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Paper wraps stone: monumental, manuscript, and printed epitaphs in eighteenth-century England

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Bullard, R. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9484-9579 (2020) Paper wraps stone: monumental, manuscript, and printed epitaphs in eighteenth-century England. Inscription, 1. pp. 18-31. ISSN 2634-7210 Available at https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/92250/

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See Guidance on citing.
Published version at: https://inscriptionjournal.com/2020/06/27/paper-wraps-stone/

Publisher: Information as material (Iam)

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Paper Wraps Stone:

Monumental, Manuscript, and Printed Epitaphs in Eighteenth-Century England

Rebecca Bullard

John Le Neve (1679–1741) an English antiquarian who flourished in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, is best known for *Fasti Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*. This hefty collection of biographies of clergymen, first published in 1716, became the foundation of a vast, multi-generational biographical project that continues to the present day. By contrast, Le Neve's next publication, *Monumenta Anglicana*, has sunk like a stone into the deep waters of scholarly history. Five volumes of transcribed funeral monuments published between 1717 and 1719, *Monumenta Anglicana* addresses the title of this new journal, *Inscription*, directly. It also speaks to the theme of this first issue, 'beginnings' – because it pioneers new ways of approaching the various media in which it is involved: inscribed stone, manuscript and print.

The methods that Le Neve adopts in *Monumenta Anglicana* are innovative in at least three ways. First, this text takes a familiar antiquarian practice – the transcription and publication of epigraphy – but it focuses on modern, rather than ancient, inscriptions. The first volume contains transcriptions of monuments set up from 1700–1718. Second, it coins a new term to refer to a published text that seeks to gather information about the recently dead in one place: the obituary. Finally, it offers an early example of an unusual publishing practice: subscription publication, where the person who organises the subscription list and distribution of copies is the author, rather than a bookseller.[1] These innovations are all inter-related aspects of Le Neve's self-consciousness towards the materiality of text.

Monumenta Anglicana:
BEING
INSCRIPTIONS
ON THE
MONUMENTS
Of Several
EMINENT PERSONS
Deceased in or since the YEARS 1700. to the end of the YEAR 1715.
Dedicated (since a Series of Time by way of)
ANNALS,
OR
An OBITUARY
At the rate of each YEAR is added
Of some Memorable Persons who died therein,
Whole INSCRIPTIONS (if any yet fit up) are not come to hand.
Intended as a Specimen of a much larger WORK.
Ovid.
Nec pigeat (ferum est) Mihi Nomen Scribere Fatis.
By JOHN LE NEVE, Gent.
LONDON: Printed by W. Bowyer, for the Author, and Sold by Mr. Hawkins, Bookseller in Cornhill, Mr. Ward, Bookseller in the Strand, Mr. Fox, Bookseller in Fleet-street. MDCCXVII.

Figure 1. John Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana* vol. 1 (1717), title page. Creative Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

Monumenta Anglicana asks its readers to consider what happens when one kind of inscribed text (a monument) is transformed into another (a manuscript), and then gathered together with other inscriptions in a printed volume. In doing so, it offers an extended meditation on what it means to commemorate the dead not just in stone, but also in print. Rather than emphasising the essential differences between the media with which his text engages, Le Neve asks his readers to consider them in relation to one another. He presents paper-based memorials not as a poor substitute for stone, but rather as a new kind of commemorative practice that exists alongside, and in dialogue with, inscribed monuments. He looks towards the future as well as the past as he transforms epitaphs through the medium of print.

Inscriptions ancient and modern

Transcribed epitaphs feature in almost all antiquarian publications from the sixteenth and through to the early eighteenth centuries, alongside other inscribed objects such as coins and medals. During the early years of the seventeenth century, however, epitaphs became the principal topic of entire texts. Two slim volumes, William Camden's *Reges, Reginæ, Nobiles & alii in ecclesia collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti* (1600) and Henry Holland's *Monumenta sepulchralia Sancti Paul* (1614), take readers on tours of the epitaphs and monuments of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, respectively. These little texts barely register in the balance, however, when weighed against a 900-page folio of transcribed inscriptions in the dioceses of John Weever's colossal *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631), a 900-page folio of transcribed inscriptions from parish churches and cathedrals in the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, London and Norwich. Weever's text became, according to Graham Parry, 'one of the most frequently mentioned antiquarian works of the seventeenth century.'[3] In the early years of the eighteenth, John Le Neve began the first volume of his *Monumenta Anglicana* with an extended summary of the discourse on epitaphs with which Weever begins his own work. Le Neve goes on to claim that he is 'pursuing the same Studies' as John Weever, 'tho' after a Method somewhat different from him'.[4]

Weever portrays himself as a solitary epitaph hunter whose painstaking commitment to transcribing the verbal contents of monuments impressed itself, physically, both on himself and on his book. Not content to reproduce epitaphs from earlier publications (he doesn't mention Camden or Holland's short books, which include some of the epitaphs that he also appears to have transcribed at first hand), he suffered for his calling as he rode around south east England, recording the inscriptions that he found in each place. In the introduction to his work, he recalls that

> having found one or two ancient Funerall inscriptions, or obliterated Sepulchers, in this or that Parish Church, I have ridden to ten Parish Churches distant from that, and not found one. Besides I haue beene taken vp in diuers Churches by the Churchwardens of the Parish, and not suffered to write the Epitaphs, or to take view of the Monuments as I much desired.[5]

Just as time obliterated sepulchres, so antiquarian pursuits left their mark on Weever, the doleful lone churchwarden and miles of horse's hoof-prints. More positively, what we see at work here is a strong sense of connection betw een the author and the ancient past, achieved through physical presence. Although Weever did call on learned friends for help in gathering material – he notes in particular, the assistance Robert Cotton, Henry Spelman, and John Selden – the authority for this volume derives from the fact that Weever has stood before the monuments he transcribes, his feet physically occupying the place of readers down the centuries and the masons who first inscribed them.

The importance that Weever ascribes to place and physical presence is registered in the structure of his text. *Ancient Funerall Monuments* moves slowly from parish to parish, situating epitaphs in the context of the places, buildings, families and local customs that help to make sense of them. Indeed, Weever worries that

> I may, perhaps, be found fault withall because I doe not chorographically and according as Churches stand, neare or further remote, in one and the same. Lath hundred or wapentake, emprint and place the Funerall Monuments in this my booke, but slip sometimes from one side of a County to another before I emprint an Epitaph.[6]

1. *Fasti Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*, <bmsh.ashmolean.org/collections/fasti-ecclesiae/> [accessed 1 June 2020].
2. K. I. D. Moulton, *Bibliography London Printing, Dawne at Work: Studies in the Burger Ledger*, (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1972), p. 1x1.
3. Parry, p. 216.
4. John Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana* 4.5 sth (1677–1770) 1.A3r. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
5. John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments within the United Monarchie of Great Britain, Ireland, and the Iland adjacent* (1631) 5.B2.A2r.
6. Weever, 5.B2.A2r.

Le Neve picked up not only Weever's project to create a repository of modern memorial inscriptions, but also his proposed method – that is, direct collaboration with the craftsmen who produce these objects. In the preface to *Monumenta Anglicana*, Le Neve notes:

> *I think my self obliged in a particular manner, to own my Obligations to* Mr. Stanton[.] *Mason, near St. Andrew's Church in* Holbourn. *Were every Person of that Profession as careful in preserving Copies of the* Inscriptions *on all the Tombs they set up, and as communicative, (which indeed I think they should be for their own Honour) the World might be easily obliged once a Year with a Volume of that sort perfectly new, without stigmatizing the Editor with the Name of a Plagiary … I have likewise been much oblig'd to* Mr. Bird *the Carver, and to* Mr. Hardy *and* Mr. Palmer *Masons; and I wish I could say the same of the whole Fraternity.* (1, a4v–b1v)

Le Neve's tone suggests that he inherited Weever's self-pitying tendencies as well as his proposed methods. He did, however, establish very productive working relationships with stonemasons including Francis Bird and Edward Stanton. In the half-decade before the publication of *Monumenta Anglicana*, Bird had produced funerary monuments for high-profile subjects including John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, Sidney, Earl of Godolphin, and Thomas Sprat, Dean of Westminster, all of which were erected in Westminster Abbey, as well as a statue of Queen Anne in the same place.[12] Stanton was a scion of one of the most significant families of London stonemasons who also undertook extensive work producing funerary monuments at Westminster Abbey and in parish churches and cathedrals across England and Wales.[13] Le Neve's collaborators, then, were among the most prominent craftsmen working on funerary monuments at the time when he was writing.

Le Neve's decision to focus on modern memorials, and to do so in collaboration with living masons and sculptors as well as other correspondents, gives his work a different complexion from that of his antiquarian predecessors. Those earlier texts emphasise the strong connections of monuments with the places they occupy – connections that endure through and are reinforced by the passage of time. They also privilege the author's physical presence in that same geographical and cultural landscape as a precursor to and guarantor of the text. Print is a useful way of preserving stone inscriptions, but the primacy of the monumental original is never in doubt. In *Monumenta Anglicana*, on the other hand, Le Neve seeks to explore the relationship between the various media that a text might occupy: stone monument, paper manuscript (which both precedes and follows presenting monuments as ancient, stable and original), and printed text. Rather than inscription on stone), he depicts them as just one stage in the evolution of an epitaphic text.

Stone, script and print

Monumenta Anglicana adopts an approach towards place that is radically different from that of earlier collections of monumental inscriptions. While Holland and Camden focus on particular churches (albeit very large and significant ones), and Weever progresses through the parishes and counties of southern England, Le Neve's work gathers together, promiscuously, epitaphs from all over England and Wales. A single leaf in the first volume takes us from Cumberland to Kent; another whizzes around between Staffordshire and Essex, Lancashire, Middlesex, Buckinghamshire and Denbighshire (1, 6–7; 59). There is no sense of organisation by place here and, in fact, Le Neve is profoundly indifferent to matters chorographical. He ends the preface to the first volume with a wonderfully casual reference to the fact that it is impossible to tell where many of the epitaphs in his book come from:

> *One thing I forgot, let not the Reader be very angry, when in some Places he sees at the Front of an* Inscription *In — and no more; the Omission is occasioned by the forgetfulness of the Persons who communicated the same, which cannot at present be recollected.* (1, b1v)

12. Maurice Cowles, 'Bird, Francis (1667–1731), sculptor', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <oxforddnb.com> [accessed 20 June 2020].

13. Geoffrey Fisher, 'Stanton, Edward (c.1681–1732), sculptor and mason', in Stanton, William (1699–1765), tomb sculptor and mason', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <oxforddnb.com> [accessed 20 June 2020].

Weever's vocabulary here conveys the importance of locality to his writing: chorography, for instance, refers to the practice of charting particular regions and districts,[7] while a 'wapentake' or wapentake is a subdivision of a shire equivalent to a hundred – its Norse derivation speaking to the ancient past of the Midlands and northern counties where it is used.[8] The verb that Weever uses for his own activities, 'emprint', calls to mind an equally localised form of activity, albeit one that takes place in the confined space of the book. In this context, it is more metaphorical than literal: the title page tells us that this text was printed by Thomas Harper for the bookseller, Laurence Sadler, but Weever's choice of verb elides the role of the printer and that of the author. He performs a similar rhetorical manoeuvre when he writes that he 'slip[s] sometimes from one side of a County to another', evoking both geographical and textual terrain. Both metaphors (author as printer, text as landscape) wish away the mediating function of print. Weever's ideal text is one that allows readers to feel as though they are standing – just as he did – before real monuments that exist in a particular geographical landscape.

As objects that were made both in the ancient past and in more recent times, monumental inscriptions allow antiquarians to adopt a diachronic approach towards particular places. The epitaphs included in the second edition of Henry Holland's volume on St. Paul's Cathedral (1633) span nearly a millennium – from the tomb of Sebba, King of the East Saxons, who died in 677, to the 'newly erected' monument to John Donne, who died in 1631.[9] John Weever also saw antiquarian potential not only in the ancient funeral monuments that give his book its title, but in inscriptions that were being produced during his own lifetime. In his introduction, he writes:

> I would earnestly desire the Tombe-makers of this Citie of London, and elsewhere, that they would be so carefull of posterite, as to preserue in writing the Inscriptions or Epitaphs which they daily engraue vpon Funerall Monuments, from whom I shall expect the like kindnesse, and to whom I will euer remain alike thankfull. For, I intend, God willing, hereafter to publish to the view of the world, as well the moderne, as the ancient memorials of the dead throughout all his Maiesties foresaid Dominions, if God spare me life.[10]

God didn't spare Weever, who died just a few months after the publication of his magnum opus. But the idea that modern monuments might speak to posterity and the belief that tomb-makers might be key to such a project lived on after his death through Weever's self-appointed successor, John Le Neve.

Le Neve's *Monumenta Anglicana* is an antiquarian text with a difference. It looks very much like earlier texts by Weever, Holland and Camden, offering readers a collection of transcriptions of monuments found in English churches. Like those earlier texts, Le Neve focuses primarily on monuments erected on the interior of churches, given the expense of such a venture, these tend to commemorate individuals of relatively high social status. Again like those of his predecessors, Le Neve's monuments commemorate men and women, in Latin and in English, celebrating the public and private virtues of their deceased, as well as their family connections. Unlike earlier texts in this tradition, however, Le Neve's focus is exclusively on modern memorials. The earliest texts in *Monumenta Anglicana* date from the time of Camden, Holland and Weever. The penultimate inscription in the fifth and final volume of Le Neve's work is a well-known epitaph on two lovers killed by lightning in 1778, written by Alexander Pope (though not attributed to him by Le Neve). It was erected in Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, the year after the first volume *Monumenta Anglicana* had left the press, and just a few months before the publication of its final volume.[11] Le Neve's text is, then, something of an oxymoron: an antiquarian volume of modern memorial inscriptions.

8. 'wapentake, n.' in *OED Online* <oed.com> [accessed 1 June 2020].

9. Henry Holland, *Ecclesia Saticti Pauli illustra* (1633), sig. E2r–E3r.

10. Weever, sig. A1r.

11. Le Neve, v, 185. On Pope's epitaph, see Joshua Scodel, 'The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth' (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 378–386.

7. Marjolie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 101–102.

14. Weever, sig. A2^{r-v}.

mediated nature of its end product. *Monumenta Anglicana* consistently points up the fact that stone inscription, manuscript transcription, and printed codex exist *in relation to* one another. Its author invites its readers to reflect on the processes that turn one state of a text into another, and to make comparisons between those states.

As he highlights the process of mediation, so Le Neve also acknowledges the potential for textual instability throughout *Monumenta Anglicana*. He observes in the preface to volume two of this series:

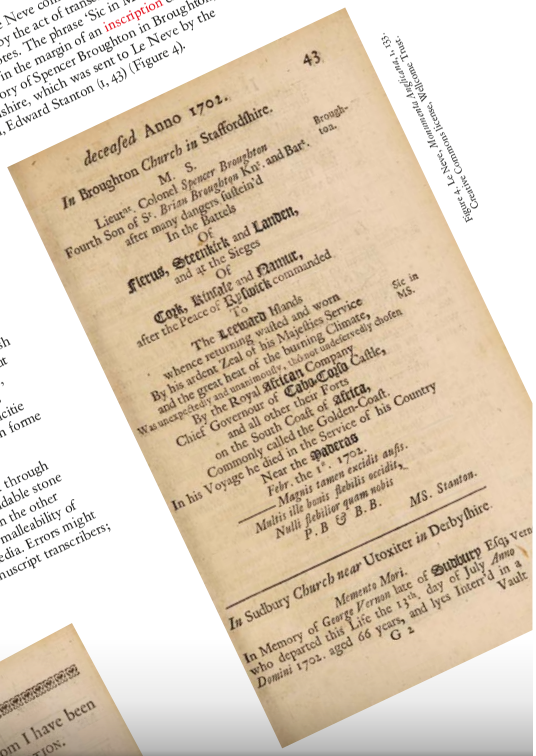
> *I am very sensible that, in some few Places of this Book, I have printed false or unintelligible Latin; but, not being satisfyed whether the Fault be laid to the* Mason *who set it up, or to the Transcriber who copied it, I rather chose to let it go as it came to me and shall be much obliged, if any Gentleman who has the Opportunity of coming to the original of any* Inscription, *will take the Trouble to compare them, and let me know how to set them to rights.* (ii, [A]2^{v})

Le Neve's insistence here that he prefers mistakes in Latin to intervening in the text he receives is reminiscent of John Weever, who notes, in *Ancient Funerall Monuments* that 'I write the Latine in the same manner as I find it either written or imprinted.' Weever goes on to observe:

> I likewise write the Orthographie of the old English as it comes to my hands; and if by the copying out of the same it be any manner of ways mollified, it is much against my will, for I hold originalls the best; whereby some may object the simplicitie of my vnlaboured stile, and the rough hewen forme of my writing.[14]

Weever's final metaphor here takes us back through non-standard spelling to the solid, dependable stone inscription that he valorises. Le Neve, on the other hand, makes an easy allowance for the malleability of an inscription as it moves between media. Errors might be the fault of stone carvers and manuscript transcribers; corrections might be passed into print through the care of future correspondents. (I have not come across versions of *Monumenta Anglicana* bearing manuscript corrections or filled-in missing place names but, like Le Neve, I invite contributions from future researchers who may discover these textual interventions for themselves!) There is no strong sense here of a perfect stone original and imperfect paper copies, but rather an impression that all texts are mediated through the work, and perhaps errors, of fallible creators.

Sometimes Le Neve communicates the textual instability engendered by the act of transcription through intriguing marginal notes. The phrase 'Sic in MS.', for instance, is printed in the margin of an inscription erected to the memory of Spencer Broughton in Broughton, Staffordshire, which was sent to Le Neve by the mason, Edward Stanton (i, 43) (Figure 4).



deceased Anno 1702.

In Broughton Church in Staffordshire.

M. S.

Lieut.ᵗ Colonel Spencer Broughton Brough-
Fourth Son of Sᵗ. Brian Broughton Knᵗ. and Baᵗ. ton.
after many dangers escaped
In the Battels
Of
Fiscus, Steenkirk and Landen,
and at the Sieges
Of
Cork, Kinsale and Namur,
after the Peace of Ryswick commanded
To
The Leeward Islands
whence returning waited and wore
By his ardent Zeal of his Majesties Service
and the great heat of the burning Climate, Sic in MS.
Was unexpectedly and unanimously (yet not undeservedly) chosen
By the Royal African Company
Chief Governour of Cabo-Coffo Castle,
and all other their Forts
on the South Coast of Africa,
Commonly called the Golden-Coast.
Near the Pederas
In his Voyage he died in the Service of his Country
Febr. the 1ᵗ. 1702.

Magnis tamen excidit ausis.
Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit,
Nulli flebilior quam nobis
P. B & B. B. MS. Stanton.

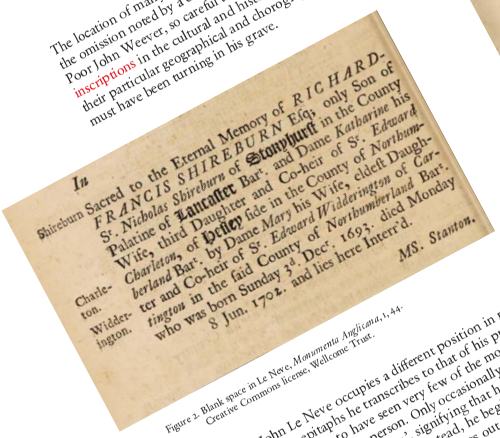
In Sudbury Church near Uroxiter in Derbyshire.

Memento Mori.

In Memory of George Vernon late of Sudbury Esqᵉ Vere
who departed this Life the 13ᵗʰ. day of July *Anno*
Domini 1702. aged 66 years, and lyes Interr'd in a Vault.
G 2

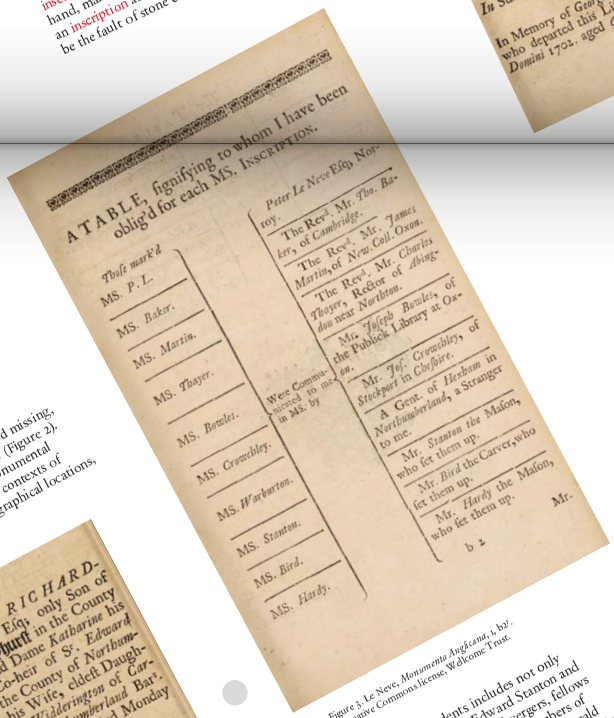
Figure 4. J. Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, i, 43^{r}.
Creative Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

The location of many of the epitaphs is indeed missing, the omission noted by a dash or blank space (Figure 2). Poor John Weever, so careful to situate monumental inscriptions in the cultural and historical contexts of their particular geographical and chorographical locations, must have been turning in his grave.



In
Shireburn Sacred to the Eternal Memory of RICHARD-
FRANCIS SHIREBURN Esqᵉ. only Son of
Sᵗ. Nicholas Shireburn of Stonyhurst in the County
Palatine of Lancaster Baᵗ. and Dame Katharine his
Wife, third Daughter and Co-heir of Sᵗ. Edward
Charleton, of Lydeyate in the County of Northum-
berland Baᵗ. by Dame Mary his Wife, eldest Daugh-
ter and Co-heir of Sᵗ. Edward Widderington of Car-
lington in the said County of Northumberland Baᵗ.
Charle-ton. Widder-ington.
who was born Sunday 3ᵈ. Decᵗ. 1693. died Monday
8 Jun. 1702. and lies here Interr'd.
MS. Stanton.

Figure 2. Blank space in Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, i, 44.
Creative Commons license, Wellcome Trust.



A TABLE, signifying to whom I have been
oblig'd for each MS. INSCRIPTION.

Those mark'd		
MS. P. L.	Were Communicated to me in MS. by	Peter Le Neve Esq. Norroy.
MS. Baker.		The Revᵈ. Mr. Tho. Baker, of Cambridge.
MS. Martin.		The Revᵈ. Mr. James Martin, of New Coll. Oxon.
MS. Thayer.		The Revᵈ. Mr. Charles Thayer, Rector of Abingdon near Northan.
MS. Bowtes.		Mr. Joseph Bowtes, of the Publick Library at Oxon.
MS. Crawshley.		Mr. Jos. Crawshley, of Stockport in Cheshire.
MS. Warburton.		A Gent. of Hexham in Northumberland, a Stranger to me.
MS. Stanton.		Mr. Stanton the Mason, who fet them up.
MS. Bird.		Mr. Bird the Carver, who fet them up.
MS. Hardy.		Mr. Hardy the Mason, who fet them up.

b 2 Mr.

Figure 3. Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, i, b2^{r}.
Creative Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

John Le Neve occupies a different position in relation to the epitaphs he transcribes to that of his predecessors. He appears to have seen very few of the monuments in his volume in person. Only occasionally does he mark an epitaph 'MS. *autog.*', signifying that he has transcribed the inscription himself. Instead, he begins the first volume with a two-column table that sets out the correspondents 'to whom I have been oblig'd for each MS. INSCRIPTION' (Figure 3).

Le Neve's list of correspondents includes not only stonemasons and sculptors like Edward Stanton and Francis Bird, but also dergymen and vergers, fellows of colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, members of Le Neve's family (among them his uncle, the herald Peter Le Neve) and persons unknown to him including 'A Gent. of *Hexham* in Northumberland, a Stranger to me', and one Mr. Mansel, 'A Stranger who Subscribes that Name' (i, b2^{r-v}). Entries in the table are keyed to individual epitaphs, each of which bears the name of the person who sent it: *MS. Bird*, *MS. Stanton*, and so on. What we see here is not just Le Neve emphasising the collaborative nature of his project (which was characteristic of antiquarians before him, including Camden and Weever) but also the self-consciously

Page 4 of 4, Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, i, 152.
Creative Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

Figure 5. Le Neve's *Monumenta Anglicana*, 1, 80. Creative Commons License. Wolfson Trust.

15. For the monument to Spencer Broughton, St. Peter's Church, Broughton, Staffordshire, see broughtonchurch.com/memorials.html.

The monument itself seems to correct the manuscript version to which the marginal note refers. Le Neve's text includes the phrase 'By ardent Zeal of his Majesties Service', but the stone inscription replaces the awkward preposition 'of' with the more fluent 'for', to read, 'By ardent zeal for his Mat^{ys} Service'.[15] Who made this change? Perhaps Stanton, if he was the mason as well as Le Neve's correspondent. What is the 'MS.' to which the marginal note refers? Perhaps the (now lost) original specification sent by the person who commissioned this monument. The note reminds us that, for masons like Stanton, manuscript instructions precede the act of carving in stone; and that inscription is, in this sense, an act of *trans*cription.

Even more extraordinary than the marginal note in Spencer Broughton's memorial is one in a Latin epitaph on one Peter Lee, again sent to Le Neve by Edward Stanton. This time the monument's location is conspicuously missing, its absence denoted by the word '*In*' followed by blank space (Figure 5).

'Sic in MS./Quaere.' ('so in the manuscript: query') is printed in the margin next to the words concerning Lee's death, '*Antiquâ* moriens' – as well it might be, since this phrase is at odds with the preceding lines of the epitaph, all of which give a *place* name followed by a verb:

Hibernià natus
Eblanâ eductus,
Angliâ vivens,
Flandriâ militans

[Born in Ireland
Educated in Dublin
Lived in England
A soldier in Flanders] (1, 80)

In fact, as the surviving monument shows, the word '*Antiquâ*' in Le Neve's text should read '*Antigua*': this inscription is – rather astonishingly – in the churchyard of St. John's Cathedral, Antigua and Barbuda, where Peter Lee is buried (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Gravestone of Peter Lee, St John's Cathedral, Antigua and Barbuda. The first five lines show the text printed in Figure 5. Image copyright Arvin Thornton.

Again, the marginal note raises a number of questions. Whose query is this: Stanton's, Le Neve's, or someone else's altogether? Is it there because Stanton, who sent this epitaph to Le Neve, hasn't seen the stone inscription himself, but only a manuscript version of it? If so, this suggests that Stanton was not just sending inscriptions that he had made himself, but that he was also passing on manuscript versions of monuments by other masons. We cannot resolve these questions definitively, but we can think about their impact on Le Neve's approach towards materiality. By leaving these marginal notes in the printed text rather than editing them out, Le Neve reminds readers that stone monuments are not 'originals', as Weever would have them. Rather, monuments are one stage through which a text might pass as it is inscribed (by hand and in stone), transcribed, and registered in print. *Monumenta Anglicana* allows its readers to experience this dynamic process of transmission and re-transmission, rather than conferring a sense of authority or stability on the texts it records.

Le Neve's transcribed inscriptions occupy an ambivalent relationship to the monuments that give his text its title. These monuments were often visually arresting, with heraldic devices and sculpted figures and objects, but none of this iconography and decoration is registered in *Monumenta Anglicana*. Beyond a very few passing references to the fabric out of which the tombs are made (one entry, for instance, records an epitaph '*On a black polish'd Marble on the Floor*' of St. Mary's, Warwick (1, 7)), Le Neve gives very little sense of these inscriptions as material items – perhaps because he had not seen many of them himself. Sometimes his text contains only a partial transcription of a particular monument. For instance, the inscription on Thomas Wagstaffe in *Monumenta Anglicana* is just one half of the original monument in St. Chad's, Bishop's Tachbrook, Warwickshire, which is a double memorial to Thomas and his wife, Dorothy Wagstaffe (Figures 7 and 8). In spite of the involvement of stonemasons and sculptors in its production, Le Neve's text often feels a long way removed from the monuments that inspire his project.

Figure 7. Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, 1, 149. Creative Commons license. Wellcome Trust.

Figure 8. Part of monument to Thomas Wagstaffe and Dorothy Wagstaffe, St. Chad's Church, Bishop's Tachbrook. Image copyright Jacqui Waldron.

Print in time

John Le Neve repeatedly reminds his readers that what they are reading is a printed text, and he reflects at length on the implications of the medium of print for his project. Towards the end of the preface to the first volume, he uses a conspicuous first-person pronoun to draw attention to the fact that he is not only the author but the publisher of this work, when he expresses an intention to publish two further volumes,

> *if the Gentlemen who relish this will please to subscribe for them (on the same Terms, viz. five Shillings the small Paper and Eight Shillings the large, each Volume) either with myself at the* Crown *and* Fan *in the* Old Bailey, *or* Mr. Henry Clements, *at the* Half Moon *in* St. Paul's Church-yard, London. (I, b r)

Publication by subscription, a kind of eighteenth-century crowd-funding, was not unusual in this period.[16] It was, however, quite unusual for an author to take on the responsibility for organising the subscription himself, rather than working through a bookseller or publisher. Keith Maslen notes that *Monumenta Anglicana*, which was produced by the eminent printer, William Bowyer, is 'the first example at the Bowyer Press of a retail-subscription edition printed for the author'.[17] Although he had the help of the well-known bookseller Henry Clements in collecting subscriptions and distributing the printed volumes, Le Neve's own name appears in Bowyer's account books against this title.[18] When he gives out his address to prospective subscribers, Le Neve's highlights his position as a London-based editor-publisher who transforms manuscript transcriptions of stone monuments into print, rather than an antiquarian collector who tours the country looking for scattered stone monuments.

In the hands of Le Neve the author-publisher, a collection of printed memorials becomes a thing that, in its capacity for growth, seems almost alive. This is registered particularly clearly in the pricing structure that Le Neve adopts for his project. Having charged a fixed price for the first two volumes of *Monumenta Anglicana*, Le Neve begins to charge by the printed sheet from the third volume onwards. He writes:

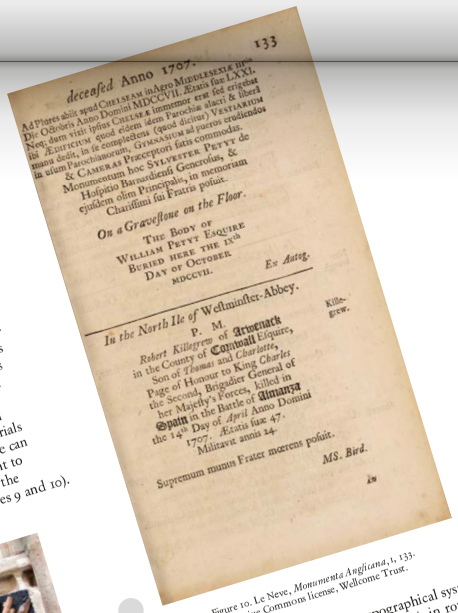
> *In a Collection of this kind, it is next to impossible to say when we have enough for a Volume; and consequently, as difficult to cast any large Number of* Inscriptions *exactly to a Sheet; for which Reason, if I ever publish any more Volumes of this sort, let the Number of Sheets be either more or less, they shall be sold at the Priæ of* 2d. *per Sheet the Small Paper, and* 3d. *per Sheet the Large; which Rate* (I hope) *will not be reckon'd extravagant; and those Gentlemen, who have diverted themselves, with making such Collections,* (I hope) *will own, in my Justification, that* (in so doing) *an Editor must be* (unavoidably) *at a much greater Charge than bare Paper and Print.* (II, a r)

Presumably his subscribers didn't find the rate extravagant, because for the fourth and fifth volumes he increased it to 5*d*. for small paper, 7*d*. for large (III, [A]3r). More significant than the exact figures for current purposes, however, is the sense that Le Neve creates here of the relationship between manuscript and print, and his own role as both editor and publisher in mediating that relationship. When he discusses the difficulty of casting off copy – that is, working out how many printed sheets will be needed to accommodate the available quantity of manuscript inscriptions – he highlights the inter-relatedness of the various media involved in a project like *Monumenta Anglicana*. He also calls attention to the flexibility and extensibility of the printed book. This is a format that can grow *ad infinitum*, courtesy of generous contributors around the country and the hard work of the editor. The rich repository of the country's churchyards combined with the endless supply of potential subjects (death never going out of fashion) means that, even if its subjects are dead, the books that contain their memorials go on living and growing.

16. Brian Findlay, 'Subscription publishing', in *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and H. R. Woudhuysen, <oxfordreference.com> [accessed 20 June 2020].

17. Maslen, *Printing House at Work*, p. 102.

18. Ibid., p. 102.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deceased Anno 1707.

Ad Pyres abiit apud CHELSEAM 10Mo MIDDLESEXIÆ die Die Octobris Anno Domini MDCCVII. Ætatis suæ LXXI. Neq; fuit vitæ ipsius CHELSEA immemor esse sed erigebat sibi ÆDIFICIUM quod eidem Item Parochiæ dicari & liberis suis Parochianorum, GYMNASIUM ad pauros erudiendos in usum Parochiæ hoc SYLVESTER PETYT de & CAMERAS Præceptori fatis commodas.
Monumentum hoc SYLVESTER PETYT de Hospitio Barnardiensi Generosus, & ejusdem olim Principalis, in memoriam Charissimi sui Fratris posuit.

On a Grave-stone on the Floor.

THE BODY OF
WILLIAM PETYT ESQUIRE
BURIED HERE THE IXth
DAY OF OCTOBER
MDCCVII. *Ex Autog.*

In the North Ile of Westminster-Abbey.

P. M.
Robert Killigrew of **Arrenack** in the County of **Cornwall** Esquire, Son of *Thomas* and *Charlotte*, Page of Honour to King *Charles* the Second, Brigadier General of her Majesty's Forces, killed in **Spain** in the Battle of **Almanza** the 14th Day of *April* Anno Domini 1707. *Ætatis suæ* 47. Militavit annis 24. Killigrew.

Supremum munus Frater mœrens posuit.

MS. Bird.

Figure 10. Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, I, 133.
Creative Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that Le Neve claims to '*have endeavoured to keep the Form of each* Inscription *as much as possibly I could, imagining that might render the Work somewhat more beautiful*' (I, a4v). Le Neve's text does look visually striking due to the variations in letterforms (roman, italic and black-letter) used on individual inscriptions. There is, however, no correspondence at all between the typography in Le Neve's text and the letterforms of the memorials on which, at first, they seem to be based – as we can see, for example, if we compare the monument to Robert Killigrew in Westminster Abbey with the version that we find in Le Neve's text (Figures 9 and 10).

Figure 9. Monument to Robert Killigrew, Westminster Abbey.
Copyright The Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

Instead, Le Neve develops his own typographical system for his printed inscriptions: most of the text is in roman type, with personal names in italics and place names in black-letter. Le Neve consistently preserves the lineation, but not the letterforms, of the original. It seems likely that this is because Le Neve is working from manuscripts, rather than monuments. The effect, however, is to reinforce a sense that the printed version of the text both stands apart from, and is also in constant dialogue with, the manuscript and inscribed stone versions. Instead of valorising stone as the original medium, and presenting manuscript and print as an imitation or attempted facsimile of it, Le Neve takes some pride in beautifying his printed pages without reference to the monuments towards which, through the medium of both print and manuscript, they nonetheless gesture.

22. 'obituary, n. and adj.' in *OED Online* <oed.com> [accessed 1 June 2020].

23. Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, 1, 48, 60, 79, 99, 125, 137, 138, 167.

between the two definitions that the *Oxford English Dictionary* offers for this word: the first, 'a register in which deaths, or obit days are recorded', and the second, 'a record or announcement of a death, esp. in a newspaper or similar publication [...] Also (formerly) the section of a newspaper in which deaths are announced (*obsolete*)'.[22] It comes closest to this final definition, though it refers to a section of a printed publication rather than a newspaper, and it predates *OED*'s first usage in this sense by more than two decades. As Le Neve conceives of it, then, the obituary is a secularised, printed version of a religious, manuscript practice. It is a textual repository in which the deaths of a community are registered in something close to real time. Le Neve's neologism signals that, in using the printed text in this way, he is doing something quite unprecedented.

The fact that the obituary archives the unmemorialised dead has clear commercial potential. If the eminent persons in Le Neve's obituary don't yet have monuments, who better than the masons who collaborate with him to erect them? Le Neve's text includes the inscriptions on Edward Stanton monuments from Norfolk, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Lancashire, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Hampshire – in addition to numerous monuments in unidentified places.[23] It amply demonstrates that Stanton was in demand the length and breadth of England. There is nothing as direct as an advertisement for Stanton's work in Le Neve's volume, but a commercially successful mason surely saw a potential market for future monuments among Le Neve's readers.

Le Neve was surely attracted to the obituary's commercial potential too. As a section of a work that records recent deaths, the obituary is perpetually extensible, the inevitability of death guaranteeing a regular supply of fresh copy. *Monumenta Anglicana* was not the first publication to exploit the facts of death in this way. Le Neve's earlier publication, *Lives and Characters of the Most Illustrious Persons, British and Foreign, who died in the Year 1711* (1712), was likewise designed as an annual register of the dead, compiled from 'Memoirs, Epitaphs, Monumental Inscriptions &c.' communicated by friends of the deceased and 'To be continued Yearly'.[24] Le Neve claims that *Lives and Characters* is a '*New Essay*, never before attempted,' but in fact the bookseller John Dunton had, some years previously, promised his readers 'The Lives and Deaths of the most eminent Persons that die every Month' in his periodical, *The Post-Angel*.[25] Although neither of these publications lasted long, they indicate a growing interest in and awareness of the commercial and cultural possibilities created by serial printed memorials.[26] 'Intended as a Specimen of a much larger WORK', as the title page to the first volume declares, *Monumenta Anglicana* was also designed to cash in on death's abundance.

To see the obituary as just a commercial phenomenon, however, is to miss its cultural significance. Le Neve's innovation expresses a kind of confidence in the capacity of print, as well as stone, to commemorate the dead. It demonstrates that the printed text can archive not just ancient history, but the unfolding present. It is collective, rather than individualistic, offering a snapshot of a culture at a particular moment in time. It points antiquarians towards the future, as well as the past.

Metamorphosis

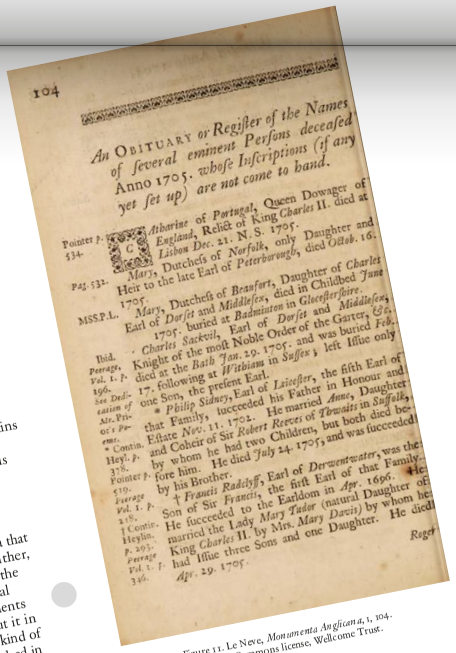
Le Neve's belief in the cultural value of printed memorials is at odds with other, rather more influential, contemporary commentators on commemorative practices. In a popular early essay from his hugely influential periodical, *The Spectator*, Joseph Addison sends Mr. Spectator – the periodical's fictional front-man – on a tour of the tombs in Westminster Abbey. Mr. Spectator observes:

> [W]hen I meet with the Grief of Parents upon a Tombstone, my Heart melts with Compassion; when I see the Tomb of the Parents themselves, I consider the Vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly

24. John Le Neve, *Lives and Characters of the Most Illustrious Persons, British and Foreign, who died in the Year 1711* (1712), pp. iii, vii.

25. John Dunton, *The Post Angel: or, Universal Entertainment*, 1 (January 1701), sig. B2r.

26. *The Post-Angel* ran from January 1701 until September 1702. Le Neve produced one further volume of *Lives and Characters*, for people who died in the year 1712, in 1714.



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An OBITUARY *or Register of the Names of several eminent Persons deceased Anno 1705. whose Inscriptions (if any yet set up) are not come to hand.*

Pointer p. 534. — *Catharine of Portugal*, Queen Dowager of *England*, Relict of King *Charles* II. died at *Lisbon Dec.* 21. N.S. 1705.

Pag. 532. — *Mary*, Dutchess of *Norfolk*, only Daughter and Heir to the late Earl of *Peterborough*, died *Octob.* 16. 1705.

MS.P.L. — *Mary*, Dutchess of *Beaufort*, Daughter of *Charles* Earl of *Dorset* and *Middlesex*, died in Childbed *June* 1705. buried at *Badminton* in *Gloucestershire*.

Ibid. Peerage, Vol. 1. p. 196. See Dedication of Mr. Pitt's Poems. — *Charles Sackvil*, Earl of *Dorset* and *Middlesex*, Knight of the most Noble Order of the Garter, &c. died at the *Bath Jan.* 29. 1705. and was buried *Feb.* 17. following at *Withiam* in *Sussex*; left Issue only one Son, the present Earl.

* Contin. Heyl. p. 378. Pointer p. 510. Peerage Vol. 1. p. 218. — * *Philip Sidney*, Earl of *Leicester*, the fifth Earl of that Family, succeeded his Father in Honour and Estate *Nov.* 11. 1702. He married *Anne*, Daughter and Coheir of Sir *Robert Reeves* of *Thwaites* in *Suffolk*, by whom he had two Children, but both died before him. He died *July* 24. 1705, and was succeeded by his Brother.

† Contin. Heylin. p. 203. Peerage Vol. 1. p. 346. — † *Francis Radclyff*, Earl of *Derwentwater*, was the Son of Sir *Francis*, the first Earl of that Family. He succeeded to the Earldom in *Apr.* 1696. He married the Lady *Mary Tudor* (natural Daughter of King *Charles* II. by Mrs. *Mary Davis*) by whom he had Issue three Sons and one Daughter. He died *Apr.* 29. 1705.

Roger

Figure 11. Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, 1, 104.
Creative Commons license, Wellcome Trust.

The method that Le Neve adopts to organise the inscriptions in his volume both reflects and enables the open-endedness of his project. Where earlier antiquarians like Weever had used place as a primary structural principle, Le Neve arranges his epitaphs in order of time. The title page of the first volume tells readers that it is 'Deduced into a Series of Time by way of | *ANNALS*'. The volume is divided up by year of death, running heads indicating that each section contains 'Inscriptions on Persons deceased | Anno. 1700', and so on. Le Neve's project joins other publications in this period that adopted an annalistic structure, including the journalist Abel Boyer's *History of the Reign of Queen Anne, Digested into Annals* (1703–1713), which was published each year throughout Anne's reign. These annalistic publications take seriously the idea that the printed text – produced speedily and easy to gather, compendiously, with other printed material – has the capacity to record events in something close to real time, whether those events are political developments or the deaths of individuals. As Daniel Defoe put it in an early issue of his periodical, *The Review*, the kind of punctual and serial print publication that flourished in the early decades of the eighteenth century is, in effect, 'Writing a History by Inches'.[19]

Le Neve's sense that the printed text might memorialise not only those people who already have a monument, but also those who are as yet un-memorialised, leads to one of his most striking textual and generic innovations. In the first volume of *Monumenta Anglicana*, each year's inscriptions end with a section bearing what was, in 1717, an unusual title: '*An* OBITUARY *or Register of the Names of several eminent Persons deceased* [...] *whose* Inscriptions *(if any yet set up) are not come to hand*' (Figure 11).

The primary meaning of obituary in Le Neve's time was not the one that we might most closely associate with it: that is, a brief biographical account of an individual, published shortly after his or her death. Death notices did appear in the periodical press in this period, but it wasn't until 1780, when it was adopted by the popular *Gentleman's Magazine* as the title of its death notice section, that the term 'obituary' became widely used.[20] Le Neve gestures towards an older meaning of this word when he uses it in *Monumenta Anglicana*: the obituary or obit book in a Roman Catholic church or religious house, which records dates of death in order that prayers for the soul of the departed might be offered on his or her anniversary.[21] Le Neve's obituary falls somewhere

19. Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the Affairs of FRANCE*, 35 (4 July 1704).

20. Elizabeth Barry, 'From Epitaph to Obituary: Death and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century British Culture,' *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 11 (2008), 259–275.

21. Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 329.

setting fire to the earth (the 'service'). Perhaps Le Neve thought this quotation especially apposite because it comes just after Phaëthon's epitaph:

HIC · SITVS · EST · PHAETHON · CVRRVS ·
AVRIGA · PATERNI

QVEM · SI · NON · TENVIT · MAGNIS ·
TAMEN · EXCIDIT · AVSIS

HERE PHAËTHON LIES: IN PHOEBUS'
CAR HE FARED,

AND THOUGH HE GREATLY FAILED,
MORE GREATLY DARED.[32]

In a project that highlights the textual instability that arises when epitaphs move between media, it seems entirely fitting that Le Neve seeks to associate his ambitious obituary with Phaëthon's doomed efforts. That he does so in an allusion that garbles the Latin original resonates – appropriately, if not deliberately – with his understanding that the act of textual transmission always also invites textual transformation.

No record of Le Neve's death survives, although he seems to have lived several decades after 1719, when the fifth and final volume of *Monumenta Anglicana* was published.[33] No monument marks his final resting place, but the epigraph on the title page of the first volume of *Monumenta Anglicana* could stand for Le Neve's epitaph as well. This, too, is a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from the very last verse of that work: '–- nec ignis, / Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas,' '[And now my work is done,] which neither the wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor the gnawing tooth of time shall ever be able to undo.'[34] Le Neve's text is an act of metamorphosis that turns stone and manuscript into printed text, but that also self-consciously registers the process of transformation. And, as in Ovid, the altered body/text, while often apparently frailer than the original, achieves longevity through its capacity to change.

32. Ovid, pp. 82–83.

33. Nicholas Doggett, 'Le Neve, John (b. 1679, d. in or before 1741), antiquary,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <oxfordhdnb.com> [accessed 20 June 2020].

34. Ovid, pp. 426–427.

27. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, 26 (30 March 1711).

28. Joseph Addison, *The Free-holder*, 38 (20 April 1716).

29. Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, *Edmund Curll: Bookseller* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 72.

follow: [...] When I read the several Dates of the Tombs, of some that dy'd Yesterday, and some six hundred Years ago, I consider that great Day when we shall all of us be Contemporaries, and make our Appearance together.[27]

Mr. Spectator's reflections depend on the material characteristics of stone. Stone's durability obliterates temporal distinctions between parents and children, youth and age, past, present and future. It figures forth eternity as it gives the impression, at least, of permanence. By contrast, and in another periodical essay, Addison condemns '*Grub-street* Biographers, who watch for the Death of a great Man, like so many Undertakers, on purpose to make a Penny of him'.[28] Here, Addison attacks the team of speed-writers working for the notorious bookseller Edmund Curll, who had published Le Neve's *Life and Characters* in 1712. Curll specialised in producing 'instant biographies' of the recently dead, often based on limited or spurious information.[29] *Monumenta Anglicana* wasn't published by Curll and it isn't a collection of biographies in the same vein as *Life and Characters*, but, with its serialised obituary of the recently dead, it could nonetheless be seen as part of the print-based, irreverent publication culture to which Addison so strenuously objected.

Le Neve, however, constructs the relationship between stone monuments and printed memorials differently from Addison. In the preface to volume two of *Monumenta Anglicana*, Le Neve notes that

> *When a Church extremely decay'd, or out of Repair, by the mere Injury of Time, shall, by the Zeal of the Parishioners, or by any other Assistance, be pulled down and rebuilt; there has been no Care, or Thought of re-erecting any Monuments which must of Necessity then come down: But the Marble is thrown in Heaps in a Corner, as the Bones into a Charnel-House … [T]o prove the Matter of Fact, I have, now lying by me, six Sheets of Inscriptions, taken in the Year 1680, in the Church of St.* Clements Danes, *in which Year, we are told, this Church was taken down, and rebuilt at the Charge of the Parishioners, and some others; but, let any body find the Tombs, or any Footsteps of them, if they can; nay, farther, I very much question, whether there be so much as another Copy of them now in being?* (II, [A] 1v–2f)

Contrary to Addison's assertion that, because of its durability, stone figures forth eternity, Le Neve emphasises its vulnerability. Likening monuments that have been cast aside to skeletons in a charnel house, he collapses the apparent distinction between monuments that endure, and corpses that decay. Le Neve's vivid movement into the first person ('I have, now lying by me …') also highlights the fragility of manuscript as a medium. A single copy of six sheets (perhaps there is a sense of potential fragmentation implicit in their separateness?) offers little security against loss. Like other antiquarians before him, then, Le Neve highlights the protective function of printing stone inscriptions. John Weever, sceptical of the growing power of puritans in his own time, presents his text, *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, as an antidote to earlier iconoclasts who left monuments 'broken downe, and vtterly almost all ruinated'.[30] In Le Neve's time, the building of fifty 'Queen Anne' churches presented a different kind of threat to ancient monuments. Nonetheless, there is a similar belief in both texts that print, for all its apparent ephemerality, has preservative qualities.

What we see in *Monumenta Anglicana*, however, is the conviction that print is not only preservative, but also transformative. Le Neve makes a number of arresting allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as he explores this idea. Noting that his obituary can never record all of the deaths that take place in any given year, he asserts that '*yet with all its Faults, I believe I may be so bold as to say* Aliquisq; Malo foret [sic.] Usus in illo' (I, b1f). The Latin here is a mangled quotation from Book II of Ovid's work, 'aliquisque malo fuit usus in illo': 'and so even in that disaster was there some service'.[31] In Ovid, this line follows the death of Phaëthon, son of the sun god, Phoebus, who crashed his father's chariot and so put out the sun for a day (the 'disaster' to which Le Neve's quotation refers), but gave another form of light by

30. Weever, 83'.

31. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, rev. by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, XLII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), pp. 82–83.