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Bullard, R. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9484-9579>
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Rebecca Bullard

Paper Wraps Stone: Monumental Manuscript and Printed Epitaphs in Eighteenth- Century England

John Le Nève (1679–1741), an English antiquarian who flourished in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, is best known for *Fair Ecclesiae Anglicanae*. This hefty collection of biographies of clergymen first published in 1716, became the foundation of a vast, multigenerational biographical project that next continues to the present day. By contrast, Le Nève's volumes of transcribed funeral monuments published between 1717 and 1719, *Monumenta Anglicana*, addresses the title of the new journal *Inscriptiones*, “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 Nève adopts in *Monumenta Anglicana* are innovative in at least three ways. First, this text takes a familiar antiquarian practice—de transcription and publication of epitaphs—but reconfigures it to focus on modern, rather than ancient, monuments. The first volume contains transcriptions of covers set up from 1700–1715; subsequent volumes cover the period from 1700–1718. Second, it comes a new item to the recently dead in one place: the obituary. Finally, it offers an early example of an unusual publishing practice: the subscription list and distribution of copies is the author, rather than a bookseller. These innovations are all inter-related aspects of Le Nève's self-consciousness towards the maturity of text.



Figure 1. John Le Nève, *Monumenta Anglicana*, vol. 1 (1717), title page. Courtesy 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 further reformed into another (a printed text). In doing so, it offers an extended meditation on what it means to commemorate the dead not just in stone, but also in print. Furthermore, emphasizing the essential difference between the media with which his text engages, Le Nève asks his readers to consider them in relation to one another. It 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, Le Nève's volumes, William Camden's *Rerum Regiarum Nobilissimarum* (1608) and Henry Holland's *Monumenta Episcopalia* (1609) and Henry Holland's *Monumenta Episcopalia* (1609) take readers on tour of the dioceses of England and Wales, respectively. These little texts barely register in the balance of the monumental works of the period, but they are important in the context of the early eighteenth century. In the early years of the eighteenth century, according to Graham Paddy, Weever's *Epitaphs* (1659) is a 900-page folio of transcribed epitaphs from parish churches and cathedral ruins in the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, London and Norwich. Weever's text became, according to Graham Paddy, the most frequently mentioned antiquarian work of the seventeenth century. In the early years of the eighteenth century, Le Nève goes on to claim that he is pursuing the same text as John Weever, “tho’ after a Method somewhat different from him.”¹

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. Now content to reproduce epitaphs from earlier publications (he does not mention Camden or Holland's store 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

Just as time obliterated sepulchres, so antiquarian pursuits left their mark on Weever: the delightful tone of this passage registers the pressure of an unfriendly, or obfuscated, Sepulchre, in this or that parish Church, and not found to be. Besides I have been taken from their diocesan Churches by the Churchwardens of the parish, and has suffered to write the Epitaphs, or to take view of the Monuments as I much desired.

More positively, what we see at work here is a strong sense of connection between the author and the ancient past. Weever did call on learned friends for help in gathering material—he notes in particular the assistance offered to him by eminent antiquarians Robert Cotton, Henry Spelman, and John Selden—the authority for this volume derives from the fact that Weever has stood before the place of readers down the centuries and the narrator who first inscribed them.

The importance that Weever ascribes to place and physical presence is reiterated in the structure of his text. *A True and Faithfull Relation of the Buriall Monuments* is divided into parts, situations, epitaphs in the context of the places, buildings, families, and local customs that help to make sense of them. Indeed, Weever warns that

I may perhaps be found fault withall because I doe not chronologically and according as Churches stand, neere or further remote in one and the same Church I have put in this my booke but slip sometime from one side of a County to another before I complete an Epitaph.²

1. John Le Nève, *Monumenta Anglicana*, vol. 1 (1717), title page. 2. John Le Nève, *Monumenta Anglicana*, vol. 1 (1717), title page. 3. John Le Nève, *Monumenta Anglicana*, vol. 1 (1717), title page.

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 obelisked Sepulchres, in this or that parish Church, and not found to be. Besides I have been taken from their diocesan Churches by the Churchwardens of the parish, and has suffered to write the Epitaphs, or to take view of the Monuments as I much desired.

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4. John Weever, *A True and Faithfull Relation of the Buriall Monuments*, vol. 1 (1659), title page. 5. John Weever, *A True and Faithfull Relation of the Buriall Monuments*, vol. 1 (1659), title page. 6. Weever, *op. cit.*

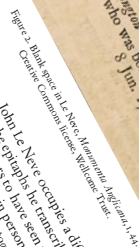


Figure 2. Blank space in Le Neve's *Momments Aggiunti*, 1447. The blank space is a common feature in the manuscript, and is often used to indicate a person's epitaph or a person's name.

(Figure 3)

time' (4, 6-7). Enclosed are several personal and anecdotal epistles, each of which person who sent it: *MS. B.12.1.1.1*. What we see here is not just Le Neve's collaborative nature of his project (which is characteristic of antiquarians before him, including Camden and Wever) but also the self-conscious

location of many of the epigraphs is an omission noted by a dash or blank space on Jobl Wecker, so careful to situate monuments in their particular geographical and historical contexts that their particular geographical and chorographical locations must have been turning in the gate.

Figure 3. Le Nerve Monumento Angélica, t. bas
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Figure 3. Le Neve Monumenta Anglica, a base Creative Commons license, Welcome Trust.

Weever's final metaphor for the sum of my writing, non-standard spelling, and **incription** that he valorizes, i.e. Weever's hand, makes an easy allowance for the medieval manuscript **in** **incription** as it moves between media. Errors might be the fault of some carvers and manuscript transcribers.

...the manuscript was written in the original of any **fact**...
(01.12.12)
...to encourage that I wrote the Latin in the
...**fact**...
...the Orthographic of the old English
...by the copying of
...of the original
...of the original
...of the original

[illegible]

nature of its end product. *Monument Augustina* clearly puns on the fact that some *incertion*, or transcriptional error, played a role in its creation. Its turn of phrase invites its readers to make a comparison between those states, and the implications so Le Nève engages in the textual ineligibility of the original.

correction might be passed into print through the care of future correspondents (I have not come across any of *Monument Augustina* bearing manuscript variations or filled-in missing place names but like Le Nève, in its contributions from future researchers there is no strong sense how of a perfect original and imperfect paper copies, but rather an impression that all text are marked through the work, and perhaps errors, of fallible creators.

Sometimes Le Nève communicates the textual ineligibility of the act of transcription through intriguing and alluring. The phrase 'sic in MS.' for instance, engaged in the margin of an *incertion*, seemed to suggest that the manuscript was set to Le Nève by the original scribe. Broughton in *Brachion* (Figure 4b)

[illegible]

Figure 4. Le Neve, *Monumenta Anglicana*, 1, 135.
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setting fire to the earth (the 'service'). Perhaps Le Neve thought this quotation especially apposite because it comes just after Phaëthon's epiphany:

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 epiphihs move between media, it seems entirely fitting that Le Neve seeks to associate his ambitious obituary with Phlaethon's doomed efforts. That he does so in an allusion that gables 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 Née's* death survives, although he seems to have lived several decades after 1719, when the fifth and final volume of *Memoriae Anglicanae* was published.¹¹ No monument marks his final resting place, but the engraving on the title page of the last volume of *Memoriae Anglicanae* could stand for *Le Née's* epitaph as well. This, too, is a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from the very last verses of that work: *... nec igitur / Nec potent ferre, nec celsa abolvere / ...* [and now my time is done, my gathering to the world of Jove, not for my sword, nor the glowing torch of Jove, nor yet be able to undo, ...] *Le Née's* text is of time shall never be able to undo, ... *Le Née'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 of text, while often apparently fairer than the original, attests longevity through its capacity to change.

32. Ovid, pp. 82-83.

33. Nicholas Doggett, 'Le Nee, John (b. 1675)', oxforddnb.com [accessed 20 June 2020].

34. Oxid, pp. 426-427.

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography[illegible][illegible][illegible]

30. Weaver, KJ.

31. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, rev. by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, XII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 82–83.

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

28. Joseph Addison, *The Freeholder*, 35 (20 April 1716).

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

[illegible]

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

When a Church extremely decayed, or out of repair, by the mere injury of Time, shall, by the Zeal of the Parsonage, or by any other Assistants be pulled down and rebuilt, there has been no Cure, or Thought of erecting any Monument to show ... [It] to prove come again: but the Marble is thrown ... [The] bones, as the Bones are now lying by me six Shets Corner, of the Port, I have, now found by me, the Church the Mother of Paul, in the Year 1680, in the Church of Inscriptions, taken in the Year 1680, in the Church of St. Clements Dames, in which Year, we are told, this Church was taken down, and rebuilt at the Charge of