Iconographic Representations of Mortality and Resurrection in 17th-Century Gloucestershire

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Research into the representation of death and resurrection on gravestones has given relatively little attention to the place of the death's head and cherub on English monuments in church and churchyard, with most enquiries focusing upon Scotland and New England. Gaps in the English evidence caused by decay and destruction have encouraged the imposition of a stylistic chronology established at a distance from the material under study. This paper considers the configuration of symbols of mortality and resurrection on the memorials of Gloucestershire. It seeks to uncover reasons for their use, interpreting each monument in terms of its individual design and positioning. It also challenges the established chronological progression from death's head to cherub and the presumption that images of mortality and resurrection were presented in deliberate contrast with each other.

Key words: Commemoration, Mortality, Resurrection, Symbolism, Seventeenth-Century, Gloucestershire.

Introduction

The issue of whether symbols surviving in the archaeological record can document religious change by linking iconography and thought patterns was raised by Deetz and Dethlefsen in their classic study of the gravestones of Colonial New England. They alleged a progression from death's head, through cherub to urn and willow motifs within the iconography of memorials:

> *'The earliest of the three is a winged death's head, with blank eyes and a grinning visage. Earlier versions are quite ornate, but as time passes, they become less elaborate. Sometime during the eighteenth century — the time varies according to location — the grim death's head designs are replaced, more or less quickly, by winged cherubs. This design also goes through a gradual simplification of form with time. By the late 1700's or early 1800's, again depending on where you are observing, the cherubs are replaced by stones decorated with a willow tree overhanging a pedestaled urn.'*
>
> (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1967, 29)

This sequence was linked to shifts in religious thought, which in turn reflected feelings of optimism or pessimism among the population as a whole. As Hall (1976) has pointed out, Deetz and Dethlefsen sought to draw parallels between the material data and broad generalisations derived from the historical records (Hall 2000). Orthodox Puritanism existed in 17th - century New England and so, they implied, must have been linked to contemporary material culture.

Hall has suggested that we should regard the iconography of the 17th - century memorial as a component of a western moral system, a salve to worldly indulgence and an admonition of earthly vanities rather than a feature of a specific religious creed (Hall 2000, 53). Like Deetz and Dethlefsen, this is a generalising explanation that neglects the immediate context of each memorial. Religion cannot be regarded as the only determinant of funerary iconography, and the unique circumstances in which a memorial was commissioned are crucial for their proper elucidation. The interpretation of funerary iconography should avoid extremes of ahistoricism and textual determinism, and incorporate all relevant aspects from its social and economic context to its immediate situation within the church.

Existing studies of post-medieval funerary iconography, such as those published over recent years in the *Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies,* emphasise the message which the memorial might convey to the observer at face value rather than the extent to which its significance was dependant upon the situation of the individual erecting it. Allan Ludwig claimed that the inhabitants of colonial New England felt a collective need to express the religious sentiments through a doctrinally neutral medium (Ludwig 1966, 18). Within the iconophobic culture which he identified in late 17th -century Massachusetts, he regarded commemorative imagery as offering a way to confront the mysterious and intangible world beyond the grave. Nelson and Hume-George suggested that the skull and the cherub were a means of channelling anguish, bitterness and rage into a socially acceptable substitute (Hume George and Nelson 1981, 636). Concentrating upon the symbolic functions of the images, and highlighting their relationship to contemporary religious conflict, both studies attribute a singular meaning to the symbols and fail to acknowledge the

role of those who erected the memorials in the interpretative process. Humanity is removed from the equation; symbols become aesthetic representatives of the society under scrutiny. This aestheticism persists within more recent studies, such as that of Finch (2000). Unlike Ludwig, he acknowledges that changes in ideology and belief cannot simply be read from material culture. However, his unqualified decision to group death's heads and cherubs within the same 'iconographic vocabulary' also denies the potential for personalised interpretation, subsuming the imagery under a broad mantle of post-Reformation iconography (Finch 2000, 137-9).

Giving meaning to symbols through regional and local study

Archaeology should consider material culture in terms of the individual experiences forged in its creation and perception, as well as through preconceived categories based on acknowledged social and economic processes. With regard to memorials, local studies should focus upon the immediate context of the church, striving to understand each act of commemoration by examining the iconographic make up of each memorial, its relationship to other aspects of the church and to other examples within the region. Existing general investigations of early modern commemoration, such as by Llewellyn (1991, 2000), Houlbrooke (1999) and Gittings (1984) have used examples from across the country in illustration of their arguments. More localised studies have been carried out by Tarlow (1999), Parker-Pearson (1999) and Finch (2000), highlighting the potential for particularised investigation of and thus an insight into individual attitudes to death as well as illustrate generalised socio-economic arguments. However, little local and regional study has been carried out in England, leading to the acceptance of generalised interpretations of iconographic patterns which might not be borne out across the country as a whole.

The following analysis centres on the iconography of commemoration in Gloucestershire, focusing upon the relationship between so-called 'mortality' and 'resurrection' symbolism during its florescence in the 1600s. The terms are somewhat misleading when applied to skulls and *putti* featured on monuments of the 17th and 18th centuries, belying the iconographical bonds between the motifs, and suggesting that they stand in opposition to each other. To the modern imagination, 'mortality' implies darkness and decay, intimating a pessimism which researchers such as Deetz and Dethlefsen (1967) have associated with predestination theology. Resurrection calls to mind hopeful images of light and transition. These were not necessarily the reactions of the observer at the time; as Hume-George and Nelson (1981, 640) have asserted, there may be hope in the grin of a skull as well as fear. An ambiguity of meaning is inherent within symbolic iconography. An image might be viewed by many individuals from a variety of backgrounds over time and as such never acquires a definitive meaning. However, this should not prevent the researcher from endeavouring to recreate these interpretative contexts in

Fig 1 Mortality symbolism surmounting the tomb of Richard Pate, 1580, Gloucester Cathedral; photograph, Kirsty Owen

Fig 2 Flamboyant imagery on an early 18th - century table tomb, Elmore; photograph, Kirsty Owen

Fig 3 A memorial to James Lennox Dutton Esq. in the church of St Mary Magdalene, Sherborne (c, 1791); photograph, Kirsty Owen

order to gain an idea of the interactions between viewer, image and context at specific points in time.

Iconographic bones and angels are present in medieval Gloucestershire; the former may be seen in the cadaver tombs of Dursley and Tewkesbury while the latter cradle the heads of the Gloucestershire's nobility. Inscriptions which allude to resurrection emerge in the 1570s, though corresponding iconographical images do not appear until the early 1600s. This is possibly due to the increased controversy associated with renderings of angels following the reforms of the 16th century. The doctrinal relationships of mortality symbolism were comparatively muted; thus it is unsurprising that the earliest iconographical image of death is featured on a late 16th - century memorial from Gloucester Cathedral, that of Richard Pate (Fig 1). This monument is surmounted by a skull with a bone clasped between its teeth and a skeleton draped in a shroud. Some of the most striking iconographical references to decay and rebirth come from the 18th century. A famed flamboyant table tomb at Elmore dates to around 1707 and features allegorical images of Death, Time and angels (Fig 2). A monument to James Lennox Dutton Esq. and Jane his second wife (d 1791) carries the mortality tradition within the church into the late eighteenth century, depicting a starkly realistic Death trampled under the foot of an angel (Fig 3).

Parker-Pearson (2000, 47) and Houlbrooke (1999, 174) have claimed that the 18th century witnessed a gradual distancing of commemoration from the reality of death, as metaphors relating to sleep, rest and peace became increasingly popular. Houlbrooke highlights the 'romantic' nature of the monumental death, noting an increasing preference for discrete text based memorials, and labelling such monuments as curiosities (Houlbrooke 1999, 195). This interest in an overarching hypothesis concerning 'decency' neglects difficult imagery and allows the neatness of historical categorisation to override the particular circumstances of individual cases. It is, moreover, built upon a relatively small sample derived from a number of locations.

So-called images of mortality and resurrection appear to have flourished in lieu of the intercessory memorials discredited by the official admonition of Purgatory in the 16th century. However, they cannot be linked to a specific time period or historically documented phase of religious thinking. Therefore the nature of funerary iconography in 17th - century Gloucestershire will be first considered within its own immediate stylistic, spatial and regional context; only then will it be discussed within the national historical and archaeological framework.

The sample studied and the survival of examples

This study incorporates data from 274 memorials dating from between 1600-1700, extracted from a broader survey of the monuments of Gloucestershire c, 1350-1700. The sample was derived from 91 churches across the four distinct

geographical regions of the county; 48 in the Cotswold Hills, 37 in the Vale of Gloucestershire, three in the City of Gloucester and seven in the Forest of Dean. Of these, 86 featured iconographical and textual allusions to mortality which might be considered relevant to this study. Four types of monument were analysed; stone effigies, brasses, wall mounted stones and table tombs. Effigies dominated the sample until the 1640s, whereupon smaller wall mounted memorials become more numerous. During the 1680s and 1690s the volume of extramural commemoration began to rival the number of monuments inside the church. Ledger slabs and gravestones were omitted from the study on the basis that the types of memorial included were sufficient to show how commemorative trends moved from individual and lavish effigy-based tombs to numerous plain memorials through the course of the 1700s. Also, the sheer volume of surviving slabs and gravestones from the closing decades of the 1600s would have weighted the sample too heavily and detracted from any patterns evident within the earlier material.

In spite of the exclusion of certain forms, the dates of monuments included within the sample remained weighted towards the later 17th century. The most quoted reason for this is the perceived pervasiveness of Civil War iconoclasm. Cromwell and the Parliamentarian army have traditionally been held responsible for the surviving evidence of iconoclastic attacks on churches. As Aston (1988, 67) has noted, Victorian ecclesiologists are largely to blame for this confusion. She asserts that they confused the evidence for iconoclasm incited by the two Cromwells, Thomas and Oliver. As such, it suited them to play down the dislocations of the 16th - century reformations and so to relate their revivalist endeavours to the Laudian beautification of the 1630s (Aston 1988, 67). In fact, Victorian restoration and subsequent phases of interior modification may have done as much damage as the 17th - century iconoclasts.

The ordinances of the 1640s were not specifically aimed at memorials. However, some damage was undoubtedly done to church monuments by those zealously devoted to their cause. Elsewhere in the country there is evidence that memorials were targeted as representatives of the enemy. Iconoclasm could thus be a means of venting frustration in the absence of a real adversary:

> *'... both which statua were erected at the front of the entrance into the Quire. These aesthetic rebells as if they would not have so much of the militia to remaine with the King, as the bare images and representation of a sword by his side they breake off the swords from the sides of both statuas: they breake the crosse from off the Globe, in the hand of the statua of our gracious sovereign now living, and with their swords hacked and hewed the crown on the head of it, swearing, They would bring him back to parliament.'*
>
> (Ryves 1648, 233)

Much damage may have been done by Civil War soldiers in combat or out of boredom. Bullet holes around the west door of St. Mary's Church in Berkeley allegedly date to the 1640s. Few battles were fought in Gloucestershire, but control of the county was bitterly contested; it contained a number of key ports and trade routes. Once emptied of marksmen, churches might be turned into prisons, hospitals, storehouses or stables by either side (Phillips 1973, 198). Documents detailing the extent of iconoclastic attacks on churches in the 1640s doubtless exaggerated the extent of the damage. The accounts of William Dowsing and Richard Culmer may have inflated the number of monuments destroyed in order to embellish their own reputations. Conversely, Ryves' *Mercurius Rusticus* magnified the extent of parliamentary damage in order to present their treason as a rebellion against God and King:

> *'Had not the barbarous inhumane impitie, of these schismaticks and rebells shewed the contrary, we could not have imagined that anything but the like pieitie that have inshrined them, or a resurrection should ever have disturbed the venerable, yet not Popish reliques. But these monsters of men to whom nothing is sacred did not stick to prophane and violate these cabinets of the dead and so scatter their bones all over the pavement of the church.'*
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> (Ryves, 1648, 232)

In his study of the monuments of Norfolk, Jonathan Finch came to the conclusion that damage to monuments in the 1640s was not as substantial as a cursory glance at the historical record might suggest (Finch 2000, 126). William Dowsing's journal records the alleged extent of destruction within the county and its thoroughness may have led some to blame material damaged in the 16th and 19th centuries on him. The archaeological evidence is much more ambiguous. Effigies seem to have been the most popular monuments in Gloucestershire between 1600 and 1640. They dominate the sample and thus feature the bulk of allusions to both resurrection and mortality. Approximately 55% of surviving monuments erected between 1600 and 1640 were stone effigies. This drops dramatically to less than 1% in the 1640s (Fig 4), seemingly suggesting a link to the Civil War. The picture of survival in the 1640s which emerges from his material is very uneven, suggesting that monuments had differing chances of survival depending upon where in the county they were situated. This in turn related to the degree of intrusion achieved by the commissioners, the volatility of the religious climate and the consequent willingness of the local population to cooperate. Reactions to reform could thus be highly localised. Recently historians of Gloucestershire, such as Caroline Litzenberger, have suggested that the wealthy residents of the county in the 16th and 17th centuries were overwhelmingly pragmatic with regard to the implementation of official policy

(Litzenberger 1989, 41-3). A few individuals stand out as either devoutly Catholic or zealously Protestant, but overall conformity was favoured over conflict. Effigies creep back into the sample in the 1650s, once the excesses of war and iconoclastic activity had ceased. However, the prominence of the image was gradually superseded by inscribed texts, a consequence of Protestant doctrine which allowed for economical designs and so the inclusion of a wider sample of the population in commemoration.

Finch (2000, 111) has drawn attention to the link between commemoration and social status. The ability to create a permanent testament to the wealth, status and piety of an individual within the public space reflected favourably upon their living descendants within the congregation. The continuing dominance of that family was legitimised through the antiquity of their lineage and the perpetual bond between piety, wealth and power which was displayed in the devout posture or epitaph of the memorial. The increased numbers of smaller and less elaborate monuments in the late 17th century is perhaps evidence that the connection between public display and the augmentation of social position was being picked up by parishioners further down the economic ladder. Trades which suggest a lifestyle apart from the landed gentry are stated in epitaphs upon a number of wall-mounted and extramural memorials, such as that of Thomas Pierce, a clockmaker whose table tomb stands in Berkeley churchyard, and the dynasty of Phillimore clothiers buried at Cam. In 1631 John Weever asserted that

'sepulchures should be made according to the qualitie and degree of the person deceased, that by the tomb every one might bee discerned of what rank hee was living'

(2000, 110).

The fact that Weever (1631, 23) and other commentators such as Thomas Fuller (1642, 188) felt the need to codify this statement suggests that not everyone was adhering to it. Increasing numbers of wall-mounted and extramural monuments may indicate a desire to assert one's identity publicly among mercantile and craft workers, endowing permanence to otherwise ephemeral names and achievements. As commemoration diversified, it also became increasingly affordable, providing an increased number of individuals with the opportunity to express their identity and so their beliefs about life and death within the public arena.

Allusions to resurrection and mortality

The iconography of resurrection and mortality is integral to the constitution of the post-reformation memorial throughout the 17th century. Allusions to mortality are consistently more popular than references to resurrection and immortality, making up almost the entire sample in the first half of the century. In the aftermath of the Reformation, it is possible that images of Death were perceived to be less problematic than cherubs and angels. They made no presumptions with regard to the afterlife and thus were not

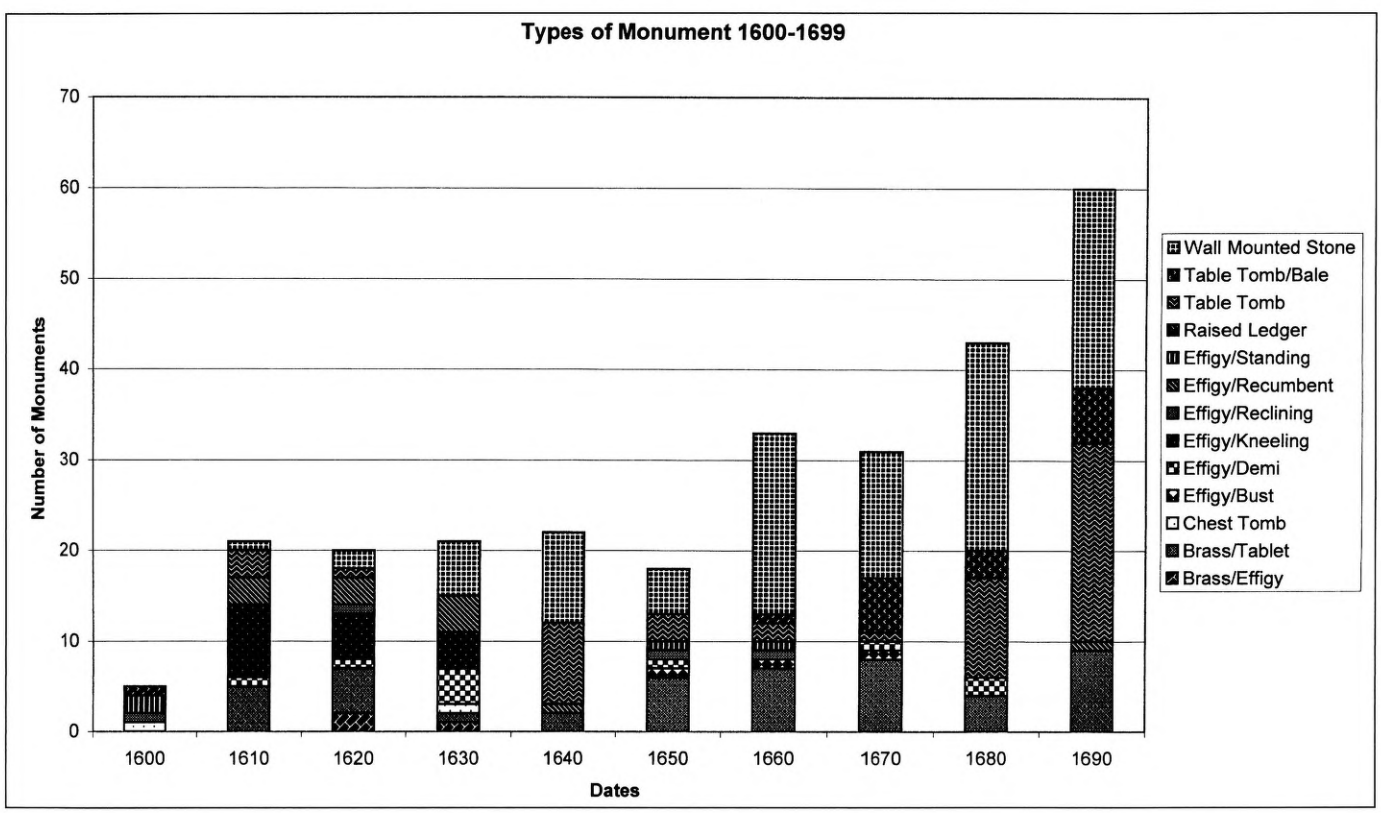

Fig 4 Types of monument recorded between 1600 and 1699 in the county of Gloucestershire; photograph, Kirsty Owen

as open to misinterpretation. Depictions of skulls and skeletons were grounded in mortality, and bore no idolatrous connotations. Allegorical representations of Death with a dart and Time with his scythe feature on Thomas Throkmarton's monument at Tortworth (c 1607) (Fig 5) and the Machen memorial in Gloucester Cathedral (c 1615) (Fig 6) These figures are almost theatrical, seeming to reference contemporary ballads such as *Lo Here I Vaunce with Speare and Shield*:

> *'Loe here I vaunce, with speare and shield,*
> *To warche my pray, to spoyle, to kill;*
> *By day, by night, on sea, one land, noe tyme I stay;*
> *But toyling still, my force I try, to worcke the will of ruling Jove;*
> *With deathfull dart, eache hart I heave, though hard as flint.'*
>
> (Anon 1579 [1920], 257)

In spite of its anthropomorphism, Death does not present a particularly threatening aspect on any of these monuments. Its image is marginalised by the central drama of privileged life which it frames. The effigies are centralised, constituting the principal focus of the memorial. Images of mortality are literally marginalised, rendered decorative and superfluous rather than threatening and admonitory.

Thomas Throkmarton's memorial mixes its allegorical image of Time with arms. The entire scheme is surmounted by a large heraldic display. This implies a triumph of personal achievement over the anonymity of death, perpetuated through worldly fortune grounded in illustrious lineage. The monument mirrors Time with an allegorical angel. Considering the lack of other references to resurrection in the first decade of the seventeenth century this seems a rather audacious reference. However, its presence is decorative, balancing allegorical Time on the opposite side of the inscription. Its presence might also be allied to the eye-catching display of arms above the mural, implying the perpetuity of glorious memory in this life and the next, Worldly Achievement and Resurrection are rendered together in lavish marble, further betraying the subservience of time to the perpetuation of personal achievement.

The Throkmarton memorials dominate the south chapel at Tortworth. They are behind iron railings and so were intended to be viewed by the congregation at a distance. The particular iconographic scheme of the monuments thus is naturally subordinated to its more prominent components: the effigy and the arms. Iconographic mortality is subsidiary to the link between individual achievement and its contribution to perpetuation of familial dominance. The Bower monument at Gloucester Cathedral laments that *'vayne vanitie, all is but vayne'*. However, this statement is undermined by the fact that its two skulls and '*memento mori*' inscription are marginalised by the painted effigies of John and Ann Bower and images of their '*nyne sonnes and seaven daughters*'. Death surmounts the monument, but it is the coloured images of Life which hold the attention of the viewer. The capitalised names of John and Ann are each placed next to a skull, perhaps intended to signify the fate of each individual. The essential message of this monument seems to be that each person is fated to die, but that their name may not perish with them provided they leave a strong legacy. Death is ever present, but ultimately trumped by the perpetuity of family.

In the 1640s, familial representations ceased to be the central focus of memorials, replaced by the inscribed descent of wall-mounted stones, brass tablets and table tombs. The physical and expressive marginalisation of mortality and resurrection imagery continues through what Finch (2000, 37) has described as '*abbreviated symbolic iconography*'. This is typified by the depiction of skulls, which may be winged or bare, and *putti*. Contrary to the evolutionary system identified by Deetz and Dethlefsen in New England, there is no evidence of the evolution of one type into another in Gloucestershire, and thus no correlation with a prevalent devotional system. From the middle of the 17th century, the two types of imagery often appear together on the same monuments. Examples include a stone to Jane Fox (d 1657) at St Nicholas in Gloucester, which features a winged *putto* at the base and a skull at the top (Fig 7). This lack of

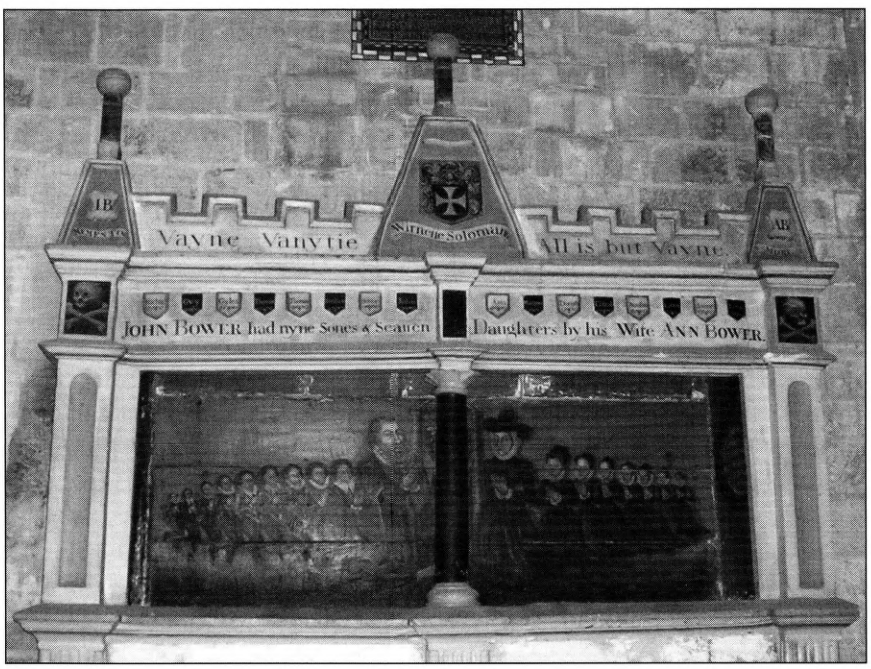

Fig 5 The Bower memorial, c, 1615, Gloucester Cathedral; photograph, Kirsty Owen

Fig 6 Thomas Throkmarton's monument, c 1607, Tortworth; photograph, Kirsty Owen

accordance between funerary iconography and a historically attested religious system has also been noted by Finch (2000, 38-9) in Norfolk. He found skulls and cherubs to be present on almost every monument in the 17th century. The first skull to appear in his sample dates to c 1617 and is depicted on a wall mounted memorial to Phillip Russell Esq. From the 1640s he notes skulls and jumbles of charnel at the base of memorials were habitually twinned with cherubs in order to contrast the fate of the body with that of the soul. Skulls and *putti* seem an unlikely pairing, yet in the context of Christian iconography they are intimately related. Death and decay are necessary preludes to resurrection and salvation (Cohen 1974, 170-5). The skull and the cherub are allied in the constitution of the Christian life cycle. The intimacy of this relationship is illustrated by an epitaph on the memorial of Job Yate at Rodmarton (d1667):

'Trust not the world remember deth and often think of Hell
Think often on the great reward for those that do live well
Repent amend then trust in Christ
So thou in peace shall dye
And rest in bliss and rise with ioy
And raine eternally.'

The tone and progression of this text illustrates the complete world-view of post-Reformation Christianity. The mortal world, its closeness to death and the threat of damnation are linked within the same sentence. The text then proceeds through the act of redemption in Christ to the joyful act of resurrection. The joining of skulls and cherubs with a description of the life of the deceased appears to reflect this creed. However, the relationship between these forms of expression in Gloucestershire's commemorative *schema* is neither regular nor predictable enough to justify the derivation of a link between funerary iconography, Protestant doctrine and the religious sentiments of the deceased and their kin.

Death's heads and cherubs are not always coincident on the wall monuments of 17th -century Gloucestershire. Between 1640 and 1700, approximately 37% of monuments within the sample feature some iconographic allusion to mortality, whilst 49% intimate resurrection (Fig 8). It is clear from the chart that fewer numbers of memorials bear both forms of iconography. A total of 37 monuments have allusions to both resurrection and mortality, whilst 68 feature either one type or the other. The decision to incorporate either a skull or a *putto* was a function of the greater context of the memorial, some elements of which may be visible within the historical record. It is injudicious to draw explicit connections between individual works of art and analysed socio-economic trends, since a variety of other factors might influence their constitution. However, the presence of spikes in the graph of mortality iconography in the 1630s and 1660s invites a link to outbreaks of plague

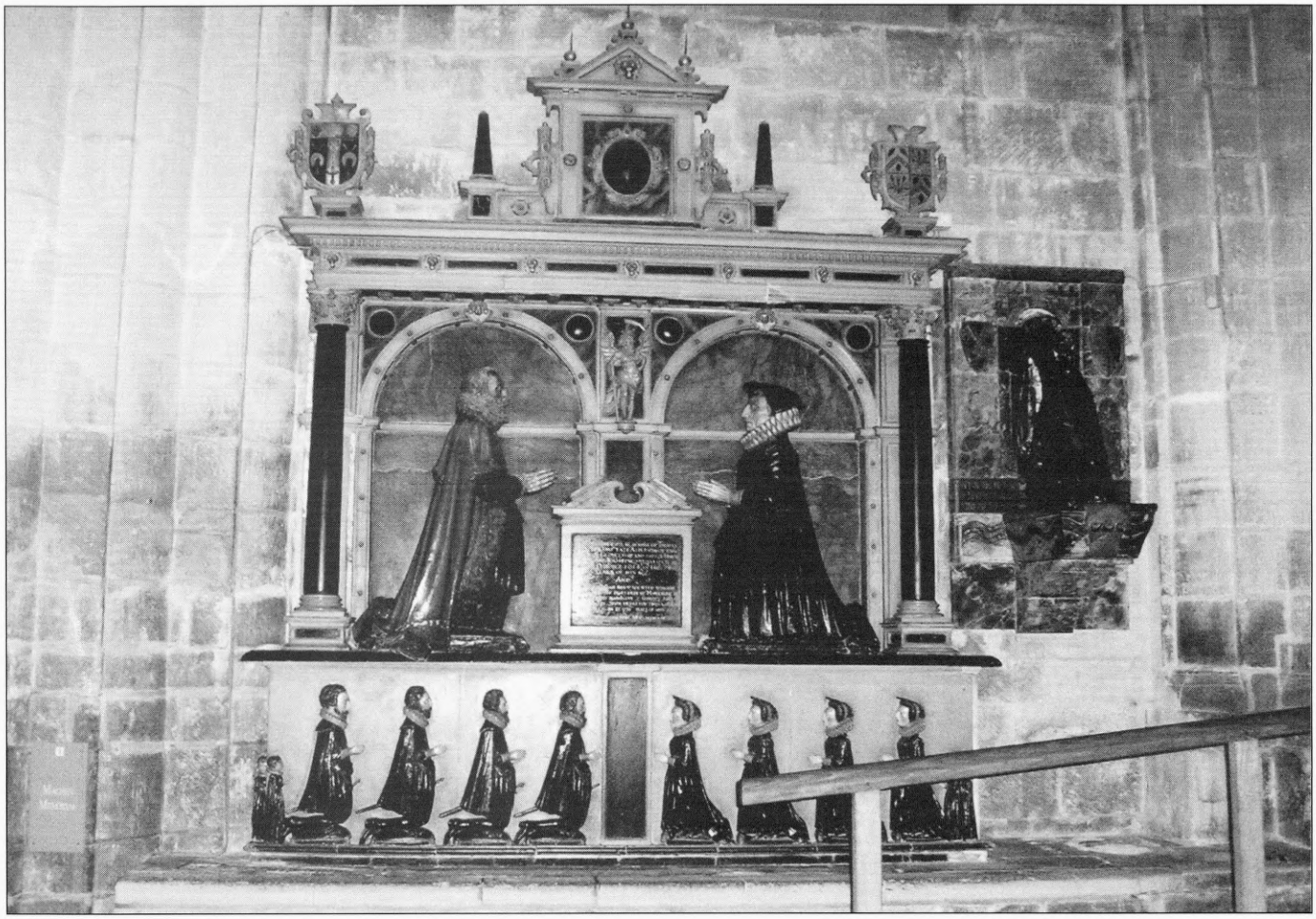

Fig 7 (above) The Machen memorial, c 1615, Gloucester Cathedral; photograph: Kirsty Owen

Fig 8 A stone erected in memorandum of Jane Fox, d 1657, at St Nicholas in Gloucester; photograph, Kirsty Owen

within the county. Plague had been a part of life in Gloucestershire since the 14th century. Its early modern episodes are known to have been particularly devastating, with a wave of outbreaks hitting the county in the late 16th century. Herbert (1988, 74) has asserted that the devastation of the 17th - century epidemics may have exceeded even these. Isolated references in documentary sources allude to the presence of disease in the 1600s. The session orders from the court of the aldermen of Gloucestershire included a discussion of measures taken in order to keep the city free of plague. Overseers' accounts from Withington '*in time of the plague of Pestilence*' refer to '*Persons infected and shut up in the time of the Contagion*' (GRO P374 CH 1). On a more idiosyncratic note, John Clutterbuck's 17th - century commonplace book includes a number of recipes alleged to fight plague. The Brimpsfield parish registers record the burial of suspected plague victims at Rudge Lane in 1665. Datable archaeological evidence is sparse. A possible plague pit was identified at Blockley in 2002, but later refuted. A gravestone from Withington dated to 1665 refers to one unfortunate victim of the plague. The possibility of a relationship between these fragments of evidence and the funerary iconography of Gloucestershire is fragile, yet more tenable than in previous centuries. In the wake of antagonistic attitudes to religious symbolism, comparatively neutral forms of expression seem to have become increasingly popular in commemoration. Under such circumstances, people may have chosen to make reference to their immediate circumstances. A heightened awareness of mortality during epidemics would have rendered the death's head an obvious choice. The extinction of Purgatory encouraged contemplation of the fate of living in lieu of the current status of the dead, adding particular impetus to current mortality crises. In such a climate, outbreaks of disease may have been particularly conducive to bursts of symbolic expression.

The number of allusions to resurrection and immortality rises through the course of the later 1600s. The pattern of references to mortality throughout the 17th century is much more erratic than its slightly more controversial foil. However, the former may have provoked equally strong responses from its audience, albeit for different reasons. To the eyes of the modern observer, the anthropomorphism of the death's head and skeleton are much more striking than the cherub and angel. They can draw the attention of the observer from a considerable distance. Allegorical figures featured on the table tombs at Elmore and Standish have a particularly sinister countenance to modern eyes. Whether they would have had the same effect upon viewers in the 17th century is difficult to determine, given that the population was faced with its mortality on a much more regular basis (Fig 9). This intimate relationship might, however, stir more personalised and intense emotions than heavenly imagery and so a capricious attitude with regard to their depiction is to be expected. The flamboyant table tombs of the Vale of Gloucestershire, epitomised by the Standish and Elmore memorials, are restricted to a small area between the River Severn and the Cotswold Hills (Fig 10).

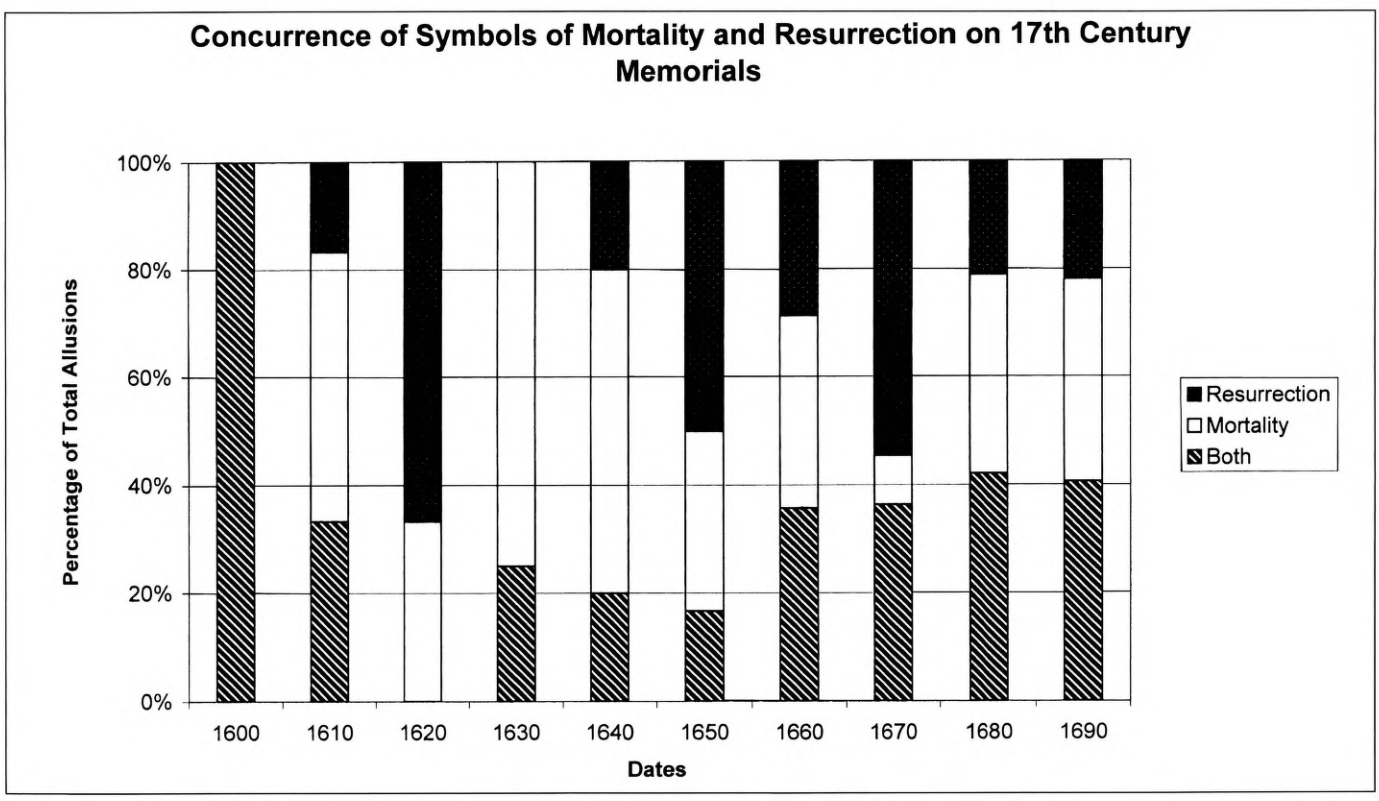

Fig 9 Concurrence of Symbols of Mortality and Resurrection on 17th-century Memorials in Gloucestershire; photograph, Kirsty Owen

Fig 10 A table tomb from Standish depicting skulls inside a scallop shell, a traditional symbol of resurrection and eternal life, dating to the 17th century; photograph, Kirsty Owen

They may have been produced by a specific workshop, or even a single craftsman working in a malleable local limestone which they understood particularly well. They date to the latter part of the 17th century and cannot be correlated with a known mortality crisis. It is probable that the motivation behind such graphic renditions was much more localised. The figures of Death and Time were useful attention-grabbing devices, particularly in a crowded churchyard which parishioners might only pass through on their way to a service. Quoting Richard Morris, Denison (1998) has asserted that groups of table tombs in the late 17th century may have represented 'informal chantries', subversions of the official disavowal of Purgatory over a hundred years before. Such a hypothesis is difficult to prove, as this practice would have been necessarily clandestine. Even without this function, however, anthropomorphic decoration remained a useful 'hook', drawing people towards the epitaph and so encouraging them to remember the life of the deceased. Wandering through the maze of 17th- and 18th-century memorials in the churchyard of St Mary, Painswick, highlights just how effective this snare might be. Despite being composed of the same oolitic limestone as every other tomb, the flamboyant tombs stand out, drawing eyes away from the church just as their intramural counterparts of the earlier 17th century might distract from the service. To employ an often quoted term for the early modern period, such monuments were an attempt to assert an individual identity against the collectivistic nature of parish life. The body of the church was, and to an extent still is, a repository of local history. However, that history was constituted through the sedimentation of individual acts of creation and destruction. The ability to remain visible within the parish space beyond one's natural lifetime was a function of wealth and privilege, and the desire to project and maintain a presence to the benefit of future kin and past reputations existed regardless of any postulated pious motive.

A number of late 17 th-century table tombs featured coats of arms just as their intramural counterparts did. The table tombs around the chancel at Oddington feature a number of examples; most detail the lineage of the deceased within the central text. The striking mortality imagery displayed at the margins of the epitaph brought attention to the text whilst also suggesting the humility of the deceased and their kin through a demonstrable awareness of their mortal frailty. Juxtaposing anthropomorphic images of mortality with angels and cherubs, present on the other side of many of the tombs in Standish churchyard, implied that this modesty justified the position of the deceased and their family in Paradise. Therefore, the iconography of mortality in the churchyard drew an audience to the monument so that they might learn the connection between humility in this life and rewards in the next. The didactic message was filtered through the medium of wealth and worldly privilege, connecting status and ancestry to resurrection in a manner which implied that one precipitated the other.

This unlikely link between humility, wealth and resurrection is reflected within the church where monuments were used to display the rewards reserved for the wealthy in the next life, justifying the actions of their living descendants. The effigies of Edward Lord Noel and Juliana at Chipping Campden step out of their tomb as if in the act of rising from the grave (Fig 11). Their earthly deeds are detailed on the doors of the tomb, going before them as they step into paradise. The monument is raised on a wall in a chapel with several other family monuments. Together they form a highly visible mausoleum, raised above the floor of the church in striking black and white marble. The link between earthly dominance and otherworldly rewards is patent and is intended to lend divine sanction to the actions of the living lordship of Campden.

The majority of later 17th century allusions to mortality in Gloucestershire's churches are much less intrusive than the efforts of the spectacularly wealthy and influential Campden family. By the later 1600s, most monuments within the church space were wall mounted. Brass plaques and mounted stones make up approximately 90% of the sample in the 1660s. Skulls and *putti* frequently often frame the central text, featuring on 12 of the 27 memorials of that decade. Unlike their extramural counterparts they are unobtrusive and not always eye-catching, often blending in with the frame. The most visible aspect of the mounted stones is usually the heraldry, which in many cases is all that

can be discerned from the parish floor. Death's heads and *putti* seem to present a natural backdrop to the achievements and familial connections of the deceased. It could be argued that there was less need for visual draws within the church since the memorials would have a captive audience in the seated congregation. For those who lacked the impressive resources of the Campdens the amount of experimentation possible was doubtless curtailed by expense and by what was considered acceptable within the church. Extramural monuments would not detract from the service and thus were unlikely to antagonise the clergy and pious-minded parishioners.

Deetz and Dethlefsen (1967, 29-30) were eager to draw links between the presence of certain types of iconography and overarching shifts in religious thought. This deterministic approach was rejected by Ludwig (1966, 18-19), who chose to regard death's heads and *putti* as an expression of the laity's collective longing for religious expression in the wake of the Reformations. However, both Ludwig and Deetz and Dethlefsen regard their subject matter as reflective of a broader social climate. They do not consider that the iconography might be active in the reproduction and modification of its situation. The post-Reformation monument, stripped of its intercessory role in soliciting prayers for the deceased in Purgatory, became an arrant means of public display. Allusions to family and descent are the most common iconographic and textual feature, manifested by colourful heraldic displays and lengthy affirmations of familial origins. They survive on approximately 57% of the sample, or four out of every seven monuments erected. Coats of arms frequently surmount wall monuments, implicating the prosaic and worldly concerns of the deceased and their families at death. Armigerous displays are often the most striking feature, visible from a great distance. The Castleman memorial, which dates to around 1670, exemplifies these preoccupations (Fig 12). Coats of arms are displayed above and at the foot of the monument. Whereas the cherubs and death's heads merge into the frame of the memorial, visible only upon close examination, highly coloured arms crown the memorial and so define how the observer should interpret what they read in the text below. Death and resurrection formed a frame for the worldly deeds of the deceased. Certain aspects of the frame might be referenced in the text, but the images did not constitute a central didactic focus. Commemoration conveyed personal and familial piety, perpetuating the position of a select number of individuals within society.

Even when twinned with rebirth, death was a dangerous notion for those concerned with the perpetuity of lineage. It was capable of rupturing the continuity of resources and respectability. The position held by an individual could be lost either by their failure to produce children or their offspring's incompetence. Referring to the effigies of the early/mid 17th century, Llewellyn (1991, 54-55) has asserted

Fig 11 The effigies of Edward Lord Noel and Juliana, c 1660, Chipping Campden; photograph, Kirsty Owen

that the main function of the commemorative body was to resist the inevitable process of decay and to defy the temporality of the funeral. He regards death as a moment of instability between two worlds which must be managed in order to minimise the amount of disruption which it is able to cause. The depiction of images of death and resurrection in the frame of wall monuments may also be regarded as an exercise in 'ritual management'. Death and rebirth are codified and marginalised, and thus distanced from the central epitaph of the memorial. The abstract images of death and rebirth adorning the frame are acknowledged as factors in the life of the people mentioned in the text, but are unable to touch them or their position within society.

Location of skulls and putti upon the monument

Finch's interpretation of skulls and putti as indicators of the fate of the body and soul within his Norfolk sample hinges upon the location skulls and bones at the base and cherubim

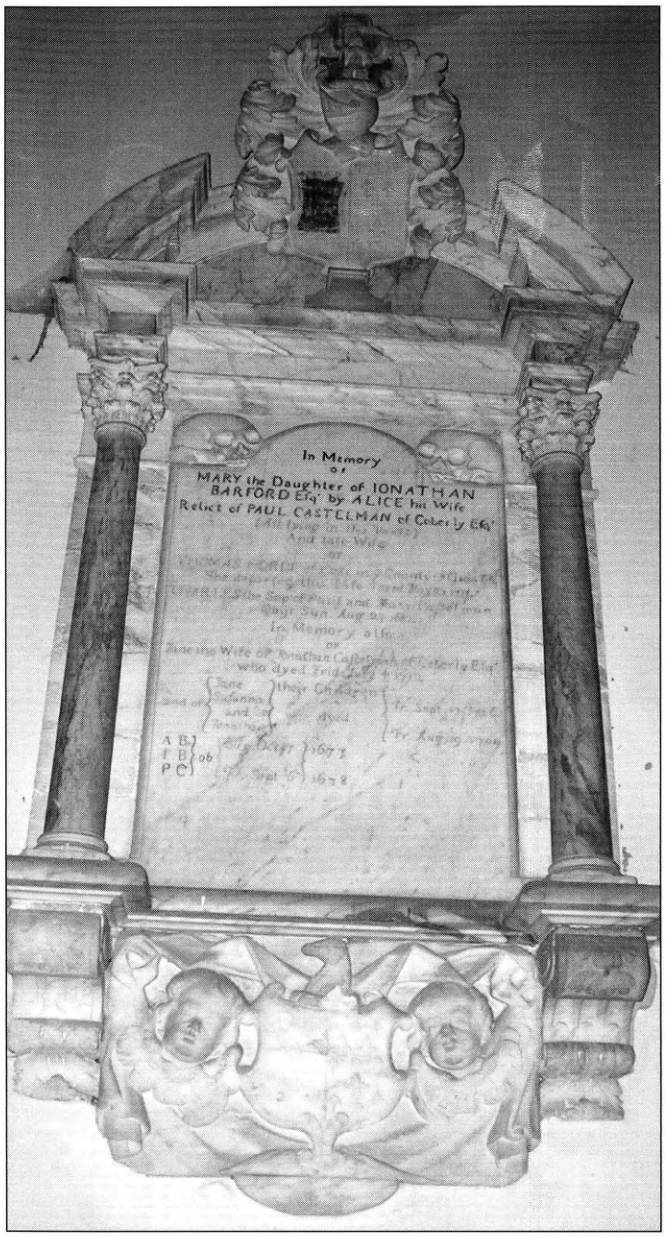

Fig 12 The Castleman family memorial, later 17th century, Coberley; photograph, Kirsty Owen

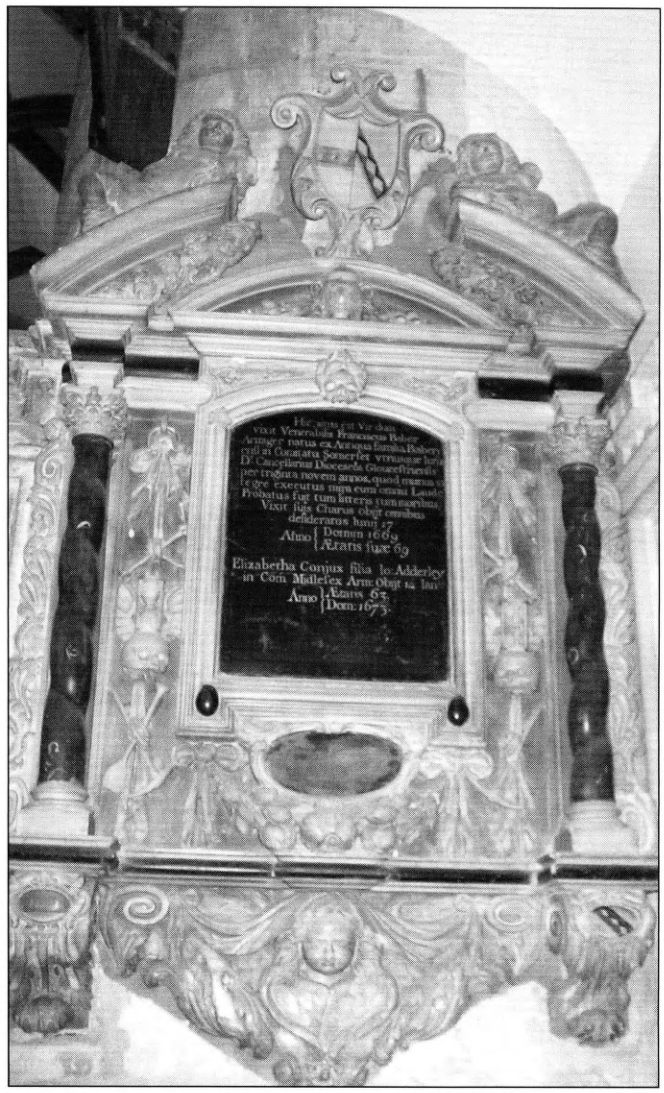

Fig 13 A wall monument to Francis and Elizabeth Baber dating to the later 1660s/early 1670s, Gloucester Cathedral; photograph, Kirsty Owen

at the top. The being of those commemorated is split in two; the fallible body descends into dust at the base while the pure soul rises to meet the angels at the top (Finch 2000, 138). This does not accord with the data from the Gloucestershire sample. Of the 87 monuments in the sample which date to 1640-1700 and feature an iconographic reference, only 32 display both symbols of resurrection and mortality. This suggests an average of five per decade out of approximately 11 memorials with relevant iconography. The position of the iconography is equally variable. Skulls and death's heads are as likely to appear at the top or in the margins of a monument as they are at the base. When mortality and resurrection are juxtaposed cherubs often appear at the base of the monument, as is the case on the late 17th-century Castleman memorial at Coberley. A small monument to Robert Glyn (d 1687) at Little Rissington features angels holding a skull at the top of a monument. Such a scheme does not suggest the separation of the fallible body from the pure soul. The manner in which one image flows into the next suggest that the figures were positioned in this way for the sake of aesthetics and so do not reflect the philosophical musing of the artist or patron. The purpose of this imagery was to frame the central action of the text. It does not describe the life of the deceased, but is marginalised by it, and thus a lack of consistency in the positioning of each image is to be expected.

The notion that the images of mortality and resurrection should perennially accompany one another derives from an over-emphasis upon the religious implications of the iconography and a resultant tendency to oppose the images

instead of regarding them as components of the same codified response to a disruptive rite. Imaging death served to distance it from the person of the deceased, pacifying it and thus playing down its ability to disrupt familial status within the community. This pacification could be achieved either by skulls or by cherubs, since both effectively tamed death and distanced it from the body of the individual described in the text. Codification was both religious and social, since prohibitions on imagery favoured abstract symbolism and so created a tool which could manage the rupturing effects of mortality.

Prior to the 16th-century allegorical representations of death were uncommon. Commemoration depicted mortality and resurrection acting upon the body itself. The monumental body was almost universally an idealised representation, unsullied by disease or age. The obvious exceptions to this are the cadaverous *transi* and shroud brasses which depicted explicit skeletal images of the deceased which might constitute an attempt to expose the deceits of the perfected effigy. However, even such apparent attempts to draw attention to the inevitability of decay cannot be divorced from the socially motivated display which influenced their objects of ridicule. Such dramatic imagery drew in spectators so that they might pray for the dead and respect the wealth and standing which made such a monument possible. The earliest allegorical references to resurrection in the county are found on medieval effigies such as that of Edward II at Gloucester Cathedral and the late 14th-century recumbent effigy of a woman at Bishop's Cleeve. Angels support the heads of the deceased, waiting to raise their souls up to Heaven. Such monument simultaneously articulated religious sentiment and social superiority. The social functions of depictions relating fallibility and divinity in death did not diminish with the extinction of the retroactive religious function of the monument and the rejection of the human form as a medium of display.

Death and what was likely to precede it were difficult concepts in the aftermath of reform, not just from a doctrinal point of view and their implications for the lingering social functions of the memorial. Despite no longer functioning as intermediaries between the living and the dead, memorials and their iconographic schema continued to influence social roles through their presence in the church space. A wall monument to Francis and Elizabeth Baber incorporates mortality and resurrection into its frame; it is the black backdrop of the text and the surmounting heraldry which stand out (Fig 13), implying a desire to prioritise worldly achievement over otherworldly fate. The erection of a monument was intended to carry the *persona* beyond its mortal span. Explicitly referring to the inevitability of death was therefore counterproductive. The iconography of the post-reformation memorial acculturates the rite of death, changing it from a threatening presence to a marginalised artistic device. Death and inevitable rebirth are integrated into affluent display, subtly alluding to the piety of those commemorated yet subsidiary to their vital achievements and solid legacy.

Inscriptions

In early 17th - century Gloucestershire allegorical, iconographic and inscribed forms of resurrection and mortality are present together on intramural monuments. The vast majority of allusions to resurrection are textual. As has previously been suggested, this may suggest that the imagery present on 17th - century monuments was intended to guide the eye to the text and to add emphasis to its message, rather than to make statements in its own right. The number of references rises in the first decade in proportion with an increase in the number of memorials. Considering the erratic profile of the incidence of pietistic allusions in the 17th century, it seems odd that references to resurrection should maintain such a regular outline. Text and resurrection were intimately related in Protestant doctrine. The saving power of the Word was one of the principal tenets of 16th century reform. Stating a desire for a glorious resurrection in an epitaph was one of the least controversial expressions on a monument. Most allusions comprise only a single line at the end of an inscription. The memorial to Thomas Throkmarton (d 1607) states that he:

> *'... parted this life the last daye of ianuarie in the yeare of our Lord 1607 leaving here his mortail partes interred in this monument until by the command of Christ it rise again immortail.'*

This inscription makes it clear that the monument is merely a repository for Throkmarton's remains. His fate is the province of Christ and is in no way influenced by its presence or people's reactions to it; the location of the soul between bodily death and resurrection is ambiguous . Despite this Throkmarton is clearly certain of his own redemption. Within the practical context of commemoration, this translates into the equation of worldly worth with salvation. Throkmarton's declaration of imminent resurrection is preceded by details of service to king, country and Christianity. Mortal achievements are presented as an index of divine favour. However, the ability to affirm these deeds was contingent upon the wealth of the family or individual. Masses, indulgences and pleading memorials were purchased by the wealthy prior to the Reformation in order to expedite passages through Purgatory. This exclusivity of salvation was retained through the connection of wealth, worth and grace in stone. This association in turn reflected positively upon surviving kin, exalting their place in society and justifying their wealth and power over others. Piety was manipulated as a component of affluent display. On occasion this might involve an element

of self depreciation. An inscription from the tomb of William Childe at Blockley (c 1615) acknowledges the futility of commemoration:

'In vain am I lamented in mournful marble. I shall burst through my tomb of marble and enter the starry skies.'

Nevertheless, the blatant expression of wealth which frames this inscription contradicts this message. Such sentiments were clearly not sufficient to detract from the merits of public displays of piety.

Mortality is most commonly expressed iconographically rather than in the form of an inscription; in contrast to images of immortality, their lucid worldiness might have afforded them some immunity from iconoclastic attacks. Its purpose on the memorial was both ideological and practical. Text and image worked together in order to pass an ideological message onto the reader. Images of death were an aspect of this process, linking affluence to resurrection and the conquest of Death through commemoration. However, they also functioned on a superficial level, helping to gain the observers' attention. The intensity of mortality imagery might have allowed it to function as a hook which could entice readers towards the text and thus the lives of the deceased. In the churchyard, grinning skeletons and skulls might stand out against their limestone backdrop, drawing in an audience to read the inscription. This is illustrated by the graphic imagery featured on the table tombs of St Nicholas, Standish. Images of Death and Time surround inscriptions, gesturing at the text. The allegorical figures can be seen from the church path and might draw the eyes of the congregation as they left the church. Allegorical figures are more common in churchyards than inside the church. They were necessary in order to get the attention of parishioners moving back and forth through God's acre.

Memento Mori inscriptions seem to have served a different purpose. Unlike the imagery, they were not easily read from a distance and therefore unsurprisingly are not common in extramural contexts. The intramural examples have a sermonic quality, rarely referring to the particulars of an individual life. Joanne Burton's memorial at Coln St Dennis states her deference to the authority of Christ:

'Heare lyes my body fast in closed within this watery ground but my precius soule in it cannot nowe be founde but at the doome and generall iudgement daye my saviour Christ will bid me rise and come awaye althought I never married we are to any man as it my soule and body to my saviour God..'

This stated humility is undermined by the presence of a heraldic shield at the top of the monument, which suggests that the deceased and family wanted the earthly achievements of the family to remain visible in death. Such imagined homogeneity marks the *memento mori* inscription out as another attempt to use the affirmation of piety in death in order to enhance the moral and consequently social standing of the deceased and their family. A lesson in the inevitability of bodily decay thinly masks an attempt to imprint the identity of a family into the communal space.

Of the 23 *memento mori* inscriptions which survive in Gloucestershire, a single example is extramural. Thomas Pierce's inscription on his table tomb at Berkeley differs markedly from the intramural examples:

'Here Lyeth Thomas PEIRCE whom no man taught
Yet he in fron Braffe and Silver wrought
He jacks and Clocks, and watches (with Art) made
And mended too when others work did fade of Berkeley
Five tymes Major this Artist was and Yet this Major this
Artist was but Grasse when he owne watch was Downe on
The laft Day He that made watches had not made A Key to
Wind it Vp but Vfelesse it must lie Vntill he Rise Againe
no more to die.'

Like many commemorated within the church, Peirce was of considerable public standing. Yet the character of his inscription is distinct from that of its intramural counterparts. It retains the sermonic quality of Joanne Burton's memorial, composed 30 years before. The deceased's achievements in life, far from being irrelevant, are intimately associated with the manner of his death. The lesson of both sermons is that the manner of one's life will inevitably be reflected in their death, but Peirce's monument is unashamed of the worldliness of the deceased. It is not masked or codified, but relates specifically to the acts of the individual. His achievements were impressive and certainly worthy of pride amongst his kin, yet his family connections were not made explicit. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasoning behind this contrast between intra- and extramural uses of the *memento mori.* The compounding of acts of piety with images of lineage continues unabated towards the end of the 17th century inside the church, suggesting that familial connections continued to be an important consideration for those choosing to be commemorated there. The individuality of Peirce's statement was a reflection of the particular aspirations of the type of people who sought commemoration in the churchyard.

Williamson (1998, 15) has identified two types of 'gentry' amongst the county elite of the later 17th century. Typically, the local gentry possessed smaller estates and came from legal, mercantile, professional and yeoman backgrounds; their social and political interests were parochial and county based. The great landowners, by contrast, divided their time between their county estates and political activities in London. These two categories are somewhat fluid; the Berkeley family had been involved in entrepreneurial activities in addition to attending court for many generations, whilst some of the most politically active men

Fig 14 A memorial to James Vaulx, 'a practitioner in physicke and chirurgery', c 1610, Meysey Hampton; photograph, Kirsty Owen

in Elizabethan and Stuart administration traced their fortunes back to the wool trade. Nor can a clear distinction be drawn between the burial of the latter in the church and the former outside. There is evidence for the burial of professionals in the church in the mid to late 1600s. James Vaulx of Meysey Hampton was '*a practitioner in physicke and chirurgery*', yet his monument was one of the brashest erected in the county (Fig 14). However, from the later 17th century the churchyard was the preserve of the so-called 'local gentry'. The politics and prominence of these individuals was locally based and, of particular import in this context, valued personal achievement over familial strength. Groups of monuments which record the names of each family member, such as those of the Phillimore clothiers at Cam, are powerful statements of the role of a particular family within the local community. They bear down on parishioners walking up the path on their way to church. Each individual is accorded a place in the dynasty. This contrasts with the intramural effigies of the earlier 17th century, which subordinated individuals to the statement of perpetual lineage. Family was not an irrelevance to the late 17th century 'local gentry', yet reduced dependence on hereditary wealth and associated political and economic patronage networks meant that there was less need to perpetuate a mythic notion of its enduring prominence. The individualisation of power within the churchyard annulled the relationship between power and piety. Worldly achievements in trade and local government replaced pious endeavour as the principal qualification for divine grace.

Conclusion

Deetz and Dethlefsen's account of the progression from death's head through cherub to urn and willow aimed to link historically documented phases of religious thought to regional material culture patterning. This study has suggested that neither the iconographic sequence nor the homogeneity of the precipitating religious attitudes can be accepted as universals. A supposed association of skulls with mortality and cherubs with resurrection belies the intimate link between the two forms of imagery. Generalizations based upon empirical links between iconography and documented religious thought fail to consider the intrinsic reciprocity of two images. Death's heads and cherubs were not rendered in opposition. They do not imply comparative degrees of pessimism and optimism on the part of the patron, but are part of a single iconographic expression of perceptions of the Christian life cycle in the 17th century. In the case of Gloucestershire's memorials, such images frame and compliment the affirmation of individual memory and lineal continuity. The inescapability of mortality which they imply is abstracted and marginalised by their position around the borders of the memorial.

Localised iconographic study highlights the dangers of formulating general conclusions based upon documentary material alone. Any conclusions derived from the textual evidence should be subject to testing and review against numerous material datasets. The study of 17th-century funerary iconography in England has been hampered by the lack of regional studies considering the incidence and relative importance of images of mortality and resurrection. As such, discussions of death's heads and cherubs on memorials tend to defer to the conclusions reached by those concerned with better studied datasets in New England and Scotland. Particularized studies of commemorative iconography are needed in order to deconstruct the simplistic iconographic sequences established by the American evidence. It is not possible to link the choice of certain imagery to particular phases of religious thought, nor can death's heads, cherubs, angels and allegorical images be said to have occurred only at specific times during the 1600s.

Deetz and Dethlefsen implied that the relationship between iconography and religious thought was creative, engendering specific imagery in accordance with historically documented trends. By contrast, the Gloucestershire sample suggests a constraining and sometimes destructive relationship between dominant patterns of religious thought and iconographic preference. The desire for a permanent memorial which might reflect favourably upon past achievement and surviving kin overshadowed the fleeting religiosity of the individual. Allegorical images of Death and Time were less likely to become targets for the iconoclasts than angels when situated within the church, increasing the popularity of such motifs on monuments in the 1600s among those erecting monuments. The negation of the intercessory function of the memorial, its associations with the abrogation of Purgatory and securing a blissful hereafter brought the worldly, societal functions of the monument to the fore. Monuments were intended to create enduring testaments to the dead and their families. Church monuments inside and outside the building were made to be observed. Post-reformation images of Death, Time and angels might function as a hook, drawing people in and gesturing to the epitaph. This was particularly true of extramural monuments which might employ striking allegories in order to draw the eyes of passers-by, inviting them to read the accompanying inscription. The epitaph was increasingly the main focus of the post-reformation monument. Images were manipulated in order to frame and augment its content. Their importance in doing so is particularly clear in a churchyard such as that of St Mary's in Painswick, which is populated by innumerable limestone table tombs the individual features of which blend into one another. The so-called 'flamboyant' tombs stand out amongst the crowd, luring the observer to the much degraded epitaph. Universalising approaches to the study of iconography overlook such practical aspects of monumentalisation. The elucidation of general trends awaits the production of additional regional insights into the

interplay between mortality and resurrection in English post-reformation commemoration which take account of the experience of viewing each example in context prior to forming conclusions relating to their overall function within 17th century society.

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