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ARTICLE

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"Thou Art Keeper of Man and Woman's Bones" – Rituals of Necromancy in Early Modern England

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Abstract

In sixteenth and seventeenth-century England, high rates of mortality and churchyard burial placed the dead very close to the living both physically and emotionally. Experiments of necromancy, in which a magician sought to contact the dead by magical means, from the time have been little examined as historical documents. One such set of experiments is referred to here as the "Keeper of the Bones" ritual, in which a magician calls on a spirit to bring the ghost of a dead person in order to obtain desired information. We will examine these rituals and connect them with contemporary funerary rituals and practices, as well as beliefs in the nature of the soul and the role of the dead in early modern culture.

Introduction

In early modern England, the dead were a matter of deep concern to the living. Mortality rates were high by modern standards, with a quarter of children dying before the age of ten (Pollock 2017, 61). The average life expectancy remained close to 38 years, less than half of that in the United States and Finland today, from the mid-sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth (Wrigley et al. 1981, 234–236). Not only did the living fondly remember the many deceased, but their dead relatives and neighbors often lay in the local parish church or churchyard, binding them to the center of civic and religious life. Further, the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory

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promised that those in the afterlife could receive succor by all manner of practices, ranging from private prayer to major endowments for local religious institutions, all of which led in turn to continued remembrance and visibility of the dead. Most notably, however, indulgences could be purchased to ease the suffering of the dead while in purgatory (Marshall 2002, 6–46). The dead, while in this liminal state, could interact with the living through apparitions that brought warnings or indications of an undone deed or a hidden crime (Edwards 2012).

Such practices became fodder for Protestant reformers and their supporters, who saw post-mortem religious practices that channeled money to the Church as exploitation of the living rather than relief of the dead. The denial of Purgatory, and that of the connections between the dead and the living that accompanied it, became key elements of Church of England theology. This dissociation brought change to many different aspects of remembering and interacting with the dead, ranging from revisions of the Church's liturgy to the dissolution of religious endowments to the unparalleled destruction of tombs, funerary monuments, and bodies. The goal of these efforts was to close off the world of the dead from the living, save for directing the most general sentiments of hope and gratitude toward the deceased (Marshall 2002, 93–187).

Nonetheless, popular devotion and belief could not be transformed so easily. Narratives regarding the re-appearance of those dead continued to circulate, as they had before. Further, people continued to report dreams in which the dead visited them, in some cases to provide comfort, in others to warn or provide admonitions about improper behavior (Schmitt 1998, 42–58). Finally, a small educated population sought out dream visions through rituals not forming part of acceptable liturgical or popular practice: the branch of ritual magic known as necromancy[1]. As Janine Rivière sums up the situation, "the evidence of popular beliefs and narratives about ghosts

[1] The term "necromancy" could have different meanings at this time. Authors sometimes employed it to designate magic they viewed with disapproval, or that explicitly dealt with demonic rituals, as opposed to "nigromancy," which was magic that an author perceived positively (Klaassen 2012b, 10–11). In this article, it is used in the original Greek and Roman sense of magical operations used to contact the dead, a meaning in which it was also employed in early modern Britain (Ogden 2001, xxxi–ii; Holland 1590, D4r–v; Perkins and Pickering 1608, 108; Cotta 1616, 37).

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indicates a more complex relationship that reflects continuities rather than abrupt changes" (2009, 104).

Contemporary literature displayed some ambiguity toward necromantic practices, despite the best effort of divines to dissuade readers from such practices. Educated authors and readers were familiar with and quoted such Biblical passages as Leviticus 19:31 and Deuteronomy 18:10–11 that set out prohibitions against those who consulted with the dead or even those who allowed practitioners to live in their community. The most famous Biblical description of necromancy was the account of Saul and the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28). On the eve of a battle, Saul, King of Israel, asked a medium to call up the ghost of the prophet Samuel. When the witch conjured Samuel, he appeared and gave a dire prediction of Saul's death that was fulfilled. The plain wording of the passage suggested that the medium was successful in her magic and that the information the ghost provided was accurate. This did not stop many interpreters from seeking to explain the passage instead as a demonic illusion or trick (e.g. Lavater 1572, 127–140; Howard 1620, 89v–90r). Further, with the revival of the Classics, many learned individuals would have been familiar with the necromantic rites performed for Odysseus (*Odyssey* XI), Aeneas (*Aeneid* VI), and Lucan (*De Bello Civili* VI). Such encounters spilled over into theatre, with the most prominent example being the ghost of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's play, a figure whose ambiguous nature as ghost, devil, or hallucination drives the play's dramatic tension (Kapitaniak 2008, 613–680).

Necromancy was not only a phenomenon of Biblical narrative, literature, or entertainment. Contemporary accounts of necromantic rites are very much in evidence, even if they might tell us more about attitudes on the topic rather than actual practice. Edward Kelley, before he engaged in crystal-gazing sessions with John Dee, was reputed to have called up a dead man in a Lancashire churchyard (Weever and Cecil 1631, 45–46). We have multiple accounts of cunning people, or local magicians who set out to address a wide range of local concerns, seeking out ghosts haunting

houses in order to lay them or seek their guidance in finding treasure (e.g. Anonymous 1661, 4–5; 1685, 3). The powerful were not exempt from engaging in necromancy – or being accused of doing so. The MP Goodwin Wharton, in conjunction with the cunning woman Mary Parrish, had dealings with her familiar spirit, one George Whitmore, supposedly an executed man who promised to serve her after his death (Timbers 2016, 58–70). Henry Caesar, vicar of Lostwithiel, accused Sir Walter Mildmay, Elizabeth's Chancellor of the Exchequer, of engaging a magician to call up the ghost of Cardinal Pole (Rowse 1969, 335–336). The explorers Adrian (c. 1541–1629) and Humphrey Gilbert (1537–1583), are believed to be responsible for a series of necromantic rituals for calling up dead magicians, as chronicled in a manuscript now designated as British Library Additional MS. 36,674 (Klaassen 2012b). These practices were treated with such seriousness that King James I included in his Witchcraft Act of 1604 a prohibition against those who would "take up any dead man, woman, or child, out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth; or the skin, bone, or any other part of any dead person, to be imployed, or used in any manner of Witchcraft, Sorcery, Charme, or Inchantment," upon pain of death. (*Statutes of the Realm*, 1 Jac. I c. 12)

Much of the above is well known to historians of early modern England. What have remained largely unexamined, however, are the manuscripts and printed works relating to necromantic procedures found in various repositories in the United Kingdom and United States. This literature, often transcribed and circulated surreptitiously, often consists of miscellanies collecting various procedures, ranging from short charms to rituals of exceeding length and complexity, compiled from different sources. Such rituals make extensive use of Christian symbolism, imagery, and references, by calling on which the magician could command or entreat a wide variety of supernatural beings. Such creatures could assist in obtaining many goals, including the acquisition of wealth, influence, healing, knowledge, or sex. A small but substantial percentage of these rituals promises the magician successful contact with the dead (Klaassen 2012a).

Necromancy was a key aspect of the ritual magic literature of the time. The influential author and magician Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa devoted two chapters of his *De occulta philosophia* (1533), the encyclopedic treatise on magic first published in English in 1650, to the dead and necromantic rituals (Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, 521–538). After Agrippa's death, a spurious "Fourth Book" attributed to him appeared, with its English translation first published in 1655. Its last section expanded upon the principles in *De occulta* to lay out necromantic procedures in further detail (Agrippa von Nettesheim and d'Abano 1655, 69–71). Reginald Scot's anti-witchcraft, anti-Catholic treatise *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), as part of a lengthy catalogue of magical procedures, provided one ritual to call up a ghost who would in turn contact the fairy queen Sibilya, and another in which a man to be executed would promise to serve the magician, similar to the one who supposedly served Mary Parrish and Goodwin Wharton (Scot 1584, 401–410, 423–429). Scot hoped that revealing magical rituals would lead to their ridicule; instead, these were supplemented in the 1665 expanded edition, published after his death, with an operation to summon the spirit of a hanged man (Scot 1665, 217–218). Interest in the topic was reflected in manuscripts as well, which might include operations for the creation of a Hand of Glory (Sloane 1727, 46), or a sheet with characters that could be placed upon the ground when one wished to speak with a spirit (Folger V.b.26, 121). One might even summon up spirits in order to cause the body of a dead person to walk, or to ease their time in purgatory – even if the Church denied that realm existed. Such rituals appear in manuscripts alongside those intended to influence angels, demons, unspecified "spirits," fairies, thieves, witches, and other creatures (e.g. e Mus. 173, 56r, 45r).

One ghost-summoning ritual, perhaps the most common of those in the manuscript tradition, appears under several titles (or none), but for the sake of analytical simplicity, it will be henceforth referred to as the "Keeper of the Bones" rituals. Examination of these rituals will reveal not only hitherto little-noted examples of early modern ritual magic, but also draw interesting parallels and contrasts with beliefs and practices

regarding the dead found everywhere from theological treatises to British law to the printed literature of ritual magic to folk praxis. The aspects covered here include the role of Azazel, considered to be the keeper of the bones of the dead; the role of dreaming and the dead; the importance of the churchyard; what items might be taken away from the grave; the time a spirit could be called to manifest; and the purposes for such conjurations. In doing so, this demonstrates that explorations of ritual magic texts might yield important historical insights not accessible through other sources.

The "Keeper of the Bones" Rituals

Many of the manuscripts of early modern British magic have not been systematically examined as to content, and many more await discovery. Examination of the manuscript sources available to the author has located fifteen different examples of this ritual appearing in collections of miscellaneous magical rites, ranging from short charms to lengthy spirit conjurations for all manner of purposes. The first exemplar, appearing in Bodleian Library Rawlinson D.252, 67r–v, dates from the fifteenth century; three more from two manuscripts date to the sixteenth century[2], and eleven from eight manuscripts are recorded in seventeenth century works[3]. Due to the state of preservation of these manuscripts, it is unknown whether this signifies a broader interest in the early modern era for this topic, but it does indicate that individual copyists found the work of interest for more than two centuries. Notably, in three cases, multiple versions of the same ritual can be found in a single manuscript, likely as a safeguard against imprecise procedures leading to failure or other dangerous

[2] From London, British Library: Sloane 3884, 47–56; From Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois: Pre-1650 0102, 68–72, 87–92.

[3] From London, British Library: Sloane 3318, 71v; Sloane 3851, 103r–103v; from Oxford, Bodleian Library: Ballard 66, 35–9; Douce 116, 129bis–130, 196–202, 204; e Mus. 173, 73r, 75v; Rawlinson D.253, 139-4; from Chicago, Newberry Library: Vault Case 5017, 23; from Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland: Guthrie GD188/25/1/3 (not examined), 115–20. In the following citations, truncated references will be given, based on shelfmarks, and page numbers omitted for rituals that are the sole examples in a manuscript.

The following uncritical versions of this ritual have been published: Sloane 3851 in Gauntlet and Rankine 2011, 235–236; Rawlinson D.252 in Mathieu 2015, 468–469; Rawlinson D.253 in Skinner and Rankine 2018, 125; the two in e Mus. 173 in Harms and Clark 2019, 293–294, 300.

consequences. If so, it not only indicates that some examples would have been copied for reasons other than curiosity, but also that different versions of the same rite were available to the copyists for transcription through their surreptitious networks of distribution.

Many of these rituals are quite brief, being only a few hundred words, most of which are invocations that call upon God and holy spirits, individuals, events, and objects to compel the spirits to obey that are typical of the genre (Kieckhefer 1998, 126–143). If we were to assemble a common picture summing up these rituals, it might yield the following picture: The magician, in search of a desired but inaccessible piece of information, visits the grave of a dead individual; save in one exemplar, the identity or nature of the dead person is not specified. Calling out to that person multiple times, he or she then recites an incantation calling upon the spirit Azazel (or some variant thereof) to grant the magician control of the dead individual. These incantations form the bulk of most of the text of these ceremonies. One example begins as follows:

> O Thou Azazell, as thou arte the keeper of dead mens bones; And keepest heare the bones of this man N. I Commande the[e] And also Charge the[e] and I Coniure the[e] by the vertue of almighty god... That thou come to me, naminge the place and also the time and hower, And at the enteringe into a the [sic] place to give; 3 knockes so that they may be perfectly heard... (Pre-1650 0102, 87–88)

Having done so, the magician departs the grave and returns home. The dead individual either appears to the magician in a dream or appears to him or her later, imparting the desired information. (Mathieu 2015)

Despite these overall commonalities, considerable differences also appear among these rituals, particularly in the length and content of the conjurations, the ritual preparations and tools, and the overall goals of the operation. For example, one set of operations, consisting of Sloane 3851 and 3884; Douce 116, 196–202; and Pre-1650 0102, 68–72 and 87–92 are longer than the rest, featuring multiple conjurations, an intermediate

stage in which Azazel appears to the magician to negotiate for the dead person to appear, and sometimes additional accoutrements, such as a magical circle drawn on the ground or a plate of lead used as a lamina. A few also have elements not present in the others. One key example, Rawlinson D.252, ends with the magician requesting a Mass to be said for the dead person. Notably, only one other ritual, Sloane 3851, mentions this stipulation, and that only to promise the Masses to the spirit in the incantation, with no instructions at the ritual's end that they must be included. The lack of mentions in other manuscripts might be due to different textual traditions, the excising of an unnecessary step, or removal of a process that, after the Church of England's critique of Purgatory and the saying of masses for the dead, would have been seen as heretical or too difficult to perform. (Marshall 2002, 148–149) Other such variations shall be explored in the analysis below.

"Keeper of the Bones of the Dead": The Role of Azazel

Protestant theology placed the souls of the dead in hell and heaven, with their status determined and governed over by God. Thomas Nashe, however, expressed his concern that that Devil would deceive Christians to believe that "the bodies and the souls of the departed rest entirely in his possession" and "the boanes of the dead the diuell counts as his chiefe treasurie" (1594, B.iii). Our rituals suggest that this was no idle fear, as they assign both the bodies and souls of the dead to the dominion of a more ambiguous figure, known by different names and titles. In all cases save but one (Rawlinson D.253), it is said to have the bones or bodies of the dead in its keeping. In some rites it bears different and exalted titles, especially "god" (e Mus. 173, 73r, 75v), "lord" (Sloane 3318, Newberry Vault Case 5017), or "King of the Dead" (Sloane 3851). Its name differs between sources, as it is variously referred to as Fazol, Sezel, Assachell, Asiel, Azafell, Asacel, or St. S., but in over half the name is given as "Azazel" or a variant spelling thereof.

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Even if Reformed theologians did not recognize Azazel's dominion over the dead, he was a familiar figure to them. In Leviticus 16:8, 10, and 26, two goats are designated for sacrifice in a ritual performed on behalf of the Jewish people. One goat was designated by lots for Yahweh and the other for Azazel, with the latter being sent away into the desert. Within the context of Leviticus, Azazel seems to be a personification of chaos and counterpoint to Yahweh. Later commentators decided the name referred to a specific spirit at odds with the Old Testament God (Blair 2009, 55–62). Early modern writers were unaware of the prominent role that Azazel or Asael played in the *Book of Enoch* as a rebel angel (Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012, 25, 28), but they were certainly aware of the Biblical references, and readers at the end of the early modern period would have been familiar with Milton's depiction of him as a "Cherube tall" bearing the standard of Hell (Milton 1667, 18).

Azazel also possesses associations with the dead outside this group of rituals. Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia* maintains that the cadaver remains in the power of the demon Azazel, as known to the Hebrews[4] (Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, 523). Agrippa had considerable influence on later occultists, yet Rawlinson D.252, our fifteenth-century source, pre-dates Agrippa's work and describes the spirit as "Asacel." This suggests that Agrippa might have been adapting an existing tradition from magical literature, counter to previous speculation that such associations might have been derived from passages in the compilation of Kabbalistic mysticism known as the *Zohar*. It could be that the usage of "Azazel" in these rituals ultimately derives from the *Zohar* or other Hebrew sources, but much work remains to be done on the transmissions of magical rituals from Hebrew to Latin and later vernacular sources that might illuminate this question (Mesler 2019).

This association between Azazel and the dead can be found elsewhere in magical practice, if one record of magical operations is any indication. This is the series of magical experiments recorded in Additional Ms. 36,674 performed by the Gilbert

[4] "[U]t dicunt Hebraeorum theologi, linquitur in potestate daemonis Zazelis" (Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, 523).

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brothers. The record of crystal-gazing workings conducted in 1567 does not mention the "Keeper of the Bones" ritual itself, but it features Azazel as a key figure. In one session, conducted at sunrise on February 24, "Assasell" appeared with the figures of several dead magicians, including Solomon, Adam, Bacon, and Tobias, who promised that they "love man more" than other types of spirits and were therefore ideal for teaching magic (59r–60r). The following day, the spirit appeared again, this time with Solomon, Job, Adam, Bacon, and Cornelius Agrippa. This time, Assasel himself speaks, telling the magicians that "they" – presumably the spirits – were not to "tell things past, present, & to come," a common phrase in the magical literature of the time (49r–50r). Given the procedures outlined elsewhere in the manuscript, and the lack of access to the graves of these far-flung and illustrious individuals, the Gilberts probably were not performing the "Keeper of the Bones" ritual itself. It remains to be seen whether other such usages of Azazel with the dead appear in manuscripts elsewhere, but this does suggest that these associations were apparent to those beyond the ritual described here.

"Far Easier, and More Familiar": Dreaming of the Dead in Early Modern England

In most of the "Keeper of the Bones" rituals[5], the ritual's intended outcome is to induce a dream in which the dead individual manifests and provides information to the magician. Such dream incubation, in which an individual sought a message from a supernatural source through dreams, was a common element of pagan spiritualities and carried over into Christian times (Véronèse 2007), with precedents in Biblical stories ranging from Jacob to Joseph. Saint Augustine addressed the visions of the dead in dreams, admitting that they could provide correct information, but that this was the result of angelic intervention rather than the appearance of the deceased (Augustine 1999, 366–369). Later Christian authors treated dreams of the dead with skepticism,

[5] All save Sloane 3851, 3884; Douce 116, 196–202; and Pre-1650 0102, 87–92.

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but such visions nonetheless possessed an important role in medieval hagiography and the practice of pilgrims.

The belief in supernatural contact during dreams began to be critiqued by sixteenth-century British thinkers, and it sustained a full-scale intellectual assault during the seventeenth century. Many authors, having witnessed the devastation of the Civil War, inveighed against claims of supernaturally inspired nocturnal visions as being superstitious and leading to civil unrest (Rivière 2013). Nonetheless, early modern people, including such notables as Elias Ashmole, Archbishop Laud, and Thomas Vaughan, continue to report dreams of the dead (Rivière 2009, 111–115), so it is unsurprising that some believed these to be actual contact with the deceased. The English merchant Thomas Tryon could assert "it is far easier, and more familiar for the deceased Souls to communicate their secrets to their living Friends in Dreams, then to appear thus in external Forms, by cloathing themselves with thin Elemental Bodies" (Tryon 1689, 74). The antiquary John Aubrey relates three examples of dream visions of the dead, two of which proved to be true, and the other which led to a mother giving her daughter a deadly remedy, following her into the next world when she herself took it to reassure her chambermaid that it was harmless (Aubrey 1857, 52, 74, 56–57).

Given this grudging and caveat-filled official sanction of dream messages, and narratives and practices involving dream intervention by saints, it is hardly surprising that dream incubation formed an important technique in the literature of ritual magic, with various techniques for pursuing nocturnal visions appearing in manuscripts from the medieval and early modern periods (Véronèse 2007; Chardonnens 2014). A sixteenth-century manual at the Folger Shakespeare Library details a procedure for invoking an old man named "Balancus" or "Balanchus" who appears at night to provide the magician with desired information (Folger V.b.26, 47, 224). Other operations, preserved in the Newberry Library manuscript mentioned above, stipulate that the magician place either magical words on a parchment, or the names of the Three Magi on green wax, beneath their head before sleep to learn the identity of a thief (Newberry Vault Case 5017, 11v).

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In a similar manner, the "Keeper of the Bones" ritual often requires a magically potent item – in this case, dirt from the grave – be placed in the same position in order to contact the dead. In doing so, it reflects the Biblical, folkloric, and magical beliefs of its time and place.

"A Right and Due Burial": The Role of the Churchyard

One commonality within these rituals is their beginning at a grave, the most accessible location of which would be the parish churchyard. Even if there is no supernatural manifestation there, the ritual involves a trip to this site to make the initial call. Yet a reader of the printed magical literature of the time might have some serious misgivings about this instruction.

Within the works of Agrippa and pseudo-Agrippa, the churchyard was an appropriate, and yet not entirely desirable, place for such rituals. Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia* lists several such locations, while noting that "the holy right of buriall being duely performed to the bodies, oftentimes prohibiteth the souls themselves to come up, and driveth them farther off the places of judgement" (Agrippa von Nettesheim 1992, 489). Following this cue, the *Fourth Book* lists among "the places most befitting for these things" the "Church-yards," although these rank well behind the "execution of criminal judgements," places of "publike slaughters of men," or a location where "some dead carkass, that came by a violent death, is not yet expiated, nor ritely buried, and was lately buried" (Agrippa von Nettesheim and d'Abano 1655, 70). It continues by stating that "the Souls of the dead are not easily to be raised up, except it be the Souls of them whom we know to be evil, or to have perished by a violent death, and whose bodies do want a right and due burial." (Ibid., 71) Thus, we might be surprised that the rituals make no stipulations in this regard, especially as most operators would have first-hand knowledge of local burials that might fit the bill.

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It remains puzzling why exactly these rituals did not conform to the caveats in the printed literature. Agrippa's name and reputation were common knowledge during his lifetime. His *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* and the *Fourth Book* later attributed to him did not come into print in Britain until 1651 and 1655, respectively, yet fragments taken from his work are copied into manuscript works of magic from the time, including some that include the rituals to Azazel (e.g. e Mus. 173, 32v–33r; Sloane 3318, 147r) and once even within the text of the rite itself (Sloane 3884, 49r). Thus, at least some of the copyists would have been familiar with Agrippa's preferences. A more important factor could be the shift in the localization of the souls of the dead during the Reformation, with the denial of purgatory. Many theologians, led by Martin Luther, believed that all of the dead were effectively asleep at the earth until Judgment. Ironically, even despite the theological push to minimize monuments and remembrances of the dead, this position of the Church re-focused attention upon the churchyard as the prime location for the spirits of the dead, no matter their deeds in life, to take residence. (Boyacioğlu 2016, 218–220)

The performances of such rites in the churchyard might seem less likely due to its public nature, as many different activities, ranging from markets to sports to cock-fighting, might take place within (Dymond 1999; Peate 1970). Nonetheless, most of these rituals require very little in the way of ritualized speech or actions, much of which might seem to an observer to be prayer for the dead, a practice which found a strong defense in the writings of the Church fathers (Marshall 2002, 141–148). Further, the view of the churchyard as a place that "swarmed soules and spirits" and where "a right hardie man heretofore scant durst passe by night, but his haire would stand upright" indicates that evenings might have granted more privacy for potential necromantic rituals (Scot 1584, 462, 153). Given the dangers of travel in the era, such a covert practice might have been preferable to traveling out into the wilds to perform the ritual at a more appropriate site (Parkes 1925, 152–192; Monga 1998). Then again, secrecy also depended upon what the magician needed to acquire at the grave.

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"Skin, Bone, or Any Other Part": The Use of Remains in the "Keeper of the Bones" Rituals

On December 4–5, 1590, Agnes Sampson confessed to attending a meeting of witches at North Berwick kirk, at which the Devil's servants "opened up three graves... and took of the joints of their fingers, toes, and noses" in order "to make a powder of them to do evil withall" (Normand and Roberts 2000, 147). King James I, the supposed target of the North Berwick witches' spells, later wrote in his *Daemonologie* of how "the witches take [a dead body] up and joint it" (ibid., 406). Although the circumstances behind the drafting of the aforementioned 1604 statute against witchcraft and magic remain unclear, the king's displeasure likely led to the stipulation that the penalty of death should fall upon anyone who would remove any part of a corpse from its resting place for magical purposes (*Statutes of the Realm*, 1 Jac. I c. 12).

Despite the official prohibition, the printed literature of magic at the time did refer in several passages to the use of the corpse or parts thereof in magic. Agrippa assured his readers that "the souls of the dead cannot be called up without blood and a carkasse: but their shadowes to be easily allured by the fumigations of these things" (Agrippa von Nettesheim 1651, 489). The *Fourth Book* followed him, reiterating that "In raising up these shadows, we are to perfume with new Blood, [and] with the Bones of the dead..." along with other substances (Agrippa von Nettesheim and d'Abano 1655, 70). Scot noted that some considered that the burning of the smoke of "the tooth of a dead man" could be used to relieve those "bewitched in their privities," or that the skull of a slain man might be used to cure epilepsy or rabies (Scot 1584, 82, 243). The rite to summon the ghost of a hanged man from Scot's 1665 expanded edition, as noted above, also required the corpse to be present (Scot 1665, 217–218).

Within the "Keeper of the Bones" rituals, one manuscript, Sloane 3884, seems to correspond to these requirements. The magician is cautioned to bring a shovel along to facilitate the process. He or she should be prepared to dig up the entire corpse, replacing the dirt, and bearing the remains away to a secret place. Having done so, the

magician should remove some part of the body. This could be the heart of a small child, or a part "in the which she or he did most delyte in & dyd most offend with," such as the tongue of an eloquent person or the voice of the lecher. Such a substance could be used to make a perfume to call up the spirit (Sloane 3884, 48v–49r). This example, then, is quite close to the instructions given in Agrippa and pseudo-Agrippa.

Yet this gruesome example is an anomaly in our corpus of rituals. The other thirteen reviewed do not require any part of the dead individual to contact the spirit. Instead, most of the rituals simply require some dirt from the grave to be carried away. Not only was this much more feasible to obtain and more lawful, but its use would have had precedent in funerary ritual. Graveyard earth was already incorporated into the burial ritual, with either the minister or (later) someone nearby sprinkling it into the grave while the minister intoned the memorable phrase, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" (Cressy 2002, 397–398). The scattering of graveyard dirt stood as a symbol of ecclesiastical control over the death process; John Leech of Essex was excommunicated after sprinkling dirt on an informal burial in 1589 (Cressy 2002, 405) and Humphrey Justice of Banbury, Oxfordshire ended up in a physical altercation with a minister in 1619 when he tried to fill in a grave, with the body being present (Peyton 1928, 298). Thus, taking such earth could be seen as both a symbolic reversal of the burial process and an undermining of the Church's control of that process.

Beyond orthodox Protestant theology, the use of graveyard dirt to invoke the power of the dead, especially in the case of the saints, was a longstanding part of European folk tradition. Dirt or dust from the grave of saint falls into the category of "tertiary relics," items brought into a contact with the saint's body or items touched by the saint (Sauer 2010, 597). Such practices are known as early as the chronicles of Gregory of Tours and the Venerable Bede, which describe soil taken from saints' graves possessing great power (Van Dam 1993, 134–135, 151–152, 159–160, 244; Bede 1958, 118–119, 170). As late as the early twentieth century, the dirt from the tomb of St. Ulrich was sold in Augsburg to ward off rats and mice (Andree 1911, 125). At Rennes and Boistrudan,

linen bags of dirt from the graves of holy individuals were made available to sufferers (Sébillot and Harou 1900, 156; Orain 1886, 193). In some Western European folklore, graveyard dirt is seen as having special power to compel the dead. Paul Sebillot presents a nineteenth-century belief – without a given location, although his home province of Brittany is likely – that placing graveyard dirt into a sack might aid in the contacting of the dead (Sébillot 1904, 208). Folklore of the English West Country held that casting graveyard dirt into the face of a ghost could cause it to change form to that of an animal, a prelude to commanding the spirit to depart (Brown 1979, 29–30, 58).The magician who practiced the "Keeper of the Bones" rituals was thereby participating in a broader cultural practice, conducted throughout Western Europe for over a millennium[6].

"Within Thirteen Nights": Time and the Soul in Early Modern Burial

Although Catholics and Protestants agreed about the immortality of the soul, neither suggested that some time might elapse between death and the departure of the spirit from the world. This was nonetheless a component of popular belief, with the spirits of the wicked or those improperly buried remaining for a longer time. In some narratives from France, the buried individuals maintained enough of a presence that they could arise to defend or threaten the living (Muchembled 1985, 63–64). Authors rarely stated the exact period, and when they did, it was rare to have any agreement. Separate passages of the *Zohar* provide different spans of time in which the lower soul, or *nefesh*, stays with the corpse: thirty days, seven days of intense connection to the body followed by twelve months of visitation, or until the body has decayed (Matt 2004, VI: 135–136; III: 362; V: 302). Thomas Tryon was vague on the duration of the soul remaining on the earth, save to say that "as the moisture and matter of the Body does

[6] Given the frequency that these rituals were used to uncover theft – see below – a Welsh practice should be noted in which a person sleeps on a piece of earth on which the thief has walked, wrapped in a rag and placed under a pillow. (Trevelyan 1909, 44)

waste, so the Apparition or Ghost does grow weak, and at last vanish" (Tryon 1689, 70).

For most individuals, such questions might have theological or emotional importance, but those who practiced necromancy would find a pragmatic need in addition to these. After all, if a spirit has yet to depart for heaven, hell, or Purgatory, or if it merely has stronger ties to the moldering flesh for a time, those would be ideal times to use a ritual. The only printed reference to such a magical practice is in Reginald Scot, who claimed that "The Necromancers affirme, that the spirit of anie man may be called up, or recalled (as they terme it) before one yeare be past after their departure from the bodie" (Scot 1584, 141). Given Scot's hostility toward magicians, however, we might ask how accurate this information might be.

The operators of our "Keeper of the Bones" rituals take two different stances as to the elapsing of time. Nine of those examined make no reference to a time constraint whatsoever. This would have been in line with both Luther's doctrine that the dead lay sleeping until Judgment, and many seventeenth-century narratives regarding returning spirits, who would appear to redress wrongs no matter how much time had elapsed since their deaths (Boyacioğlu 2016, 227). Others suggest that the spirit should be contacted soon after burial, whether for an unspecified duration (Ballard 66, Rawlinson D.252), or for a specific length of time – "first night," "3 days," or "within 13 nights" (Sloane 3851, 3884; Illinois Pre-1650 0102, 87–92; Douce 116, 196–202). This disparity, along with the lack of agreement between any of these rites and the minimal links between these and other contemporary sources, suggests that questions of the soul's presence near the body were far from settled even well into the seventeenth century.

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The Purpose for Seeking an Audience with the Dead

Sneaking into a graveyard, reciting an incantation, and stealing away something from the grave – a magician must have had compelling reasons to do such things. Some of the "Keeper of the Bones" ritual manuscripts remain silent as to what the ritual's purpose might be, while others provide multiple objectives. Half of the rituals examined are for the purpose of uncovering theft (Sloane 3318; e Mus 173, 73r, 75v; Douce 116, 129bis–130, 196–202, 204; Rawlinson D.252). The next most common category is the discovery of gold, silver or other treasure, which appears in five cases (Rawlinson D.253; Newberry Vault Case 5017; Douce 116, 196–202; Illinois Pre-1650 0102, 68–72, 87–92). Ghosts were routinely associated with buried treasure in early modern times; tales of spirit manifestations in a location were often interpreted as signs of hidden wealth, and uncovering them led not simply to enrichment, but to performing the laudable duty of putting a troubled spirit to final rest (Dillinger 2012, 77–79). Three rituals refer more generally to answering questions (Sloane 3318; Rawlinson D.253; Newberry Vault Case 5017), and one of these cites manslaughter as a crime to be revealed (Rawlinson D.253). We also have a single example of a ritual in which the spirit is compelled to "bring the Booke of Magick Science and arte written in suche a hand and with such Letters that I may reade it well and in such a tonge that I may well understand it" (Sloane 3851, 103v).

If we see a commonality running through most of those rituals in which a purpose is provided, it is ensuring that the social order is upheld: thieves are uncovered, wandering spirits are laid to rest, and killers are revealed. This was very much in line with many popular narratives in which ghosts manifested due to some injustice regarding their own murders, or the distribution of property, after their deaths. The magicians might themselves benefit from such situations; indeed, in the case of the request for the magical book, it is difficult to argue a direct communal good. Still, these rituals' purposes were among those addressed by the local service magicians, today classified as "cunning folk," who used experiments similar to others in these

manuscripts as part of a lucrative trade that served communities in the absence of modern medical, legal, or financial resources (Davies 2007, 84–89, 93–118, 186). If they performed such rites, the ghosts summoned via the breaking of elite and popular norms might nonetheless assist in the re-establishment of the social order (Boyacioğlu 2016, 233).

In a manner of speaking, however, these rituals show more adherence to community norms than the popular narratives. The ghosts in the stories are more focused on their own wishes, goods, and wrongs, or those done to their immediate families. Those called up in Azazel's name, however, are not stated to have limited knowledge, but instead may be summoned to provide information regarding any violation befalling members of the community. Although contemporary theology downplayed the dead's knowledge of this world, it nonetheless acknowledged that spirits had access to sources of information not available to the living, such as other dead individuals or angels (Marshall 2002, 212). Thus, by breaking both elite and popular norms regarding the relationship between the dead and the living, a magician could find knowledge capable of reasserting the social order.

Conclusion

One of the key debates in the modern study of magic is whether to treat rituals as transgressive against, or reflective of, the norms of the broader society. In his introduction to his edition of Clm 849, Richard Kieckhefer mentioned that the rites studied therein were "flamboyantly transgressive, even carrying transgression toward its furthest imaginable limits" (Kieckhefer 1998, 10). More recently, Stephen Clucas has criticized this approach, stressing the importance of the "normative character of ritual magic practices" and examining their correspondence with orthodox Christian devotion and practice (Clucas 2015, 271).

The rituals we have examined above illustrate how both approaches – toward the transgressive and normative analysis of these rituals – are required to integrate these works into our historical understanding. They breach the boundaries – whether spiritual or physical – between the living and the dead, disrupt the prerogatives of the clergy, and seek to circumvent legal restrictions on their practice. At the same time, however, they demonstrate how even such practices reflect religious and cultural norms, and, in some cases, seek to reassert community standards and social harmony. Further complicating the manner, these rites simultaneously conform to and set aside the procedures and stipulations that we might consider "normative" within necromantic practice itself. One passage turns one way, and the next another, with each change adding nuance to our understandings of macro- and micro-cultures of early modern Britain, showing how individuals set out to understand and explore the relationships between heaven and hell (and Purgatory), and between the living and the dead.

Given the explicitly Catholic elements of the fifteenth-century exemplar in Rawlinson D.252 and their omission from the other manuscripts, one might hypothesize that scribes removed such elements in order to comply with changing religious sensibilities. At the same time, the presence of only one exemplar from an earlier period is problematic, as is the assumption that magical manuscripts could not reflect previous beliefs later considered heretical or dangerous. The influence of Protestantism is certainly visible in some magical manuscripts; for example, these sensibilities likely informed Gilbert and Davis' rituals in Additional MS. 36,674 (Klaassen 2012a, 349, 351). Yet others referenced Roman Catholic concepts for much longer than it was publicly expressed. For example, Duffy has demonstrated that even the Books of Hours used for private devotion had language particular to Catholic beliefs struck out (Duffy 2011, 151–152), but it was not uncommon for magical texts to reference the pope, Purgatory, or relics (e.g. e Mus 173, 5r, 52r, 57r; Folger V.b.26(1), 21, 38, 89). It may be that the discovery of further manuscripts of the ritual, especially any composed in Catholic countries, might give some insight as to these transformations.

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In addition, usage of magical manuscripts in historical analysis must come with caveats. Due to the variegated and scattered nature of such material across geography and time, caution should be displayed at attempts to postulate their contents as portraying a worldview consistent across all scribes. Likewise, we should be careful about considering these to be rites of an undifferentiated "folk" tradition, not only because such constructions are problematic in and of themselves, but also due to the proficiency of many of these copyists with both English and Latin, aligning them more with the learned members of society.

One question that is difficult to answer is how many of these copied rituals led to ritual practice by the authors, copyists, and owners of these works. It is certainly possible that many people copied these rituals out of curiosity or wonder, or held performing them in abeyance due to fear or lack of opportunity. Perhaps a future discovery of a court transcript or account of an experiment will help us to explore this question further. Nonetheless, even a ritual that remains unpracticed does not mean that its composition and transmission cannot provide valuable information about the beliefs and values of those who chose to include it in their manuscripts – insights we might not be able to achieve otherwise, save if we find a way to speak with the dead ourselves.

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Abstrakti:"Sa oot miesten ja naisten luiden haltija": rituaalinen nekromantia varhaismodernin ajan Englannissa

1500–1600-luvulla Englannissa korkea kuolleisuusaste ja kirkkomaalle tehtävät hautaukset vaikuttivat siihen, että kuolleet sijoittuivat hyvin lähelle eläviä sekä fyysisesti että emotionaalisesti. Tuon ajan nekromantia-kokeilut, joissa loitsija pyrki maagisin keinoin yhteyteen kuolleiden kanssa, ovat historiallisina dokumentteina olleet vähän tutkittuja. Yhteen tällaisista kokeiluista viitataan tässä "Luiden haltija" ("Keeper of the Bones") -rituaalina, jossa magian suorittaja haluamaansa tietoa saavuttaakseen kutsuu henkiä tuomaan luokseen kuolleen ihmisen haamun. Artikkelissa tarkastellaan näitä rituaaleja suhteessa hautajaisiin liittyneisiin aikalaisrituaaleihin ja -käytäntöihin sekä uskomuksiin sielun luonteesta ja kuolleiden roolista varhaismodernissa kulttuurissa.