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Death, memory, and material culture: Catalytic commemoration and the cremated dead

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Introduction

As a ritual transition, death in past societies concerned the physical and spiritual transformation and reconstitution of the spiritual and physical components of the deceased as well as survivors (Hertz 1960 [1907]). Despite the phenomenal variability in mortuary practices that archaeologists explore through their material traces, a common theme across past cultures is the commemorative significance of the corpse's transformation. The cadaver can be considered part-person, part-thing, but it is indisputably a focus of memory for the survivors. Hence, its transformation is a process of selective social remembering and forgetting. Moving, posing, furnishing, and destroying the corpse are different ways by which material cultures mediate commemoration.

Memory is here defined as a social and cultural phenomenon (for a broader discussion see Williams 2001, 2006: 1–35), neither collective subconscious nor personal recollection. Instead, memory can be considered a creative process constituted by performance, material culture, place, and landscape. This approach draws on the widespread use of 'memory' to refer to perceived and imagined pasts shared between people and generated and reified through social and ritual practices (e.g. Rowlands 1993). In funerals, select material culture can evoke many different pasts, including social networks, family histories, genealogies, legends, myths of origins, and cosmogonies. Yet funerals can simultaneously articulate and configure future or prospective memories, including afterlife journeys, spiritual regeneration, and social continuity, through the choice of matter and things associated with the cadaver (Williams 2006: 1–35). Indeed, the power of mortuary commemoration in past and present societies is such that it can simultaneously draw upon multiple temporalities and scales of memory involving both the past and the future to define death and the dead (see also Holtorf 1997).

Applications of this practice-focused view of memory in mortuary archaeology have been widespread in Anglophone scholarship, particularly for prehistory and the early medieval period (e.g. Barrett 1994, Jones 2007). This approach is just as relevant to the study of mortuary practice in the ancient world, late-historical and contemporary pasts, and the understanding of antiquarian and archaeological practice itself as a form of mortuary practice. One particularly important theme in this research is a move beyond mortuary monumentality to consider commemoration as citation—the placing and insertion of graves and other mortuary deposits in relation to earlier monuments and existing graves. The British archaeologist, Andrew M. Jones, more than any other, has developed and articulated this approach, describing how funerals can operate as 'technologies of remembrance' in which practical actions and material culture serve to make and re-make the identities of the dead

through selective remembrance (Jones 2007 ; see also Williams 2006). The funeral and subsequent rituals were a *chaine opératoire* of practical actions, performances, materialities, and places through which memories were forged and re-made through citation (Williams 2006 : 20–2, Jones 2007).

Regarding funerals as technologies of remembrance has a particular significance for interpreting the rapidly changing mortuary and commemorative traditions of early medieval (c. AD 400–1100) Western Europe and Scandinavia. Following the demise of the Western Roman Empire, this was a time of socio-economic and ideological reorientation and identity-creation, involving kingdom formation and religious conversion. In recent years, studies of mortuary archaeology in this period and region have moved away from traditional research directions focusing on culture-history and social structure to consider the localized variability in mortuary practice (e.g. Svanberg 2003). Furthermore, studies have investigated the mortuary use of material culture, the human body, monumentality, and landscapes as commemorative strategies relating to claimed histories, mythologies, and idealized social identities (e.g. Andrén 1993, Back Danielsson 2007, Price 2008b, 2010, Wessman 2010, Williams 2006: 36–144). In particular, material culture has been considered to orchestrate the commemoration of the early medieval dead by creating memorable scenes. The grave or pyre might be furnished to create a vivid tableau for the dead, involving colours, textures, and surfaces that incorporated multi-vocal symbolic allusions (Carver 2000). These allusions were made more powerful by the brevity of their display prior to burning or burial (Halsall 2003). Furthermore, they were enhanced by the choreographed transformation and consignment of the corpse with materials, substances, and animal bodies (Jennbert 2006, Williams 2006: 117–21) as well as through the locations and spatial organization of the funeral and burial (Hållans Stenholm 2006, Pedersen 2006 , Thäte 2007 , Wickholm 2008 ; but see Wessman 2010).

Drawing on both texts and archaeology, Neil Price (2008b, 2010) has made a valuable contribution to this debate by emphasizing the mythological narratives employed in mortuary drama. Story-telling may be only one aspect of mortuary theatre; the transgression and conflation of narrative might have played an important part in these funerals' effectiveness in memory-making. Yet Price rightly highlights how funerals constituted the social memory of the dead person through performance. When looking for patterns in mortuary data and the variations, continuities, and changes in commemorative strategies, we are uncovering how societies made themselves and their concepts of time, history, and cosmology through acts of citation in and through the grave (see also Williams 2006: 219–21).

Catalytic Commemoration

The studies discussed above focus on the practice of memory-creation, acts of citation that refer to previous places and practices and broader mythological and genealogical perceptions of the past. However, this emphasis misses other ways by which material culture operated in commemorating the dead. One particular commemorative strategy found in cremation practices from parts of England and Scandinavia in the middle and later 1st millennium ad deserves more detailed attention. In addition to 'pyre-goods' interred with the ashes, we sometimes find the selection and deliberate placing of material culture in the grave *after* cremation. What is striking about these artefacts is that they are not necessarily 'objects of memory'; they are not artefacts with biographies upon which memories of the dead are inscribed and incorporated by the survivors. Nor are they necessarily used to symbolize aspects of the deceased's social identity as idealized and selectively portrayed by mourners during the funeral. Indeed, they may not be connected to the deceased's identity at all.

Instead, these items can be understood as commemorative catalysts. I argue that these artefacts and materials created memories of the dead through their disposal with the ashes following cremation. They protected the deceased and afforded them a new corporeal identity following fiery transformation. This form may have often been materialized in relation to mythological or cosmological themes. Catalytic commemoration did not simply ‘honour’ the dead; it re-made them.

Combs and Toilet Implements in Eastern England

Early Anglo-Saxon cremation practices (later 5th and 6th centuries AD) were complex technologies of remembrance by which the dead were transformed by fire; and selected ashes and pyre-goods were retrieved and placed in hand-made and often highly decorated ceramic containers. Most artefacts found by archaeologists in early Anglo-Saxon cremation burials are highly fragmented and distorted by fire. However, combs and toilet implements stand out as the artefacts most frequently found in cinerary urns and instead appear to be ‘grave-goods’, selectively retrieved from the pyre for burial or added unburned after the cremation (Fig. 1).

There is clearly a social dimension to the provision of combs in cinerary urns; only a minority of urns contained combs, suggesting that this was a practice restricted to a particular group or groups. Indeed, combs appear to be associated with cremation burials with more pyre-goods, suggesting a possible status association (Williams 2003: 111). Both genders could receive these items, although they are more common in graves attributed to osteologically sexed females (Williams 2003: 108). All age groups could be provided with combs, but there appear to be different age associations at different cemeteries. Therefore, it is difficult to regard comb provision as a commemorative citation of a specific social category (Williams 2003: 110). Instead, we might seek an explanation in the mnemonic agency of combs; their ability to enable the corporeal and material fixing of a new identity for the deceased as an ancestor during the post-cremation practices.

This argument is supported by the contextual evidence for how combs were employed. Only a minority at any individual site show fire-damage. Furthermore, many were added to the tops or bottoms of urns, suggesting that they were only associated with the ashes during the filling of the urn itself (Williams 2003: 107). Many combs appear to represent fragments, a portion of a whole item broken off for burial with the ashes, usually an end-piece (Williams 2003: 107–8; see also Gibson 2007). This implies that a portion of the object was offered up for the dead, while the remainder was kept by the mourners, possibly as mementos of the deceased. The act of fragmentation mirrored the dissolution of the pyre, while the sharing of the item between the living and the dead constructed an ongoing commemorative relationship between them. In other instances, miniature combs could have been made especially for the funeral. The placing of comb fragments articulated social remembering—ongoing bonds between survivors and the deceased. Meanwhile, the act of breaking and consignment to the grave balanced remembering with managed social forgetting. More important than both remembering and forgetting, the fact that these were items connected to a body’s surface destroyed by cremation suggests that combs invoked the presence of a new corporeality for the ashes following cremation.

This interpretation is supported by the evidence for both iron and bronze, full-sized and miniature ‘toilet implements’, including tweezers, blades, shears, and razors. Again both males and females could receive these items, although in this case there is a clear male bias to their provision (Williams 2007: 84). The age correlations are also interesting, with tweezers

most common with adults, while shears and razors are more common among infants, children, and adolescents (Williams 2007: 81–2). The length of tweezers can be shown to relate in crude terms to the age at death, with the smaller items tending to be found in the urns of infants and younger children (Williams 2007 : 82–3). As with combs, it appears that some miniatures may have been made simply for the funeral. Furthermore, only a small number of these items show signs of heat damage which, for the copper-alloy objects at least, strongly suggests that they had not been placed with the corpse on the pyre. These items may have had many functions and uses, but a simple association with the identity of the living person is difficult to affirm.

Combs and toilet implements could be found with the same cinerary urns, yet there were clearly differences in their significance: the former were fragmented, while the latter were placed whole. Yet what is clear is that both combs and toilet implements share a connection with the preparation and management of hair. Moreover, the association of both combs and toilet implements with cremation burials appears of paramount significance; some of these items can be found in contemporary furnished inhumation graves but at a much lower frequency. Furthermore, while the artefacts may have been used in manifold ways before and during the funeral, through their deposition they seem to have had a particular significance in the post-cremation rites. Therefore the association with hair, the connection with cremation, and their role in the burial of the ashes towards the end of the funerary sequences provide the basis for an interpretation of their significance (Williams 2003, 2007).

The particular qualities of hair and nails as enduring, separable, and peripheral to the body may have encouraged their importance in early Anglo-Saxon rituals of death and mourning. Broader associations with apotropaic and cultic practices might be seen in the exaggerated facial and head hairs upon contemporary metalwork. Depictions of the human form emphasize the centrality of head and facial hair upon dress accessories (Hines 1997, Dickinson 2002) and weaponry (Dickinson 2005). Prominent human hair also adorns the human figures represented upon gold bracteates and gold-foil figurines found in southern Scandinavia (e.g. Back Danielsson 2007).

While specific associations with the cult of Odin remain of debatable application to the English evidence (see Dickinson 2005 for an argument in favour of the link), the fact that these representations might represent heroes or gods and their appearance on dress fittings suggested their decoration invoked spiritual protection and evoked memories of myths and legends. If so, then this might be considered an apotropaic art that simultaneously afforded protection, displayed identities, and commemorated myths, legends, and possibly imagined shared origins. Cremation practices might constitute a treatment of the body that parallels the human–animal transformations represented in Style I animal art. If so, then they might both be manifestations of a broader and diversely materialized ‘ideology of transformation’, linking social and political structures and cult practice to specific mythologies in both southern Scandinavia and England during the 5th and 6th centuries AD (Williams 2001). Rituals, including those surrounding death, can be regarded as the arena in which these myths and identities were created and disseminated.

In the light of this evidence, items associated with hair were appropriate to include with ashes when finally interred in cemeteries across eastern England. Perhaps they were used to prepare the corpse for cremation as well as being used by mourners to alter their appearance to symbolize their state of mourning. They may have also been among the tools used to incise

the complex abstract decoration found upon many cremation urns, to disperse death pollution, and ultimately were inalienable from the ashes of select individuals. Hence, for both mourners and the cadaver, the management of hair and nails can be regarded as a means of articulating transformation during and after cremation and placing items of hair management in the pots with ashes both served to complete the funeral and create new, ongoing, memories of the dead by the living. These humble items did not necessarily convey or communicate memories, but they allowed memories to come into being as catalytic agents. Hence the same items could be used to commemorate individuals of different ages and genders and to forge a mythological identity for the cremated dead.

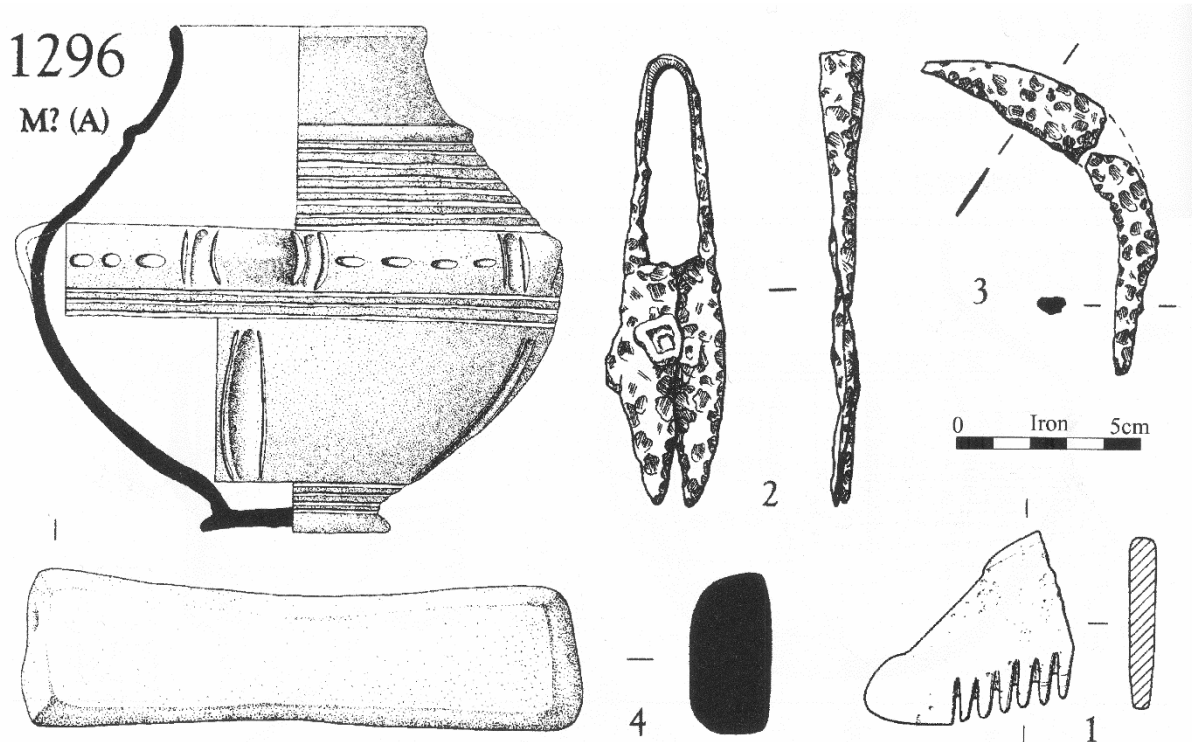


Figure 1 The cinerary urn and artefacts from grave 1296 from Alwalton, Cambridgeshire
Notes: The grave contained the remains of a probable male adult of 30–45 years of age, the remains of an immature female pig, an antler comb fragment, iron shears, iron razor, and hone (Gibson 2007: 347). The image is reproduced with the kind permission of the author, Oxford University School of Archaeology and Archaeological Solutions Limited. *Source:* Gibson 2007: 322.

Thor’s Hammer-rings in the Lake Mälaren Region

I now move my discussion away from early Anglo-Saxon England to consider the deposition of ‘Thor’s hammer-rings’ with the cremated dead of the Lake Mälaren area (Sweden) during the Viking Age (9th to 11th centuries AD). These items are not to be confused with ‘Thor’s hammer pendants’, which have been widely discussed as a late-pagan expression of religious identity and counterpoints to the Christian cross (Zeiten 1997: 27, Staecker 1999). Thor’s hammer-rings comprise of a ring of iron (oft en regarded as a ‘neck-ring’) upon which threaded a range of iron attachments and tools, including at least one hammer-shaped miniature (Fig. 2).

Gunnar Andersson has eschewed previous interpretations that regard them as dress accessories or as evidence of the deceased’s personal or group adherence to the worship of

Thor (Andersson 2005No-: 47). He instead focuses on their association with cremation practices. In particular, these items could have been made for the funeral and they do not seem to have been placed on the pyre with the dead (Andersson 2005: 47–8). This was not a universal practice; it was adopted only for selected graves in a tightly focused area in the eastern Mälaren Basin and the Åland Islands (with further examples in Russia) from the 9th to 11th centuries AD. Andersson explored in detail their occurrence in two cemeteries of the Viking period in Uppland (Valsta in Norrsunda parish and Skälby in Solluntuna parish). He noted that the frequency of hammer-rings is different between the sites. The character of the hammer-rings is also different. Their greatest frequency occurred in cremation burials of the late 10th and 11th centuries AD. Andersson argued that hammer-rings are found among all age groups and both genders, although with a slight female bias. This does not suggest a single social category shared by all those buried with them. While the practice emerged in the Vendel period, the late date of many suggests a link to the religious and political conflicts towards the end of the Viking period (Andersson 2005: 53).

To understand the use of these items in the mortuary context, we can begin by following Andersson and suggesting that they were symbols of regeneration. In the story *Gylfaginning* from the Prose Edda, Thor's hammer (*Mjölnir*) offered protection against the giants and forces of chaos. Moreover, Thor used his hammer to create fire and also to bless the pyre of the god Balder (Faulkes 1987: 49). A specific regenerative theme might also be found in this source. Thor used *Mjölnir* to bring back to life his he-goats the morning after their flesh had been cooked and consumed. By blessing the bones and goatskins they are regenerated to serve as Thor's traction in his journeys between worlds (Faulkes 1987: 38). One or all of these associations may very well have motivated the placing of hammer-rings with the cremated dead. Having passed through the dissolution of the funerary fire, the ashes were 'blessed' by the hammer and the hammer allowed the dead to regenerate and continue on their passage to the afterlife.

The combination of hammers with other miniature items including rings, themselves on a larger ring of iron, is also significant. Andersson observed the reproductive and serpentine associations of rings in Norse mythology, invoking protection for the dead, aspirations of regeneration and order against chaos and destruction. An association with Thor might also be evident here since this deity possessed a girdle that doubled his strength (Faulkes 1987: 22). Also, the Thor's hammer-rings mirror the enclosing cinerary urn within which ashes were placed: both ring and pot may have served to protect and constitute the dead. Indeed, they were often on or around the neck of the cinerary urn (Andersson 2005: 46), almost as if they were 'worn' by the pot. Connecting mortuary practice with the attributes of a single deity remains problematic. For instance, bones, hammers, and rings are associated not only with Thor but with Volund (Wayland), the archetypal Germanic shaman-smith. Volund's story appears to have been well-known throughout early medieval northern Europe. He was hamstrung and imprisoned by King Nidlud upon an island and forced to make treasures. In revenge, Volund kills the king's sons and makes silver encrusted vessels from their skulls, exotic stones from their eyes, and brooches from their teeth. Volund then seems to use a magical ring originally made for his valkyrie wife to fly away and thus escape his island prison (Larrington 1996: 102–13). Indeed what better metaphor than aerial flight to articulate the spiritual ascent of the cremated dead?

Whether connected with Thor, Volund, or a constellation of wider significations, hammer-rings were made from the one material most resistant to fiery destruction and created by only

the hottest of furnaces. Indeed, iron amulets of all types found in Scandinavian mortuary contexts appear to be preferred over others (Jensen 2008). Therefore, although not placed on the pyre, iron in the post-cremation context may have symbolized regeneration. Indeed, iron-making seems to have held magical and shamanic associations of metalworking in Norse mythology and archaeologists have identified possible close links between ironworking and cremation on the same sites in Norway and Sweden (Gansum 2004 , Goldhahn and Østigård 2008 ; see also Burström 1990 , Østigård, this volume). We might further speculate that, if smiths were among the ritual specialists involved in funerary rituals, or at least if metalworking provided one of the metaphors of transformation by which cremation was understood, then perhaps Thor hammer-rings were made by smiths for funerals as part of their shamanic role as psychopomps (guides for the dead). Therefore, smiths making Thor hammer-rings for (and possibly at) funerals at Valsta or Skälby were working towards the creation of memory. From this perspective, Thor hammer-rings are another example of the material culture of catalytic commemoration. What remains to be understood is why only selected persons received this rite upon death.



Figure 2 A Thor hammer-ring retrieved from a cremation grave in a late Iron Age cemetery at Väsby, Vallentuna parish, Uppland (diameter 85mm) *Notes:* The image is reproduced with the kind permission of the National Historical Museum, Stockholm. Photograph by Christer Åhlin, © National Historical Museum, Stockholm.

Clay Paws in the Åland Islands

A third case study of catalytic commemoration is the ‘clay paw burial rite’, a practice distinctive to the Åland Islands of the Baltic Sea from the 7th century ad and subsequently through the Viking period (Callmer 1994: 20). The artefacts in question comprise of fine clay oblongs with five fingers between *c.* 5 and 11 cm in length (Callmer 1994: 17, Fig. 3). They have been widely thought to resemble the paws of beavers, bears, or both. It is widely

accepted that these items were prepared especially for the funeral and they have often been considered to have held magical or amuletic significance (Callmer 1994: 14–16). Of the 650 graves excavated from this date range, 70 were furnished with a clay paw, primarily within the densely populated eastern areas of the islands (Callmer 1994: 19). They are employed in graves of both genders, although associations vary between regions. In the west of the Åland Islands they are more common in female graves; in the east they more often occur with males (Callmer 1994: 23).

Clay paws have been found beneath burial mounds, either placed on top of cremation urns and/or the remains of cremation layers. Callmer (1994) noted that the association with beavers and bears cannot simply reflect the contemporary late Iron Age fauna of the islands, where these animals would have been increasingly scarce in the later 1st millennium AD. He observed the magical and mythological associations of both beavers and bears in northern cosmologies of both Scandinavian and Finno-Ugric peoples, as well as the clear economic wealth and prestige these animals embodied given the Åland islanders' involvement in the fur trade (Callmer 1994 : 27, 41). He also suggested that the rite's origins can be seen as related to the creation of a new cultural identity forged by groups colonizing the Åland islands during the Vendel (Merovingian) period. Furthermore, the choice of who was afforded the rite was connected with those involved in hunting these animals upon expeditions to the east (Callmer 1994: 28, 31).

I concur with Price (2010: 143–4) that the clay paws were a mnemonic reference *between* graves, perhaps indicating a shared mythological narrative in which bears and/or beavers had a role. But what was the precise connection between clay paws and the process of cremation? As with Andersson's study of iron hammer-rings, we can regard these as affective, even magical, material culture, creating links between ritual performances in which they were interred, but also with the past. It is possible that their burial was intended to afford passage for the dead to the next world. Beavers—the most likely animals represented by the clay paws according to Callmer—are widely recognized for their humanlike and amphibious qualities and were perhaps regarded as 'kin' of those groups honouring their dead using clay paws (Callmer 1994 : 42). Also, both clay and human bodies had undergone a parallel fiery transformation and, while transformed, they survived annihilation.

Their placing in select graves might have been a way by which ritual specialists articulated the continuation of the deceased's identity following cremation, or perhaps more specifically, their regeneration into animal form. Specifically, clay paws may have been intended to invoke beavers as shamanic familiars, guiding the dead to a watery underworld (see also Williams 2001). Hence, the act of placing a clay paw with the ashes can be seen as magical and mnemonic, mediating the remembrance of the dead in their transition into the afterlife and perhaps commemorating myths of human–animal interaction and/or transformation.



Figure 3 A clay paw found in a late Iron Age grave on the Åland Islands, Sweden
Notes : The image is reproduced with the kind permission of the Åland Islands Museum.

Stones and Bones in Västergötland

My fourth example reveals how seemingly ‘natural’ materials may, in certain cemeteries, have held important roles as commemorative catalysts. Tore Artelius and Mats Lindqvist have argued that, at Vittene in Västergötland, Sweden, flakes of rock were deliberately included within cinerary urns from the 8th century ad onwards (Fig. 4). This rite may have had mnemonic implications in two ways. First, the rite was a reinvention of an older custom found among late pre-Roman and early Roman Iron Age urn-graves on the same site after a hiatus of about six centuries (Artelius and Lindqvist 2005 : 29). Rather than a ‘remembered’ ritual, it is possible that the discovery of old graves inspired the reinvention and the Viking burials that subsequently respected the location of the earlier graves. Second, these rocks were treated in a comparable way to the cremated bones and deliberately ‘cremated’ upon the pyre and retrieved for inclusion in the grave. Artelius and Lindqvist suggest that bones and stones were treated in a comparable manner as belonging to the earth and ‘planted’ by burial. This ritual practice may indeed relate to the connection perceived between bones and stones in the Norse origin myth; the earth and mountains were composed of the flesh and bones of the giant Ymir (Larrington 1996: 43). If so, this practice might be another ‘magical’ commemorative act, serving to regenerate the dead into the land; a material used to catalyse commemoration rather than distinguish the specific social identity of the deceased.



Figure 4 A Viking Age cremation urn from Vittene in Västergötland, with large flakes of rock included with the ashes (after Artelius and Lindqvist 2005)

Note: The image is reproduced with the kind permission of the authors.

Conclusion

Many of the recent studies addressing memory and material culture in early medieval mortuary practices have focused on high-status furnished graves and monuments, and the heroic and mythological allusions they incorporate (Andrén 1993, Jennbert 2006, Williams 2006, Price 2008a, 2008b, 2010). However, foregrounding the theatrical spectacles and complex symbolic statements of elite funerals risks skewing our view of how more mundane and commonplace funerals were conducted. This interpretative problem is exacerbated by using analogies from written sources witnessing elite funerals (such as Ibn Fadlan's 10th-century account of a Rus chieftain's funeral on the Volga: Warmind 1995; see Price 2008b, 2010) and hence regarding material culture as theatrical 'props' in mythological mortuary drama. As noted above, we must remain cautious not to distil all our interpretations of the material statements made in early medieval funerals into narrative forms. Early medieval funerals might be more profitably theorized as commemorative technologies that incorporated and invoked narratives, but also multiple temporalities that transcended narrative. Therefore, artefacts placed in more modest graves are not simply abbreviations and motifs of myths and other stories found in more elaborate forms in rich graves (for this argument, see Price 2010), they may be operating on alternative registers and in non-narrative forms. These might include items often referred to by archaeologists as 'amulets' (Zeiten 1997, Price 2002, Gräslund 2008). I contend that these 'amulets' are more profitably seen alongside other personal and practical items of body management and sometimes raw materials that were selected for burial with the dead in post-cremation rituals. Together, such

items might not have primarily referred to the biography and identity of the dead person(s). Instead, the artefacts were integral to the ritual performances and multi-sensory transformations of the deceased's identity when cremated material was retrieved from the pyre. For some early medieval cremating communities, even mundane artefacts and materials could be selected and used to construct memories of the dead. The four case studies reviewed in this chapter serve to illustrate how the commemorative role of such items could be catalytic rather than citational. In other words, they were not deployed as objects *of* memory (e.g. Norr 2008) as much as objects *for* memory, catalysing memory through material culture. It remains for future research to identify, investigate, and interpret further examples of the dynamic interplay of commemorative citations and catalysts in past mortuary practices.

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Suggested Further Reading

Andrén, A. 1993. Doors to Other Worlds: Scandinavian Death Rituals in Gotlandic Perspectives. *Journal of European Archaeology* 1: 33–56.
This article provides an exceptionally erudite argument concerning the ideology of Gotlandic picture stones and the mythological elements of late 1st millennium ad commemoration that is influential and pertinent for considering mortuary practices and memory.

Andrén, K., Jennbert, K., and Raudvere, C. (eds.) 2006. *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.
This is a far-ranging collection of papers presenting literary, historical, and archaeological perspectives on Norse religion, including studies of myth and memory.

Back Danielsson, I.-M. 2007. *Masking Moments: The Transitions of Bodies and Beings in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*. Stockholm: University of Stockholm.
This work has produced a stimulating discussion of memory and personhood in later Iron Age (i.e. Migration Period to Viking) Scandinavia, considering mortuary practices alongside a range of material culture and focusing on the interpretation of gold-foil figurines.

Price, N. 2008a. Dying and the Dead: Viking Age Mortuary Behaviour. In: S. Brink with N. Price (eds.) *The Viking World*. London: Routledge: 257–73.
This piece offers an invaluable and much-needed entry-point into the complexity and variety of Viking funerary ritual. Price covers the key themes of cremation, inhumation, chamber burials, ship-burial, human sacrifice, and 'funerary drama'.

Price, N. 2010. Passing into Poetry: Viking-Age Mortuary Drama and the Origins of Norse Mythology. *Medieval Archaeology* 54: 123–56.
This article provides a review of mortuary practice and expands on the interpretation of Viking funerals as narrative dramas.

Wessman, A. 2010. *Death, Destruction and Commemoration: Tracing Ritual Activities in Finnish Iron Age cemeteries (ad 550–1150)*. Helsinki: The Finnish Antiquarian Society ISKOS 18.

This is an important and new review of late Iron Age cremation practices in Finland employing memory theory.

Williams, H. 2006. *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This book outlines recent debates in early medieval burial archaeology and pursues the theme of memory in relation to case studies from early medieval Britain.

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Andersson, G. 2005. With Thor on Our Side: The Symbolism of the Thor Hammer-Ring in Viking Age Burial Ritual. In: T. Artelius and F. Svanberg (eds.) *Dealing with the Dead: Archaeological Perspectives on Prehistoric Scandinavian Burial Ritual*. Stockholm: National Heritage Board: 45–62.

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