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Viking Mortuary Citations

Howard Williams

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Abstract

Introducing the European Journal of Archaeology's special issue 'Mortuary Citations: Death and Memory in the Viking World', this article outlines the justification and theoretical framework underpinning a new set of studies on Viking-age mortuary and commemorative practice as strategies of mortuary citation. The contributions to the collection are reviewed in relation to strengths and weaknesses in existing research and broader themes in mortuary archaeological research into memory work in past societies.

Keywords

Early Medieval, Viking Age, Iron Age, Insular/British Isles, Scandinavia, death, commemoration, memory, mortuary practice

Introduction

This special issue explores death and memory in the Viking world, taking as its core the concept of citation as a mnemonic strategy in mortuary practice, connecting past, present, and future. A number of archaeologists have intermittently explored the citations within mortuary practice, evidenced at a range of scales: the choice of items selected for deposition with the dead; the posture and transformation of the body itself the citational dimensions to augmenting, adapting, and reusing monuments; the spatial and material relationships between graves and monuments within cemeteries; and their landscape settings. Yet these issues have not been explored in depth and across media, and certainly have not been systematically explored for the Viking Age. Over recent decades, the study of memory in mortuary practice and commemorative monuments has flourished, but how citations worked between materials and contexts in establishing and reproducing the character of social memory has received relatively limited attention.

This issue of the European Journal of Archaeology was inspired by two sessions at international archaeology conferences organized by Dr Nanouschka Myrberg Burström (Stockholm University) and this author: 'Chains of Citation: re-contextualization in the Viking Age' (EAA annual conference, University of Western Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic, 4–8 September 2013) and 'Material Citations in the Viking Age' (14th Nordic Theoretical Archaeology Group conference, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden, 22–26 April 2014). Both aspired to consider the use, reuse, and re-contextualization of material culture in the Viking world (northern Europe between the eighth and eleventh centuries AD), focusing on the concept of citation. By citation, we do not only mean the conscious symbolic and material allusions to material pasts. In addition, citations may not have been initially intentional. They might instead involve the cumulative and unanticipated relationships that accrue through the assembling and juxtaposition, deposition, and transformation of artefacts, bodies, graves, and monuments. This approach does not follow a single theoretical framework, but interleaves a range of

themes in recent mortuary and memory theory, including approaches to ritual practice, cultural biographies of things and monuments, and the material turn in archaeological research emphasizing the entangled and enmeshed relationships between people and things (Hall 2015; Williams et al., 2015). In focusing on the Viking Age provides a rich seam of material to which these theoretical approaches are applicable but have hitherto been neglected. For Viking studies, this approach promises to straddle local and contextualized investigations, as well as macro-scale interactions and networks that connected the islands of the North Atlantic, Northern Europe, and the Mediterranean world.

Including articles drawn from session papers (Hall; Williams) and especially commissioned additional pieces (Eriksen, Klevnäs, Lund & Arwill-Nordbladh) this special issue builds upon, but differs from, the conference sessions in three further ways. First, the focus here is specifically on mortuary contexts as one key environment for the construction and reproduction of social memories among Viking-age communities. Second, we direct our attention to citations as a principal strategy hitherto under-valued in studies of Viking-age mortuary practice. Finally, the special issue benefits from a closing commentary (Back Danielsson) that develops the debate in relation to post-humanist approaches in archaeology and cognate disciplines. In these three regards, the articles here contain individual original studies and reinterpretations mortuary and commemorative practice from Scandinavia and the islands of the North Atlantic. Furthermore, the articles in combination provide a unique collection of interest to students and scholars of both the Viking Age and mortuary archaeology. This introduction seeks to frame the collection in relation to recent research in Viking-age burial archaeology and carved stone monuments, as well as to situate these studies in connexion with broader themes and debates in mortuary archaeology.

The Diversity of Viking Death-Ways

The variety of mortuary and commemorative practices throughout the Viking world is bewildering, revealing the meshwork of intersections between Scandinavia, the Baltic, northern Europe, the Byzantine, and Islamic worlds and the islands of the North Atlantic which both created, and were created by, the Viking diaspora (Harrison, 2007; Price, 2008; 2010). There has been no shortage of exciting new discoveries and research on late first millennium AD funerary remains and commemorative monuments over recent decades (Rundkvist, 2007). Data including graves and cemeteries, burial mounds, rune-stones, sculpted stone crosses, and recumbent grave-covers as well as cultic buildings, artefacts, art, and amulets have been widely investigated, reported, and incorporated into wider interdisciplinary research in Viking studies on practices and perceptions of death, burial, commemoration, and the afterlife. Operating on multiple scales, from studies of individual graves and monuments, burial sites and locales, landscapes, regional surveys, and macro-regional explorations, mortuary archaeologies of the late first millennium are rich, varied, and keyed into broader archaeological and historical debates. These include the use of mortuary evidence to explore socio-political, economic, and ideological changes within Scandinavia, Europe, and further afield between the eighth and eleventh centuries. In addition, many local or regional sites, monuments, and archaeological contexts have particularly important contributions to make.

Recent mid- to late-first-millennium AD burial studies (including those of the eighth to eleventh centuries) have been the subject of profitable and healthy debates and innovative interpretations. These have revolved around reanalyses and reinterpretations of finds and sites long familiar to scholars, including large burial assemblages and cemetery analyses as well as wealthy chamber-graves and boat-graves (e.g. Staecker, 2005; Ljungkvist, 2008; Gräslund & Ljungkvist, 2011; Nordeide, 2011; Bill & Daly, 2012; Harrison & Ó Floinn, 2014; Hedenstierna-Jonson, 2015; Klevnäs, 2015). Yet across Scandinavia and areas affected by the Viking diaspora, new discoveries, and methods have driven forward research on burial sites and their environs (e.g. Artelius & Kirstensson, 2005; Artelius & Lindqvist, 2005; Rundkvist & Williams, 2008; Paterson et al., 2014; Jessen et al., 2015). Equally important, especially in the context of this collection, Viking-age mortuary archaeology has developed over the last decade as a profitable arena for debating new theoretical frameworks for enquiry (e.g. Goldhahn & Oestigaard, 2008; Pétursdóttir, 2009; Price, 2010; Eriksen, 2013; Gardeła, 2016). This work is important, since in many regards Viking-age mortuary archaeology has largely remained within a pre-1970s culture-historic framework of identifying shared cultural beliefs of migrants, approaches that persist in many fieldwork reports and popular syntheses of the mortuary data.

Viking-age archaeology is unquestionably interdisciplinary in nature. Yet scholars differ widely in how to integrate different sources of evidence. Depending on scholarly traditions and the particular character, date, and location of the data under consideration, mortuary data from the period is treated by some as prehistoric, by other scholars as proto-historic, and by others still as fully within the bounds of historical enquiry drawing directly on contemporary and later literature. The varying intersections between disciplinary traditions — theoretical and methodological — affect the interpretation of the period's burial and memorial evidence. For instance, there remain different camps of scholars who wish to write burial archaeology informed by the sagas (discussed and debated by, among others, Pétursdóttir, 2009; Price, 2010; Gardeła, 2016) and those who situate the data historically but very much from the ground up (e.g. Artelius, 2005; Rundkvist, 2011). Another way of framing this interpretative spectrum is between those who write about mortuary practices using elite performances and the tenth-century account of Ibn Fadlan and other written sources as entry points into the study of mortuary process and variability (Price, 2010) and those who draw more directly from ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological data and broader anthropological and sociological literature on death, dying, and commemoration (e.g. Back Danielsson, 2009; Oestigaard, 2013).

These are overlapping rather than oppositional trends. These varied approaches underpin how investigations of belowground funerary remains, monuments, and carved stone monuments, build on, and have been informed by, a wide range of concepts and approaches. Moreover, they sometimes incorporate the work of runologists, place-name specialists, literary scholars, and historians of medieval art, landscapes, religion, society, and politics with varied emphases (e.g. Price, 2002; 2008; Thedéen, 2010). Over the last decade in particular, studies have become increasingly sensitive to identifying local and regional patterns rather than adopting a macro-regional approach (see Svanberg, 2003), attentive to the complex chronological shifts in mortuary practice within the Viking Age alongside deeper long term rhythms in mortuary and cult practice in both Scandinavia (e.g. Andrén, 2014) and areas affected by the Viking diaspora (e.g. Hadley, 2008). Finally, there

is a long tradition of integrating mortuary data alongside other lines of archaeological evidence including art, artefacts, settlements, and hoards (e.g. Dobat, 2008; Hedeager, 2011).

Death and Memory in the Viking World

The Viking Age has been considered a time particularly obsessed with the working and reworking of senses of the past. Among recent studies, a growing number of archaeologists have attempted to theorize, explore, and interrogate a range of media and contexts as evidence for relationships between mortuary practice, memory-making, and mythology (Andrén, 1993; Arwill-Nordbladh, 2007; Price, 2010). In addition to rune-inscribed monuments upon which aspirations of remembrance on the part of the commissioners and those being commemorated are clearly exhibited, archaeologists are becoming increasingly sensitive to the fact that texts were elements of broader networks of commemorative strategies drawing on embodied performances; memory was created through and between funerals, using material culture, abstract art, images, monuments, and landscape. These approaches have different theoretical starting points and have adopted different methodologies, yet they are in broad agreement in regarding mortuary practice as pivotal (or at least not incidental) in the creation and reproduction of social memories and mythologies; in other words how communities in Scandinavia and elsewhere in the Viking world constructed and negotiated senses of identity, belonging, and links to imagined and recalled pasts (see Williams, 2006; Price, 2010).

Two foci have driven research, both attempting to refine how death rituals operated in relation to local patterns and landscapes as well as broader trends (Svanberg, 2003). First are studies of the 'past in the past', including the reuse of ancient monuments (Hållans Stenholm, 2006; Pedersen, 2006; Harrison, 2007; Thäte, 2007a; 2009; Artelius, 2013) but also the consideration of artefact biographies explored by paying attention to 'heirlooms' and other retrieved or curated material cultures deployed in graves and other commemorative environments (Artelius & Lindqvist, 2005; Wessman, 2007; 2010; Myrberg, 2009; Pétursdóttir, 2009; Arwill-Nordbladh, 2013).

Yet the study of social memory through archaeological data has been broadened beyond the study of monument reuse and artefact biographies to consider a range of other ways by which Late Iron Age (early medieval) communities socially remembered and forgot through the practices and theatrics of mortuary performances and environments. Such approaches focus on the staged and sequential display and consignment of material culture, not simply heirlooms but also more modest artefacts and their interaction with the dead and mourners (Pétursdóttir, 2009; Price, 2010; 2014). Furthermore, attempts have been made to consider the entangled nature of mortuary assemblages and their interplay with other media including monumentality, space, and landscape more broadly (Gansum & Oestigaard, 2004; Artelius, 2005; Jennbert, 2006; Kristoffersen & Oestigaard, 2008; Back Danielsson, 2010; Wessman, 2010; Price, 2014; Williams, 2014).

A particular shared dimension of recent approaches is their concern with processes of corporeal transformation. This takes attention away from the study of mortuary symbolism mediated by the presence and display of material culture (especially discussed for well-preserved and well-furnished inhumation graves). Instead, it allows archaeologists to

consider other mnemonic practices such as fire rituals including, but extending beyond, cremation (e.g. Høilund Nielsen, 2009; Wessman, 2010; Artelius, 2013; Williams, 2013). The mnemonic interplay of different mundane practices and pyrotechnologies in the transformation of the dead, including cooking, weaving, and metalworking has led to particularly fruitful interpretations (Gansum, 2004a; 2004b; Back Danielsson, 2007; Goldhahn & Oestigaard, 2008; Oestigaard, 2013). Other key aspects of these approaches, not always framed in relation to social memory but with the potential to do so, include the interplay between animals and people in mortuary practice (Back Danielsson, 2007; Price, 2010; Hedeager, 2011; Jennbert, 2011) and the material and sensory affordances of those substances, artefacts, and structures deployed in dealings with the dead (e.g. Artelius & Lindqvist, 2005; Back Danielsson, 2007; Lindgren, 2008; Thedéen, 2010; Andrén, 2014).

The mnemonic approach to burial and memorial data also allows archaeologists and other scholars to reconsider a range of dimensions of early medieval mortuary practice, from the use of ephemeral architectures (Williams, 2014; Wessman & Williams, forthcoming) to the perception of the dead as corporeal inhabitants of their graves and the reinterpretation of 'grave-robbing' (Klevnäs, 2007; 2015; Bill and Daly, 2012; Gardęła, 2013). These studies have considered mortuary practices and monuments as engines of memory: mnemonic mechanisms driving perceptions of the past and social change into the future (Williams, 2006; Back Danielsson, 2007). In these ways, Viking-age mortuary and commemorative practices can be re-framed as concerning the interplay between what Connerton (1989) called 'incorporating practices' and 'inscribing practices' (see also Arwill-Nordbladh, 2013). These allow us to explore themes in mortuary practice in relation to pre-Christian and conversion period communities (Lund, 2013).

This brings us back to inscription, and further work has explored the dynamic interplay between these material practices of memory work and textual strategies of remembrance. The interactions between text, art, image, and monumentality in social remembrance is thus a key dimension of Viking-age mortuary archaeology (Andrén, 1993; 2000; Staecker, 2006; Arwill-Nordbladh, 2007; Back Danielsson, 2007; 2015). Back Danielsson (2015) has considered, for example, the mnemonic effects of rune-stone placement and the embodied interactions their runes and zoomorphic imagery contrive. She also considers the broader landscapes within which mortuary contexts were situated (see also Williams et al., 2010; Williams, 2011). The commemorative dimensions of materiality and patterns of landscape positioning and relationships between settlements, cemeteries, and other locales have also been considered in terms of mythology and memory (Thäte, 2007a; 2007b; 2009; Larsson, 2010; Hedeager, 2011; Andreeff, 2012; Andrén, 2014).

Much of this literature explicitly critiques the bracketing of mortuary archaeology from other social realms and some studies have actively sought to explore mortuary mnemonics in contexts not traditionally regarded as funerary, including settlements (e.g. Thäte, 2007b; Larsson, 2010; Eriksen, 2013), hoards (Myrberg, 2009), and the life-histories of artefact types in relation to the living and the dead (e.g. Ashby, 2014). Further dimensions to such contextual approaches include explorations of the spatial interpolation between dwellings, practices, and graves and the biographies of monuments as they shift between mortuary, commemorative, and other uses through their 'life-history' (Burström, 1996; Bill & Daly, 2012; Rundkvist, 2012; Hall, 2015).

Challenges for Viking-Age Mortuary Archaeology

So far, I have identified a multidisciplinary context straddling many kinds of data that inform the study of the past and social memory in the Viking world, focusing in particular on studies that explore the entanglement of mortuary practices within broader material worlds and investigate the interconnected facets of mortuary technologies as commemorative strategies with both social and mythological dimensions. Yet there remain key challenges for future research.

Even among this literature, few acknowledge, let alone tackle critically, recent approaches to social memory in mortuary archaeology and instead prefer to retreat into the anthropology and history of religion and a perception of cosmology and mythology. In short, studies of memory remain overly straightjacketed by attempts to search for either 'Viking minds' (see Price, 2002; 2010; 2014) or social structure (see Dobat, 2008). I have discussed my reservations towards the search for meaning and mind elsewhere (Williams, 2010; 2013; see also Back Danielsson, 2007) and advocated the need to balance between seeing mortuary practices and commemoration as neither mirror nor mirage (Williams & Sayer, 2009). In this regard, Viking-age mortuary practice can gain from drawing on more careful work on later prehistoric and early historic mortuary practices elsewhere, exemplified by the pairing of book-length studies of a decade ago by this author (Williams, 2006) and Jones (2007). Jones in particular draws on anthropological theories of memory to explicitly engage with the theme of citation, and 'citational fields' connecting sequential depositional practices, the use of transforming fire technologies, and the structure and development of mortuary monuments.

A further constraint consists of a geographical fissure in the theoretical frameworks applied to Viking-age mortuary and commemorative practice. In stark contrast to the vibrant debates in Scandinavian and Baltic archaeology (see Wessman, 2010), in the North Atlantic and Insular world this mythological metanarrative for social memory is only found within studies of stone sculpture (e.g. Kopár, 2012; Williams et al., 2015) and rarely considered for other categories of data (Pétursdóttir, 2009). Elsewhere, it is largely supplanted by historical approaches; the meta-narrative of the written sources of Norse raiding, trading, settlement, and the processes by which mortuary practice was influenced and inspired by external and internal forces (see critiques by, among others, Staecker, 2005 and Pétursdóttir, 2009). Moreover, memory work is often simplified to active assertions of otherness and Norseness by immigrant elites in the colonial environment (e.g. Williams, 2006; Hadley, 2008). While undoubtedly part of the narrative, this risks being a reductive approach. Hence, while Scandinavian archaeologists have more rigorously theorized mortuary archaeology, both Insular and Scandinavian research suffer by being somewhat silenced by a colonial discourse, despite extensive critique of this challenge over a decade ago by Svanberg (2003). Back projecting historical narratives or mythological schemes offer invaluable interpretative possibilities for interpreting Viking-age mortuary performances and their possible meanings, but they equally risk silencing the narratives garnered from the material culture and the past lives of individuals and communities they implicated, as well as suppressing the detailed contextual stories of people, places, and memory revealed in the complex and varied dimensions over time and space (see Rundkvist & Williams, 2008; Williams, 2006; 2013; 2014; Williams et al., 2010). The issue here is one of

scale: our collective research aspiration should be balanced between micro-narratives relating to specific places and sites, and macronarratives that subsume all variability into a common interpretative schema. In doing so, we need to enhance dialogues between studies of mortuary and commemorative practices among the Vikings 'at home' and 'abroad'.

This problem is accentuated by specialist divisions among researchers, including distinctive camps of scholars working on rune-stones, picture-stones, burial archaeology, art, and artefacts, each attending discrete conference venues and opting for different publication outlets. Hence, many of the more innovative studies are found subsumed within either multi-period themed collections or period-specific volumes in which description takes precedent over theoretical debate and interpretation. Increasingly, studies are escaping these spatial, chronological and disciplinary ghettos (notably Back Danielsson, 2007; Price, 2010; Andrén, 2014), and yet they face the challenge of being isolated case studies in the application of theoretical approaches. Remarkably, and quite surprisingly given the widespread use of mortuary-derived material cultures in popular syntheses of the Viking Age, there are no collections spanning both Scandinavia and elsewhere in the Viking world that attempt to build new theoretical approaches in the study of mortuary practice.

Mortuary Citations Defined

This situation provided the direct inspiration for this special issue, confirmed and complemented by a recent collection which focuses firmly on rethinking the entanglement of things and spaces within 'Viking worlds' (Eriksen et al., 2015). Therefore, this collection seeks to tackle death, memory, and material culture in a specific set of ways. While we would not claim that a citational approach to social memory is the only profitable direction for mortuary research in the late first millennium AD, this collection provides a range of voices and perspectives on this important theme, confronting different material and contexts, and a wide span of regions and locales. In doing so, the studies recognize the importance of tracing the biographies of specific categories of things and the entanglement of people and things created through the movement and transfer of things over time (e.g. Ashby, 2015), as well as the networks of memory forged by cultural practices including poetry and commemorative expressions through ritual, art, and monuments (e.g. Jesch, 2015). Thinking about citational fields as proposed by Jones (2007) takes us further than simply a recognition of artefact biographies and the material qualities of things. It helps us to think about selective and cumulative relationships between categories and finds, and transcend the usual divide between below-ground burial data and aboveground monuments and memorials, as well as between Viking 'homelands' and zones of Norse trading, raiding, and settlement (see also Back Danielsson, 2007). The *European Journal of Archaeology* is an ideal venue for this collection, since it serves to use the archaeology of the Viking Age not only to gain new insights into these societies in these regions, but to demonstrate potential synergies with comparable work on death, memory, and material culture in other periods and regions of European and world archaeology.

Drawing on recent theoretical approaches to memory, personhood, and materiality in prehistoric, early historic, and late historic mortuary archaeological

research, the specific focus of this collection is mortuary citation (see also Williams, 2006). This is defined here as practices of selection and deployment of artefacts, substances, images, architectures, monuments, and spaces that, separately and in combination, created mnemonic material references to other things, places, peoples, and times. In this way, as recently discussed by Jesch (2015), senses of shared pasts and identities were congealed and reformulated. While citations are replete in Viking-age monumental texts (runes), commemorating relationships between living and dead family members and their aspirations to land, power, faith, and identity, the power of citations created a field linking many different material categories.

The theme of mortuary citation presents new perspectives on each specific category of mortuary material — burials and cemeteries, inscribed and sculpted stone monuments — as well as to emphasize relationships between them and the broader material worlds in which these contexts and materials operated. It focuses on death and memory as practical, embodied engagements between the living and the dead that may have dramaturgical components, but they might have equally involved routinized work and less organized, improvised and ad hoc practices. This approach helps us navigate between seeing Viking-age mortuary practices as either mirror or mirage (see above). Instead of opting for either of these interpretative directions, we can explore mortuary practices as varied, unfolding context-specific strategies of memory work.

Such a way of proceeding aims to critique the theoretically disengaged nature of many existing traditions of studying death-ways and also to challenge the treatment of burials and monuments as fixed, singular, and sealed contexts and things. The collection's aim is to re-engage with Viking-age mortuary practice and commemoration relationally and contextually, situated within a web of mnemonic citational relationships to other contemporary and past material cultures and spaces. This approach explores the connections between bodies, materials, texts, art, monuments, spaces, and landscapes implicated in mortuary disposal methods and monumentalities in terms of cultural choices, biographical linkages, and technological sequences. Instead we can explore the networks by which memory was worked and reworked through the interplay of materialities and spatialities created through the mortuary environment (see Williams, 2006; Back Danielsson, 2007; Jones, 2007; Williams et al., 2010; Gardeła, 2016). Furthermore, this approach not only sheds new light on the specific form, decoration, materialities, and biographies of specific materials, artefacts, monuments, and spaces employed in the commemoration of the dead during the Viking Age, but it also helps researchers understand how mortuary assemblages operated together and in relation to each other in unfolding traditions of memory work. From the investigation of skeuomorphism, scalar transformations (miniaturization, gigantism), the mnemonic power of assemblages of artefacts and monuments, and the citational power of images, materials, and landscapes, this approach offers new perspectives and insights into the death rituals of the creolizing and syncretistic death rituals of Fennoscandia, the British Isles, and the North Atlantic during the period of the Viking diaspora.

Mortuary Citations Explored

The contributions have been arranged to take readers on a journey through themes, time, geography, and contexts. We begin with Lund and Arwill-Nordbladh who together explore

a definition of citation for mortuary contexts by investigating spatial relationships within two elite landscapes. They investigate the ancient monuments, settlement, hoarding practices, and mortuary display at Gamla Lejre in Zealand, Denmark, and how the unfolding practices of dwelling and disposal accrued an elite topography of memory through repeated material citations and a pastiche of performances. Complementing the attention given to the topography of memory, they move on to another elite landscape to explore the material citations within an elite ship-cremation beneath a monumental burial mound at Skopintull on the island of Adelsö in Lake Mälaren in Sweden. Here they focus on the roles of sacrificed animals, human hair, and a bird's egg in the social construction of memory during the mortuary process itself. Each case study independently reveals the construction of citational fields within the material cultures deployed during Viking-age mortuary performances. Together, these case studies show the potential of exploring citations within funerary rituals and in the longer-term development of specific landscapes drawing on a range of types of evidence.

Their study is balanced by Hall who focuses on grave goods linked to a specific set of elite mortuary practices: the deposition of gaming pieces with the dead. Spanning the Viking world from Estonia to Orkney, this phenomenon allows him to focus on the habitual practices of gaming and how these have informed the mortuary deposition of gaming pieces as a strategy of articulating elite identities, social memories, mythologies, and aspired afterlife destinations. For Hall, the deposition of gaming artefacts cited a craft of embodied knowledge and practices for Viking-age elites.

These two studies share a focus on acts of making memories through depositional practices. Klevnäs takes an alternative perspective. While she again focuses on elite furnished burials, her attention is drawn to interpreting the reopening and reworking of older graves ('grave-robbing') as a form of mortuary citation. Aimed at the public despoiling of graves and the retrieval of artefacts with biographies, these acts forged new relationships between the living and the dead.

Together, the articles thus far have in common the consideration of the intersection of material worlds and landscapes with the mortuary arena. Eriksen focuses on citations linking the mortuary and domestic arenas. She looks beyond the grave and memorials to reinterpret the Late Iron Age and Viking Age house as a mnemonic entity for households and communities and to examine the buildings themselves as non-human personalities commemorated after their 'deaths' through burning, dismantling, and covering with mounds. Her approach considers mortuary citations linked to practices of burying houses and burials associated with them.

Our collection then considers carved stone monuments. Williams looks at scalar and skeuomorphic citations in the recumbent grave-covers from northern Britain known as 'hogbacks'. Their architectural allusions and beastly guardians are regarded, not in terms of single sources of influence, but instead in relation to a network of citations to buildings, shrines, and canopies, and also to a wide range of portable artefacts from dress accessories to weaponry. Rather than specific citations to exclusive forms and concepts, here it is the range of allusions that is key to the commemorative efficacy of hogbacks and the range of audiences to whom they spoke.

Conclusion

Unquestionably this collection cannot address all pertinent material and debates and there are inevitable geographical lacunae. Still, together these articles reveal many new directions available to archaeological research by focusing on the theme of mortuary citation. Back Danielsson wraps up the current discussion by identifying an explicit framework for developing post-humanist theory in relation to the citational theme and applying it to the Late Viking Age of Scandinavia. In doing so, her commentary and appraisal emphasizes the many new directions awaiting exploration for both seemingly familiar and new analyses and discoveries.

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