case of suicides who were denied Christian rites, or at least the folk memory of a pagan ritual, preserved across the centuries.[4] Concomitantly, the discovery of so much broken pottery in pagan graves helped convince them that the word "shards" in *Hamlet* must refer specifically to ceramic fragments, or potsherds—though in the sixteenth century the word often referred simply to splintered rock, which is indeed its most probable meaning in *Hamlet*.[5] The Swiss antiquary Ferdinand Keller (who, like Wylie, seems to have drawn the connection independently), boasted that his discovery provided "an explanation of an obscure passage in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* […] hitherto unexplained by the English Commentators on Shakespeare" (Keller, 1846, pp. 502–503).

C. H. Woodruff likewise expressed the hope that archaeology could in this case "throw some light on a difficult passage in Shakespeare" (Woodruff, 1874, p. 27). In a virtuous circle, the passage from *Hamlet* provided an explanation for the archaeological phenomenon, while archaeological discoveries helped explicate the full meaning of Shakespeare's line. Indeed, Victorian editions of *Hamlet* postdating Akerman's *Remains of Pagan Saxondom* display far more certainty in glossing "shards" as broken pots or tiles than do earlier editions, in which this is noted as merely one among several possibilities. Where Samuel Weller Singer's 1826 edition is careful to state that "It does not only mean fragments of pots and tiles, but rubbish of any kind […] [as in] *shardes of stones*" (Singer, 1826, p. 326), J. O. Halliwell's 1865 *Hamlet* glosses shards as "broken pieces of earthenware, pot-sherds, something shorn off" (Halliwell, 1865, p. 343) and Charles Knight's 1867 edition flatly declares "Shards were broken pottery" (Knight, 1867, p. 298).

10.3   The Forensic Examination of the Putative Remains of the Princes in the Tower in 1933

By the early decades of the twentieth century, invocations of Ophelia's burial in archaeological reports had come to seem old-fashioned; as Hadrian Allcroft remarked,

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[4] Evidence for broken pottery in suicides' graves in the early modern period is limited at best. Suicides were generally buried in unconsecrated ground, often at crossroads, and sometimes impaled with a stake. Peter Ackroyd reports that "local folk were permitted to throw stones or broken pots" (Ackroyd, 2006, p. 82) at these burials, but cites no evidence beyond Shakespeare's own line.

[5] Cooper 1578 s.v. "assula". An alternative possibility, also unrelated to potsherds, is that the word refers to a patch of cow-dung, or "cow-sherd" (see Evans, 2005, pp. 33–36).

the days [have] passed when the world could be impressed by whispers of Druidical sacri-
fices or conjured with 'shards, flints and pebbles'. (Allcroft, 1920, p. 678)

Nonetheless, a symbiotic, mutually affirming relationship between Shakespeare and
British mortuary archaeology persisted well into the twentieth century. One remark-
able example is the examination of the bones purported to belong to the young
Edward V and his younger brother Richard, the so-called Princes in the Tower who
disappeared in the reign of Richard III (1483–1485). Discovered under a set of stairs
in the Tower of London in the 1670s, the bones had been deposited in an urn in
Westminster Abbey (Schwyzer, 2013, pp. 48–51). In 1933, the contents of the urn
were examined by William Wright, a distinguished osteologist who had previously
published work on the early Bronze Age skulls found in the barrow burials at
Driffield, Yorkshire (Wright, 1904). Wright concluded that the bones in the urn were
those of closely related males, the younger between nine and eleven, the elder not
yet thirteen (the right ages for the princes). Working alongside the antiquary
Lawrence Tanner, keeper of the Abbey Muniments, Wright was clearly determined
to demonstrate that the remains were those of the princes and, moreover, that they
had met their deaths in the grisly manner described in the sixteenth century by
Thomas More and Shakespeare. A stain on the larger skull's lower jaw, "of a dis-
tinctly blood-red colour," was interpreted as residue of the blood that had suffused
the prince's face when suffocated under a pillow, as described by More (Tanner &
Wright, 1935, p. 18). For evidence that such haemolytic staining might occur,
Wright referred not to osteological science but to the greater authority of
Shakespeare. In *Henry VI Part 2*, Wright observed, comparable hemorrhaging is
plainly evident on the face of the suffocated Duke of Gloucester:

> See how the blood is settled in his face
> […] his face is black and full of blood. (*Henry VI Part 2* 3.2.160, 168)

In Wright's implicit reasoning, if suffocation could have this effect on the physiog-
nomy of one fifteenth-century English aristocrat (and Shakespeare must be taken at
his word), it could have it on another. The old circle was as virtuous as ever.
Shakespeare provides crucial evidence to confirm the findings of bioarchaeology;
those findings in turn confirm Shakespeare's relevance and reliability.

Tanner and Wright concluded their study of the Westminster bones by observing
how much better the princes have fared in the long run than their wicked uncle:

> while the bones of Richard III have long since disappeared, trampled into common clay,
> those of the princes freed from all undignified associations rest secure, in the company of
> those of their mighty ancestors, at the very heart of the national shrine. (Tanner & Wright,
> 1935, p. 20)

Splendid as this sentiment may have seemed, it has not stood the test of time. When
the long-lost bones of Richard III reemerged from beneath a car park in Leicester in
2012, they initiated yet another encounter between Shakespeare and mortuary
archaeology. On this occasion, however, the relationship between the Bard and the
bones proved anything but harmonious.

10.4   The Exhumation of Richard III in 2012

Amid the extraordinary media frenzy that followed the discovery of Richard's skeleton, it was hard to find a trace of the old Victorian confidence in Shakespeare's authority. Instead, archaeological and dramatic perspectives were generally seen as fundamentally opposed. Like Wright's investigation of the Westminster bones, the Greyfriars excavation meshed easily with the popular trope of the archaeologist as detective (Holtorf, 2007, pp. 75–84); this time, however, Shakespeare was no longer cast as the helpful witness furnishing a crucial clue, but rather as the criminal mastermind who had conspired to kill off Richard's reputation. It was not so much that anything specifically discovered in the excavation refuted any particular aspect of the play *Richard III*; the bones themselves were apparently enough (Toon & Stone, 2016). Having shaped popular perceptions of Richard III for over four centuries, in 2012 Shakespeare was not so much disproved as displaced; his murderous monarch was unmasked as an airy nothing, once the historical Richard had recovered a local habitation and a name. In an earlier era, the discovery that the king's spine had indeed been curved, as it is repeatedly said to be in Shakespeare's play, might have been taken as mutually confirming evidence of the skeleton's identity and Shakespeare's veracity. Instead, the fact that the skeleton's spine revealed a sideways rather than a forward curvature—scoliosis rather than kyphosis—was presented as damning proof of Shakespeare's malicious misrepresentation of Richard as a hunchback or "bunch-backed toad" (Langley & Jones, 2013). A Bloomberg headline from May 2014—"Shakespeare's Deformed Richard III Disputed by Scientists"—sums up the general mood. As the article continues, breezily paraphrasing *Hamlet*:

> The slings and arrows of literary insults aimed at King Richard III grossly embellish the deformities of the supposed hunchback whose villainy endures thanks to William Shakespeare. That's the conclusion of scientists who used 3D printing to reconstruct the spine of the last English ruler before the Tudors […]. The findings may overturn centuries of maltreatment by the Bard and other writers. (Kitamura, 2014)

For all this, disentangling the bones from the Bard has not proven easy. In the years since the identity of the skeleton was confirmed, Shakespeare has stuck to Richard III like a bur, even as his credibility is repeatedly declared to have been exploded. With each successive flurry of stories in the media—reporting the initial discovery (2012), the scientific confirmation of the skeleton's identity (2013), the controversy over the place of burial (2013–2014), and the burial itself (2015)—Shakespeare came back like a bad Tudor penny. References to Shakespeare and his play crop up everywhere in Leicester's King Richard III Visitor Centre, always to be confuted and rebuked, but never successfully dismissed from the scene that archaeology has claimed as its own. As an excerpt from Philippa Langley's diary, featured in the exhibition, declares hopefully,

> With the extraordinary story of the search generating new interest in learning about Richard, I am encouraged to see that people are now talking about him as a medieval king and that Shakespeare's anti-hero is no longer a realistic portrayal.

Yet, as Langley's remarks go some way toward acknowledging, the bones of Richard III are still noteworthy primarily for belonging to the man about whom Shakespeare told such awful untruths.[6] If the explicit message of the Visitor Centre and wider media coverage of the Richard III affair is "Forget Shakespeare", the implicit corollary is that we must continually remind ourselves of what we are conscientiously forgetting. On this evidence, Shakespeare and archaeology may be stuck in a very bad marriage, but there is no divorce in sight.

10.5 The Discovery of a Pair of Embracing Neolithic Skeletons Near Mantua in 2007

A final example from the early twenty-first century illustrates how Shakespearean exhumation has moved beyond the confines of British archaeology to become something of a global trope. In February 2007, a week before Valentine's Day, a team of Italian archaeologists led by Elena Menotti announced a remarkable discovery. Digging in a Neolithic burial ground in Valdaro, on the outskirts of Mantua, they had unearthed a pair of skeletons locked in an apparent embrace (Fig. 10.2). The bones were described as belonging to a young man and woman, probably aged around twenty judging by the good condition of their teeth. Fragments of weapons including flint knives and a spearhead found associated with the bones hinted at a tragically violent end. In early interviews, Menotti emphasized the rarity of double burials from the Neolithic period and expressed the emotional impact of the discovery: "From thousands of years ago we feel the strength of this love. Yes, we must call it love" (David, 2007). Rather than separating the skeletons, Menotti arranged for them to be lifted together from the site in a single block of sediment.

The image of the embracing skeletons instantly became and remains iconic, reproduced on t-shirts, pendants and earrings, and album covers. In Italy they became known as the Lovers of Valdaro. Internationally, however, the skeletons were immediately hailed as a Shakespearean couple. "Prehistoric Romeo and Juliet Discovered" ran the headline of the Associated Press story in the *Washington Post* (David, 2007); "Archaeologists find prehistoric Romeo and Juliet locked in eternal embrace" (*USA Today*, 2007). According to Jason Urbanus in *Archaeology* magazine, "Archaeologists were suddenly quoting lines from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*" (Urbanus, 2008). As the *Daily Mail* reported the story:

> It is the city where the exiled Romeo dreamed he died and Juliet's kisses breathed life back into his body. Tragically, the lifeless bodies of Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers would soon lie side by side. Yesterday at Mantua, in an amazing echo of that heartrending story, archaeologists revealed the discovery of a couple locked in a tender embrace, one that has endured for more than 5,000 years. (*Daily Mail*, 2007)

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[6] As Leicester Cathedral declared in 2017, defending over the objections of the Richard III Society the decision to allow Shakespeare's slanderous play to be staged within yards of the King's new resting place, "These performances will go ahead as we engage in the dynamics between the man and the myths of King Richard III" (Leicester Cathedral, 2017).

Fig. 10.2 The Lovers of Valdaro, Museo archeologico nazionale di Mantova. (Photo: D. Hollmann, Wikimedia Commons license CC BY-SA 4.0)

In terms of historical fact, any linkage between *Romeo and Juliet* and the so-called Lovers of Valdaro is elusive to say the least. In the 1590s, Shakespeare described two lovers, who never really existed, lying dead together in a tomb. Roughly five thousand years earlier, two people, who may or not have been lovers, were buried in what our eyes interpret as an embrace. It is of course the proximate location, Mantua, that provides the journalistic hook, transforming this almost nothing into almost everything. Even this is something of a stretch, for the skeletons were discovered in the village of Valdaro, several kilometres from the historic center of Mantua, and Mantua is only a secondary location in Shakespeare's play, which is mostly set in Verona (where the lovers are buried). In any case, it is difficult to see how the

coincidence of location could amount in practice to anything more than a mild irony. Yet the real force of the connection between the Valdaro Lovers and *Romeo and Juliet* is indicated in the *Daily Mail* description of the skeletal embrace as "an amazing *echo* of [Shakespeare's] heartrending story." Urbanus likewise saw in the remains "a symbol of eternal love that echoes the doomed Shakespearean couple" (Urbanus, 2008). Shakespeare may have lived several millennia more recently than the Valdaro Lovers, but by a strange temporal wrinkle he also precedes them, so that the skeletons are capable of providing an echo—and a confirmation—of his play's tragic truth. The Valdaro echo would give rise to further reverberations, as subsequent discoveries of embracing skeletons from Siberia to Greece, and dating from the Neolithic to the late medieval period, were subsumed in the Shakespearean paradigm (Geller, 2016, pp. 98–102). Thus a headline from 2013, "Romanian archeologists uncover Romeo and Juliet: medieval couple buried together with hands clasped" (Romania-Insider.com, 2013) makes a return in 2018 in *The Sun*, this time with reference to an excavation in Kazakhstan: "ETERNAL LOVE: skeletons of 5,000-year-old Romeo and Juliet 'lovers' found buried alongside remains of two sacrificed horses" (Stewart, 2018).

The vision of doomed romantic love summed up in the reference to *Romeo and Juliet* has arguably had an impact on the archaeological interpretation of these human remains, as well as their public reception. As Pamela Geller has pointed out, the sexes of the two Valdaro skeletons had not been determined by forensic examination at the time the story broke—it was simply assumed. Subsequent analysis has suggested that the figure on the right is female, but the skeleton on the left is only "probably" male. This caveat has had very little impact on how the skeletons are presented, either in the media or in Mantua's Archaeological Museum. Moreover, they were not necessarily alone together in the grave. Early photos of the dig, which were much less widely publicized than the iconic image of the embracing lovers, show another skeleton lying just three feet away (Geller, 2016, pp. 90–98). There is also nothing to suggest that their relationship was 'star-crossed', or that the love they appear to testify to in death had been thwarted during life. The early assumption, now disproved, that one or both skeletons might have been killed by the flint weapons found with them in the grave was clearly encouraged by the *Romeo and Juliet* paradigm.

References to Shakespeare, then, have been employed to confirm a certain interpretation of the archaeological evidence from Valdaro. Reciprocally, the archaeological evidence also confirms something about Shakespeare. There is a sense in which the Lovers of Valdaro prove *Romeo and Juliet* true—not because the bones belong to the children of feuding Renaissance families, but because they suggest that a certain experience of romantic heterosexual love is both timeless and eternal. Feminist and New Historicist critics may attempt to explore the roots of Romeo and Juliet's tragedy in a specific set of economic conditions and cultural assumptions about gender, class, and the family—yet how can we presume to historicize what turns out to be prehistoric? The Valdaro Lovers tell us that Shakespeare's play really is about what we used to think it was about (and probably want it to be

about), and they tell us that Shakespeare's play is true. The virtuous circle between Shakespeare and archaeology established at the close of the eighteenth century continues to operate at the dawn of the twenty-first. Its constricting force seems ever more clear. The Neolithic skeletons can only 'echo' *Romeo and Juliet* if a certain reading of the play is allowed to stand (therefore it is assumed to stand), and if the bones are indeed those of a young man and woman (therefore they are assumed to be so). Interpretation on either side of the equation is stripped out; textual and archaeological phenomena are brought to bear on one another in a way that requires each to be understood as a preestablished fact. Here we are a world away from Matthew Johnson's suggestion that an archaeological site might resemble a Shakespearean text precisely in that each is open to a wide range of valid interpretations, with no prospect of a "final" reading (Johnson, 1999, p. 106). Instead, the link between *Romeo and Juliet* and the Lovers of Valdaro sets a definitive seal on how we are to read both.

10.6   Conclusions

This brief survey of the relationship between Shakespeare and modern mortuary archaeology is potentially somewhat dispiriting. Their conjunction too often seems to encourage a set of naïve and simplistic tropes relating to each, harkening back to modes of interpretation that have long been rightfully discarded in the respective disciplines. The version of Shakespeare invoked at Leicester and Valdaro amounts to a cast of larger than life, two-dimensional characters: hunch-backed villains and star-crossed lovers. Archaeology, likewise, is all about dramatic discoveries and extraordinary individuals. For any reader interested in both Shakespeare and archaeology, it is a sad state of affairs. What is it about these two that makes them bring out the worst in one another?

There is, of course, real Shakespearean archaeology, involving substantive and illuminating dialogue between the disciplines. Excavations at the sites of the Rose and Curtain Theatres in London have shed remarkable new light on early modern performance conditions and staging practices, and the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries have proven genuinely useful to archaeologists in interpreting the material evidence (Bowsher, 2011; Bowsher & Miller, 2009). The use of ground-penetrating radar to examine Shakespeare's grave in Stratford in 2016 (Colls & Carrick Utsi, 2017) was the product of a genuine negotiation between an archaeological research project and a Shakespearean text (the epitaph's injunction, still honored by church authorities, not to "move my bones"). Yet examples such as these do not indicate why Shakespeare should be any more central to the discourse of mortuary archaeology than Geoffrey Chaucer or Jane Austen. If there is any good reason why archaeologists should find themselves, again and again, "suddenly quoting Shakespeare," it does not depend on his ability to provide relevant evidence regarding Anglo-Saxon or Neolithic burial practices, but rather on

the cultural status accorded to the playwright and his works. That status is increasingly intertwined with—and analogous to—the cultural status of archaeology itself.

By way of a conclusion, I would propose that the pleasure and satisfaction the modern public derives from mortuary archaeology is akin to the pleasure and satisfaction traditionally derived from the works of Shakespeare. The kinship is rooted in the broader affinity between archaeological excavation and theatrical performance as improvisatory, unrepeatable, endlessly interpretable events (Pearson & Shanks, 2001), but there is more to it than this. In secular modernity, Shakespeare and mortuary archaeology have emerged as two of the most potent cultural technologies for communing with and paying honor to the dead. It is crucial to observe that in each of the cases surveyed above, archaeological excavation has been seen not as a violation of the dead, but rather as an act of respect, rescue, and potentially of reparation. Thus, through the osteological investigations of William Wright, the bones of the Princes in the Tower were "freed [them] from all undignified associations"; at the reburial of Richard III, the Bishop of Leicester gave thanks for the opportunity afforded by archaeology to accord "these mortal remains the dignity and honour denied to them in death" (Stevens, 2015). The decision to preserve and display the Valdaro skeletons in their entwined posture was likewise hailed as a compassionate act of rescue: "Scientists to save 5,000-year-old embrace" (Stewart, 2007). From London and Leicester to Valdaro, archaeology is the means whereby long-silenced witnesses are granted the opportunity to testify (be it to their suffering, their innocence, or their love). Although the rule may not apply to the large majority of anonymous human remains encountered by bioarchaeologists, exhumation in these celebrated cases takes on the characteristics of a public performance, enacting and enabling an earthly afterlife.

Shakespeare, by this definition, was doing mortuary archaeology all along. Aaron the Moor might have been speaking for the playwright himself when he declared "Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves." Whatever private horror the prospect of physical exhumation may have held for him, Shakespeare's plays unambiguously celebrate the capacity of the theatre to revive the dead and make them live again on stage. As one of Caesar's assassins, Cassius, is made to remark:

> How many ages hence
> Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
> In states unborn and accents yet unknown! (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.112–114)

Indeed, one of the earliest critical responses to Shakespeare's works situates him in a theatre of exhumation, where the figurative raising of dead bones offers satisfaction to both the dead and the living. Thomas Nashe wrote in 1592, after witnessing one of Shakespeare's earliest works, *Henry VI Part 1*:

> How would it have joyed brave Talbot, the terror of the French, to think that after he had lain two hundred years in his tomb, he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times) who in the tragedian that represents his person imagine they behold him fresh bleeding. (Nashe, 1592)

In Nashe's account, Shakespeare's resurrective theatre takes the long-dead bones of John Talbot, the first Earl of Shrewsbury (d. 1453) on a triumphant posthumous public journey. The exhumation of Talbot's remains is of course figurative rather than literal, yet the idea of Shakespeare's stage as a site where old bones are displayed, applauded, and redeemed is not wholly fanciful. Reading Nashe, it is easy enough to understand why a succession of men and women—especially those facing a life cut short by disease or execution—have bequeathed their skulls to the theatre in hopes that they might triumph again on stage in the part of Yorick (Menzer, 2015, pp. 31–66). In such cases, the afterlife afforded by Shakespeare is strikingly similar to that afforded by archaeology. Indeed, the triumphant progression described by Nashe—from entombment to exhumation, public revelation, vindication, and redemptive reinterment—could with the juggling of a few words be applied to the cultural voyages undergone in recent years by the remains of Richard III or the paired skeletons from Valdaro. For contemporary consumers of media narratives of mortuary archaeology, as for Shakespearean audiences yesterday and today, a distinctive source of pleasure and satisfaction lies in imagining what consolation the dead[7] would feel, if only they could know how we adore them now.

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[7] Although repatriation and reinterment ceremonies sometimes involve some of the performative aspects discussed here, this statement is not generally applicable to human remains in museums and collections from colonial contexts.

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Chapter 11
Cemetery Enchanted, *Encore*: Natural Burial in France and Beyond

Saskya Tschebann

11.1 Introduction

Max Weber's notion of the disenchantment of the world suggests that through processes of emerging modernity the moral, cognitive, and interpretative unity characterizing the enchanted premodern world view was shattered. For Weber disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) means the belief that with the advent of industrialization, science, and rationality there are no mysterious incalculable forces at play any longer but that one can master all things by calculation (Weber, 1919, p. 16). With magic and myth being stripped from "the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in" (Taylor, 2007, p. 25) we are embarked "on a path at the end of which there will be no more mysteries" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 15).

Weber's disenchantment narrative enjoys great popularity among historians and anthropologists of death (e.g. Engelke, 2019; Farman, 2018; Fischer, 1996; Laqueur, 2015). Disenchantment of death is usually said to have begun with the Enlightenment. During the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, the ban on burials in overcrowded inner-city churchyards and their closure resulted in the establishment of new cemeteries outside the inner-city walls (Fischer, 1996, pp. 10–23). The reasons for this development were justified legally with hygienic concerns, yet were also driven by additional motivations. Beyond reshaping the urban landscape, the closing of old, Church-controlled cemeteries and the opening of new ones outside the city reflected a new understanding of a secularized relationship between the living and the dead (Kselman 2014, p. 167). Reform contributed to disenchantment and helped to destroy the medieval-Christian cosmos (Taylor, 2007, p. 773).

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Disenchantment is regarded as coming fully to fruition between the second part of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth century, when efficiency, pragmatism, and mechanization were forced onto funerary programs. The establishment of non-denominational cemeteries even further away from the fast-growing city centers and the introduction of speedy and technologically sophisticated cremation mark a turning point in the funeral culture of the industrialized world (e.g. Clayden et al., 2018, p. 100; Fischer, 1996; Laqueur, 2015, pp. 495–522). That death and burial in the so-called 'Western World' remained rather disenchanted affairs until the end of the twentieth century is argued in multiple publications (e.g. Fischer, 1996; Walter, 1990). However, the question arises whether Weber's disenchanted world is still (or ever has been) a framework applicable to the study of death-related practices. How indicative is the current funerary behavior of a secularized, disenchanted world? And, how irrational is a rationale of enchantment in the face of death and ecological concerns? This chapter will explore these questions through the current trend of natural burial.

It has long been acknowledged that Weber's homogenizing anthropological accounts of 'premodern' society are too simplistic (Jenkins, 2000, pp. 15–16) and that magic, myth, and religion never entirely disappeared but, instead, were temporarily suppressed by the sediment of alternative myths until new social circumstances allowed them to reemerge. In the twenty-first century, new expressions of spirituality have emerged accompanied by a variety of developments in many sectors of life. These include a renewed focus on craft, authenticity, myth, and other aspects of human reflexivity, as well as the return of populism, tribalism, fundamentalist religion, and the rejection of sensible science (Suddaby et al., 2017). In today's European funerary realm, one can observe a slightly diminished significance and interest in religious cemeteries, less interest in formerly widespread Christian-style monuments and grave decorations, but also new expressions of mourning and commemoration. Individualized and de-individualized collective burial spaces that emphasize group membership (Sörries, 2011), virtual remembrance (Jacobs & Ziefle, 2010; Walter et al., 2012), and a proliferation of commemorative monuments lining roads, forest paths, and the sides of lakes and rivers (Fischer, 2011) point to a reshaped relationship with the dead and to intertwined spiritualities seeking solace in a variety of forms.

This contribution takes its starting point from the silent revolution of funeral rites that is observable worldwide since the 1990s. Originating from the move towards 'green' cemeteries that allow for 'natural' burial, the 'natural burial movement', sometimes also called the 'natural death movement', has been gaining more and more attention over the last three decades (Assig, 2007; Benisek, 2017; Boret, 2014, p. 1; Clayden et al., 2015, 2018; Davies & Rumble, 2012; Hockey et al., 2012). Deemed the fastest growing environmental movement in the UK (Callender, 2012, p. 13), its continuation and alterations in France are the focus of this chapter. By exploring the French example of this movement, comparing it to Britain, and investigating what it can tell us about the fluidity of definitions, conceptions, and differing priorities, this contribution addresses current notions of life, death, continuity, plants, and, by its very nature, mystery.

11.2   A Transnational Natural Burial Movement

Since the opening of the first natural cemetery in Carlisle, England, in 1993, there has been a steady increase in different types of natural burial, counting more than 270 natural burial grounds in the UK (Natural Death Centre, 2017) and over 300 in the US (Nebhut, 2016, p. 9). Because of its inter- and transnational appeal, since then, the concept has spread to other European and non-European countries (e.g. Assig, 2007; Boret, 2014, p. 1; Clayden et al., 2015, p. ii). The 'natural burial movement' encompasses primarily the development of 'ecological' or 'green' burial, seeking to establish more environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional burial forms, while, at the same time, permitting a modified, more social approach to dying and mourning (Boret, 2014, p. 1). Ideally, these environmentally friendly cemeteries realize the objective of supporting the preservation of natural landscapes, the (re)generation of woodland, and a sustainable relationship between humans and their environment. At the same time, they can be understood as a societal reaction to the scarcity of burial spaces in urban contexts.

Given the sheer diversity of operators and cemetery landscapes, an all-encompassing definition of 'natural burial' seems not only impossible but also carries too many different connotations and cultural affinities, especially with respect to the many hybrid forms of body treatment and deposition. These can range from burial of corpses in habitats such as meadows, gardens, woods and 'green' cemeteries to the scattering or burying of cremated remains in forests, meadows, and bodies of water (Assig, 2007; Fischer, 2011, pp. 131–136; Klie, 2008, pp. 7–8). Too often the image and popular perception of natural burial practices is shaped by what is visible above the ground, e.g. whether the cemetery is garden-like or a woodland, and not so much by what happens with the dead body itself. Ideally, natural burial should imply a process in which corpses are dressed in materials made of natural fibers and spread out over the landscape in biodegradable coffins. However, rising cremation rates and persisting preferences for embalming, burial vaults, and agglomerations of graves in cemeteries pose a counteractive reality. As recent research by Ladislav Šmejda and colleagues about geochemical signals of mortuary areas has shown, the long-term ecological legacy of burial places is more imbalanced and hazardous than previously thought (Šmejda, 2017; Šmejda et al., 2017). According to the research group, decomposing corpses leach essential nutrients, such as iron, zinc, sulfur, calcium, and phosphorus into the ground, which are generally beneficial to local biota but are concentrated in cemeteries instead of being dispersed evenly throughout nature. This, in turn, causes overcompensation and imbalance (Le Roux, 2017). These findings are anything but new, as Karl Marx already warned of a rift in the metabolic interaction between humans and the soil (Foster, 1999, p. 379). Cremation of the corpse and deposition of the ashes are not the solution to this problem because the fuel used to cremate bodies constitutes non-renewable energy and, if not properly controlled, cremation can be a relatively important source of atmospheric mercury pollution (Mari & Domingo, 2010, p. 136).

The difference between the use of an already existing natural space like a forest and a constructed burial ground like the French natural cemetery discussed in this contribution, seems to lie in local-specific motivations rather than in differences of attributed values connected to burial places. Although most people do not believe in purgatory or resurrection of the body any longer, the choice of a specific place can very well be determined by considerations regarding its sacredness. On 15 August 2016, the Vatican issued the instruction *Ad resurgendum cum Christo* (Müller & Ladaria, 2016a, b) which amends the instruction *De cadaverum crematione* of 5 July 1963 (Másala, 1964) and addresses various points concerning cremation and natural burial: The Catholic Church insistently recommends that the bodies of the deceased be buried in cemeteries or other sacred places. When cremation is chosen, the ashes "must be laid to rest in a sacred place," in a cemetery, a church, or "an area, which has been set aside for this purpose," as not to be excluded from the prayers and remembrance of their family or the Christian community. The remains must also be protected from "any unfitting or superstitious practices." For Catholics, keeping the ashes of the departed in a domestic residence is not permitted and in order to avoid "pantheism, naturalism or nihilism," the scattering of the ashes in the air, on land, at sea, etc. is also not allowed, "nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry or other objects" (Müller & Ladaria, 2016b). So as not to miss the opportunity of the natural burial movement, in some countries the Catholic

Fig. 11.1 Prayer place at the natural burial ground at Vienna-Kahlenberg (Klosterwald Wien-Kahlenberg), Austria. The forest belongs to the nearby monastery of Klosterneuburg but is open to the public. A burial place for a cinerary urn at a tree can be rented for a duration from 25–50 years. Burial trees are marked by a plaque with the name and dates of the deceased. Burial is possible with or without the attendance of a Catholic priest and is also open to non-Christians. (Photo: E. Weiss-Krejci)

Church has responded swiftly to these new regulations by providing individual trees for burial of cremated remains in special forest areas as an alternative to traditional burial in a cemetery (Fig. 11.1).

The question as to what part of the burial process is natural and how it differs from an unnatural burial has to be posed separately for each cultural context to reveal the practices above and beneath the ground (Davies & Rumble, 2012, p. 17). In the context of the different 'green', 'natural', 'ecological', and 'woodland' burial grounds of England, for example, 'natural' usually means an alliance with the organic world, independent from the 'unnatural' interference of commercial ventures, whereas 'green' suggests an element of political activism (Davies & Rumble, 2012, p. 1). Emerging from an intertwined, transnational background of a global funeral trend promoting natural burial, the first natural cemetery « Cimetière naturel de Souché » in the town of Niort, Deux-Sèvres, France contributes to the living and breathing corpus of natural burial and cemetery research. Ethnographic insights into the synthesis of transnational and local expressions of this 'natural' burial site sketch the natural death movement's heterogenous realities.

11.3   « Cimetière naturel de Souché »: A Local Adaptation in Niort, France

« Cimetière naturel de Souché » is situated beside the traditional « Cimetière de Souché » on the outskirts of Niort, a municipality of 58,000 inhabitants in western France. Although a shift towards *cimetières paysagées* or *végétalisées*, i.e. cemeteries with a more 'vegetal', park-like design, has been notable all over France for over a decade (Lapouge-Déjean & Royant, 2017), the construction of « Cimetière naturel de Souché » was a novelty in a country barely used to these types of cemeteries. At the time of my 2018 ethnographic research, natural burial in France was still limited to this cemetery. My fieldwork consisted of participant observation, qualitative interviews, and informal conversations with Niort's cemetery management, employees of funeral homes, gravediggers, and those who used and visited « Cimetière naturel de Souché » and its neighboring traditional cemetery. Socio-demographic information about the deceased buried at « Cimetière naturel de Souché » and priorities and expectations by both the bereaved and general visitors enriched and activated an understanding of a seemingly functional and static place. The findings give an insight into a funeral culture in dynamic exchange with broader societal and environmental concerns while prioritizing local tastes and aspirations. Quoting the former director of the cemetery office Dominique Bodin:

> Ce qui se passe à Niort n'est pas vrai à Paris ou moins vrai à Lyon. (D. Bodin at « Cimetière naturel de Souché », 28 June 2018)

What is true in Paris or Lyon, isn't necessarily true for us here in Niort.[1]

The motivations of the cemetery planning team provided a base from which the emergence of this alternative approach could be retraced.

11.3.1 Responding to and Implementing Change

The group that sketched out « Cimetière naturel de Souché » was made up of the office of cemetery conservation, the municipal office of urban and landscape studies, local blacksmiths, and artists. The basic idea was to counter the tendency in French funeral culture that had put the stamp on cemeteries since the 1950s. Around this time, the craft industry was superseded by the industrial production of tombstones and burial vaults. The gravestone industry slowly began to use granite instead of the local limestone used previously, which had been extracted locally and crafted into gravestones by regional stone cutters. The granite used for most tombstones in traditional cemeteries today is mass-produced and shipped to France from "the four corners of the world" (« quatre coins de la planète ») (Un Cimetière naturel à Souché, 2014, p. 10), specifically China and India. Due to grave reuse being common in France and perpetual concessions now being a thing of the past, these tombs equally burden the environment after their abandonment, as their material has to be dealt with.

In addition to the shift from a regional stone industry to an international import system, cemeteries adapted to changes in religious ideology. The lifting of the ban on cremation by the Catholic church in 1963 (Másala, 1964) has resulted in an approximate 40% increase of cremations in France over the last 50 years (0.32% in 1970 to 39.01% in 2019) (Association nationale crématiste, 2020) and, according to information gained during my 2018 interview with funeral director Perrine Rouger, even 50% at Niort. This rise is explained by the fact that Niort has the first and only crematorium in the region of Deux-Sèvres, as well as by cremation being considered quicker, more practical, and cheaper.[2] It also offers greater temporal flexibility since the bodies can be refrigerated before cremation for up to 2 weeks and ashes can be stored even longer. However, given the unusually high de-Christianization of the flatlands of Niort a possible ideological link between the rise of cremation and the fall of Christian beliefs in the resurrection of the body (Charpentier & Courant, 2002, p. 29) can also be considered an explanation.

With the rising numbers of cremations, traditional cemeteries met the need for adequate burial spaces of cinerary urns with a design which persists up until today—the 'columbaria', or, as Dominique Bodin called them during our interview, the

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[1] All translations from French into English are the author's.

[2] A few years ago, the price for a 'traditional' burial in Niort, including the funeral service, a concession of 50 years, a burial vault, and a tombstone, amounted to around 5000 € per person (Un Cimetière naturel à Souché, 2014, p. 10).

"council flats of the dead" (« HLM[3] de la mort ») (D. Bodin at « Cimetière naturel de Souché », 28 June 2018). These became a common feature at cemeteries from the 1980s onwards and added to the grey, granite-heavy appearance. In 2018, three out of ten cemeteries in Niort were equipped with such columbaria. In addition to entailing the same ecological issues as other monuments and tombstones crafted out of granite, their aesthetic proves hard to incorporate into a natural cemetery.

The economic difficulties encountered by some parts of the population when faced with the costly and limited set of choices in the traditional funeral sector appear especially unnecessary in light of other noticeable current societal trends. These include shifting family structures and a decreasing interest in visiting and maintaining graves. The possibilities of finding either a job somewhere else in metropolitan France or studying in one of the main cities, results in families dying apart from each other and, consequently, being buried in cemeteries spread across the country. Almost all interviewees blamed *les familles éclatées*, the split-up families, for this development. An older woman who tended her husband's grave at the traditional cemetery of Souché expressed a general dissatisfaction regarding the abandonment of graves in the following way:

> Plus personne ne vient ici, le monde devient fou. Mes enfants n'entretiennent pas la tombe non plus; c'est horrible. (female interviewee at « Cimetière de Souché », 17 June 2018)

> Nobody comes here anymore, the world is going crazy. My children aren't tending the grave anymore either; it's horrible.

The administration noticing not only the abandonment of graves but also the cemeteries developing into deserted landscapes aimed to respond with a design that would respect the deceased, the environment, and families alike.

The creation of « Cimetière naturel de Souché » was also driven by ecological considerations. While pesticides had already been banned in France in 2011, additionally ridding the cemetery of its daily waste accumulation such as potted, freshly cut, and artificial flowers, plaques, and other non-biodegradable objects was seen as a way to manage the 'environmental debt' left for generations to come. Last but not least, the fact that in the city of Niort green public space is in high demand provided an additional incentive for the cemetery planning and construction. This transformation of urban space requires some adaptation to heterogeneous notions of respect and mourning and a view of cemeteries as multifunctional spaces for the bereaved and non-bereaved alike. The park-like aesthetic also invites visitors to perceive the cemetery not only as a burial ground but to use it as place of remembrance and as a green space where people might seek solace in nature.

Bordering the traditional cemetery « Cimetière de Souché », « Cimetière naturel de Souché » was built on a c. 4000 m^2 field which already contained several trees and other plants giving the place its basic structure (Un Cimetière naturel à Souché, 2014, p. 11). The techniques employed for the construction of the new cemetery were guided by an idea of harmony within an already existing environment, with its

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[3] Habitation à Loyer Modéré.

Fig. 11.2 Visible and overgrown limestone gravemarkers on inhumation graves. (Photo: S. Tschebann)

natural materials, local vegetation, and the municipal resources available. Stone slabs, cobblestones, logs, and iron material were, therefore, reused to construct benches, art installations, and other facilities at the site such as chestnut fences and insect 'hotels'.

The first, most noticeable feature on visiting the site is the grave and landscape design. There is only one type of tombstone for both inhumation and incineration graves. The foot-sized and square limestones from local productions may be engraved with the deceased's information and require no further maintenance, cleaning, or looking after once being set in place (Fig. 11.2). Sprays of flowers used during the funeral are kept at the grave for a maximum of 3 weeks. Grave decorations and plants on top of graves are allowed as far as they blend in with the surroundings and are biodegradable. The family can personalize the perimeter of the burial place by planting small shrubs and other plants that respect the "rural spirit of the place" (« l'esprit champêtre des lieux ») (Ferrer et al., 2017, p. 15). This has led to high variability in appearance of burial plots which can range from very simple, undecorated, and plain graves to extravagant decorations of various plant species and arrangements of stones, seashells, pine cones, and other material found within and outside the region. The families can also opt to leave the grave-tending to the municipal workers, sowing grass on top of it and mowing it regularly if the grave becomes abandoned over time.

The cemetery prides itself with going beyond other types of French 'landscape cemeteries', or *cimetières paysagées*, not only in the area of local stone use but also

by returning the bodies of the deceased or their ashes to the earth in as natural a state as possible (Mairie de Niort, 2015, p. 3). It is with regard to the private, less visible funerary realm that the deeper underlying agenda of natural burial at this cemetery comes to the fore. The departed are to be dressed in natural fibers such as linen, cotton, hemp, etc. and are deposited in coffins of untreated wood from a French forest or in recycled and biodegradable materials (Ferrer et al., 2017, p. 15). Those who opt for cremation can choose either burial of the urn or dispersal of the ashes in a special area called the 'garden of remembrance' (*jardin du souvenir*). Because in this case there are no individualized spaces, the names of the deceased are engraved on leaf-shaped brass plates and hung from the so-called 'spring tree' (*arbre du printemps*), an installation made out of copper (Ferrer et al., 2017, pp. 18–19). Incineration followed up by dispersion of ashes without a monument provides a feasible alternative to the struggle of meeting the financial requirements for an individualized grave.

According to Amanda Clot, director of the cemetery office, the current rate of inhumation versus cremation is 1:2. Half of the cremated bodies are interred in formal graves whereas the other half are dispersed at the *jardin du souvenir*. For a successful incorporation of the 'natural' into the cultural funeral landscape, high cremation rates proved to be logical in the case of « Cimetière naturel de Souché », as a significant element of French funeral customs, the cemented burial vault, is not permitted. This resulted in very few inhumation graves at the beginning, only slowly growing in numbers over the years.

11.4   (In)Animate Agents

The Niort cemetery conservation office is the administrative force behind the management of the natural cemetery. It fulfills a position at the crossroads of funeral business, users, visitors, landscape design, and monitoring the regulations of the charter and the cemetery's aesthetics. Due to the 'lack' of death care professionals helping with the personal grave space, most of the time the site is basically in the hands of municipal workers that tend the landscape. This rift between the cemetery as a collective public resource and a deeply private space of mourning is a common feature among many other cemeteries in Europe (e.g. Clayden et al., 2015; Davies & Rumble, 2012; Nielsen & Groes, 2014). The public and the private factions usually only intersect during funerals, when bereaved family members and cemetery workers come together.

According to the former and the present cemetery directors the cemetery is used by a diverse population ranging from 'Bobos', ecologists, and economically weaker families to notable people of a higher social status. Judging from exchanges with interlocutors, religious belonging ranges from believing Christians, atheists, to

those interested in Buddhist and Taoist ideas. Hence, no encompassing statement of a particular religious, de-Christianized or secular profile of the deceased and non-deceased can be made. However, the heterogenous profile of the visitors was contrasted with a shared spiritual appeal attached to nature 'stepping in' for processes of meaning-making. This is reflected in the absence of religious symbols in material commemorations and arguments by administration members and visitors alike, who claim that the cemetery's design and atmosphere have an appeal beyond religious confinements.

11.4.1   Grave Decorations

Over the years the cemetery conservation office noticed recurring violations in the form of certain objects left on the graves, such as angel figurines, flower bouquets wrapped in plastic, and Christmas trees, to name a few. These conflicts provide insights into the creative variety of material expression of agency, remembrance, and ways of bonding throughout the cemetery and through objects. One woman I talked to uses seashells and feathers, brought back from the coast where her husband used to sail, to symbolize his hobbies and express his passions and personality. The administration is generally displeased with the spreading of seashells and similar 'animated objects with agency' (Hallam & Hockey, 2001; Robben, 2018, p. xviii), since they are deemed inappropriate for the region's scenic environment. Another recurring memorialization with a 'forbidden' object is a schoolbook, replaced weekly by a grave visitor, seemingly to keep the deceased, imagined to be either a teacher or a pupil, 'up to date' with the weekly progress of school lessons.

The natural cemetery presents a contested space where the bereaved and the administration are entangled in constant negotiations over grave properness through leaving or removing organic and inorganic objects. Commemoration through objects highlights differences and similarities with other cemetery behaviors indicating a spiritual engagement, meaning making, and caring for the deceased in a reciprocal manner. This is particularly evident in flowers and other plants present at the natural cemetery, growing and withering with shifting values and negotiations of cleanliness and pollution (Fig. 11.2).

11.4.2   Cultural Flowers, Natural Weeds

Changes in French cemetery design must be regarded in relation to the national pesticide ban passed by the French government in 2011, which has changed the hue of public spaces, sidewalks, and cemeteries from a grey to a greener one. The

sudden occurrence of weeds and other plants unhindered by chemicals, accompanied by wildflowers and patches of grass is not equally embraced by everyone. It also highlights a dichotomy within the French realm of the cemetery, closely connected to notions of respect, fear, abandonment, care, and control. In the traditional conception a well-tended cemetery is rich in gravel and granite and contains well-tended graves decorated by a 'tamed' flora that is either kept in pots on the tombstones or tucked away behind plastic packaging. Interlocutors at the traditional neighboring cemetery in most cases viewed unhindered growth of wild plants on graves negatively, because to them a non-tended grave is synonymous with the deceased not being cared for. As a result, graves which display a certain degree of wildness and are without commercial flowers are associated with an image of abandonment and 'uncleanness', triggering fears that the city negates its duty to conserve cemeteries. Weeds, wild flowers, fallen leaves, and grasses taking over a cemetery can be related to what Mary Douglas has famously termed 'matter out of place':

> […] if uncleanness is matter out of place, we must approach it through order. Uncleanness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained. To recognize this is the first step towards insight into pollution. (Douglas, 2001, p. 41)

At the natural cemetery the definitions and expressions of care, cleanness, and abandonment have shifted to a more fluid set of notions, as the bereaved express very different styles of flowering the graves, ranging from well-enclosed and low in height to extending beyond their borders. However, comparable ideas of a connection between caring for the grave and caring for the dead persist. The administration has taken measures to counteract the appearance of abandonment by directly sowing grass seeds on tombs and regularly mowing the grass in order to meet some families' incapability or unwillingness to care for the grave, while also respecting public demands of an aesthetically 'clean' cemetery.

Caring for graves primarily through flowering are continuing signs of devotion through which networks of kin are maintained (Goody & Poppi, 1994, pp. 149–150). Flowers can be interpreted as "symbolic mediators" (Gibson, 2010, p. 626), a notion used originally by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss in relation to objects, animals, and humans offered in sacrifices (Hubert & Mauss, 1899, pp. 134–136). Flowers not only serve to process the abstract idea of death and dying for the bereaved by covering it up with something more colorful and appealing, but also serve as mediators between the bereaved and deceased in a form of symbolic, material communication, or as one visitor explained as "a way to externalize thoughts" (« une manière d'extérioriser des pensées ») (male interviewee at my Niort residence, 27 June 2018). One could also see the flowers on graves as a form of transaction or exchange. A first-time visitor to the natural cemetery described the function of flowers as follows, pointing to a meaning beyond an aesthetic decoration and utilitarian upkeeping for order's sake.

Fig. 11.3 Roses fixed to a leaf-shaped plaque of a departed at the *jardin du souvenir*. (Photo: S. Tschebann)

> Flowers are a sign of love that one brings to the grave. In exchange, because one gives love, one gets something back—it helps with the grief because a relation is being kept alive. One, therefore, actually gives them to oneself, not to the dead. (female interviewee at « Cimetière naturel de Souché », 9 July 2018)

Elaborating on Marcel Mauss' gift theory (Mauss, 1925) in combination with consumer research, John Sherry defines the gift as a reciprocal norm of exchange, where an individual is obliged to give, receive, and reciprocate. This threefold obligation, deriving from its cultural embeddedness, is designated through cultural conventions by which intangible essences (such as 'life' or 'hope') also transform into gifts that can be redistributed (Sherry, 1983, p. 160). In this case, the intangible essence is respect, accomplishment from fulfilling a deed, or a bond and connection one keeps up and gets back from a partner of exchange that might not be physically but metaphysically present (Fig. 11.3).

The 'lens of death' through which social anthropologists try to see the enduring appeal of spaces imbued with cultural significance, reveals a long-standing interconnectedness between nature and deathscapes. Created out of a reciprocal flux between a pragmatical utilitarianism and spiritual, socio-cultural needs, the natural burial movement of the twenty-first century shares some aspects with the narrative of the rural cemetery movement of the early nineteenth century. This comparison not only provides a critical look on the idea of a purported nineteenth-century disenchantment but also serves the purpose of showing that stand-alone factors such as hygiene, ecology or enchantment should not be made solely responsible for shifts in values and practices in the mortuary realm.

11.5   Precursors and Variations of a Movement

11.5.1   *The Rural Cemetery Movement*

As mentioned in the introduction, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, juridical regulations, pressing social reasons and health hazards in overcrowded cities, with the fear of a diminishing cult of the dead, led to a first wave of movement of the dead to areas outside the city centers and to a new cemetery concept. The trend was spearheaded by Austria and France. In Vienna, five communal cemeteries were founded in 1784 as part of the burial reform by Emperor Joseph II. In France, the opening of Père-Lachaise in Paris was accompanied by the issuing of the Napoleonic burial decree of 1804 which laid down strict regulations placing all cemeteries under government control (Fischer, 1996, pp. 15–16). This decree was a direct response to the "scorn and insensibility" into which the care for the dead had fallen during the Revolution (Goody & Poppi, 1994, p. 154).

In many places, these new cemeteries were characterized by a geometric design and a sort of 'natural theology' in which art had its shaping function to diverge between the natural and human-made beauty. The following quote by William Peabody refers to the famous garden cemetery of Mount Auburn in Massachusetts, which was founded in 1831 and marks the starting point of the so-called 'rural cemetery movement' in the US (French, 1974).

> Nature under all circumstances was meant to be improved by human care; it is unnatural to leave it to itself; and the traces of art are never unwelcome, except when it defeats the purpose and refuses to follow the suggestions of nature. (Peabody, 1831)

The rural cemetery movement does not fit smoothly into the picture of increasing disenchantment during the process of industrialization. With its emphasis of the relationship between nature and human interference, the ideal garden cemetery of the early nineteenth century followed a "design for life and the living" (Johnson, 2008) and represented an attempt to reestablish a connection with the dead that had been feared lost. In this process the cemetery was turned "from a shunned place of horror into an enchanting place of succor and instruction" (French, 1974, p. 47).

The rural cemetery movement was a direct response to the changing attitudes toward death and shows some parallels to the natural burial movement. However, its design and attitudes are more comparable to « Cimetière naturel de Souché » than to natural cemeteries in Britain which disclose a much more untamed nature. Douglas Davies and Hannah Rumble's (Davies & Rumble, 2012) anthropological-theological study of Barton Glebe, a consecrated Church of England woodland burial site, and Andy Clayden et al.'s (2015) interdisciplinary, comparative study of four British natural burial sites in South Yorkshire, Mid Wales, and Hampshire[4] make this evident.

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[4] (1) Woodland Burial Ground, Wisewood Cemetery, Sheffield (South Yorkshire); (2) Green Lane Burial Field and Nature Reserve, Abermule, Montgomery (Mid Wales); (3) South Yorkshire

11.5.2   *Natural Burial in Britain*

In the emergence of the natural burial movement in the UK in the 1990s, a refocusing of attention from traditionally religious afterlife concepts to more personally constructed beliefs was one of the objectives motivating cemetery redesign (Davies & Rumble, 2012, p. 124). This redesign sought out to provide individually constructed grave spaces, as well as the creation of a form of 'collective memorial' where the bereaved are able to "anticipate the grave's future within a wider landscape" (Clayden et al., 2015, p. 116). This allows for spaces of burial where the deceased and non-deceased contribute to the regeneration of former barren land through claiming it and introducing flora, fauna, and biodiversity to it.

Clayden et al. (2015, p. 195) list four questions about the status of natural burial in the UK and whether it constitutes: (1) a creative resistance to modernist death care; (2) part of a re-enchantment of death; (3) a form of collective environmental regeneration; or (4) a site for individual identity-making. The results of their research show that, while environmental considerations are relevant factors among their interlocutors in choosing a natural burial site, they are somewhat secondary motivations. The main objective seems to be the desire to display individuality through the chosen trees and other vegetation planted on top of the graves, providing a representation of the deceased and the possibility of engaging with a wider, shared landscape (Clayden et al., 2015, p. 137). The space is seen as a dynamic place which would, similarly to their own emotions and needs, change over time, probably resulting in an anonymous, yet emotionally-mapped, landscape of remembrance. Most grave markers are either trees or made from biodegradable materials which would eventually merge more or less seamlessly into the surrounding environment. The need for memorialization and the acceptance of a deathscape that changes and might result in a shared (mourning) space was welcomed by interviewees at all four British natural burial grounds (Clayden et al., 2015, p.116). Along the same vein, Davies and Rumble conclude that their interlocutors wish to be part of a collective landscape developed through the notion of "returning to the earth" (Davies & Rumble, 2012, p. 134).

Whereas Clayden and colleagues could attest that each of their bereaved participants found ways to encapsulate the unique identities of their deceased loved ones through choosing, doing, and living with natural burial, the data from « Cimetière naturel de Souché » presents different motivations. Apart from being a cemetery in which landscape design plays a crucial role, individual identity-making proved to be less of a particularly prominent aspect mentioned by interlocutors. The expression of bonding, communicating, and continuing (kinship) care through biodegradable materials are a notable aspect in interacting with the site materially, as well as between the deceased and non-deceased in a metaphysical sense. Returning to the

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Woodland Burial Ground, Ulley, Rotherham (South Yorkshire); and (4) South Downs Natural Burial Site, the Sustainability Centre, East Meon, Petersfield (Hampshire).

four theoretical questions by Clayden et al. (2015, p. 195) mentioned above, « Cimetière naturel de Souché » highlights the persistence of the century-crossing notion of enchantment.

11.5.3   Natural Enchantment in France

According to the creators of « Cimetière naturel de Souché », one motivation for the cemetery conception, was a form of "rebellion" against the "death business", referring to the commercial aspects of death, leaving behind massive, imported granite tombstones, seldom visited, and burdening the families financially. Another one was to turn a place of remembrance into a place of contemplation. Amanda Clot emphasizes the primary motivation as being the aesthetic and enchanting appeal of this piece of land:

> […] c'est plus un coup de foudre pour un lieu qu'ils trouvent magnifique et ils sont content pour leur défunt […] ils ont plus de plaisir de venir, de se recuire à ici qu'à cote (A. Clot at « Cimetière naturel de Souché », 28 June 2018).

> […] most of them fall in love with the place because it is pleasant and they are happy for their dead […] and they have more pleasure in coming here than to the other cemetery.

This view is partially echoed by the interlocutors at the site claiming to feel more soothed, calm, and at ease here at the natural cemetery than at traditional counterparts. It certainly holds true for the non-bereaved visitors who, according to my observations and interviews, use the place for meditative (dog) walks, picnics, educational strolling with their children, social encounters in times of loneliness, and contemplations about death and the afterlife. But what about the bereaved? According to the interviews and informal conversations shared with me, the visual appeal is perceived as contributing to a less 'cemetery-like' appearance, especially because of the absence of prominent monuments and 'shocking' crosses, which provide little relief during the mourning process. The 'lighter', less sad, more open and friendly environment, where one can garden, strike up conversations as well as notice birds, children, and plants 'going on with life', offers solace. The most prominent reason for choosing the cemetery for burial was explained in terms of its appeal which can be summarized as 'enchantment'. Some referred to the place as 'inhabited', 'mystical', 'cosmic', and 'full of life', where the soul (Christian, Taoist, or reincarnating) can be free, freer than at its 'grey and sad' equivalent of the traditional cemetery.

This brings us back to the concept of Weber's 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung*) and its antonym 'enchantment' (*Verzauberung*). The root word in German is *Zauber*, or 'magic', which for Weber together with myth enriched human understanding and reasoning until the advent of 'modernity'. However, the stark dichotomies of a world enchanted vs disenchanted, primitive vs modern, and religious vs secular cannot account for movements such as the widespread engagement between 1880 and

1914 with occultism, mysticism, and, quite literally, magic (Owen, 2004, p. 6). The assumption of a linear diminishment of magic's, myth's, and enchantment's presence in the course of industrialization neglects the "tenacious persistence of myth, magic and enchantment in human beliefs, social practices and institutions" (Suddaby et al., 2017, p. 1). "[W]e have never been disenchanted" argues Thomas Laqueur because "the charisma of the dead" exists also in our age (Laqueur, 2015, p. 18), or as Michael Taussig, with reference to Marcel Mauss' inquiry into the nature of magical spirits, aptly puts it: "Death, it appears, is the fount of magic!" (Taussig, 2001, p. 309). I therefore prefer to speak of *persistent* enchantment. Instead of continuing with Weber's thesis of a 'worldwide' trend of secularization, an approach focused on the dynamic nature of spiritualities and religious pluralization (Casanova, 2018) would yield richer insights into enchantment's creation, utilization, and experience than its mere negotiation.

11.6   Conclusions

Death and burial as research topics in socio-cultural anthropology are vast fields, encompassing the processes and practices involved with the metaphysical 'problem' of human death, from dealing with the corpse to deposition of the body and beyond. « Cimetière naturel de Souché », as the first one of its kind in France, departs from traditional cemeteries defined by elaborate granite tombstones, paths covered in gravel, massive grey columbaria, as well as commercial memorabilia such as plaques, plastic flowers, and various objects of personalized forms of remembrance. The 'natural' aspect of the cemetery is most present in its management above the ground by limiting waste from memorialization and interference with the landscape. Like at many other natural burial grounds, intervention in the surrounding landscape and memorialization through headstones and decorations are kept to a minimum to promote a scenic development. Setting forth a bold proposition to change handlings with the dead in a manner deeply opposed to the commercial interests of funeral businesses and gravestone companies, the cemetery conservation recovered deeply rooted and culturally defined notions of respect, purity, emotion, care, and the afterlife. This ethnographic account shows how motivations for the construction of « Cimetière naturel de Souché » were influenced as much by the transnational natural burial movement as they were by local considerations. For example, in contrast to natural burials in Britain, which are "less restricted or bounded by duty or etiquette" (Davies & Rumble, 2012, p. 55), in the case of Niort it is not the natural but the traditional cemetery where mourners can freely choose what to leave on the grave, as the guidelines are not confined to biodegradable materials only.

The research presented here also elucidates that incalculable and mythical aspects of human life and death shape the possibilities and acceptance of funeral innovations. Persisting traditions, while not set in stone, are hard to eradicate. This

does not only apply to grave decorations and flowers, but also to the impact of decomposition and cremation on the local biota's balance of essential nutrients. Cremation and agglomerated inhumation, both considered 'clean' and 'appropriate' means of body treatment and disposal, are not strictly 'green' practices (Mari & Domingo, 2010; Nebhut, 2016). Although embalming practices for bodies are prohibited at « Cimetière naturel de Souché », premortem medical treatments can also cause a dangerous chemical cocktail which, if released into the soil, contaminates the groundwater. However, current body treatments and disposal types are unlikely to go away anytime soon,

> because deep-seated religious values, ethical concerns and scientific arguments are not likely to reach a mutual agreement easily. (Šmejda, 2017)

Funeral practices signify death as a social event and transform the status of the deceased member. These practices also promote the cohesion of the non-deceased, but extend further to intertwinements with a dynamic funeral culture in flux with socio-demographic, economic, and ecological changes. Experimenting with changing notions of life and death, nature and culture, purity and uncleanliness, spiritualities, and environmental concerns will therefore accompany funeral developments in the future. By observing practices and exchanging with interlocutors about the significance of flowers, vegetal decorations, and grave tending at the natural cemetery, I argue that vegetal offerings (1) are continuing signs of devotion and therefore contribute to ongoing kin care; (2) function as symbolic mediators between the deceased and non-deceased; and (3) are reciprocal redistributions between objects and intangible essences (such as love).

As I have shown, the enchanting appeal of « Cimetière naturel de Souché » is due to a variety of factors. On the one hand its pleasant-to-be-in urban green space provides possibilities for therapeutic mourning, reflections about life and the afterlife, and educational purposes for both bereaved and non-bereaved visitors. Expressions relating to the cyclical nature of becoming and withering, as well as ecological continuity through decomposition hints to an attempt at closing the rift in the metabolic interaction between people and the earth (Foster, 1999, pp. 379–380). However, all indicate the enchanted quality of this place, providing its visitors with possibilities of meaning-making in the context of loss. Navigating through associations of spirituality, respect, and reciprocal care within this burial space, enchantment seems to be the safest way of keeping haunting feelings of abandonment at bay.

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Chapter 12
The Cemetery and Ossuary at Sedlec near Kutná Hora: Reflections on the Agency of the Dead

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12.1 Introduction

The outstanding Church of All Saints with Ossuary at Sedlec is located in central Bohemia within the buffer zone of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kutná Hora. It is a popular tourist destination and has attracted visitors for hundreds of years. The Ossuary, which forms the lower part of the two-story building, and the surrounding cemetery played a role in religious narratives enabling us to investigate aspects of the agency of the dead and their effects on the living. The history of the Church of All Saints with Ossuary is recorded in various historical sources, and

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many folk tales make reference to the special role of the bones. The Ossuary at Sedlec is the most widely known monument in the Kutná Hora region and an iconic place, but beyond this building there are other places that relate to, represent, and commemorate the dead. Archaeological investigations of parts of the cemetery surrounding the Church of All Saints with Ossuary began with multiple brief excavations from 2011. The main excavation activities by the Archaeological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences under the direction of Filip Velímský and Jan Frolík (Brzobohatá et al., 2019; Frolík, 2017a, b, 2018, 2019, 2020) started in 2016 (exterior 2016–2018; interior from 2019), shining some light on the historicity of the accounts of Sedlec's dead.[1]

To present the Church of All Saints with Ossuary and the surrounding cemetery in its historical context, it is necessary to provide some background and introduce the two main powers that have shaped the region from late medieval times: the town of Kutná Hora, which was the most important mining center of medieval Bohemia during the times of the Přemyslid and Luxembourg dynasties, and the Cistercian monastery at Sedlec to which the Church of All Saints with Ossuary belonged (Fig. 12.1).

12.2   Medieval Beginnings

The Sedlec Abbey was founded around 1142 as the first Cistercian monastery in the Czech lands by Miroslav, a member of the regional nobility, and was settled by monks from the Bavarian abbey of Waldsassen (Charvátová, 1998). The region had already been under intensive human influence not only during the early medieval period but also in prehistoric times (Šimůnek, 2010; Velímský, 2009a). The monastery's location contradicts the so-called 'wilderness myth' (Schreg, 2018, p. 40), i.e. the common assumption that Cistercians always settled in undeveloped lands.[2]

Before the Cistercians came to the region, a local mint was already in operation in the town of Malín (Fig. 12.1) at the end of the tenth century, but it is generally accepted that the silver was not mined in those times. After the discovery of veins of silver ore in the second half of the thirteenth century in the Kutná Hora region,[3] intensive mining surged and the area saw a veritable silver boom resulting in a fast-growing population of miners, entrepreneurs, artisans, and merchants. The mining drifts and shafts were soon surrounded by houses, wooden chapels, shops, and

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[1] The excavation was published only partially but publication of the results of thorough archaeological and anthropological analyses is in progress. See also https://www.sedlec.info/en/ossuary/renovations/. Accessed 25 February 2021.

[2] The observation that the Cistercians preferred old cultivated land wherever it was available was already made in the nineteenth century (Lippert, 1898, p. 64).

[3] The role of the Cistercians in the discovery of the local ore source is still unclear (see Petr Pauliš and Martin Bartoš in Bartoš, 2004, p. 162).
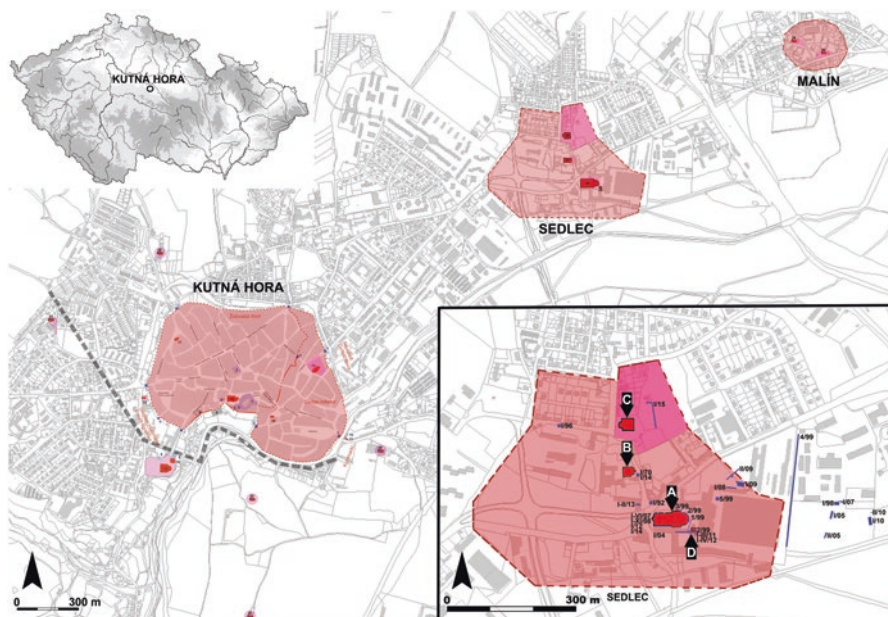
Fig. 12.1 Town of Kutná Hora, Cistercian monastery of Sedlec, and Malín settlement at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (light red and delimited by thin dashed line); high medieval church buildings (red ground plans); areas of high medieval cemeteries (light purple); boundary between parish districts of Malín and Pněvice (bold dashed line). Lower right corner: map of the area of the Cistercian monastery in Sedlec with the location of the archaeological test trenches (in blue) and churches: A = Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist; B = SS. Philip the Apostle and James the Less; C = All Saints with Ossuary surrounded by cemetery; D = Abbot's Chapel (Graphics: F. Velímský)

workshops (Frolík, 2014a, b; Velímský, 2013, 2014, 2017). At the end of the thirteenth century Kutná Hora had developed into a town.

The mining revenues provided the necessary financial means for the extraordinary development of the Sedlec Abbey into a rich and powerful institution. Shortly after the start of mining, during the reign of Přemysl Otakar II, the large deposits of silver ore attracted the interest of the Crown which regulated prospecting and mining on many of the abbey's possessions. The monastery had to ensure the supply of timber, food, and the maintenance of the roads but in return received considerable financial compensation (Velímský, 2009b). After King Wenceslas II of Bohemia issued a new royal mining code (Ius regale montanorum) in 1300, which specified the conditions necessary for the operation of the mines such as labor rules, wages, and the king's part in mining and coinage (Zaoral, 2015, p. 7), the monarch (and his successors) compensated the Sedlec Abbey by 'granting a number of privileges' (Velímský, 2009b). In the 1380s, King Wenceslas IV even made Kutná Hora his temporary seat of residence.

Over time, the Sedlec Abbey was increasingly exposed to a conflict with the wealthy residents of Kutná Hora, who made every effort to match the aristocracy in

Fig. 12.2 Oldest preserved depiction of medieval churches of Kutná Hora (1–9), Sedlec (10–12), Malín (13), and Kaňk (14): 1 = St. Martin; 2 = St. George; 3 = St. Bartholomew; 4 = All Saints; 5 = St. James (former Upper Church of the Virgin Mary at the Italian Court); 6 = Royal Chapel at the Italian Court; 7 = Our Lady Na Náměti; 8 = Hospital Chapel of the Holy Cross; 9 = St. Lazarus; 10 = All Saints with Ossuary; 11 = SS. Philip the Apostle and James the Less; 12 = Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist (without roof); 13 = St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen; 14 = St. Mary Magdalene. Some of these churches (e.g. St. George) no longer exist (Frolík & Vepřeková, 2011). The depiction is incomplete, as its left part with the churches of St. Barbara, St. Wenceslas, SS. Peter and Paul, and the Holy Trinity is not preserved. The picture also does not show the Church of St. John the Baptist in the lower town, which disappeared during the Hussite Wars. (Image modified from a pen drawing by Johann Willenberg c. 1602, Knihovna Královské kanonie premonstrátů na Strahově, Prague, sign. DS-T-I-30/26; interpretation: F. Velímský)

political position and lifestyle. One of the reasons for this conflict was the fact that many churches in Kutná Hora (Fig. 12.2) and therefore also fees and pious donations belonged to the Malín parish, which in turn was under the patronage of the abbots of Sedlec. This did not sit well with the rising class of Kutná Hora burghers, at the time the second richest in Bohemia after Prague, who wanted to support their own town community through the foundation of altars, chapels, and tombs which were connected to a family's memory and representation (Vaněk, 2011, pp. 59–67). The rivalries manifested themselves in the foundation of various confraternities, in disputes about how important processions should be maintained, through which streets and by which churches processions should or should not pass, as well as where people were to be buried. These frictions had a lasting effect on the economy, on religious life, rituals, and burial places.

12.3　Medieval Cemeteries and Confraternities at Kutná Hora

The situation of cemeteries within Kutná Hora is not well known. Cemeteries were archaeologically uncovered next to the churches of Our Lady Na Náměti, St. Martin, and St. George, but the graves are undated or stratigraphically dated to the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries (Frolík & Vepřeková, 2011). We can assume that there were cemeteries by the Church of All Saints in Kutná Hora, by the Kutná Hora town hospital (founded before 1324) with its Chapel of the Holy Cross (founded at the end of the fourteenth century), and by the Chapel of St. Lazarus, which is believed to have been connected with the leprosarium due to its location some distance from the town hospital. Another cemetery was probably located by St. Wenceslas in the

neighboring Pněvice parish. Because Kutná Hora belonged to the Malín parish, we suppose that the main cemeteries for the population of Kutná Hora were located in Malín and in the area of the Sedlec Abbey (Vaněk, 2011).

The situation changed when the burghers of Kutná Hora founded the confraternity of Corpus Christi around the year 1384 (Neuwirth, 1893, pp. 311–312). Confraternities of Corpus Christi had become highly popular in the fourteenth century, following the establishment in 1264 of the Feast of Corpus Christi which celebrated the presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Confraternity members promoted and attended religious events such as processions, funerals, and rites of remembrance for the souls of deceased members and their families. They were also granted indulgences, i.e. a remission before God of the temporal punishment one has to undergo for sins (Pátková, 2000, pp. 18 and 119).

In 1388 the Kutná Hora confraternity of Corpus Christi received a piece of land from the Prague Cathedral chapter in order to construct the Church of Corpus Christi and St. Barbara (Neuwirth, 1893, p. 335–337).[4] This church was located in the southwestern corner of Kutná Hora within the confines of the Pněvice parish (Fig. 12.1) and thus beyond the reach of the Sedlec abbots. When, in 1401, Pope Boniface IX awarded the right to perform baptisms and funerals to the Church of Corpus Christi and St. Barbara (Neuwirth, 1893, p. 339–341), the tensions between the Prague Cathedral chapter, the confraternity of Corpus Christi, the Pněvice and Malín parish priests, and the Sedlec abbot flared up (Vaněk, 2011, pp. 101–114). The Sedlec Abbey and its subordinate Malín parish regarded the new church and the cemetery behind the city walls as a threat to their parish rights and income. The lengthy dispute was only settled in 1410, when the boundaries between the parishes Malín and Pněvice were defined and an agreement about sacraments and funerals was reached and confirmed by Pope John XXIII. It was decided that Kutná Hora townspeople were to receive the sacraments exclusively in their residential parish district, but had the right to be buried at the Church of Corpus Christi and St. Barbara. The priests of the Church of Corpus Christi and St. Barbara were not allowed to visit the sick and dying in Kutná Hora without the permission of the Malín priest so as not to influence their choice of place of burial nor to encourage bequests for funeral masses, etc. If one of the inhabitants of Kutná Hora chose the Church of Corpus Christi and St. Barbara for funeral, however, he or she should be allowed a procession and chants by priests and disciples from the new church (Vaněk, 2011, p. 105). These developments reduced the pressure to use the Sedlec cemetery considerably, but animosities continued. For example, in 1412 people from Kutná Hora burnt down Malín (Charvátová, 1998, p. 112; Vaněk, 2011, p. 61 and 112).

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[4] The original church was never completely finished but instead expanded and renovated throughout the centuries (Devoty, 1828). Today St. Barbara is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

12.4   Sedlec Abbey

The first chapels at Sedlec were probably built near the monks' dwelling not long after the foundation of the monastery, but were soon replaced by larger buildings. The places of relevance to this paper are the Church of SS. Philip the Apostle and James the Less, the Sedlec cemetery, and the Church of All Saints with Ossuary (Figs. 12.2 and 12.3).[5] They will be discussed in detail further below.

Over the centuries, Sedlec suffered numerous incidents of destruction and vandalization in the course of wars and fires. Probably the most dramatic event in the history of Sedlec occurred in 1421 when the monastery was severely damaged at the beginning of the Hussite rebellion. The buildings were burnt and those monks who were not killed were expelled. Thirty-three years later, the monastery was restored to the Cistercians and the monks were able to return. Since all monastic possessions and the economic basis had been destroyed, the monastery was administratively
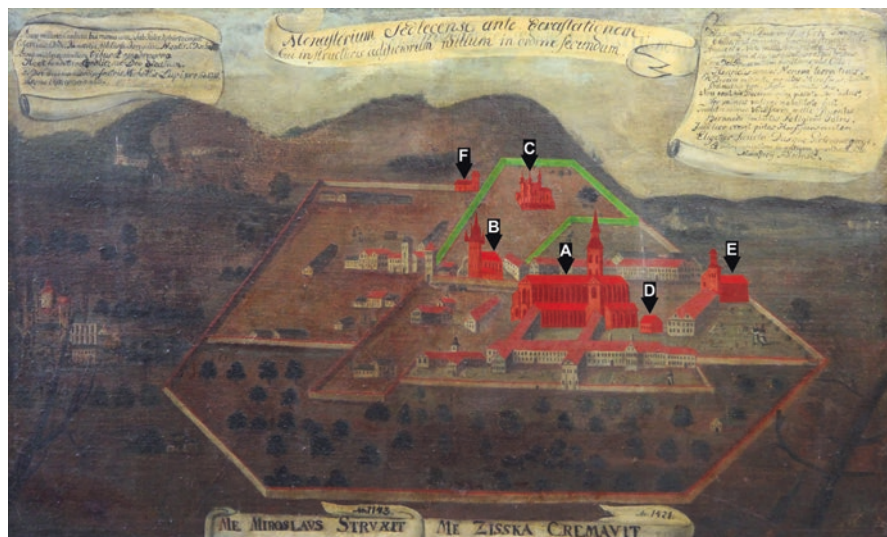
Fig. 12.3 Sedlec's churches before the devastation by the Hussites: A = Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist; B = SS. Philip the Apostle and James; C = All Saints with Ossuary; D = Abbot's Chapel; E = SS. Cosmas and Damian; F = St. Bartholomew (Baroque veduta, eighteenth century, Schwarzenberg collection. Orlík Chateau, inv. no. 1235; interpretation: F. Velímský)

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[5] The complexity of Sedlec's medieval sacred buildings cannot be dealt with in this article. The construction of the main monastery church in Romanesque style was probably started shortly after the monks' arrival. Postmedieval images show a church in the eastern area, identified by some as SS. Cosmas and Damian, the medieval monastery infirmary church. Another medieval sacred building is St. Bartholomew which allegedly was connected to one of the monastery gates (Fig. 12.3).

united with the Bohemian monastery of Skalice. The renovation of the buildings by the impoverished monks was very slow and lasted for approximately two to three centuries (Fig. 12.4) (Charvátová, 1998, pp. 112–113).
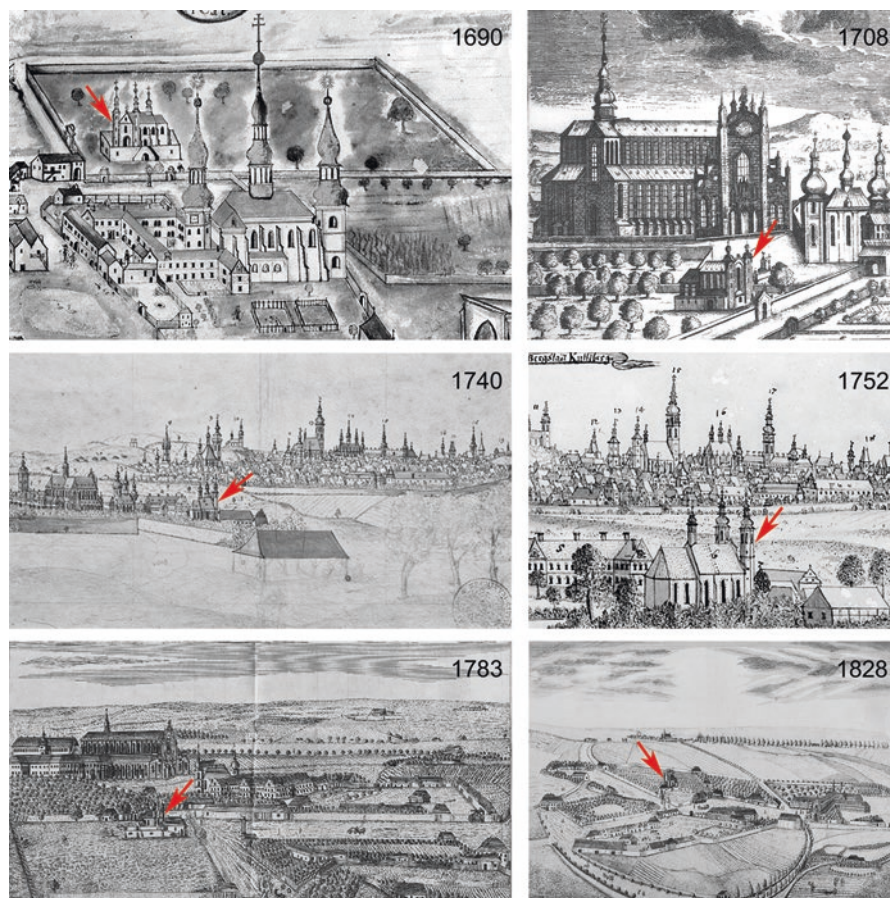
Fig. 12.4 Six post-medieval views of the Church of All Saints with Ossuary (red arrows) and its cemetery. In 1690 the cemetery is separated from SS. Philip the Apostle and James and from the other buildings by a wall. The two churches appear renovated. Trees spread across the whole area of the cemetery. In 1708 the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist has also been renovated. The two center images of 1740 and 1752 show Kutná Hora in the background. The 1783 view depicts the monastery before its dissolution and in 1828 SS. Philip the Apostle and James has already been dismantled (1690: *Graduale monasterii Sedlecensis* […], unknown artist, Národní knihovna České republiky, Prague, sign. XIII A 8, fol. Viv; 1708: engraving by A. Fridrich published in Sartorius, 1708, fol. 922; 1740: *Die königl. Bergstadt Kuttenberg in Böhmen* […], F. B. Werner 1735–1740, Státní okresní archiv Kutná Hora, Sbírka vedut a grafických listů, inv. no. 2; 1752: *Cisterc. Clost. Sedlitz und K. Bergstadt Kuttenberg*, F. B. Werner, Štencův archiv negativů, Prague, no. 46747–4364, Kutná Hora – Sedlec; 1783: *Prospectus posterior monasterii Sedlecensis ante abolitionem*, unknown artist, Státní okresní archiv Kutná Hora, Sbírka vedut a grafických listů, inv. no. 5; 1828: *Postremus Sedlecensis prospectus A:MDCCCXXVIII*, unknown artist, Státní okresní archiv Kutná Hora, Sbírka vedut a grafických listů, supplements, folder 2)

During the Counter-Reformation, which was characterized by new impulses and the reintroduction of medieval traditions, such as a procession with the monstrance from Sedlec to Kutná Hora in 1620 (Dačický, 1955, pp. 571 and 574), Sedlec underwent the first major renovation of its structures in the seventeenth century. This was followed by a second even more profound restorative wave in the eighteenth century (Fig. 12.4). Around 1700 the restoration of the main abbey church, consecrated to the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist took place (Benesch & Zettl, 1856; Vácha, 2008). This church had been built in the Gothic style at the beginning of the fourteenth century under Abbot Heidenreich (Jindřich) (Doležel, 2015; Hynková, 2000) on the site of the older Romanesque convent church (e.g. Brzobohatá et al., 2008; Neuwirth, 1888, p. 53; Velímský, 2009a).

In 1783 the Sedlec Abbey was dissolved by Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II, and in 1809 the possessions were sold off to the aristocratic Schwarzenberg family. Since 1995 the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist in Sedlec has been included in the zone of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kutná Hora, while the Ossuary is in its buffer zone.

12.4.1 SS. Philip the Apostle and James

The Church of SS. Philip the Apostle and James was erected in the first half of the thirteenth century and is often referred to as being located "at the gate of the monastery" ("in porta monasterii") (as in the deeds of 1394, 1395, and 1399: Kapihorský, 1630, p. 5–6; Monumenta Vaticana, 1903, p. 427, no. 755 and p. 492, no. 910). It contained a chapel with the Holy Sepulcher on which stood the monstrance with the Host. A sanctuary lamp symbolizing the ever-burning light hung above one of the altars (Mudra & Ottová, 2009, pp. 500–501; Tadra[6], 1886). In 1389 the confraternity of Corpus Christi and the Holy Sepulcher was established in this church by initiative of Jan of Jenštejn, archbishop of Prague, and in 1395 the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi (including a procession with the Blessed Sacrament) was ascertained by Pope Boniface IX (Kapihorský, 1630, pp. 4–6; Monumenta Vaticana, 1903, p. 492, no. 910). Indulgences were granted to those who visited the church and participated in the procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi or in the celebrations during the Octave. Consequently, the church attracted large numbers of visitors. Originally the church was designed for the needs of the laic visitors of the abbey; in later times it also held a parish function, served as a burial place for wealthy people, and was associated with a hospital and a building for the accommodation of Sedlec's numerous visitors. The church was demolished in 1817 (Mudra & Ottová, 2009; Tadra, 1886; Uličný, 2009, p. 229; Velímský, 1970).

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[6] In the publication, the author's name is misspelled as "Fadra".

12.4.2   Sedlec's Cemetery and the Legend of the Holy Soil

During medieval times at least seven burial locations were in use within Sedlec's monastic grounds. Four were located inside churches and three next to them. Here we pay particular attention to the second group. The cemetery by the Gothic Church of the Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist—as well as its Romanesque precursor—was the most important one for the monks[7] who were buried there from the middle of the twelfth century until the Hussite Wars, with burial activities reaching a maximum during the thirteenth century (hence before the construction of the Gothic church). This burial ground was archaeologically excavated during five seasons between 1998 and 2008 (Brzobohatá et al., 2008; Velímský, 2009a). A laic cemetery was located by the Church of SS. Philip the Apostle and James, which probably originates from the time when the church was first built. It was excavated in 1970 and 2014 within a limited spatial scope, without it being possible to exactly date it or determine its extent (Velímský, 1970). At the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, burial activities in both cemeteries decreased and shifted to the area where the Church of All Saints with Ossuary (of which more below) was eventually constructed. Excavations in this cemetery started in 2016.

The historical records on the medieval Sedlec cemeteries are sparse. The Zbraslav Chronicle (*Chronicon Aulae Regiae*) by Peter of Zittau (Žitava) records the burial of a monk in the cemetery in the late thirteenth century (Emler, 1884, p. 51). The laic cemetery of Sedlec is mentioned in the Chronicle in connection with the 1318 peace agreement of Domažlice. Bad harvests in 1316 and 1317 and the ongoing conflict between the Crown and the Bohemian aristocracy had destabilized the country to such a degree that, according to the Chronicle, 30,000 people succumbed to famine and were buried in pits at the gate of Sedlec within a single year (Brázdil et al., 2018, pp. 100–101):

> […] ita quod infra unius anni spacium […] in porta Scedelicensi triginta milia hominum sunt sepulta. [...] In omnibus locis fovee fodiebantur, que mortuorum cadaveribus replebantur. (Chronicon, 1316–1333, p. 6r; Emler, 1884, p. 248)

> […] so that within the period of one year […] thirty-thousand people were buried at the gate of Sedlec. [...] Pits were dug everywhere, which were filled with the corpses of the deceased.[8]

Although most historians see the number of 30,000 dead as exaggerated, recent archaeological interventions may confirm the Chronicle's account. Beneath and beside the Church of All Saints two stratigraphically distinct levels containing 32 mass graves with approximately 1200 skeletons were discovered (Frolík, 2017b, 2018, 2019, 2020) (Fig. 12.5). The upper layer probably represents an epidemic

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[7]The abbots of Cistercian monasteries were usually buried in the chapter house as for example Sedlec Abbot Frederick who died in 1330 (Chronicon, 1316–1333, p. 67r–68 l; Emler, 1884, p. 302).

[8]All translations are by the authors.

Fig. 12.5 Fourteenth century mass grave unearthed in 2017. (Photo: J. Frolík)

of 1348–1350.[9] A connection of the lower layer to the famine of 1318 mentioned in the Zbraslav Chronicle is possible (Brzobohatá et al., 2019, p. 85), but has not yet been fully established.[10]

The archaeological investigations have confirmed that the medieval laic cemetery was much larger than it is today and probably extended from SS. Philip the Apostle and James all the way to the Church of All Saints with Ossuary in the north (Fig. 12.3). Reports of the discovery of hundreds of bodies beneath the pillar of Saint John of Nepomuk in the eighteenth-century additionally support this assumption:

> When the ground for the beautiful new stone pillar of honor, on which the statue of the great miraculous Saint John of Nepomuk rests, was dug in 1704 just outside the ring wall of the much-mentioned cemetery, again up to three hundred bodies buried in ancient times were found in the immediate vicinity: also in the current renovation of the old handsome collegiate church as well as during the previous construction of other buildings, various bodies

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[9] Two of the graves contained Prague groschen (dated shortly before 1346) from the time of John of Luxembourg, king of Bohemia from 1310–1346 (Brzobohatá et al., 2019, p. 85). The Prague groschen was minted at Kutná Hora as of 1300 in varying quality for more than 200 years (Milejski, 2018).

[10] Clarification is expected from a project in progress.

were found in the ground, sometimes up to twelve lying on top of one another, so that a large number of old burials can easily be deduced from this.[11] (Sartorius, 1708, p. 918)

The cemetery by the Church of All Saints with Ossuary retained its function as burial ground after the Hussite Wars.[12] In addition to archaeological research, its extent can be defined on the basis of postmedieval maps and other imagery (Fig. 12.4). Measuring approximately 90 × 150 m in the seventeenth century, the cemetery was reduced to its present and final dimensions (c. 70 × 60 m) somewhere between 1783 and 1838. The 1838 Sedlec map of the Franciscan Cadaster of Bohemia shows a similar size as today.

The uniqueness of this cemetery lies in fact that extraordinarily huge amounts of people were buried here. This is because, in contrast to other parish cemeteries, this cemetery was not only used for people from within the parish but also attracted people from far away. The exact time when this popularity arose is not known but is certainly connected to the cemetery's status as Campus Sanctus (Holy Field) and the legends revolving around it, especially the legend of the Holy Soil. Although this legend is probably of medieval origin (Uličný, 2009), the earliest written mention of the Sedlec Campus Sanctus can only be traced back to the early seventeenth century. According to the legend which is first mentioned by Šimon Eustach Kapihorský (1630, p. 4) and retold by Augustin Sartorius (1708, p. 915), the soil of the Sedlec cemetery was able to transform fresh corpses into white dry bones within one day.

> The soil itself was generally only called Terra Sancta, Holy Soil, and had the effect that it consumed the bodies within 24 hours except for the bare bones, which appeared quite white.[13] (Sartorius, 1708, p. 915)

Allegedly, Abbot Heidenreich himself had brought back the soil from the Holy Land. Through its dispersion into the local soil of Sedlec, the cemetery transformed into a Holy Field. As word about the abbot's deeds spread through central Europe, the cemetery became increasingly famous and many wealthy people desired to be buried there. Several nineteenth-century accounts claim that the soil came from

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[11] „Als jüngsthin An: 1704. der Grund zu der schönen neuen Steinernen Ehren-Seule / worauff die Statuen des Grossen Wunderthätigen heiligen Joannis Nepomuceni ruhet / gleich ausserhalb der Ring-Mauer des mehr-besagten Gottes-Ackers gegraben wurde / hat man in selbigem wenigen Umcreys / auffs neue bis drey hundert der allda vor Alters beerdigten Cörper gefunden: desgleichen auch in jetziger Verneuerung der alten ansehnlichen Stiffts-Kirche / und vorhero in Auffrichtung anderer Gebäuder / in dem Grund verschiedene Leiber / deren auch zuweilen bis zwölffe auff einander gelegen / angetroffen / daß demnach aus allen diesen die grosse Anzahl der alldasigen alten Begräbnussen ohnschwer abzunehmen."

[12] Although SS. Philip the Apostle and James became the main convent church—and may have served as burial place for the members of the convent—after the destruction of the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist by the Hussites, the cemetery around All Saints with Ossuary remained Sedlec's main cemetery in post-Hussite times.

[13] „Die Erden daselbst wurde ins gemein nur Terra Sancta die Heilige Erden genennet / und hatte die Würckung / daß sie die Leiber innerhalb 24. Stunden bis auff die blosse Gebeiner / so gantz schön weiß schienen / verzehrete."

Golgotha (Anonymous, 1854, p. 162; Devoty, 1829, p. 12; Grueber, 1861, p. 227; Wankel, 1879, p. 353), where Jesus was crucified. There is one instance that mentions the garden Gethsemane, the place where Jesus was arrested (Dudik, 1878, p. 229), and another that traces the soil back to Akeldama, the Field of Blood (Benesch, 1870), a potter's field outside Jerusalem, which according to Matthews 27.3–7 was bought and turned into a burial ground for foreigners by the Temple priests using the 30 pieces of silver that Judas Iscariot had returned to them.

There are also numerous accounts about the effects of the Holy Soil. For Kapihorský only the bodies of those who died in God's grace decayed within 24 h, whereas those who died outside this state needed more time (Kapihorský, 1630, p. 4; see also Sartorius, 1708, pp. 915–916). Priest Florian Rudolf, on the other hand, writes in 1711 that only the bodies of those who died without sin remained buried in the soil of the Sedlec cemetery, whereas the bones of sinners were rejected and cast out. The latter were then buried outside the walls of the cemetery and can sometimes be found in the fields (Načeradská, 2011, p. 9). According to yet another version, rapid decay only happened to those who died in the grace of God, whereas the Holy Soil does not take care of those who go to Hell (Bechstein & Erhardt, 1853, p. 566; Gebhart, 1854, pp. 145–146). It is worth questioning whether real pedological properties of the Sedlec soils influenced these legends. Kutná Hora and Sedlec as centers of a mining zone were heavily affected by pollutants connected to the mining and smelting, including arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, and zinc. High concentrations of these elements were detected in the graves excavated in the cemetery at the Ossuary. Importantly, high levels were found not only in the cemetery soils (necrosols), but also in the samples taken directly from the buried dead bodies.

Many historians dismiss the Sedlec legend of the Holy Soil as mere invention, mostly due to the fact that no journey to Jerusalem by Abbot Heidenreich is recorded in the historical sources and that the city was not under Christian administration at the time when the alleged journey took place (e.g. Charvátová, 1998, p. 110, Charvátová, 2009; Hynková, 2000). According to Petr Uličný (2009), the story should not be entirely disregarded. The concept of the Holy Field probably originated in the Third Crusade (1188–1192) when Ubaldo Lanfranchi, the archbishop of Pisa, allegedly brought back a large amount of sacred earth from Mount Calvary to enshrine it around Pisa Cathedral (Cole Ahl, 2003, p. 95). Like other relics, dirt from Christ's death place possessed "the power to colonize" (Nagel & Wood, 2010, p. 198) anything that it came into contact with and to instantiate one sacred place in another. Uličný (2009) believes that Heidenreich may have been confused with Abbot Nicholas Mikuláš, who traveled to Avignon in 1342 where he could have picked up the topos of the Holy Soil and also gained knowledge about architectural imitations of buildings from Jerusalem. The fourteenth century saw the emergence of a variety of stories associated with the Camposanto cemetery of Pisa and a twelfth-century Crusader building at Akeldama, Jerusalem, which had been constructed by the Knights Hospitaller to dispose of the dead from the order's infirmary. The soils of both places were believed to miraculously consume the flesh of the deceased in the shortest possible time and to ensure salvation (Cole Ahl, 2003, p. 95; Uličný, 2009, p. 233).

The late-fourteenth-century layout and architecture of Sedlec may have been an attempt to recreate the Jerusalem topography using the Campus Sanctus (with its Holy Soil), SS. Philip the Apostle and James (with the Holy Sepulcher, the monstrance with Host, and the ever-burning light), and the Church of All Saints with Ossuary, which replicated the Akeldama funeral building (cf. Uličný, 2009, Fig. 6), as sacred land-marks.

12.4.3 Church of all Saints with Ossuary

The two-story Church of All Saints with Ossuary with its upper chapel and underground charnel house was built after the completion of the main abbey church (Doležel, 2015, p. 208). It had two hexagonal towers with ever-burning lights (Neuwirth, 1888, p. 420) and an altar in the charnel house on which masses for the deceased were celebrated. Based on the archaeological survey (2016–2020), the construction can be narrowed down to the time period between 1380 and 1400 (although a wall of an older building was uncovered during the excavation in the southern part). The earliest written mention of the Ossuary comes from the year 1409, when the debt of 100 threescores[14] by a man called Jaksch Blumel for a Mass performed in the Ossuary is mentioned ("item Jaksch Blumel centum sexagenas pro missa in ossario") (Čelakovský, 1916, p. 126).

Today the Ossuary is considered the second most famous charnel house after the Paris Catacombs (Koudounaris, 2011, p. 96). This fame is primarily based on its decoration made from the bones of thousands of dead people (Fig. 12.6). The curation of large quantity of bones in the Ossuary was first noted by Kapihorský (1630, p. 4). The exact date when the bones were first arranged in a decorative manner is not known. It may have been connected to the time when the Sedlec cemetery was reduced in size, and bones from emptied-out graves were moved into the charnel house (Vácha, 2003, pp. 191–192). Since Josef Braniš (1886, p. 51) refers to the year 1511—a year mentioned several times in nineteenth-century regional histories—and Jan Beckovský remarks that in 1661 the bones had been arranged in the Ossuary for almost two centuries (Beckovský, 1700, p. 688), the most likely period for this event is between the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. That large quantities of bones were already stacked up by the mid-sixteenth century is supported by the discovery in 1560 of a gilded silver chalice with 10,000 ducats and a pearl and goldwork embroidery, which had been hidden among the bones (Devoty, 1829, p. 19).

After slowly disintegrating during post-Hussite times, the charnel house was renovated in 1661. This event was commemorated in a dedicatory inscription: "HOC OSSARIVM EX VLTIMIS RVINIS NOVITER EREXIT. 1661" ("This

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[14] = 6000 Prague groschen. In 1409 the average weight of one groschen was 2.626 g containing 1.6 g silver (see Milejski, 2018, p. 100).

Fig. 12.6 The Ossuary in 2016. In the center one of the bone pyramids and the Schwarzenberg coat of arms. (Photos: E. Weiss-Krejci)

Ossuary was newly erected from the last ruins in 1661"). In 1711 Abbot Bonifatius Blahna founded a confraternity associated with the Ossuary to support the cult of the souls of the dead (Vácha, 2003, p. 200). From 1708 to 1712 the Church of All Saints was extended in the area of the narthex by architect Jan Blažej Santini-Aichel—he also rebuilt the Sedlec Abbey church of the Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist (Horyna, 1998). Santini-Aichel renovated the Ossuary in a Baroque-Gothic style and probably laid the basis for today's bone decorations. The bones were piled up into pyramids symbolizing heavenly mountains. Above the pyramids, wooden, gold-plated crowns were suspended from the ceiling. They are said to symbolize the martyrs' crowns belonging to the monks murdered by the Hussites. Glass covers were also applied around the bone pyramids making them look like giant reliquaries. The glass has not survived into modern times (Vácha, 2003, p. 199).

Although the Church of All Saints was once again redecorated between 1735 and 1740, in the 1860s the Schwarzenbergs decided to give the Ossuary a total make-over (Meeting Reports of the Archaeological Society, 1865). The artist was

Fig. 12.7 The Ossuary in the first half of the twentieth century. (Photo: K. Vokoun, Státní okresní archiv Kutná Hora, Sbírka fotografií a negativů Kutná Hora, inv. no. 1171)

woodcarver František Rint from Česká Skalice and the work is dated to 1870.[15] Rint's creations include a Schwarzenberg coat of arms, a chandelier, chalice, monstrance, and garlands hanging from the ceiling (Fig. 12.6). The majority of the hanging decorations did not survive to the present day, but were dismantled during the twentieth century together with most of the interior furniture (e.g. confessional, parapet, benches, and pulpit) (Fig. 12.7).

After a series of minor repairs between 1989 and 2010, the owner and administrator of the building, the Roman Catholic parish of Sedlec, decided to overhaul the entire building, and in 2011 the renovation of the Church of All Saints with Ossuary was initiated once again. These works were accompanied by the rescue excavations mentioned above, with the most intensive part taking place from 2016 to 2020. Among others the work comprised repairs of the roof, renovation of the sewer, and the installation of a ventilation system, the relocation of the ticket office from the Ossuary to the information center outside the cemetery, the establishment of a separate book and souvenir store and an exhibition area, the construction of two terraces and a new paved walkway around the lower part of the church, cleaning and restoration of the hanging bone ornaments, and repair of the facade. From the end of 2018 through 2019, one of the four bone pyramids was dismantled and the secret of its inner construction unveiled. It turned out that the interior was made up from construction debris intermixed with highly fragmented bone pieces. Beneath the bone pyramid three intact graves were discovered. The bone pyramid will eventually be

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[15] Rint also arranged the bone decoration in the ossuary of St. Stephen's in Malín, which at the time fell under the Sedlec parish. It cannot be ruled out that the skeletal material used for the original decoration of the Malín Ossuary in the eighteenth century derived from Sedlec. Documents prove that in later years fallen and removed bone decorations were transferred from Sedlec to Malín.

reconstructed using only those bones that are well preserved. The others will be reburied. The investigations allowed a distinction between different stages of the decoration. The oldest parts were simple stackings of bones along the walls. The bone pyramids were created during the Baroque era, followed by the hanging decorations.

12.5   Bones, Ghosts, and Martyrs

Although the date for the first arrangement of the bones in the charnel house is not known there exists general agreement that it was a blind person who was responsible. The exact identity of the person is variably given as blind friar (Bechstein & Erhardt, 1853, p. 566; Gebhart, 1854, p. 146; Sartorius, 1708, p. 915), blind lay brother (Müller, 1861, p. 40) or blind youth (Nedobyty, 1902, p. 780). The underlying message of the story, however, remains the same. The reported blindness of the maker minimizes the role of human intention in the decoration of the Ossuary, and locates power and agency instead in the bones themselves.

> […] those who have traveled through different countries say that nowhere have they seen so many bones of the dead together than at Sedlec, which a certain friar from said monastery, who was otherwise blind, allegedly brought into the fine order that now can be seen on all four sides regaining his sight after the work was done.[16] (Sartorius, 1708, p. 915)

The legends of the Holy Soil and the Blind Friar are just two examples of a much wider complex of stories that became widely distributed in the German-speaking and Czech lands (Bechstein & Erhardt, 1853, p. 566; Devoty, 1829; Gebhart, 1854, pp. 143–146, etc.). Additionally, there are several unpublished accounts such as the record by priest Florian Rudolf from 1711 and the book of the funeral confraternity of Sedlec of 1769 (Načeradská, 2011), which might be reflective of the oral traditions circulating in Bohemia during the eighteenth century. Despite some changes in the narrative over time there are many general themes that allow us to investigate the agency of Sedlec's dead.

Apparently, the belief prevailed that all those dead who were turned into bones in the Holy Field and then deposited in the Ossuary were pure and free of sin. Like relic bones, they were able to perform malevolent or benevolent acts depending on the behavior of those who came into contact with them. A story from the Sedlec funeral confraternity book of 1769 tells of a monk who often served masses for the dead in the Ossuary, but was criticized for it by the other monks. One day, when he was with the other monks, the arm of a dead man appeared in front of him and gave him a blessing. From that time on, the other monks followed his example and never

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[16] „[…] sagen die jenige / so verschiedene Länder durchreiset / daß sie nirgends so viel Todten-Beiner bey einander gesehen / als eben zu Sedletz / welche ein gewisser Religios aus besagtem Closter / der sonsten blind gewesen / in die jenige feine Ordnung / wie sie anjetzo auff allen vier Seiten zusehen / solle eingerichtet / und nach vollbrachter Arbeit / sein Gesicht hinwiederum bekommen haben."

troubled him again (Načeradská, 2011, p. 10). Florian Rudolf tells how toothache was solved by touching the aching cheek with a tooth taken from the Ossuary and how promises of paying for a Mass to be served for the dead or making a donation to the Ossuary helped to relieve pain (Načeradská, 2011, p. 11).

Much more frequent than the tales of the benevolent dead are stories of threats to the living. After leading the annual Easter Monday procession in 1657, a preacher named Rudolf Reichenberger visited the Ossuary in the afternoon together with his companion Johannes. Overwhelmed by the large number of bones and ignorant that these bones were "of blessed children" („von Kindern der Seligkeit") (Bechstein & Erhardt, 1853, p. 566) he asked a question of serious consequence:

> How many of those present do you think are damned? No sooner had he said such a thing, behold, there was a terrible noise among the bones through the whole chapel and two mighty stones were thrown thereupon, so that the good father and brother had to run away in fear and trembling.[17] (Sartorius, 1708, p. 917)

Reichenberger still visited Sedlec afterwards but never dared to set a foot into the Ossuary again (see also Gebhart, 1854, p. 146). This story not only expresses a threefold aversion against the preacher, who was a Jesuit, a German, and from Kutná Hora („aus der Gesellschaft JESU, Teutscher Prediger zu Kuttenberg") (Sartorius, 1708, p. 917), but also clearly attributes agency to the bones, which turn out to be quite dangerous. To doubt their state could indeed threaten one's life as the following story shows, which was written down in 1769 in the book of the funeral confraternity of Sedlec. In 1663, so the story goes, a young man from Čáslav visited the Ossuary where he brooded about the possible origin of one of the skulls, asking himself if it could be from a hanged man. No sooner had he expressed this thought than the skull jumped on the floor and rolled under his legs in such a manner that it caused him to fall down. Terrified, he died on the spot (Načeradská, 2011, p. 11).

12.5.1   The Holy Field

After the Hussite Wars and before the large renovation campaigns of the eighteenth century, large parts of the cemetery had fallen out of funerary use. In his family chronicle, Mikuláš Dačický mentions that preaching was performed in the cemetery in 1565 (Dačický, 1955, p. 232), and in 1598 the abbot of Sedlec allegedly allowed the bailiff of the property next to the monastery to plow and cultivate the sacred cemetery ground,

> in which so many pious Christians had been laid to rest […]. Immediately after the first day of desecration, God's punishment followed. The unfortunate bailiff was severely crushed by

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[17] „Wie viel vermeynt ihr Wohl / daβ aus Gegenwärtigen solten verdammt seyn: kaum hatte er solches ausgeredet / siehe / da geschahe durch die gantze Kapelle unter den Gebeinern ein entsetzliches Geräusche / und erfolgeten hierauff zwey gewaltige Stein-Würffe / daβ der gute Pater samt dem Bruder voller Forcht und Zittern den Reiβaus muste nehmen."

an unknown ghost at night / from which he died soon afterwards […]. The unexpected death of Abbot Francis that same year made the matter even clearer / that God would defend the honor of the places consecrated to him.[18] (Sartorius, 1708, p. 918)

It is notable that in this version of the story the dead act by order of God, not out of their own will. Sartorius tells a second version, in which the bailiff died as soon as he had opened a number of furrows. And in another version by priest Florian Rudolf (cited after Načeradská, 2011, p. 9), it was a ghost who killed the bailiff in the field.

During one of the major renovations of the monastery area (1661, 1708–1712, 1735–1740), there was some terrain leveling but—as shown by the recent archaeological excavations 2016–2019—with no destructive consequences for the graves. Intrusive ploughing was obviously conceived as improper whereas non-intrusive use or cultivation with little disturbance was not a problem. According to Joseph Devoty, until 1817, the Campus Sanctus had 'always' been an agricultural meadow for growing *Wiesewachs*, i.e. hay. His words suggests that even long after its use period, the cemetery was still considered a sacred area.

The land of this sacred field has always been used for growing grass until it was first planted with fruit trees in 1817 by order of the authorities. Since then, it has been leased annually per bed, whereby it often turns out that large gravestones, on which a cross is usually carved, have been excavated and the arrows used by the Hussites have been found.[19] (Devoty, 1829, pp. 24–25)

The sanctity of the cemetery is further attested by reports of processions of ghosts seen at night walking through it. For example, in 1657 and 1663 processions of dead dressed in white Cistercian cucules holding lit torches and chanting were allegedly observed thereby proving "that there is no doubt about the sanctity of this venerable place" („daß also an der Heiligkeit dieses Ehrwürdigen Orts gar nicht zuzweiflen") (Sartorius, 1708, p. 916; see also Bechstein & Erhardt, 1853, p. 566; Gebhart, 1854, p. 146). These descriptions of processions are reminiscent of the annual medieval Easter Monday processions from Kutná Hora to Sedlec which allegedly began in the year 1304 and were organized by miners from Kutná Hora who dressed up in white cowls and carried candles. Their path led through the Sedlec cemetery (Sartorius, 1708, p. 914; Devoty, 1829, p. 9). Hence the question needs to be asked whether these stories are rooted in memories of real medieval events, or are merely 'ghostly' versions of the processions that were reintroduced from 1620. Similar

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[18] „wo so viel fromme Christen ruheten […]. Gleich nach dem ersten Tag sothaner Verunehrung erfolgte von Gott die Straff. Dann der unglückselige Wirthschaffter wurde von einem unbekandten Geiste zu Nachts heßlich gedruckt / worvon er bald darauff sterben müssen […]. Des Abbts Francisci eben noch in selbigem Jahre erfolgter unvermuthete Tods-Fall machte hernach die Sache noch deutlicher / daß Gott vor die Ehre der ihme geweihten Oerter eifern thäte."

[19] „Der Grund und Boden dieses h. Feldes wurde von jeher als Wiesewachs benützt, bis er erst im J. 1817 auf höhere Anordnung obrigkeitlicher Seits mit Obstbäumen ausgesetzt wurde. Seit der Zeit wird er jährlich beetweise verpachtet, wobei es sich oft ergibt, daß große Grabsteine, auf denen meistens ein Kreuz ausgehauen seyn pflegt, ausgegraben, und die von den Hussiten hier gebrauchten Pfeilen vorgefunden wurden."

topoi are recorded from other Cistercian monasteries such as the night processions of the murdered Cistercian nuns from Oslavany (Vácha, 2003, p. 192).

12.5.2   Martyrs of the Hussite Wars

The stories about processions of nuns murdered by the Hussites, and Devoty's reference to the arrows left behind by the Hussites (Devoty, 1829, p. 25) are part of a wider narrative which became popular in the eighteenth century in the Cistercian order houses of Bohemia (Vácha, 2003, pp. 191–192). The Hussite Wars not only provided a backdrop for the fabrication of numerous martyr stories about the suffering and cruel deaths of the Cistercians, but became part of the order's history and identity (Vácha, 2008, p. 307) (Fig. 12.8). An important element in the eighteenth-century stories about the Cistercian martyrs is the tree topos (variably lime, oak or elm), on which the monks had been hanged by the Hussites (Vácha, 2003, pp. 187–190). At Sedlec, the martyrs are associated with linden trees that grew close to the cemetery wall.

> At the rear wall of the churchyard towards the exit were three large lime trees, on which many of the Cistercians and Carthusians, who had fled here from Prague, Augezd, and Podiebrad, were hung due to the rage of the Hussite leader Žižka by his raging army. An already rotten tree stump has survived to this day as a further memory.[20] (Devoty, 1829, p. 23)

The rotten linden stump referred to by Devoty was reportedly 400 years old and, when cut down, revealed a mingled mix of human bones, rotten monk habits, and nails in its interior. Some of its leaves resembled Cistercian and Carthusian cowls (Devoty, 1829, p. 24). In this context it is also noteworthy to point to a certain resemblance between other-than-human agents—such as sacred destroyed buildings—and persons martyred by the Hussites. In either case, violence and destruction could not undo their sanctity. The following story involving the Church of All Saints serves as an example:

> At the time of the Hussite unrest / as well as further on / when the usual lamps on the two towers mentioned were completely gone and extinguished / one saw instead celestial rays more often there / and perceived them / as if the lower chapel / or the Holy Ossuary would be in complete flames.[21] (Sartorius, 1708, p. 916)

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[20] „Bei der hintern Kirchhofsmauer gegen Ausgang waren drei große Lindenbäume, auf denen viele der Zisterzienser und aus Prag von Augezd und Podiebrad hieher geflüchteten Kartusianen durch die Wuth des Hussitten-Anführers Žižka von seinem tobenden Heere aufgehängt wurden, von denen ein bereits vermorschter Stock noch zum weitern Andenken bis auf den heutigen Tag vorhanden ist."

[21] „Zur Zeit der Hußitischen Unruhe / wie auch ferner hinauß / da die gewöhnliche Lampen auff besagten zwey Thürmen völlig abkommen und verloschen / hat man an statt derselbigen öffter-mahls himmlische Strahlen daselbst gesehen / und beynebenst wahrgenommen / als wann die untere Kapelle / oder das Heil: Gebeinhaus gleichsam in völligen Flammen stünde."

Fig. 12.8 The torture and murder of the Cistercians and Carthusians by the Hussites at Sedlec on 25 April 1421: 1 = Leader of the Hussite invaders, Jan Žižka from Trocnov; 2 = Hussite soldier on a cow wearing the abbot's miter; 3 = Hussite soldier desecrating the monstrance; 4 = decapitation of monks; 5 = monk beaten at the stake; 6 = monk on breaking wheel; 7 = impaled monk; 8 = burning of monks; 9 = Hussite soldier driving away cattle; 10 = hanged monks; 11 = convent church on fire; 12 = heavenly angels dropping crowns of thorns and palm branches on the martyrs (Baroque oil painting by M. Willmann 1703, Church of the Assumption of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist; interpretation: F. Velímský)

In this folk tale, through destructive and violent acts by the Hussites—in this particular case the destruction of the two ever-burning lights on the towers—the sanctity and the power of the sacred building increased.

12.6   Discussion and Conclusion

In central European legends, silver has always played a special role. The dead at Sedlec and the silver mining background of the Kutná Hora inhabitants are intrinsically connected. Silver was the reason for the rise of the wealth of the monastery and the origin of Kutná Hora town. In this light, the Akeldama version of the origin of the Holy Soil which links it to the place of Judas Iscariot's 30 pieces of silver is especially appealing. In addition, Akeldama was a place for pilgrims, which not only received many foreigners as visitors, but like Sedlec also buried them in its own cemetery. But why was Sedlec so popular for so many people?

The topos of the purifying Holy Soil was powerful at Sedlec and it lasted for centuries. According to the legends, the graves of the Holy Field at Sedlec held three basic categories of dead: (1) those who died in the grace of God and need very little or no time for putrefaction; (2) a much larger group of those who have sinned and take a longer time to decay; (3) the wicked hell-bound souls which are either cast out or not taken care of by the soil. The similarities between the affective capacities of the Holy Soil and Purgatory are evident. At Sedlec, decay of the corpse became a metaphor for the temporal punishment one undergoes in Purgatory. Once the dead were transformed into bones, they were deposited in the Ossuary and, judging from the legends, considered clean and destined for salvation. If the Holy Field could serve as a substitute for Purgatory in people's minds, its attractiveness is hardly surprising. Purgatory had to be endured and was non-negotiable for a Christian who desired ultimate salvation.

There may also have existed a connection between the concept of punishment in Purgatory and the reasons behind the construction of medieval ossuaries. In medieval Europe and the Czech lands ossuaries were quite common (e.g. Koudounaris, 2011; Kratzke, 2009; Rendek & Libenský, 2019; Vácha, 2003). There even existed a small ossuary in neighboring Malín and probably one beneath the Church of Corpus Christi and St. Barbara in Kutná Hora. Whereas in the past the main reason for the construction of medieval ossuaries was often considered a functional requirement to avoid overcrowding of cemeteries (Koudounaris, 2011, p. 19), an eschatological component to ossuaries may also exist. Crangle (2016, p. 226) and Craig-Atkins et al. (2019), whose research focuses on English ossuaries, have argued that these buildings served a kind of corrective function regarding the chances for salvation. Wealthy individuals that were buried in church interiors near altars could benefit from masses being held there. Those that were buried in the cemetery did not have that advantage. Committal to an ossuary corrected this imbalance by allowing greater numbers of dead people to benefit from the proximity to an altar. That the Sedlec Ossuary and its altar might have fulfilled a similar role is evident from several stories that emphasize the importance of holding masses for the dead. These masses could help reduce the time souls had to spend in Purgatory and guarantee their ultimate salvation.

The different types of dead within the Sedlec deathscape are connected to different types of spaces. The most sacred spaces are the interiors of consecrated

buildings that hold altars. These were the spaces in which the corpses of the wealthiest people were buried and in which the bones exhumed from the cemetery were deposited. The agency of the latter is strong since they could punish or reward the living (Sartorius, 1708, pp. 915–916).

Ghosts don't ever seem to enter the interior of sacred buildings. Their apparition often took place at night in the cemetery, though in one case there was a daytime appearance (in one version of the story of the ploughed field). Ghosts also appeared at night to people in their bedrooms. Ghosts could assist God and the other dead, but they are not identical with the dead in the Ossuary, whose agency is much more potent. In some legends, ghosts belong to individuals who died violent deaths (e.g. the martyrs tortured by the Hussites). The cemetery contained those dead that had to wait—and might turn into ghosts—until they were pu(t)rified (Kapihorský, 1630, p. 4). It was not conceived as a haunted place in which restless ghosts pestered every living being, but instead an enchanted sacred space that only posed a danger to those who disrespected it.

But not every corpse was destined for the Ossuary and salvation. The cemetery also held wicked people who did not decay (Bechstein & Erhardt, 1853, p. 566; Gebhart, 1854, pp. 145–146) or, in the version by priest Florian Rudolf, were cast out by the soil and reburied outside the monastery wall (Načeradská, 2011, p. 9). The monastery wall seems to have been a very special place reserved for very special kinds of people. Both Kapihorský and Wenceslaus Hajek of Libočan note the following event for the year 1463: on the day of Saint Lawrence, the chief mint master of Bohemia Zdeněk Kostka[22] ordered all Kutná Hora minters to mint coins. They refused, however, because they wanted to celebrate the day of Saint Lawrence. As a result, Kostka got very angry and insulted not only them, but cursed God and Saint Lawrence with shameful words. Soon afterwards, lightning struck the building and the mint master was severely burned. He died six days later and was buried at the wall of the Sedlec Abbey (Hagecius, 1697, p. 802; Kapihorský, 1630, p. 50). Interestingly, the wall is also the place associated with the violent death of the martyrs murdered by the Hussites. However, as martyrs an opposite fate awaited them.

The Sedlec cemetery and the Church of All Saints with Ossuary were once very special spaces with very special kinds of dead people. Originally part of a larger medieval architectural project that tried to imitate Jerusalem's topography, after the Hussite Wars it was reduced to a legend about sacred soil and later served Counter-Reformation narratives of ghosts and bones with extraordinary agency. Although the fame of the Holy Field of Sedlec attracted pilgrims from distant countries for centuries, it was eventually forgotten and only brought back into the public memory during recent archaeological excavations. The Ossuary, by contrast, never lost its fascination and attraction for the public, and its bones have assumed a very special afterlife of their own. Today, it seems that the dead from the Ossuary are very much alive.

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[22] The story does not match the biography of the historic chief mint master of Bohemia Zdeněk III Kostka of Postupice who died in 1468 in the Battle of Zvole, nor any of the other members of the wealthy aristocratic Kostka family.

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