RITES OF PASSAGE AND THE LIMINAL DEAD IN MEDIEVAL AND REFORMATION BRITAIN

A Ph.D. Dissertation

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To my family

RITES OF PASSAGE AND THE LIMINAL DEAD IN MEDIEVAL AND REFORMATION BRITAIN

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores accounts of the liminal, returning dead in medieval and Reformation Britain through the anthropological schema of the Rites of Passage, identified by Van Gennep early in the twentieth century. These Rites of Passage, on the concept level, have existed within human society for a very long time, as they take their foundations out of the very human conditions that support and carry the community and society itself. Society's perceptions of death as well as the Rites of Passage that surround death are examined over the said period, to argue that the returning dead were the very representation of failed Rites of Passage: the liminal presence. It is thus proposed here that even through major changes in shape and perception, these Rites of Passage and the result of their failure, the liminal presence retained their inherent properties. As such it is argued here that the liminal dead, were a continued presence within a society that underwent great religious changes. From the revenant, the walking dead, perhaps the purest incarnation of liminality to the later apparitions of ghosts in the Reformation period, the liminal presence, in all its incarnations, is shaped beyond anything else through the Rites of Passage, in all their universality.

Keywords: Rites of Passage, Arnold van Gennep, Liminal Presence, Revenant, Walking Dead, Ghost, Purgatory, Exempla, Reformation

ÖZET

ORTA ÇAĞ VE REFORMASYON DÖNEMİ BRİTANYA'SINDA GEÇİŞ TÖRENLERİ VE LİMİNAL ÖLÜLER

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Bu çalışma, Orta çağ ve Reformasyon dönemi Britanyası'nda liminal ölülerin kayıtlarını, yirminci yüzyılda Van Gennep tarafından ortaya atılmış olan antropolojik Geçiş Törenleri şeması üzerinden incelemektedir. Bu Geçiş Törenleri kavramsal açıdan, sosyal toplum içerisinde çok uzun süredir varlığını sürdürmüş olup temellerini toplumu destekleyen ve taşıyan insanlık hallerinden almaktadır. Toplumun ölümü ve Geçiş Törenlerini duyumsaması ve algısı bu dönem içerisinde incelenip geri dönen ölülerin aslında sekteye uğramış Geçiş Törenlerinin sonucu, yani liminal varlığı tam olarak temsil ettiği öne sürülmektedir. Şekil ve algı açısından büyük değişikliklere uğramalarına rağmen, bu Geçiş Törenlerinin ve sekteye uğramalarının sonucu olan liminal varlığın temel özelliklerini korudukları ve dolayısıyla liminal ölülerin bu dönemlerde büyük dini değişiklikler geçiren toplum içerisinde varlıklarını kesintisiz bir biçimde sürdürdükleri ileri sürülmektedir. Liminal varlık, belki de en saf cisimleşimi olan yaşayan ölülerden, Reformasyon dönemindeki hayaletlere kadar bütün biçimleri ile her şeyin ötesinde Geçiş Törenleri üzerinden değişime uğramaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Geçiş Törenleri, Arnold van Gennep, Liminal Varlık, Yaşayan Ölüler, Hayalet, Araf, Exempla, Reformasyon

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CHAPTER I

DEATH – RITES OF PASSAGE

The subject of death and the dead within the study of history has been quite popular in the last few decades. Interestingly enough, perhaps due to our modern mindset that insists that the dead are non-entities within our society, there are few works focusing on death that actually deal with the dead. The history of the dead has stepped back into the shadow of the history of death.[1] Those that study death seem to ignore, for the most part, the returning dead, even though one would expect these dead to be a treasure trove of information as to how the living perceived or believed the dead themselves to act, and by proxy allow one to glean their understanding of death itself. This stance is not exactly incomprehensible; the study of death, while still new and shiny, was not a mainstream subject until its novelty propelled it straight into the deep currents. As such one would have to be very careful as to what kind of sources one would be using in the said studies. The dead and their place within the society have only recently swum to the edges of the rapidly moving currents of mainstream study where history is concerned. Yet they are not perceived

[1] Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die Gegenwart Der Toten," In *Death in the Middle Ages,* ed. Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: Leuven University Press: 1983), 21.

anymore as the sole property of folklore, and have indeed taken their places within history and the study thereof.

The study of the dead and dying in any given society, at any given time period, has by now, for the most part, ceased to be the cause of many a raised eyebrow. Still, as with any study there are sections of it that even now remain out at left field. The study of the returning dead, in their varying forms, of revenants, ghosts, poltergeists, etc. is one such section. Throughout the research in this specific section one will come across diverse approaches, some very keenly concerned in insinuating here and there that of course it is all in the minds of the living; others, perhaps more religiously oriented, throw in a 'who knows'; either opinion or stance is faulty, one could argue, as they insist on superimposing the mindset of the present on to the past. Perhaps the best approach that I have personally come upon is Finucane's: "Even though ghosts or apparitions may exist only in the minds of their percipients, the fact of that existence is a social and historical reality."[2] The valid point here thus would be the fact that in the period in question, people did indeed believe that certain dead could very well return and did indeed do so on a regular basis. As such, regardless of the reality of the situation, whether there were indeed things going bump in the night, or merely overactive imaginations and mass hysteria, the fact remains that people, in believing the dead to return, left records of such a belief and as such those studying this belief need to take such records at face value, rather than trying to spot the trick of the illusionist, going 'and exactly how did that rabbit end up in that hat?'

Such an approach would only hinder one from perceiving the finer points of the belief they are studying, because a belief it is and thus carries all the connotations

[2] R.C. Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1984), 1.

and consequences of being such. People at the time believed their dead to be very close to them, and that a select number of the dead could and did return. After all, as Gurevich stated, "Surely the historian studying the individual's relationship with death can find no evidence more interesting than these reports from beyond the grave."[3] This is similarly valid not only for the study of death but also the perception of death and the dead within the society. How could such a study be conceived of as complete if a huge section of the belief system is excluded on the grounds that, from a logical point of view, it is completely irrational? These dead, whether imagined phenomena or not, clearly indicate with their tenacious existence certain facts that people believed to be true where the order of the world and the place of the dead within that order was concerned.

Thus while studying the dead of a society that perceived its dead to be in close proximity one must take into account that these dead were seen as part of the society, and thus they have to be studied as such, with inherent properties, purposes, and motivations. The same goes, and perhaps more strongly where the restless dead, the liminal presence, the revenant, the ghost is concerned, one cannot simply label these parties as social constructs. Even if they are social constructs, or figments of overactive imaginations, they have to be approached as the contemporaries would have perceived them: as real.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle in the study of the dead in the Middle Ages – be they the returning, active sort, or merely those that lie still in their graves – is the necessity to overcome the mindset of our own modern society, wherein the dead have long ceased to exist in any significant social capacity, except in a memorial sense. The medieval mindset however had a different approach, one indication of

[3] Aaron Gurevich, *Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 70.

which would be "the fact that biography, such as it was understood in the Middle Ages, did not finish with the completion of its subject's life on earth. Only the judgement pronounced at the last day could close the story."[4] Until the end of time thus the community's dead, as well as the current living members, co-existed together: "Intimacy between the living and the dead was possible because death was not envisaged as a full extinguishing of either body or spirit."[5] One must understand and perceive clearly that in the medieval timeframe the dead were not defunct within the society. In this sense death was not the end of things or of relationships, as it is perceived to be today, but rather a point of transformation; a threshold to be stepped over.

This perception was not only grounded in the Christian teachings of the afterlife, that is, in religion alone, it was also a social phenomenon:

> Dort ist der Status des Toten nicht bestimmt von subjectiven 'Andenken', das im Belieben der Lebenden steht, sondern er ist gewisser massen eine objektive Gegebenheit; die Toten sind Personen im rechtlichen Sinn, sie sind Rechtssubjekte und also auch Subjekte von Beziehungen der menschlichen Gesellschaft. Mit anderen worten: sie sind unter den Lebenden gegenweartig.[6]

Thus to understand the make-up of medieval society, as well as the perceived relationships and interaction between the living and the dead, one first has to overcome the modern conditioning that the dead as a social group do not exist and, as it were, have no 'place' in the dealings of the society in general. The living owed the dead of their society their inheritance, status, name, even their lives; as such the dead could not in anyway be excised from the community, or the memory of the

[4] Ibid., 66.
[5] Nancy Caciola, "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in the Middle Culture," *Past and Present* 152 (1996): 7.
[6] "The status of the dead is not categorized by the subjective 'memorial' that is dependent on the discretion of the living, but it is instead an objective given; The dead are persons from a legal stand point, they are legal subjects and also subjects of the human relationships of the community. In other words, they are present among the living." (my translation): Oexle, "Die Gegenwart Der Toten," 22.

living.[7] The dead were a social class of their own; they were indeed an active part of society, legally, financially, religiously, emotionally, spiritually, even geographically, with motivations of their own: "People were buried in their local parish cemetery amongst their relatives and friends… [which] …also maintained a disembodied presence of the dead in the minds of the living community."[8]

Graveyards, or rather more descriptively churchyards, were situated within towns; they were places of rest for the dead but also in some cases open to the living as would be difficult for the modern mind to imagine; they functioned as marketplaces, areas for festivities, dancing, drinking, feasts, grazing.[9] All of which the Church generally frowned upon, but which would indicate a rather laid-back relationship with the dead of the community: "The church constantly castigated dancing in churches and cemeteries as being 'pagan,' 'superstitious,' or 'indecent.'";[10] which would indicate that people tended to do it anyway. In medieval Europe people lived together with their dead, their presence and remembrance very much in evidence in the everyday dealings of the society. As such, the relations between the living and the dead were similarly active and seldom one-sided. The living communicated with the dead, the dead were also known to communicate back, which did not always invoke the horror one would expect from a modern point of view. The dead were deeply entangled in remembrance and commemoration in a society that strived to remember.

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[7] Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 79.
[8] Danielle Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 20.
[9] Sarah Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and The Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2011), 172.
[10] Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 183.

People were praying for their dead from the late sixth century on, even though from a religious stance such prayer was neither encouraged nor theologically grounded.[11] Though "St Augustine distinguished three main ways of assisting the souls of the dead: masses, prayers, and alms,"[12] it was he himself who worded his doubts that the situation of the dead could really be influenced for the better by the living, that any change could be wrought on the greater scale of things after the point of death: "His confidence in the efficacy of prayer for the dead was not specifically linked to his belief in the possibility of postmortem purification."[13] Similarly it was Augustine who rebuffed the idea that the dead could return in any capacity to the living. It must be stated that before the twelfth century "the official teachings of the church … lacked the clarity which they had come to possess by the later Middle Ages."[14] However, these arguments did not stop the continued existence of prayers for the dead, effective remembrance and the regard of the dead as a part of the community: "The commemoration of the dead by the living was an affirmation of their continuing affinity."[15] The living and the dead were in a interdependent circle, their existences deeply tied to one another.

In such an environment, where the dead, a veritable age class[16] within the society, existed comfortably in such close proximity to the living, the question of visitations from the dead that inspired fear becomes rather interesting. As there were indeed visitations that filled people with dread and fear, visitations that in a society

[11] Bonnie Effros, "Beyond Cemetery Walls: Early Medieval Funerary Topography and Christian Salvation," *Early Medieval Europe* 6, 1, (1997): 7.
[12] Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006), 35.
[13] R. R. Atwell "From Augustine to Gregory the Great: an Evolution of the Emergence of the Doctrine of Purgatory," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38, 2, (1987): 185.
[14] C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11.
[15] Virginia R. Bainbridge, "The Medieval Way of Death: Commemoration and the Afterlife in Pre-Reformation Cambridgeshire," in *Prophecy and Eschatology*, ed. Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 200.
[16] Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 36.

so close to its dead were unwanted and guarded against. What exactly was it that could turn a benign co-existence, that was in all senses expected and the norm, into a source of terror? Throughout history, apart from the 'normal' dead there have been examples of a rather more disturbing kind of dead that caused mayhem and harm among the living. It seems that as long as people died, which they did with rather disturbing regularity and in great numbers from the very beginning, there were some which refused, in the most disturbing fashion, to stay dead.

Perhaps the most grounded way to go about finding out what was different about these particular dead, would be to study the norm of things, that is, how the community understood, dealt with, and prepared for the death of the individual, the community member, for therein lies the answer as to what was setting these specific dead apart from the norm. Additionally, this would allow one to glimpse the mechanics behind a community that could continue to live with its dead, even with the existence of the shock of these rather abhorrent deviations.

Death, biologically seen, is an inescapable event; every living organism shares it as a common fate. However, "where a human being is concerned the physiological phenomena are not the whole of death. To the organic event is added a complex mass of beliefs, emotions and activities which give it its distinctive character."[17] Death is doubtless the most unsettling event for the human mind to contemplate. This, regardless of the promises of religion and the afterlife, was no different in the Middle Ages; it was perhaps even more pronounced, as the death rate and reality of life expectancy forced death to a much closer proximity to the community as a whole. The close-knit ties of the dead of the community to the living were similarly a rather stark remainder of death's immediacy. Thus the community,

[17] Robert Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand,* trans. Rodney and Claudia Needham (Aberdeen: The University Press, 1960), 27.

the society, the people, had no choice but to manage with the existence and proximity of death and the dead.

Death, being normally the death of a member of a community, had to be as controlled as possible, to follow a preset stencil that would indicate and ensure a 'good' death wherein everything was as it should be and nothing deviated from its set path. If that path was followed as it should be, then there would be no mishaps and the dying person could become once again part of the community, as one of their dead this time, merely changing in status and capacity within the community and society. The 'good' death thus "suggests some degree of mastery over the arbitrariness of the biological occurrence by replicating a prototype to which all such deaths conform."[18] Such a controlled death was equally effective from a religious perspective, indicating the possible salvation of the soul of the deceased to a great extent.

Thus there were, in the understanding of the times, certain types of death; the most basic division that exists in everything human beings judge holds its validity here as well: 'good' and 'bad': "The Good Death is a moral dying, a dying that can be done well or badly as a social performance."[19] A person could die a 'good' death or a 'bad' death, and the kind of death the person died would shape the identity of the person in the eyes of the community, to some extent going beyond the life they had lived or the status the person had held in life within the community beforehand: "In the business of dying it was all important to make a good end."[20] The type of death one died could very well lead to damnation or salvation, and these in both the religious and the social sense.

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[18] Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry, "Introduction," In *Death & the Regeneration of Life,* ed. Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 15.
[19] Allan Kellehear, *A Social History of Dying* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 85-86.
[20] T. S. R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages: Morality, Judgment, and Remembrance* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), 119.

Once again, the difference of the modern and medieval mindsets becomes apparent when one scrutinizes what people understood of a 'good' death in the Middle Ages. Unlike the modern take that a painless, quick and possibly unaware death would be the best way to go, to the medieval mind these properties were the very thing one should avoid at all possible cost. A good death was prolonged, with a decent amount of suffering that albeit should not be so much as to cloud the mind of the dying person and blur to them the awareness that they were, indeed, dying. Aries's 'tamed death' may be seen as a concept similar to the 'good' death, as it too was a death coming to pass within the household, with forewarning and preparation.[21] A good death thus was one that gave sufficient warning of its coming; a simple illness seemed to be the best.

This prolonged period of waiting and awareness was necessary to prepare both the individual – body and soul as it were – and the community for the oncoming event: "The ideal Christian death took place at home, with the dying in bed surrounded and comforted by the family."[22] The dying person in the best of conditions, thus, would be in their sick bed surrounded by family and neighbors, visited by the priest, would have the last rites administered, and die repentant and absolved. Death in this sense was a social event; the community participated in it. This eased the passing and loss of the member, and ensured a smooth return to everyday life once the dying person was perceived to have taken their place among the community's dead: "With good deaths, community boundaries were effortlessly fractured and immediately reconstituted as the dead left the community of the living and entered into their new 'age class'. These shades were believed to accept their

[21] Philippe Aries, *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present,* trans. Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1975), 13-14.
[22] Roger S. Wieck, "The Death Desired: Books of Hours and the Medieval Funeral," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages,* ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 437.

new place."[23] It was the period of preparation that allowed this smooth passage to commence.

However, there were certain conditions to be fulfilled, certain rituals and rites to be practiced to ensure the said safe passage: "Rites of this type concern processes of individual transformation whereby social and cultural norms are symbolized and reconfirmed."[24] These rituals, while essentially religious in nature, inherently fulfill a social purpose, ensuring the continued health and wholesomeness of the community. These preparations and rites, practiced throughout the 'process' of dying and death, were part of a bigger function. They pinpointed a stage of transition that the member of the community underwent. The members of the community passed through several such stages during the span of their lives and their existence within the community. The close proximity of the dead within the community and the fact that the community perceived the dead to be a class of their own, allow the rites and transformation of death to be clearly identifiable as one such threshold.

The community had a certain approach to such thresholds. As with the 'good' death, there were ways to go about it that would ease the transition and change in identity. This change in identity was not limited to the dying person, but also to the bereaved and the remaining members of the community. They, through the death within the family and community, also went through alterations: "At death identity is altered not only through the loss of figures who have served as sources of identity but also by the new responsibilities which the living must take upon themselves."[25] Thus how death is perceived, approached and controlled by the community, through

[23] Nancy Caciola "Spirits Seeking Bodies: Death, Possession and Communal Memory in the Middle Ages," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 84.
[24] Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 29.
[25] Douglas J. Davies, *Death, Ritual, and Belief* (London: Cassell, 1997), 4.

whatever control they could establish over the death of the individual, is of utmost importance. In this sense the position of the dead within the community is telling: "The dead did not cease to be members of the human community. Death marked a transition, a change in status, but not an end."[26]

Thus death posed as a threshold that affected the individual as well as the whole community: "In all human societies, the great majority of ceremonial occasions are *'rites of transition'*, which mark the crossing of boundaries between one social category and another."[27] The rites that marked such thresholds in the course of a person's life within the community were first identified by scholar Arnold Van Gennep in the very early twentieth century, as the *Rites of Passage*. The schema he shaped argued that these rites were utilized whenever the individual moved from one phase in their life into another: "Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings."[28] There are quite a few of these stages, as apart from the biologically enforced and rather inevitable ones: birth, puberty, pregnancy, old age for those who reach it, and death, there are additionally those constructed by society: marriage, apprenticeship, entering an occupation, retirement, etc. Here of course the focus will be on the most inescapable of them all, death. This particular stage meant more in a society where the dead did not disappear. Though, as one shall see, almost all the stages and Rites of Passage have some impact on the returning dead and the belief that surrounds them. Van Gennep's simple schema allowed for

[26] Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 2.
[27] Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication: The Logic by which Symbols are Connected: An Introduction to the Use of Structuralist Analysis in Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 35
[28] Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 3. Van Gennep's work was first published in 1909 as Arnold Van Gennep, *Les Rites de passage. Étude systématique des rites* (Paris: 1909).

the possibility for the Rites of Passage to become visible and perceptible in human communities in general, independent of geography, time, religion or the specific rituals employed within the processes.

Van Gennep subdivides the Rites of Passage into the *rites of separation, transition rites / liminal rites,* and *rites of incorporation.*[29] The theory itself is based on the idea of transition, "which centres on the idea of 'liminality' (from the Latin *limen,* 'threshold')."[30] In this sense the Rites that Van Gennep identified were literally those of a journey, a passage. While Van Gennep calls these subdivisions too rites, these rites equally point to periods of time, that is "stages",[31] wherein the separation, transition and reintegration happens, stages of the journey, as it were.

In the phase of separation, as the name would indicate, the subject, the person, the passenger, leaves behind their previous identity, severing any and all ties to the community that were created under that identity. Once separation is complete, the subject is cut loose from all its tethers to the community and enters the liminal stage. This threshold stage is a space of in-between: the subject has no identity, they are a stranger to the community, a ambiguous presence, dangerous, uncanny and unsettling, until they are once again integrated into the community under their new identity within the stage of reintegration. In the reintegration stage the subject re-forges their ties to the community under a new identity and status, once again

[29] Ibid., 11. The wording of incorporation as it brings with it connotations connected to the corporeal body, will be redefined as *reintegration* [as utilized by Robert Dinn, "Death and Rebirth in Late Medieval Bury St. Edmunds," in *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100-1600*, ed. Steven Bassett. (London: Leicester University Press, 1992),156.] though for all intends and purposes and in its most basic their functions are the same; the reintegration of the now dead person into the community as one of the dead.
[30] Binski, *Medieval Death*, 29.
[31] Miri Rubin, also treats these subdivisions as stages rather than 'rites' the "three crucial stages in the making of the *rites de passage*: separation, transition and incorporation" Rubin, Miri "Introduction: Rites of Passage," in *Rites of Passage: Cultures of Transition in the Fourteenth Century,* ed. Nicola F. McDonald and W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2004), 2.

becoming a member, shedding the previous ambiguity of the liminal stage and taking its place once again within the community.

These stages identified by Van Gennep, in his *schema* of *rites de passage,*[32] while incredibly simple in nature, allow one to perceive properties and meanings of the rituals that were employed in the Middle Ages within the community that would have otherwise been obscured by the religious nature of the said rituals and their connection to the Church. Where death in the Middle Ages is concerned, the application of Van Gennep's schema of the Rites of Passage is not novel, though a few side notes should be made where both these general approaches and Van Gennep's own approach to death as Rites of Passage is concerned. While within the workings of the Rites of Passage in general, the subject, that is the person going through the transition takes center point, in the case of death, death being what it is, the subject, the dying person, does take a backseat to the whole event, especially so after the point of death. Similarly the rituals surrounding death are most of the time identified as mortuary rituals, that is, rituals coming to pass after the point of death. However, it is important and essential, as is argued here, that especially when one is studying death, the dead and the returning dead, that the dying person even after death must remain the subject of the Rites of Passage.

Van Gennep states that while analyzing funeral ceremonies, he had expected to find the separation rites to be prominent, this is to be expected as he would anticipate the community to be separating itself from the deceased; however what he found was something different. Apart from very prominent transitional rites, he found that "those funeral rites which incorporate the deceased into the world of the

[32] Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, vii.

dead are most extensively elaborated and assigned the greatest importance."[33] As such the fact that it is the reintegration stage rather than separation that is demonstrated during the funeral would indicate that indeed the subject and its perceived process through the Rites of Passage is what determines the actions of the community, as would have been the case in Rites of Passage of initiation, where the initiate would be the subject going through all the stages.

Van Gennep's attention strays to the funeral and the bereaved as the focal points of the Rites of Passage that constitute death. From an anthropological point of view this perception is indeed valid, as the social structure of the remaining community is largely the main point of research. Similarly some researchers who do use the Rites of Passage to understand the rituals that surround death in the Middle Ages focus more on the mortuary, that is, post-death rituals rather than on the dying person as the subject. As was the case with the history of the dead, this shift towards the remaining living and the society is understandable from a modern point of view. However, one must take into account how the dead were perceived to be part of the community even after death, as active members. Thus the focus, it is argued here, must remain on the subject as would be the case with any initiation rite.

As it was, Van Gennep himself seems to provide a solution to the problem by suggesting an existent duality, that the dying person as well as the bereaved of the community are going through their own Rites of Passage, connected but still separated. On the transitional period of the mourners he states that:

> in some cases the transitional period of the living is a counterpart of the transitional period of the deceased, and the termination of the first sometimes coincides with the termination of the second – that is, with the incorporation of the deceased into the world of the dead.[34]

[33] Ibid., 146.
[34] Ibid., 147.

Hence the indication is that there were two possible readings where the Rites of Passage of death were concerned; through the subject, the dying person, and the bereaved, the community. As such, to avoid further complication and stay true to the very subject of this study, this study will limit itself to the reading of the Rites of Passage through the subject of the dying person. Thus it is argued here, where the separation stage is concerned, one must focus on a point a bit earlier in the flow of things, the process of dying itself, while applying the schema of the Rites of Passage to death in the Middle Ages. Dinn similarly identifies the stage of separation to commence while the subject is still alive.[35] Dinn however also focuses on the normal flow of events, that is, successful Rites of Passage for both the subject and the community, which though indeed of interest here, is hardly as interesting as what happens when the Rites fail.

The Rites of Passage, in general, fulfilled the roles of landmarks in the social time-flow of the community. In the stages throughout the individual's life the society and community were in control of the Rites, guiding and controlling the subject, to ensure safe passage and unbroken continuation within the workings of the community. However when it comes to death, the last set of Rites of Passage of the member of the community, the control of the community even of the subject, the dying person, can only go half-way. Death, the midway point, in a way also marked the start of uncertain and unfathomable waters. Thus the community at this point could only really guide the subject up to a certain point. As death is inevitable, and the subject has no choice in going through with it, the community and society structure and organize the passage as best they can: the way to die, the way to die well, to complete one's transition successfully and be successfully reintegrated and

[35] Robert Dinn, "Death and Rebirth," 151-169.

welcomed back into the community as one of the dead. Thus the Rites of Passage of death were planned as much as possible.

The most basic necessity for successful Rites of Passage, a 'good' death, started with foreknowledge, and time for preparation. Once the approach of death was identified and perceived, preparations for the safe passage of the dying person commenced. The separation phase was initiated. The sick room became a space removed from time and everyday life; a liminal space that housed the departing member of the community; a space as in-between as the person it was created for. This private chamber would become a cocoon of ideal conditions created for the dying person. The sick room would serve as a stage on which the first phase of the Rites of Passage would be played out: "observations of the dying person as someone *already* interacting with the otherworld;"[36] the initiation of the liminal stage and the religious preparations; the subject literally on the threshold, standing between the earthly realm and the Hereafter. Within the sick room one would witness a merging and mixture of religious and social preparation, so intertwined that any attempt to unravel one from the other would obscure their combined purpose.

The Rites of Passage were not only for the sake of the individual however. They were equally there to ensure the continued existence and peace of the community, in overcoming the loss of one of its members. In this sense the Rites of Passage were a social event with a single subject in the middle: "At the tolling of the bell the neighbourhood was encouraged to drop what it was doing and follow the priest to the bedside, or at least say a prayer for the soul of the dying."[37] Family, and neighbors would visit, everyone saying their farewells. Ideally the subject would be in bed "surrounded by family and possibly attended by their physician and a priest

[36] Kellehear, *A Social History of Dying*, 82.
[37] John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 32.

within the private space of the bedroom."[38] It was essential that any wrong doings or open conflicts be resolved, be they serious or merely neighborly quarrels. The dying person is thus encouraged to disentangle all the strands that connect them to their family, friends, community, society and the earthly realm. A will is prepared, the family to be bereaved taken care of to the best possible extent where the future is concerned. Inheritances are dealt out, depending on the wealth and position of the dying person; the continuity of the flow of everyday life for the community is secured. Any ties to the people familiar to the dying person as well as the community, emotional, economical, spiritual, even religious are shed.

Certain rituals were used to bring about separation and the completion of the Rites of Passage. The rituals that were employed during the process of death were mostly religious in their nature, their source the Church itself: "A bad death was death without the last rites."[39] Confession of sins, absolution, extreme unction and viaticum all in their original Church-established utilization concerned the salvation of the soul. Within the sick room and the eyes of the community, however, they came to signify the rituals necessary for the Rites of Passage, death. Thus there was an overlap in the perceptions of the people and the fear they felt towards incomplete Rites of Passage and the fate of the soul in the Hereafter. Sudden death and unpreparedness was not only cause for being stuck as a liminal presence, in the transitional phase of the Rites of Passage, in between the strata of the living and the dead, but also brought with it suspicion in the eyes of the community and the possibility of damnation. All in all, the Church itself as well as its rituals were perceived as integral to the Rites of Passage: "The Church offered help generally

[38] Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body*, 18.
[39] Margaret Aston, "Death," in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England,* ed. Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 207.

regarded as indispensible in making a safe departure from the world: comfort, guidance, and above all the sacraments of penance, the altar, and extreme unction."[40]

The importance of the Church for the medieval peasant was:

> not because of its formalized code of belief, but because its rites were an essential accompaniment to the important events in his own life – birth, marriage and death. It solemnized these occasions by providing appropriate rites of passage to emphasize their social significance.[41]

This was especially the case where death was concerned; the rites offered by the Church thus fulfilled double functions, religious and social. These rituals fulfilled the social necessities posed by the Rites of Passage. Confession and absolution would settle the connection of the dying person with the remaining living, removing any quarrels and exercising forgiveness and thus separation from the community and the current identity of the subject. Thus confession was perceived to be of importance not only for the eternal fate of the soul, but also for the remaining members of the community. The one confessing, through his confession, came clean about any and all misdeeds, at least in theory. These misdeeds at their very basis were his connections to the earthly realm, to his family, to the community, strings that could prove dangerous if left tethered. Absolution thus was a continuation of confession itself. The individual removed any and all ties, of affection or enmity. The material and economical side of these connections was dealt with through the will itself.

The viaticum within the frame of the Rites of Passage worked as a fortification for the dying person, rations, as it were, for the journey and transition awaiting them. Extreme unction on the other hand initiated the complete separation of the senses from the physical: "The dying person was prepared for death with the

[40] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 47.
[41] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin Books, [1971] 1978), 88.

sacrament of extreme unction, which, administered at the death bed by a priest, sacramentally celebrated separation from the world of the living."[42] However this separation of the senses from the earthly world in general was not the official purpose the Church had devised for this ritual. It should also be pointed out that apart from this discrepancy in perception as to the function of the rituals between the Church and the community, their inherent meaning, where the Church itself was concerned, had also been subject to change throughout the history of the Church.

Extreme unction, for example, the anointing of the sick as it was originally established was first and foremost perceived and used as a healing ritual. It was only later "after the year 850, [that] anointing, confession and reconciliation, and viaticum were beginning to define the ritual response to dying."[43] It was from that point on that unction, the anointing, came to be directly associated with death as part of the rites of death; an inherent part of the rites for the dying, the preparing of the dying person's soul in the face of death. Thus the ritual "had itself evolved into a purification of the senses, rather than a healing unguent."[44] It became extreme unction, reserved to the dying. The connotations of healing still existed but it was perceived as a healing of sins, to an extent, rather than the sickness that assailed the body of the dying person. The five senses and the sins committed through them became the main point of the ritual. The senses, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands and feet, were anointed and cleansed, and any sins possibly committed though the use of the said senses were sought to be forgiven through God's mercy.[45] Thus one could

[42] Dinn, "Death and Rebirth," 153.
[43] Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 168.
[44] Lizette Larson-Miller, "Healed to Life: The Historical Development of Anointing of the Sick at the Heart of the Church's Healing Ministry," *Liturgy* 22, 3 (2007): 8.
[45] Wieck, "The Death Desired," 436.

argue that in the official sense the ritual encompassed both purification and a possible remedy for the sins of the individual.

In the eyes of the community however, extreme unction was much more closely bound to death than was intended by the Church. The five senses, it was believed, were detached by extreme unction, severing the connection of the dying person to the world of the living. Extreme unction thus became the very ritual of separation within the Rites of Passage surrounding death: "In the early Middle Ages the close association of Extreme Unction with death led to the perception that reception of the sacrament was tantamount to a death sentence."[46] Its administration to the dying person meant that all hope was exhausted, and it was extreme unction itself, the community believed, that removed the individual from the living. After the administration of extreme unction "the subject of the ritual, while not literally dead, was considered to have entered a shadow world between life and death, a world of unclear boundaries."[47] After separation, thus, the subject entered the second stage of the Rites of Passage and took on liminal qualities. Survival, after the administration of extreme unction, was very unsettling.

"Anointing was the most final ritual statement: the anointing or unction of the dying … was a ritually transformative act from which there was no return."[48] The community believed that once anointed these individuals were no longer of the living; they were effectively the living dead, outcasts from the living world. They became something other, something liminal that existed between the living and the dead; these individuals, it was believed, would not be able to partake once again in life: "They would have to live thereafter as a sort of animated corpse…never again

[46] Sarah J. Plant, "Spencer's Praise of English Rites for the Sick and Dying," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 32, no.2 (2001): 405. A similar turn of phrase is used by Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 44.
[47] Dinn, "Death and Rebirth,"153-4.
[48] Binski, *Medieval Death*, 29.

eat meat, or have sexual relations with his or her spouse."[49] None of these consequences were dictated by the Church; on the contrary the Church was quite disturbed by such beliefs, calling them superstitious and groundless: "Words like 'superstition' are suspect, finally, because they arise out of the learned tradition and not from popular culture itself."[50] They are generally used to try and subvert such common beliefs. Such an accusation would thus indicate that this perception of extreme unction was a later meaning loaded onto the rite itself through its usage within the Rites of Passage, and thus belonged in its origin to the social spectrum, not religion.

Extreme unction is perhaps the best example as to how the rituals provided by the Church and inherently religious in nature were put to social use, their inherent meaning changing drastically to accommodate the social purposes thrust upon them by the community. As it were, the Church provided most of the rituals that the community utilized. They were used as the rituals that made up the Rites of Passage that marked the transition of the community member from one status to another, one phase in their life to another; the important events that a community would feel necessary to commemorate —births, naming, coming of age, marriages and death, to count the basic few. The religious rituals that overlaid such events could be listed as baptism to introduce a new member to the community; communion to mark the entry into rationality of the young member; marriage to bind together two members and ensure procreation and the continuity of the community, and the last rites, to ease the transition and safe passage of the member from the community's living to the community's dead. This safe passage was not only for the safety of the dying

[49] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 313.
[50] David Hall, "Introduction," in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century,* ed. Steven L. Kaplan (New York: Mouton, 1984), 8.

member, but also for the health of the community, as a mishap in the Rites of Passage of death could be hazardous not only to the person in question, but also to the whole of the community.

When things went according to plan, and there was enough time and forewarning to prepare, the separation happened as previously stated, farewells, the handling of worldly affairs, the preparation of the will, confession, absolution, extreme unction and the viaticum. The full separation of the senses was believed to have been initiated by the ritual of extreme unction. The liminal stage already in a sense existent within the walls of the sick room, once it was isolated from everyday life, then took the dying person completely.

This was why those who survived after the administration of extreme unction were believed to be living corpses. They were essentially stuck as liminal presences with no way of claiming either their new identity as one of the dead of the community nor reclaiming the old identity they had shed. The liminal stage, even where all went as it should, commenced at the point of the complete separation of the dying person from life. However, the danger associated with that liminal stage was not ignored. This is further underlined by a very basic necessity: "Corpses need removal; the dead demand some attention and treatment. This begins with the experience of death's strangeness, a phenomenon rooted in death's stillness… the dead are too still for the comfort of the living."[51] The corpse is the very proof that death is inevitable and that it is the destination everyone without exception is headed for. The involuntary perception of one's own reflection in the corpse forms one of the motivators which affect the relationship between the living and the dead, and equally fuels the urge to establish some control. The liminal stage, a natural part of

[51] Douglas J. Davies, *A Brief History of Death* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 48.

the Rites of Passage that constituted death, and a phase that had to be overcome by both the subject and the community, reflects the manifestation of such fears.

The fear of the newly dead "is something deeply rooted in men's minds, undoubtedly antedating Christianity."[52] This was most probably why customs such as the opening of the windows in the sick room and the house, after the occurrence of death, for the escape of the dead soul, or the covering of mirrors and shiny surfaces to avoid trapping the soul were common.[53] Similarly, customs such as the usage of winding paths to the burial ground[54] can be identified as being triggered by a fear of the liminal. More generally:

> it seems to have been widely believed across Europe in the Middle Ages (and much longer) that for a period after death the dead remained in the vicinity of their bodies, liable to haunt the locations they had inhabited and the persons they had known when alive.[55]

These dead, though, would cease to be fearful once they overcame the liminal stage, that is, of course, if nothing went wrong to trap them therein. There were normal episodes and customs within the liminal stage. For example, "The transitional period in funeral rites is first marked physically by the more or less extended stay of the corpse or the coffin in the deceased's room (as during a wake), in the vestibule of his house, or elsewhere."[56] The wake, part of the funeral proceedings can be perceived as part of the separation process where the community is concerned: celebrating the previous identity of the subject, and reminiscing about

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[52] H.R. Ellis Davidson, "The Restless Dead: an Icelandic Ghost Story," in *The Folklore of Ghosts,* ed. H.R. Ellis Davidson (UK: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1981), 173.
[53] Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, "Introduction: Placing the Dead in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7. The covering of reflective surfaces was practiced after the Reformation as well. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion," in *The Pursuit of Holiness,* ed. Charles Trinkous and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 330-331
[54] Richard Mercer Dorson, *Peasant Customs and Savage Myths, Volume I* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 324.
[55] Gordon and Marshall, "Introduction: Placing the Dead," 7.
[56] Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 148.

the life led. The funeral procession to the gravesite, as well as the interment itself, are of course the main markers of the integration of the subject among the dead of the community. There were several other customs that seemed to be used as a matter of course, such as pouring water into the grave to form a kind of boundary,[57] seemingly to assure the community that everyone once in place would stay there. This transitional or liminal stage in the normal flow of events, it must be emphasized, is only of concern until the deceased is successfully reintegrated into the community as one of the dead. However, the more interesting burial customs arise only in certain situations, where problems have occurred within the Rites of Passage of death. These dead are clearly set apart in the eyes of the community.

Metcalf and Huntington argue that the application of Van Gennep's schema to death in the Middle Ages is problematic as it is difficult to pinpoint when exactly the stage of reintegration is initiated or rather completed.[58] One should remember first of all that to his surprise Van Gennep himself had found and identified the stage of reintegration to be already in process during the funerary proceedings. It is similarly argued here that the reintegration starts with the funeral, once the deceased is interred with the others of the community's dead, and completed for the most part either on the seventh or thirtieth days of commemoration after death. The post-burial feast reaffirmed the re-knitting of the community after the loss and reintegration of its member once again within its ranks, this time as one of the dead of the community: "The obsequies celebrated for each departed soul on the seventh and the thirtieth day after burial, and on the first anniversary, were called the week's. month's, and year's 'mind' or remembrance."[59] Continued anniversaries and

[57] Gordon and Marshall, "Introduction: Placing the Dead," 7.
[58] Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 112.
[59] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 327.

commemoration, while they seem to confuse the exact point of reintegration, are actually easily explicable as confirmatory of the reintegration of the subject into the dead of the community and thus part of the normal dealings between the living and the dead of the community, if one takes into account the existent close relations between the living and the dead in the medieval community.

The funeral had a two-fold function: for the deceased and for the living. The dead person was being reintegrated into the community under a new identity, and this was important to both. The whole process "served to repair the breaches in the fabric of society caused by the deaths of important people, to confirm the transfer of property and responsibilities to successors, reinforce the social hierarchy, and uphold traditions of hospitality."[60] All of these were part of the separation stage of the Rites of Passage, here the living take upon them the connections that were once tied to the deceased, reweaving the ripped seam in the community left by the departing party, while the dead man is reintegrated, the community reforms itself. Thus it is important to remember that the Rites of Passage had several functions when it came to the death of the community member: "In diesem Beziehungen zwischen Lebenden und Toten sind religiose, soziale, rechtliche und wirtschaftliche Momente eng verbunden."[61] Notice that the points of connection between the living and the dead, religious, social, legal, economical, are all aspects which were cut off during the separation stage; thus one can argue that the subject is once again reconnected to the community in the reintegration stage but this time under his/her new identity and status as a new community member, one of the dead.

[60] Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement* (London: Routledge in association with the Social History Society of the United Kingdom, 1989), 1.
[61] "In these relationships between the living and the dead, religious, social, legal and economic moments are tightly connected." (my translation): Oexle, "Die Gegenwart Der Toten," 30.

Thus the connection between the living and the dead was perhaps most strongly felt during the funeral, the point where the reintegration of the deceased person back into the society as one of the dead commenced. Yet it also, for the bereaved completed their separation from the deceased member of their community in his or her capacity as one of the living; from that point on, if nothing went wrong, the deceased would become one of the dead and the relationships would be resumed in this new capacity. Thus, apart from a brief planned interruption, the normal liminal phase within the schema of the Rites of Passage, the relationships within the community and society proved to be continuous: "Funerals in late medieval England … were intensely concerned with the notion of community, a community in which the living and dead were not separated, in which the bonds of affection, duty, and blood continued to bind."[62] This was of course in cases where nothing untoward had happened during the Rites of Passage or the death itself, and thus the community was at ease with its newly dead. The rituals thus established that "death became a familiar, comprehensible state with a recognizable time span, and the activities of the living were seen to have some influence over the process of death."[63]

The anthropologist Victor Turner, working on the schema of Van Gennep's Rites of Passage, delved further into the concept of liminality, that is, the properties of the liminal, threshold phase. His theories have given liminality, with all its entailing properties a certain liberty from the Rites of Passage itself. It is Turner who names the subjects, while they are in the liminal phase, '*liminal personae*,' or '*threshold people*'.[64] These subjects, liminal presences, take on the full meaning of the liminal, the other, that which is isolated and removed from the community, a

[62] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 474-475.
[63] Dinn, "Death and Rebirth," 165.
[64] Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell, [1969] 1991), 95.

source of danger and ambiguity with their lack of identity; the very embodiment of the uncanny: "Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, conventions, and ceremonial."[65] And where death as Rites of Passage are concerned the liminal entities are by definition beyond the natural order of things, they end up belonging neither to the living nor to the dead. Such liminal presences are not created solely through failed separation; the refusal to bestow proper burial rites and ceremonies by the community itself was also a way to condemn one to a liminal existence. This refusal of burial can either be a result of a perceived failure in the separation stage by the subject within the Rites of Passage itself or a punishment for crimes against the community, such as suicide or excommunication. These liminal personae, the liminal presences, are also perceived as pollutants, contagious even, to be avoided at all cost.[66]

For those studying the restless dead, the concept of the liminal presences provides fascinating answers as well new layers to explore. To take Turner's and Van Gennep's theories a step further: failed Rites of Passage in death could lead to liminal presences that have no prospect of reintegration back into the community: "The imaginations of some societies are also haunted, often by the fear of those already 'dead' but still reckoned to be a threat to the living."[67] These liminal presences are the dead that inspire fear and terror within the community and the trigger lies within the Rites of Passage themselves. Thus perhaps equally important as the actual process of the subject through the Rites of Passage is the perception of the community as to their success. The Ritual is thus "acting not only on the

[65] Ibid., 95.
[66] Victor W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 97.
[67] Davies, *A Brief History of Death*, 131.

individual or individuals at the centre of the ritual, but also manipulating the perspective of those situated on the periphery of the ritual who observe a 'seeming transformation' taking place."[68] Thus the subject remains under close scrutiny while undergoing the Rites of Passage.

Here once again the concept of the types of death comes to the fore. A 'bad' death was one of the primary reasons for failed Rites of Passage. A 'bad' death, as it was understood in the Middle Ages, was a sudden death, one that gave no warning to the dying person, thus no chance for preparation and rituals: "Fear of death itself was rendered visible as a fear of the unknown and the disorderly."[69] Sudden, violent, obscure deaths were the worst; the death of the traveler alone, out in the wilderness without anyone to bear witness to his passing, condemned the deceased to anonymity, their identity lost for eternity. A 'bad' death is thus "the secret death that is without witness or ceremony: the death of the traveler on the road, or the man who drowns in a river, or the stranger whose body is found at the edge of a field, or even a neighbor who is struck down for no reason."[70] These were deaths for which neither the subject nor the community could prepare themselves. These people die without receiving the last sacraments and probably unconfessed.[71] Thus they are left bereft of the rituals that form the Rites of Passage, the very embodiment of a 'bad' death, uncontrolled and unprepared. "Bad deaths promote disorder,"[72] not only where the probable fate of the dead person is concerned but also for the community that suffers the said loss: "Certain shades of the dead might remain displaced for some time,

[68] Joel Burden, "Re-writing a Rite of Passage: The Peculiar Funeral of Edward II," in *Rites of Passage: Cultures of Transition in the Fourteenth Century,* ed. Nicola F. McDonald and W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2004), 13.
[69] Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body*, 20.
[70] Philippe Aries, *The Hour of our Death* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 11.
[71] Edelgard E. DuBruck, "Introduction," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages,* ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 24.
[72] Kellehear, *A Social History of Dying*, 94.

particularly the ghosts of those who had died a 'bad death' that was sudden and violent."[73]

Those that suffered sudden deaths could not go through the orderly path of the Rites of Passage; they did not have the opportunity to confess their sins, be absolved, receive extreme unction, sever their ties to the living and prepare the community for their loss, be it emotionally, economically, spiritually or religiously. In this sense the danger of a sudden, violent death overlapped the very Christian fear of a religiously unprepared death. The Christian ideas and rituals to prepare a soul's safe passage into the afterlife and hopefully to its salvation overlapped with the purpose and process of the Rites of Passage, though it is important to emphasize that the Rites of Passage were less about the salvation of the eternal soul of the subject than their safe transition into one of the community's dead.

Unsurprisingly, suicides were as suspect as could be, a person trying to remove themselves from life and community before their time; apart from the strong religious prohibition of it, there was the additional senseless loss to the community of a healthy member that could have, under any other circumstances, carried on its function within the community for many years to come. As such, "they cannot fully enter the realm of the dead, since they did not await Death's summons."[74] Through the suicide, death ceases to be a social event; any control that the community could have enforced to ease the passing of its member is shattered rather spectacularly and abruptly. As a consequence, "the person who has committed suicide cannot be incorporated with the other dead and must wander between the world of the dead and that of the living."[75]

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[73] Caciola, "Spirits seeking bodies," 66.
[74] Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1990] 1993), 46.
[75] Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 161.

Similarly, and rather more surprisingly, the deaths of stillborn or unbaptized infants, as well as the death of a mother during childbirth, were perceived to be 'bad' deaths and put these dead, who in the eyes of the modern society would be perceived as pitiful victims, in the position of the 'suspect'. The way one died, in the eyes of both the community and the Church, told a lot about the true nature of the person, regardless of the life they had lived or the fact that they were a victim of chance or crime.

That the death of an expectant mother during childbirth identified her as one of the 'suspect' dead should anthropologically not come as a surprise; cultures all over the world throughout history have had similar reactions to such deaths. The reason once again lies deeper than religion; it is a social phenomenon, and can be given shape once again through the application of Van Gennep's schema of the Rites of Passage. The pregnant woman, herself, is already, in a sense, a liminal presence within the community. She carries within herself the as yet unfulfilled promise of a potential new member of the community. The moment she is identified as pregnant, she is no longer exactly a wife or woman, nor yet a mother; her identity is set *between* these two roles. It is only after the successful delivery of the child, the new member, that she can retake her old identity and her new one as a mother. Religion with its rites once again supports these Rites of Passage through the ritual of Churching, the reintegration of the woman into the community, the cleansing of her after childbirth.

The woman dying during childbirth not only bereaves the community of its potential new member but also causes further the loss of an already established member. Thus the expectation of celebration of a new member ends up in the loss of a member that potentially could have produced many more children. As such, when

the Rites of Passage schema is applied, her loss and the unfulfilled expectations of the community mark the dead expectant mother as a liminal presence that is potentially harmful and to be guarded against.

The stillborn child or the death of an unbaptized infant, as with the death at childbirth, carries with them the connotations both of loss and lost potential. However, the perception of them as suspect owes to other conditions as well. The Christian idea of original sin, the belief that inherently until baptism human beings are bad, and sinners, does not really help the cause of these infants. However, the belief in original sin is not the only reason. From a social point of view, until an infant is named — in this case baptized, the Church offering once again its rituals for the community's use — the child is not perceived as part of the community; it is as yet not integrated into the community as one its members. It is only after this rite that the child is recognized as a healthy member of the community, and until that point it remains a liminal presence without identity: "It logically follows that the children who have not yet been incorporated into the society of the living cannot be classified in that of the dead."[76] As with the mother, the infant too, be it stillborn or dead before baptism, is perceived as suspect, and treated as such.

The ambivalence of 'bad' deaths, and failed Rites of Passages, both where the eternal fate of the soul as well as the community that is left behind shaken and fractured is concerned, is the most potent factor in the making of the 'suspect' dead, in the creation of the liminal personae. The suspect dead, for the most part, were not treated as the 'normal' dead were; they were perceived as potentially dangerous. They were refused burial among the dead of the community, that is, in the graveyard: "Kommt in der Verweigerund des Begraebnisses al seiner sozialen

[76] Ibid., 152.

Leistung Lebender fuer einen Toten drastisch zum Ausdruck dass eine Person aus einer Gruppe oder gar aus der Gesellschaft ausgeschlossen ist oder ausgeschlossen werden soll."[77] Thus the dead for which the living refused to perform their most basic of duties, burial, carry with them the connotation of banishment, exiled from the community.

One could argue that the living refused them integration or reintegration into the community, one of the basic and vital stages of the Rites of Passage. Suspect dead were thus "condemned to a pitiable existence, since they are never able to enter the world of the dead or to become incorporated in the society established there. These are the most dangerous dead."[78] Most of these dead, with regard to the perceived danger they posed, were buried as far away as possible from the community of the living, as well as distant from the community's dead. They were buried at crossroads, roadsides, boundaries, "as far as possible from my place without trespassing on yours."[79] These were places that belonged to no one; they were themselves in a sense liminal, in-between spaces, that were later avoided. Thus the reaction of the community can be gauged by the place of burial: to "the sanctified ground in the churchyard was contrasted the limbo of evil spirits at the crossroads."[80]

However, it was not only the place of burial but what the living did to these corpses that was telling: these dead were mutilated. There were several practices: the living would stake the corpse into the grave; remove the head and place it between its legs or bury it separately; crush the head after decapitation; crush the body under a heavy boulder; remove the legs; bury the corpse deeper than the others; throw

[77] Gerhard, "Die Gegenwart Der Toten," 33.
[78] Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 160.
[79] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 55.
[80] Mike Parker Pearson, "The Powerful Dead: Archaeological Relationships between the Living and the Dead," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 3, 2 (1993): 207.

some into bogs or rivers, or bind their hands and feet.[81] Some were buried face down.[82] These burial practices were not novel in nature; burial sites discovered at the Anglo-Saxon cemetery of Sutton Hoo,[83] and other archaeological digs as old as the Iron Age, [84] point towards a very old and it seems continuous practice. This would indicate that the need and urge to practice such gruesome customs on their dead, or perhaps not *their* dead in the sense that they refused to claim them, was existent divorced from religion or even region. Though some of these dead were identified as possible criminals and victims of execution, exiled members of the community that the community refused to retake into their ranks, once again liminal presences, others too seemed to have received similar treatment.

Burial and the customs practiced were thus a statement on the person being buried. Suicides were staked and buried at crossroads without religious ceremony, a method that seems to be "more or less fixed by the end of the tenth century."[85] Infants and mothers dead at childbirth were staked and buried out in the wilderness. In the eleventh century, Bishop Burchard of Worms (d. 1025), in his *Decretum*, admonished "those women who go to the graves and transfix with a stake the bodies of children who died without baptism or the bodies of women who died in childbirth so that the dead cannot return and harm the living."[86] That a bishop found these incidents worrying enough to record the belief would indicate that these practices were prevalent enough to incite comment. Still it must be stated that even with the

[81] Reynolds, A. "Executions and Hard Anglo-Saxon Justice." British Archaeology 31 (Feb 1998): 8-9 and Jacqueline Simpson, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse? Debatable Apparitions in Medieval England," *Folklore* 114 (2003): 390.
[82] Gordon and Marshall, "Introduction: Placing the Dead," 7.
[83] Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England: 1066-1550* (London: Routledge, 1997), 118, and Martin Carver, *Sutton Hoo: Burial Ground of Kings?* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 138-139.
[84] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death*, 79.
[85] MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 20.
[86] Burchard of Worms, Decretum, xix. 5, ed. J.-P. Migne, P.L., cxl, col. 974. as translated in Martha Rampton, "Up From the Dead: Magic and Miracle," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages,* ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 285.

recurrence of such burial practices throughout history, it would be wrong to call these practices pagan, and the customs witnessed during the Christian era as pagan remains: "It does not seem reasonable to seek a definite fixed origin for such traditions, either in one geographical area or in any particular culture; they are probably as old as the practice of burial itself."[87] It was, as is the case with the Rites of Passage, a social phenomenon, a social reaction rather than a religious one. For any practice, rather than trying to guess at its origins, one must focus on the function it fulfilled in order to glean how the community understood it.[88]

It was probably a practice as old as the forming of human communities and the human reaction to death as well as the impulse to control and mitigate it: "The ideal death 'event' was a highly orchestrated process in which all participants, including the dying knew what to do and what to expect."[89] Thus the community and the dying person exercised as much control over the proceedings as possible, following a set pathway, a formula that would hopefully render the right results, which was whence the Rites of Passage themselves were most probably born. Religion and the social context were in a sense inseparable; this also caused the Rites of Passage to come to carry connotations of both. However, the continued practice of such customs that excluded and even, in a sense, punished certain dead, sometimes in the face of the Church's disapproval, may well indicate that the social aspect was at times more dominant.

However, it is also imperative to state that the reaction of the community and the family towards the dead varied. The human mind and emotions, as they are, were open to many influences, from community, social pressure, or even just stubborn

[87] Ellis Davidson, "The Restless Dead," 173.
[88] Carl Watkins, "'Folklore' and 'Popular Religion' in Britain during the Middle Ages," *Folklore* 115, no.2 (2004): 144.
[89] Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body*, 20.

love. The human reaction to the dead body is many-faceted, affected by many outside as well as psychological conditions: "official doctrine about the afterlife, folkloric ghost beliefs, natural affection for the deceased, horror of the corpse, the obligation to remember and the impulse to forget."[90] All these reactions are tipped to the side of horror once it is perceived that the Rites of Passage had failed. These bodies were treated in this way for a very specific reason: these dead were believed to be stuck as liminal personae, liminal presences, due to their failure to undertake or complete the Rites of Passage safely.

That the bodies suffered such treatment is indicative of the belief that a continued connection between the body and the dead person – from a religious point of view this would be the soul – existed. This idea of a continued connection between the body and the soul after death was supported by the Christian rhetoric of resurrection, one of its central tenets.[91] As it were, even the dead body up and walking was not that strange an idea where the most basic Christian doctrines were considered. Insert the saints who it was believed did visit the living, and one of their most distinguished miracles was indeed resurrection of the self. These dead were the "very special dead,"[92] and as such were regarded with the respect they called for. Even if the liminal presence, and its return among the living, was the very opposite of saintly visitations, still one might argue that the credibility bestowed on the dead walking may indeed have stemmed at least in part from the path opened by the saints. That the body and soul of the dead were inherently connected, part of a whole, lies ironically behind both the belief in the returning dead and the Christian

[90] Gordon and Marshall, "Introduction: Placing the Dead," 8.
[91] Rampton, "Up From the Dead: Magic and Miracle," 276.
[92] This phrase was first designated by Peter Brown: Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 69.

resurrection.[93] However, it was also utilized in other ways, as is visible in the punishment of corpses even after the offender is already dead; or even in the perceived connection between the corpse and the liminal presence where the precautions taken against the corpse are concerned.

Thus an important question arises: what was it exactly that the community feared from these specific dead, which were known to be dangerous, a hazard to the whole community? These dead, through their failing of the Rites of Passage, and to some extent through the impossibility, inability or unwillingness of the community to bury and reintegrate them properly, were condemned to remain as liminal presences: "They would like to be reincorporated into the world of the living, and since they cannot be, they behave like hostile strangers toward it."[94] The answer in part lies in the precautions taken against them; almost all the burial practices seem to be aimed to make the corpse stay put in its grave, as though there is a chance that it would not stay where it was put, a sinister indication that the body, the corpse itself, is perceived as a source of danger, a threat. Records and anecdotes indicate that indeed corpses were known to cause trouble under certain circumstances, circumstances that, as we shall see, clearly overlap with failed Rites of Passage, and the implied presence of a liminal entity. For those studying the restless dead, those dead that refuse to stay put and continue to intrude upon the lives of the living, the returning dead, the riddle is easy to answer. For a certain period in time there was one very specific type of the returning dead that seems to match these properties completely: the revenant.

[93] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 13.
[94] Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 160.

CHAPTER II

REVENANTS: THE LIMINAL PRESENCE – NEWBURGH, MAP, BURTON AND THE LANERCOST CHRONICLE

The liminal presences that returned, the returning dead, were an essential by-product of a failed Rites of Passage; they inspired fear and dread within the community, as they represented something very fundamental within the cycle of life and death, as well as community life going very awry. Revenants were simply one manifestation of this failure, and, as one shall see through the examples in this section, revenants too varied in their form. This chapter will primarily focus on the records of such revenants emerging from their graves in twelfth and thirteenth-century Britain. While the number of sources focusing on the revenant are indeed limited, this is primarily due to the limited geographical scope of this study. The sources are still rich enough to allow one to assess the form the liminal presence took as well as to pinpoint properties of the lore that stand out in the common belief. Thus revenants within this work will be approached as one type of the returning liminal dead that dominated the fears of the community for a certain time period. This period cannot be clearly demarcated. As with everything that concerns belief, changes happen both seemingly fast and extremely slow at the same time. However, the changes within

the revenant lore should be landmark enough for this study to continue to follow how the Rites of Passage, and the fear of their failure, were perceived by the community. As well as how, if at all, the Rites of Passage changed through the upheavals of religious alterations.

The revenants were those of the dead that walked the earthly realm in their own bodies, digging themselves out of their graves to harass and attack their own families and communities. Among all the returning dead, the revenants are perhaps the most perfect embodiment of failed Rites of Passage and their consequence, the liminal presence. The actual corpse becoming part of these returns is of import as it called forth the already strained regard of the living towards the corpse, the very thing that represented the inescapable fate that awaited any and all community members. It is thus not surprising that certain opinions were generated as to what kinds of deaths were manageable and what kinds were to be avoided if possible. It was, all in all, an attempt to create an illusion of control where the uncontrollable was concerned. The liminal entity, here especially the revenant, was thus perceived to be triggered first and foremost by a 'bad' death, which was synonymous with failed Rites of Passage.

Within the revenant lore 'bad' deaths are one of the main foundations; revenants almost always die 'bad' deaths. This 'bad' death may be a sudden, unforeseen event, like a dive off a roof, or merely the excommunicated death, wherein the member is in a sense exiled and isolated from the community even while alive, a condition which dragged on into death; regardless of which, the revenants follow a certain pattern that is triggered by such a death. They, unlike the normal dead of the community, refuse to stay put in their graves and peacefully co-exist with the living in the community. They become instigators of chaos within the

community, disrupting the community itself. The inability to take their rightful place within the community – regardless of where that was in the religious picture of things in the afterlife – left the liminal presences as dangerous and uncanny entities on the earthly realm, once familiar and now not, strangers with familiar faces.

In the minds of the community members the existence of revenants was first and foremost connected to the dead body left behind; as it was the use of their physical bodies that set apart these particular liminal presences from the other returning dead. The body, after death, was believed to retain a certain essence of life, which made it, for a certain period of time until the complete decomposition of flesh, vulnerable to influences: "The attribution of some degree of sentience or 'life-force' to the corpses of the recently deceased was a very long-standing popular intuition."[1]

This period of perceived vulnerability or susceptibility in the body is also connected in a sense to the Rites of Passage, though this particular theory belongs to the anthropologist Robert Hertz. Hertz in his studies came upon the practice of twofold funerals, which indicate a two-staged death. The person effectively dies twice, first at the biological death which leaves behind 'wet'[2] remains, where this fleshy corpse is interred temporarily and is regarded to be liminal and dangerous. This is indicative of a liminal, ambiguous period, wherein the community has to guard against the newly dead. During this time "it 'returns' of its own initiative through necessity or through malice, and its untimely appearance spreads terror."[3] This period is believed to end only after the complete decomposition of flesh, whereby the body dies its second death, which in turn indicates the safe passage of the dying person into the community of the dead. The remains at this point are 'dry'

[1] Gordon and Marshall, "Introduction: Placing the Dead," 7.
[2] The terms 'wet' and 'dry' where the corpse is concerned, are used by anthropological studies to indicate the stages of decomposition the corpse goes through, while there is flesh on the bones it is in the wet stage, once it becomes skeletal, it is in the 'dry' stage.
[3] Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, 37.

remains, mere bones and are once again and this time permanently interred in the final resting place: "The question of a reanimated skeleton is never raised: there must be flesh upon the bone."[4]

In Hertz's studies the danger of the dead harassing the living during that certain period seems to have existed for all the dead, as long as they were in this in-between period wherein the corpse remained undecomposed, a kind of normal liminal phase one could say. However, those that died 'bad' deaths were perceived quite differently: "It seems, in the most typical cases at least, that the transitory period extends indefinitely for these victims of a special malediction and that their death has no end."[5] Thus if one combines the perception of the condition of the corpse with the failed Rites of Passage, it explains why the undecomposed body featured so heavily in the revenant lore. These liminal presences were thus pushed outside even the dominion of nature, the embodiment of deviation, stranded on the shores and cut off.

While the details of Hertz's examples might vary from revenant and other lore, the belief that the corpse retains some life energy, a life of its own until its second death when it became skeletal clearly corresponds to the same basic logic: "The 'life' of the corpse tends to correspond to the period during which it is still changing and developing, and it ceases to be frightening after its second 'death'."[6] Similarly, all through this 'wet' stage the corpse still very much resembles a living person in general shape and form. This resemblance may also have influenced the fear of the newly dead. As such, it was the life energy, it was believed, that allowed revenants to regain their body. The main condition for a revenant to walk however was the failure of the Rites of Passage.

[4] Caciola, "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual," 32.
[5] Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, 85.
[6] Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death*, 141.

Literally trapped between the living and the dead, due to this failure, revenants brought with them some special attributes that identified them as the perfect representation of liminal presences. The revenants walked the earthly realm in their own bodies; they refused to remain in their graves and roamed places familiar to them. They were in a sense horrible imitations of the life they had lost, still wearing the faces of the loved ones of the community, even while, within the main lore, they seem to lose their personality. Previous attachments however still seem to guide and motivate the revenant, as most of the time their targets are familiar people, loved ones, the bereaved, the remaining members of the community. One argument may well be that the revenant in its own violent way seeks to remove the attachments that the failed separation and Rites of Passage left behind, or take these very people with it to the grave. However the base motivation seems to be perceived by the community as much more destructive.

The liminal presence is propelled by an urge to regain that which it has lost, basically the life left behind. The unsuccessful separation of attachments here seems to become the very things that draw the revenant. Thus the survivors are faced with an abomination, a dead body that walks, wears the face of the dead, and acts nothing like the person lost, a failed imitation of life, stuck in between either state and with no way of regaining life. The living, in this case, have no way of communication to mitigate peacefully the situation, as the revenant seems to act under motivations that have little to do with the personality of the living person before their death.

The dead in question seem to be warped by the failed Rites of Passage. Van Gennep at one point indicates that the temporarily liminal dead, within the normal liminal period of the Rites of Passage, may act in jealousy of what the remaining still possess: life. They may have a need to gain what was lost, or a wish to take those

closest to them with them. These were the 'hostile strangers' that Van Gennep had identified.[7] Attachments in this case become a source of danger for the living, no longer a point of comfort. The revenant thus embodies an "abjection [that] is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar not even the shadow of a memory."[8] The revenant clearly is trying to break, unsuccessfully, back into the realm of the living, thereby wreaking the havoc it does: "The revenant's duality, its share in the powers of the supernatural world along with its continued link to its original humanity, explains its fearsomeness for humans."[9] The revenants thus represent the very thing the community would hope to avoid with all Rites of Passage. These dead become liminal presences, abominations in the eyes of a society which seems to have been used to close encounters with its dead, as long as everyone knew their place: "In most communities, while the dead are mourned, there is still an underlying hope that, once dead, they will not only remain dead but also in the grave."[10]

Once the revenant, the liminal presence, ventures forth from its grave, the community finds itself in dire straits. Revenants as physical beings, physically attacked their victims. However, there in the revenant lore resides a much more insidious effect that the revenant can have on the community it is harassing. As was the case with Turner's liminal presences, being perceived as contagious, as a pollutant, the revenant seems to act as the source of plagues, hence threatening the whole community. The community in response to a revenant walking took a similarly physical path of action. The corpse of the revenant in question was in most

[7] Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 160.
[8] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 5.
[9] Carol L. Edwards, review of *The Folklore of Ghosts,* by H.R. Ellis Davidson ed., *The American Journal of Folklore* 96, no.381 (1983): 359.
[10] Timothy R. Tangherlini, "Who Ya Gonna Call?: Ministers and the Mediation of Ghostly Threat in Danish Legend Tradition," *Western Folklore* 57, no. 2/3 (1998): 153.

cases completely destroyed through dismemberment and fire. This reaction may be seen as a way to deny completely the revenant, the liminal presence, its path back to the community of the living, the earthly realm, while at the same time refusing, through the decimation of the physical remains, any possibility of reintegration among the community's dead.

Archeological evidence, as well the written records, indicates that the revenants, and the returning dead in general, were a widespread phenomena that was independent of geography, period, or religion. As it were, the British examples to be examined here are mainly dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century, when the writers seem to have taken an interest in the wondrous and horrendous. The clumping of said sources in this period should not be taken as limiting the extent of the belief to this period, as burial findings seem to attest to a previous existence of the revenant and the liminal presence. As for the later period, while the liminal presences in the form of the returning dead undoubtedly existed, the case of the revenant undergoes an interesting transformation, which may well indicate some change in the perception of the Rites of Passage and the resultant consequences of their failure: the liminal presence.

The writers in question here – William of Newburgh, Walter Map, Geoffrey of Burton and the anonymous recorder of the Lanercost Chronicle – are all interested in recording events that have come to pass. As such their approach to the revenant at times is baffled but not in doubt of its authenticity: "All these stories, without exception, were told as being absolutely and historically true."[11] The reactions and speculations of the writers are almost as important as what they recorded. As their perception indicates how the liminal entity was perceived differently by the

[11] R.A. Bowyer, "The Role of the Ghost-Story in Medieval Christianity," in *The Folklore of Ghosts,* ed. H.R. Ellis Davidson and W. M. S. Russell (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981), 178.

bystanders to the event itself, as well as the opinions of the witnesses and the writers themselves.

William of Malmesbury, writing in England in the early twelfth century, stated that it was widely known that the Devil could cause the corpses of evil men to walk.[12] The denial that the dead themselves were involved in some of the writers and the insistence that it was the Devil's work had its roots in Augustine's theories as to the capabilities of the dead to return and communicate with the living. According to Augustine, "It was neither the body not even the soul of the dead person that appeared but only the 'spiritual image'; these 'spiritual images' were quite often introduced by demons."[13] The fact that Augustine disregards the possibility of the physical body being involved seems to separate revenants from his stance altogether. However, his statement that it was the demons' work, and not that of the dead, seems to have resonated with some where the revenant was concerned.

There is the additional need to explain the inexplicable through the divine, for these writers and even their sources; it was important to forge some semblance or order, and reason to the phenomena. Here, it is important to state that the liminal presence in its revenant form, walking around in its own corpse and wreaking havoc upon the living did not have a Christian doctrinal explanation, and as such may have easily been identified and labeled as pagan 'superstition'. However that was not the case: "Walter Map, William of Newburgh and Geoffrey of Burton, all of whom took an interest in such things, had the lexicon of anti-pagan condemnations at their fingertips but did not make much use of it."[14] As one shall see the perceptions of the sources were as influential as the writer's own inclinations. The idea that a mere

[12] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Rerum Anglicarum – The History of English Kings,* introduction and commentary R. M. Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) Book II cap. 4.
[13] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 17.
[14] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, 86.

human soul, though wondrous in nature, could cause such disruption and have such power of its own self was probably not a comforting thought. Demons on the other hand were indeed placed within the divine order of things, albeit a threatening part of it. As it were, the phrase 'with God's permission' seems to surface a fair bit in such anecdotes, bestowing upon them even in the midst of chaos, some order. As such, this demonization of the revenants should be approached with caution, as in most sources the witnesses even the authors seem to be at best unsure of the nature of the phenomena, at worst convinced it is the dead man himself walking: "In many communities it was the human dead that dominated the local supernatural, rather than beings of an entirely different essence, such as angels and demons."[15]

Thus, regardless of the recorder's leanings the common belief seems to have been set on the dead man himself, that is, the liminal presence, doing the walking in his own body. In the pursuit of popular culture David Hall states that "Anyone who intervenes to serve as guide is suspect; the intermediary is by definition different from the subject."[16] And while this work is keen to avoid the categorizations of elite, or popular belief, as they seem to enforce artificial boundaries on the society, it is indeed important to gauge whence which ideas and opinions surface where the written sources of the revenants are concerned. One "cannot speak of 'folklore' in isolation or as a given category. Rather, we need to think of the bigger picture, considering 'religious culture' as an organic whole."[17] As it were the very anecdotes in question here seem to demonstrate a culture much more homogeneous when it comes to the belief of the liminal dead, especially in their revenant incarnation. It is equally important to be aware of who the finger that points to the devil as the main cause of revenants belongs to. Fortunately the writers here seem to be much more

[15] Caciola, "Spirits seeking bodies," 83.
[16] Hall, "Introduction," 5.
[17] Watkins, "'Folklore' and 'Popular Religion'," 141.

open minded, and unafraid, especially where Newburgh is concerned, of stating their ignorance as to the true nature of the phenomena. All in all, it is important to state that these anecdotes were recorded due to the curious nature of the phenomena, and, in the case of Newburgh, the worryingly curious nature of the phenomena. It was interesting enough and important enough, in the eyes of the writers, to warrant being part of their works, which were in most cases chronicles and histories.

The anecdotes in question here, both short and long, allow one to glean a great many things on revenant lore, the least of which were the perceived reasons for a revenant to walk, which as one shall see, considerably overlap with ideas of failed Rites of Passage. Similarly, it is through their accounts that one can deduce the prevalence of the belief across the strata of the society. While approaching the said sources this work, rather than clumping together all the anecdotes from a single writer or source together, will try and follow the common elements through the said anecdotes.

William of Newburgh, in his *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (hereafter *Historia*), written in the last decade of the twelfth century,[18] is perhaps the most anxious in his inability to completely explain the reasons as to why these revenants are walking. William "offers these prodigious events to his readers with questions, hesitations, and doubt."[19] Thus, he is also very concerned about establishing the credibility of his sources and the authenticity of the anecdotes: "William described his duties as chronicler in precise terms; he felt obliged to record 'facts' of history

[18] The general consensus seems to have moved to agree with Kate Norgate's findings, who pointed to "the spring of 1199 and the autumn of 1201 as the limits of time within which" the *Historia* was composed. Kate Norgate, "The Date of Composition of William of Newburgh's History." *The English Historical Review* 19, no.74 (1904): 295.
[19] Nancy F. Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 115.

and not engage in 'mystical speculations'."[20] At times he points out the culpability of Satan in the whole debacle but cannot in all certainty state that it is indeed so without doubt. Wherever the influence of the Devil is mentioned, Newburgh limits these statements with phrases such as 'it is believed' or 'it is said'. His perhaps most honest statement as to the range of his knowledge comes squeezed in the middle of his anecdotes:

> It would not be easy to believe that the corpses of the dead should sally (I know not by what agency) from their grave, and should wander about to the terror or destruction of the living, and again return to the tomb, which of its own accord spontaneously opened to receive them, did not frequent examples, occurring in our own times, suffice to establish this fact, to the truth of which there is abundant testimony.[21]

His only refuge is the credibility and integrity of his sources and the prevalence he sees in the phenomena: "It appears that anecdotes testifying to belief in the walking dead were circulating actively in the 1190s."[22] Due to the same sense of integrity Newburgh is concerned about the lack of previous recordings in the face of the current frequency of anecdotes he has come across. This may also conceal some concern about a potential apocalyptic significance of the increased frequency. It seems he has searched long and carefully for previous records. Still, overcoming his uneasiness, he deems it important to stress the commonness of the events:

> Moreover, were I to write down all the instances of this kind which I have ascertained to have befallen in our times, the undertaking would be beyond measure laborious and troublesome; so I will fain to add two more only (and these of recent occurrence) to those I have already narrated, and insert them in our history, as occasion offers, as a warning to posterity.[23]

A warning Newburgh thinks is necessary for the future, as the liminal presence was danger enough to a community even forewarned. The fact that all these writers did

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[20] C. S. Watkins, "Sin, Penance and Purgatory in the Anglo-Norman Realm: The Evidence of Visions and Ghost Stories," *Past and Present* 175, no.1 (2002): 22
[21] William of Newburgh, *The History of William of Newburgh,* trans. Joseph Stevenson (Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1996), 658.
[22] Simpson, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse?" 391.
[23] William of Newburgh, *The History of William of Newburgh*, 658.

indeed record revenants indicates to a great extent the way these anecdotes and indeed revenants themselves were perceived: "The willingness of so many churchmen to discuss these so expansively and neutrally suggests the desire to control them was hardly strong and that, while the revenants themselves might be a danger, belief in their existence was not."[24] The need, however, to perhaps make sense of the whole thing, as witnessed with Newburgh's attempt, is evident and as such explains why for some the demonic explanation seemed to be more palatable.

Newburgh recorded four particular revenants within the pages of his *Historia*, the Melrose, Berwick, Buckingham and Anantis revenants; each slightly different, and offers one the opportunity to perceive the many facets that concern the particular belief of revenants, and the more general understanding of a liminal presence, its powers over the living and the consequences of its presence within the community. The anecdotes will not be rendered here in their order of recording; even Newburgh himself seems to have avoided sequencing them chronologically. Similarities and similar motifs will determine the order.

The following anecdote is, as are the others, close to Newburgh's own period, removed by a few years. In Melrose monastery a revenant makes its presence known. It is identified as a chaplain of an illustrious lady, buried in the very same monastery. The man's way of death is left unclear, but suspicion is cast upon him through his way of life, and his disregard of the obligations of his clerical status.

> This man having little respect for the sacred order to which he belonged, was excessively secular in his pursuits, and — what especially blackens his reputation as a minister of the holy sacrament — so addicted to the vanity of the chase as to be designated by many by the infamous title of 'Hundeprest,' or the dog-priest; and this occupation, during his lifetime, was either laughed at by men, or considered in a worldly view; but after his death — as the event showed — the guiltiness of it was brought to light: for issuing from the grave at night-time, he was prevented by the meritorious resistance of its holy

[24] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, 87.

> inmates from injuring or terrifying any one within the monastery itself; whereupon he wandered beyond the walls, and hovered chiefly, with loud groans and horrible murmurs, round the bedchamber of his former mistress.[25]

The man's first and foremost community seemed to have been the monastery where he was buried. That is where he begins his wanderings. However, unable to reach any of the members there, he moves on to another person that is familiar to him. In this sense it is easy to see how previous attachments, still unbroken, are at play. Similarly the degeneration of the liminal presence from one of the members, albeit lacking in morality, of the community by virtue of his burial, to a danger is indicative of the transformation undergone by the said member. As the passage indicates, the liminal presence does not communicate in any viable way nor would it seem that any interaction would end up being of benefit to the living. The leniency that the local community had exhibited towards the chaplain's unacceptable behavior while alive is also sternly criticized, which may indicate that the whole community was in a way responsible.

The mistress, out of her mind with fear, entreats one of the brothers of the monastery, who employs the help of another monk and two young, strong men. Solidarity seems to be the way to go against liminal presences, as was previously demonstrated from the revenant moving on to the mistress when it could not harm those within the monastery. Similarly, it is only when the monk is left alone that the revenant ventures forth from its grave:

> The devil, imagining that he had found the right moment for breaking his courage, incontinently roused up his own chosen vessel… Having beheld this from afar, he [the brother] grew stiff with terror by reason of his being alone; but soon recovering his courage, and no place of refuge being at hand, he valiantly withstood the onset of the fiend, who came rushing upon him with a terrible noise, and he struck the axe which he wielded in his hand deep into

[25] William of Newburgh, *The History of William of Newburgh*, 658-659.

> his body. On receiving the wound, the monster groaned aloud, and, turning his back, fled… to seek his own tomb again.[26]

Once again the wording is telling: the 'devil' is doing the walking and the corpse is a mere vessel. The setting however is significant as well: the anecdote almost completely transpires within a local community known to and by the revenant. And if the percipients of the incident were part of a religious order and arguably more inclined to explain things through the devil, their response was physical rather than spiritual.

The liminal presence donned in the corpse seems vulnerable to physical attack, as physical attack was its own method of offence. The deserters do come back and together they dig up the corpse, which seemed to indeed have been the actual culprit.

> When they had divested it of the clay cast forth with it, they found the huge wound it had received, and a great quantity of gore which had flowed from it in the sepulchre; and so having carried it away beyond the walls of the monastery and burnt it, they scattered the ashes to the winds. These things I have explained in a simple narration, as I myself heard them recounted by religious men.[27]

The complete destruction of the corpse is the way to divest the community of this unwanted liminal presence. It seems that it does not matter whether the setting is a monastery or a village, the way to deal with a liminal presence walking in its own body, or as this anecdote is rendered the devil making a corpse walk, was through the destruction of the corpse. The heavier emphasis on the devil doing the walking may actually be due to the sources of Newburgh being religious men, probably the monks of the monastery, easier to explain the hand of divinity, even through the devil, than a mere soul refusing to rest.

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[26] Ibid., 659.
[27] Ibid., 659.

That Newburgh states these sources to be religious, or perhaps simply monks, is for him a testimony of their trustfulness, but is also indicative to the reader of their effect in the rendering of the story. Newburgh is perhaps not wholly convinced, as it is just at the beginning of this very passage that Newburgh makes the statement that he indeed does not know how these corpses come to walk in the earthly realm. However, the perceived reason of walking seems not to have affected the method of dispatch, which would indicate that this anecdote is indeed representative of revenant lore, and thus the existence of a liminal presence, with its choice of previously familiar members of the local community as victims.

Recording the foraging forth of a revenant from his grave in the town of Berwick-on-Tweed, Newburgh gives the main points at the very beginning. Here too there is indeed mention of the devil and his possible influence, though Newburgh seems again to be reluctant to commit himself:

> In this town a certain man, very wealthy, but, as it afterwards appeared, a great rogue, having been buried, after his death sallied forth (by the contrivance, as it is believed, of Satan) out of his grave by night borne hither and thither, pursued by a pack of dogs with loud barkings; this striking great terror into the neighbours and returning to his tomb before daylight.[28]

Here, in contrast to the Melrose revenant, the less than stellar qualities of the man seem to manifest themselves only after death, thereby testifying to his state of character while alive. The harking back to the possible responsibility of Satan, comes indeed seemingly as an afterthought, the main focus remaining on the destructive effect of the revenant within the community:

> The higher and middle classes of the people held a necessary investigation into what was requisite to be done; the more simple among them fearing, in the event of negligence, to be soundly beaten by this prodigy of the grave; but the wiser shrewdly concluding that were a remedy further delayed, the atmosphere, infected and corrupted by the constant whirlings through it of the pestiferous corpse, would engender disease and death to a great extent; the

[28] Ibid., 657.

> necessity of providing against which was shown by frequent examples in similar cases.[29]

The danger posed by this liminal returning dead to the community engenders a communal response. The community comes together in order to deal with this threat collectively. Though the passage is rather short, Newburgh manages to convey the twofold danger the corpse walking posed to the community. And there seems to be no doubt in this case that it is the corpse itself walking. The 'simpler' reaction is mere fear of the physical consequences of a run-in with the revenant. However, it is the second and 'wiser' opinion that is of great interest here. They argue that the problem has to be dealt with and fast, as the presence of the revenant could infect and corrupt the very air. The liminal entity here is present with all its glory, the duality of the revenant reflecting its core properties clearly.

The liminal presence, here, is capable of laying physical hands on the members of the community, threatening their very lives, while at the same time its contagious nature threatened the whole community. With its unclean presence due to the failed Rites of Passage and its inability to have become one of the dead of the community, conferring its outsider properties, the liminal presence becomes a pollutant that has to be scoured away. The rather offhand reference to other such happenings, where indeed the pollution of the liminal presence proved harmful to the community and its members, indicates that the belief was rather prevalent. People seemed to have heard of the possibility of such an event. Similarly the countermeasures taken against the revenant also seem to come from a community versed in how it should deal with such occurrences:

> They, therefore procured ten young men renowned for boldness, who were to dig up the horrible carcass, and, having cut it limb from limb, reduce it into food and fuel for the flames. When this was done, the commotion ceased.

[29] Ibid., 657-658.

> Moreover, it is stated that the monster, while it was being borne about (as it is said) by Satan, had told certain persons whom it had by chance encountered, that as long as it remained unburnt the people should have no peace. Being burnt, tranquility appeared to be restored to them; a pestilence, which arose in consequence, carried off the greater portion of them.[30]

The countermeasure of dismemberment and the complete destruction of the body come from the community. It seems that the utter destruction of the body, the very connection of the liminal returning dead to the community, was deemed necessary to rid the community of this unwanted 'stranger', thereby closing its ranks and boundaries to any further invasion. This destruction may well be read as a complete refusal of reintegration, and at the same time a forceful and final separation of the liminal presence from its original community and any vestiges of identity.

This action it would seem denies this lost member any further connection, even, one could argue, a chance of resurrection. The way that the revenant is said to have hinted at the method of its own destruction is baffling, though the reference to Satan may explain it as taunting. Likewise, it may be due to a crossover from fable, wherein the villain or monsters often hinted at the method of their destruction. Speech and communication, while here it was limited to mere taunts, would prove to be of great importance, as later examples will indicate. As it were, while it was effective, this particular removal of the liminal presence seems to have come too late, as the community suffered the contagion; most, according to William, died. Thus one could argue that the 'wiser' opinion, that all haste is necessary in the removal of liminal presences seems to be ratified.

Newburgh continues with another anecdote this time located at the castle 'Anantis'.[31] He indicates that his source is an aged monk of a position in authority who is a first-hand witness. The fact that the monk indicates it happened in his own

[30] Ibid., 658.
[31] Joseph Stevenson proposes this castle to be Annand or Annan, in Dumfriesshire. Ibid., 600n.

lifetime would place the incident within that generation. Seen chronologically this anecdote may well be the oldest among Newburgh's collection:

> A certain man of evil conduct flying, through fear of his enemies or the law, out of the province of York, to the lord of the before mentioned castle, took up his abode there, and having cast upon service befitting his humour, laboured hard to increase rather than correct his own evil propensities.[32]

The man's position in life is made clear at the very beginning; he is already a rather unsavory sort. The following events do not come as a surprise to the reader.

This man married a woman, whom he later suspected was unfaithful. He thus devised a scheme wherein he pretended to leave town for business and hid in the beams of his bedroom, where indeed the wife was bedding a young fellow. Enraged the man fell. Though the man did not die with the fall, the fall opens the path for his death, and his failed Rites of Passage. The circumstances of his situation are all around unsavory, the results even more so:

> Being much shaken by the fall, and his whole body stupefied, he was attacked with a disease, in so much that the man whom I have mentioned as having related these facts to me visiting him in the pious discharge of his duties, admonished him to make confession of his sins, and receive the Christian eucharist in proper form: but as he was occupied in thinking about what happened to him, and what his wife had said, put off the wholesome advice until the morrow – that morrow which in this world he was fated never to behold! – for the next night, destitute of Christian grace, and prey to his well-earned misfortunes, he shared the deep slumber of death. A Christian burial, indeed, he received, though unworthy of it; but it did not much benefit him: for issuing, by the handiwork of Satan, from his grave at night-time, and pursued by a pack of dogs with horrible barkings, he wandered through the courts and around the houses. [33]

This particular man is the very representation of a 'bad' death, failed Rites of Passage: "The bad death by its nature contravened the norms of preparedness and virtue that married the ideal Christian rite of separation."[34] This man, even though he seems to get a second chance of putting his own Rites of Passage, his death, to

[32] Ibid., 660.
[33] Ibid., 660.
[34] Binski, *Medieval Death*, 50.

rights, does not take it. While he lies sick and dying, he cannot let go of his wife's unfaithfulness, nor does he confess, receive the Eucharist, or absolution. One would deduce from this that he refused to undergo the last rites, or extreme unction. He willfully refused to partake in the separation phase, unable to let go emotionally, spiritually and religiously. This, added to his rather misspent life, made the man a perfect candidate for becoming a liminal presence. The Christian burial, an attempt in reintegration perhaps, is unsuccessful, due to the failure to separate in the first place. Like the Melrose revenant, the man was given presumably proper burial rites. This only emphasizes the importance laid by the community on the separation phase. Once again the devil gets the pointed finger, but all other indications point towards failed Rites of Passage.

The main concern of the community at first is an attempt to isolate themselves from the liminal presence, the revenant, by physically locking themselves into their houses. Their first fear is the physical aspect of the revenant, a fear of being physically beaten, or killed. However, as is often the case with liminal presences, something much more insidious is working its way through the community:

> But these precautions were of no avail; for the atmosphere, poisoned by the vagaries of this foul carcass, filled every house with disease and death by its pestiferous breath. Already did the town, which appear almost deserted; while those of its inhabitants who had escaped destruction migrated to other parts of the country, lest they, too, should die.[35]

Thus a single liminal presence is enough to destroy a whole community if left to its own devices; the ties of the community unravel due to the threat and the continued deaths as well as migration. It is Newburgh's very witness who

[35] William of Newburgh, *The History of William of Newburgh*, 660.

> applied himself to summon a meeting of wise and religious men on that sacred day which is called Palm-Sunday, in order that they might impart healthful counsel in so great a dilemma.[36]

As in the previous cases, those of the community that are left behind and alive come together to discuss the possible solutions to the problem. The liminal presence is of concern to the whole community, even when the damage is not as widespread as it is in this anecdote. While the gathering was still engaged, two young men take it upon themselves to rid the community of the entity. Their intention is to dig the corpse up and burn it. As such, one could argue that the remedies for revenants were generally well known. The brothers dig up the corpse and

> inflicted a wound upon the senseless carcase, out of which incontinently flowed such a stream of blood, that it might have been taken for a leech filled with the blood of many persons. Then, dragging it beyond the village, they speedily constructed a funeral pile; and upon one of them saying that the pestilential body would not burn unless its heart were torn out, the other laid open its side by repeated blows of the blunted spade, and, thrusting in his hand, dragged out the accursed heart. This being torn to piecemeal, and the body now consigned to the flames, it was announced to the guests what was going on, who, running thither, enabled themselves to testify henceforth to the circumstances. When the infernal hell-hound had thus been destroyed, the pestilence which was rife among the people ceased.[37]

It is this particular passage that is of such interest to those who study vampires, and has allowed them to announce this particular revenant to be a vampire, even though there is no mention of any physical attack at all within the community.[38] The image is created through the comment that there was so much blood as to belong to more than one person. However, it is counter-productive to try and label these walking dead as vampires, as the lore itself is clearly about the walking dead, rather than the

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[36] Ibid., 661.
[37] Ibid., 661.
[38] One such author is Montague Summers, who is adamant in his identification of the revenant as a vampire. Ironically he also mentions the possibility of suicides coming back as vampires: Augustus Montague Summers, *The Vampire, his Kith and Kin* (Forgotten Books, reprint, [1928] 2008), 125. Revenants do not seem to display any vampiric tendencies at all, let alone suicides. Thus the word vampire is avoided as much as possible in this work, as it brings with it connotations that are deeply muddled not only by the later beliefs that surfaced in Eastern Europe but also the further complication of the fictitious novel that took to vampires as to a long lost relative.

thirsty ones. The rest of the passage is in accordance with revenant lore, the shredded shroud, always an activity the restless dead seem to display, is a prominent part. The brothers do indeed burn the body, though the heart has first to be removed and destroyed separately. This particular part will resurface in Burton's anecdote. It may be because the heart is given particular importance within the corpse that its separate destruction is required to ensure the destruction of the corpse itself. The Anantis revenant is an especially helpful example as the anecdote has the most detail on the man before, during and after his death, allowing us to perceive how the Rites of Passage have failed, almost willfully sabotaged by this man, and the consequences thereof.

Here, before continuing with the last of Newburgh's anecdotes, Buckingham, which is very interesting in its own right, one feels compelled to turn to another interesting anecdote, as it has many common points to Newburgh's previous record, where the heart and its destruction prove to be of importance in the removal of the liminal entity, and the pollution caused by liminal presence is at the forefront. This particular anecdote was recorded by Geoffrey of Burton in his *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*. While saints are a rather intricate subject where revenants and liminal presences are concerned, with their tendency at times to up and walk themselves in their earthly undecomposed flesh, this particular anecdote was recorded in the posthumous miracles section, wherein the author recorded local beliefs that were in any way connected to the shrine where the bones of the Saint were supposedly at rest. The particular anecdote of interest here can be dated by the naming of the abbot,

Geoffrey Malaterra, who held the abbacy 1085-94.[39] The collection allows a glimpse to the local beliefs in the area.

The anecdote is about two revenants rather than one. These two runaway peasants who are the cause of an inordinate amount of trouble for the abbey, are suddenly struck down dead while they were about to eat. As one can guess it is this point that ties the anecdote to the Saint; it is deemed as just punishment, though the Saint is not mentioned directly at all, not with their death, nor with the calamities that arise thereafter. It is what happens after the two peasants suddenly die that is of interest here:

> Next morning they were placed in wooden coffins and buried in the churchyard at Stapenhill. The village from whence they had fled. What followed was amazing and truly remarkable. That very same day on which they were interred they appeared at evening, while the sun was still up, at Drakelow, carrying on their shoulders the wooden coffins in which they had been buried. The whole following night they walked through paths and fields of the village, now in the shape of men carrying wooden coffins on their shoulders, now in the likeness of bears or dogs or other animals. They spoke to the other peasants, banging on the walls of their houses and shouting. 'Move, quickly, move! Get going! Come!' When these astonishing events had taken place every evening and every night for sometime, such disease afflicted the village that all the peasants fell into desperate straits and within a few days all except three … perished by sudden death in a remarkable way.[40]

Drakelow was the village the peasants had run off to and at the center of the dispute. The idea is mainly that the Saint was punishing not only the two troublemakers but also the whole village, which would seem to be a bit vindictive.

The men had died quiet suddenly, undoubtedly unprepared and without any rites. However, it seems an effort was made and they were buried in the churchyard properly. That they ventured forth coffin and all may have been an indication that the burial was not appropriate in the first place. When one examines the flow of events and removes the proximity of the Saint from the equation however what remains is

[39] Geoffrey of Burton, *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna,* trans. and ed. Robert Bartlett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), xxix.
[40] Ibid., 195-197.

very consistent with revenant lore. These liminal presences had returned, to the very village they had run off to in life and nigh took the entire village with them to death. The contagion is caused by the polluting presence of the liminal entities, their very existence and connection poisons the village. The connection to animals and shape-shifting is not a novel thing with liminal entities either, perhaps emphasizing their alien nature to the living of the community. However, such connections are mentioned more frequently in later centuries, and less so in relation to revenants themselves.

The count of the region hastens to make amends to the abbey. He orders one of the three peasants remaining alive to doubly restitute all damages, though these countermeasures seem to lack in effect as the other two peasants fall sick as well. The community, what was left of it, was huddled in terror:

> They received permission from the bishop to go to their graves and dig them up. They found them intact, but the linen cloths over their faces were stained with blood. The cut off the men's heads and placed them in their graves between their legs, tore out the hearts from their corpses, and covered the bodies with earth again. They brought the hearts to the place called *Dodecrosseforal/ Dodefreseford* and there burned them from morning until evening. When they had at last been burned up, they cracked with great sound and everyone there saw an evil spirit in the form of a crow fly from the flames. Soon after this was done both the disease and the phantoms ceased.[41]

There are a few very interesting points in this passage, first and foremost that the Bishop seems to think nothing of allowing peasants to go about opening the graves of these suspect dead. It seems to be the thing to be done. There is no talk of purification, prayers or the Saint. Similarly, one would think that if they believed this malediction to be affected by the Saint then the remedy would also lie with her; however there is no mention of her at all.

[41] Ibid., 197.

The corpses, typical of the restless dead, are found undecomposed, with evidence of activity within the grave. The period identified by Hertz as most dangerous thus seems to continue indefinitely in the case of the revenant, the normal procession of death and decomposition is halted, one would argue, by their failed Rites of Passage and their continued existence as liminal presences. Thus the bodies of those that suffer a 'bad' death, failed Rites of Passage "inspire the most intense horror and are got rid of precipitately; furthermore their bones are not laid with those of other deceased members of the group who have died a normal death. Their unquiet and spiteful souls roam the earth for ever."[42] This sentiment had similar reflections in Christian society wherein the walls of the cemetery were closed to the suspect dead: "The fate of the soul was linked to that of the corpse."[43] This applied both to burial and the state of he corpse.

The precautions that the peasants take with the decapitation and the placement of the head are very familiar.[44] In this study this is the only such passage, but thus doubly important in that it actually connects this specific burial custom with actual revenants. It could be argued that such graves found by archaeologists may indicate both countermeasures against suspect dead before their walking or, to a lesser extent, as is the case here, remedies in the face of such restlessness. The very matter-of-fact actions of the peasants indicate that they were no strangers as to what remedies were deemed effective. In this instance the burning of the heart is seen as enough, in a sense destroying the very essence of the body, already handicapped by the decapitation. The evidence of evil at work, once again in association with an

[42] Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand,* 85.
[43] R. C. Finucane, "Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion: Social Ideals and Death Rituals in the Later Middle Ages," in *Mirrors and Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death,* ed. Joachim Whaley (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 60.
[44] See previous chapter on specific customs in the burial of the suspect dead.

animal, is also present, its emergence from the bodies marking the end of the liminal entities and their running amok.

The sick peasants recover, and everyone leaves Drakelow, which ends up deserted. Drakelow is perhaps the best evidence of how a liminal entity is capable of destroying the whole community. The death and walking of the peasants, even the wholesale destruction of the community, seems to be perceived as the Saint's punishment, which was why this specific anecdote was included in the collection. However, equally possible is another reading of the anecdote. If indeed the Saint is in any way perceived as active within these events, one could argue that it was only the death of the individuals that was wrought in her power; the walking and subsequent destruction of the whole village, seems to be overkill. As such one could argue that the troublemakers were already prime candidates for liminality, and their sudden death and thus their failure to partake at all in the Rites of Passage only propelled them to it faster. There is enough of revenant lore here and the involvement of the Saint is never spelled out. Thus the anecdote does present itself as a good example of revenancy and the effect of liminal entities.

These last three anecdotes, two of Newburgh and this one of Burton, stress the otherness of the liminal presence, both where the personality of the dead person is concerned but also the threat the liminal presence posed to the community. It was not mere physical attacks in these anecdotes, but the poisoning of the whole community, a real and present danger to the very existence of the communities in question. The members of the communities do not seem to be in anyway surprised that the liminal entity is the reason for continued death and destruction within the community, and they are ready to act in order to stop it. No one seems to need a manual in how to deal with such occurrences. The next anecdote, from Newburgh's

Historia, however, provides a different take on the whole idea, the hint of a possibility that something else could at times be a viable option where one is dealing with a liminal presence.

Though Newburgh recorded this particular anecdote first, it may not have been due to it antedating the others. Anantis may as well have been earlier, likewise Melrose, which is specified to have happened a few years earlier whereas the anecdote below is merely indicated to have happened in 'these days'. The order of the sequence may have well been because this Buckingham anecdote represents the most positive outcome, as well as the only one where the effectiveness of the Bishop's measures seems to put the divine to the fore, thereby perhaps easing the uncertainty of the why, when the solution is clearly present in the Church. Also, another point to consider would be whether or not the 'devil' makes any appearance within the narration:

> In these days a wonderful event befell in the county of Buckingham, which I, in the first instance, partially heard from certain friends, and was afterwards more fully informed by Stephen,[45] the venerable archdeacon of that province. A certain man died, and, according to custom, by the honourable exertion of his wife and kindred, was laid in the tomb on the eve of the Lord's Ascension. On the following night, however, having entered the bed where his wife was reposing, he not only terrified her on awaking, but nearly crushed her by the insupportable weight of his body. The next night, also, he afflicted the astonished woman in the same manner, who, frightened at the danger, as the struggle of the third night drew near, took care to remain awake herself, and surround herself with watchful companions. Still he came; but being repulsed by the shouts of the watchers, and seeing that he was prevented from doing mischief, he departed. Thus driven from his wife, he harassed, in a similar manner, his own brothers, who were dwelling in the same street.[46]

As stated above, the dating seems to be contemporary to when Newburgh was recording the event. Similarly, his given source is one of great standing, and one

[45] This Stephen can probably be identified with Master Stephen de "Swafeld", who was archdeacon of Buckingham ca. 1194-1202: Diana E. Greenway, "Archdeacons: Buckingham," Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066-1300: volume 3: Lincoln, British History Online, accessed September 09, 2013 http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=33571

[46] William of Newburgh, *The History of William of Newburgh*, 656.

would assume trustworthiness. Additionally, as was the case with Anantis, Newburgh's source himself is present during the events, a first-hand witness to the account, the second such in Newburgh's anecdotes.

There is no mention in the text itself that the man had died a 'bad' death; similarly it is indicated that he had been buried properly without any suspicion. However, the walking of the liminal presence and the later developments in the community's dealing with him indicates that it was indeed a 'liminal presence' and indeed the result of failed Rites of Passage. The man targets his wife; in a rather horrifying imitation of life he comes to her in their bedroom. Similarly to the other anecdotes, in solidarity and watchfulness there seems to be some security. When his approach to the wife fails, he turns once again to his kindred, those presumably closest to him in life, and his own community, his neighbors.

The liminal presence wreaks havoc among the animals, stirring them up, animals seem to act distressed when confronted with the liminal. At times this connection, as one shall see, may overlap, as the Burton's anecdote demonstrated with notions of shape-shifting.

> He began to wander abroad in daylight, formidable, indeed, to all, but visible only to a few; for oftentimes, on his encountering a number of persons, he would appear to one or two only, though at the same time his presence was not concealed from the rest.[47]

This shift to daylight seems to indicate an escalation. The selective visibility is harder to explain as one would expect a lumbering corpse to be visible to everyone, if one were to take the lore at face value. However it is without doubt that it pulled up a notch the already prevalent hysteria within the community. As with the other anecdotes the community seems to come together and at long last go to the Church

[47] Ibid., 657.

for advice, which in turn leads to the archdeacon sending a letter to the bishop of Lincoln.

> The bishop being amazed at his account, held a searching investigation with his companions; and there were some who said that such things had often befallen in England, and cited frequent examples to show that tranquility could not be restored to the people until the body of this most wretched man were dug up and burnt.[48]

The answer as to the remedy to a liminal presence, a revenant walking, comes fast and it is very consistent with the lore itself. While there have been questions as to whether the Bishop's companions, presumably men of the Church themselves, subscribed to this view or merely stated what was necessary in the eyes of the community as a remedy,[49] this interesting point would indicate that the lore was prevalent enough so as to negate any division of opinion where one would expect it to exist, between the clerical and the non-clerical. Here, the narrative seems to suggest that the bishop himself, the Burgundian-born Hugh of Avalon, is unfamiliar with such remedies, which may explain to an extent why, in this anecdote, the bishop veers off the beaten path where the countermeasures to be taken against the revenant are concerned.

As was the case with the Melrose monks, the general idea of how to get rid of such a danger to the community seems to have gone beyond mere social standing or clerical or religious status. In this anecdote it is the bishop who abandons the usual methods. This deviation may signify a change that is already oncoming, something that would change the perception of the liminal presence and the consequence of failed Rites of Passage. The bishop had other ideas as to how to approach this dead man walking:

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[48] Ibid., 657.
[49] Simpson, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse?" 391.

> This proceeding, however, appeared indecent and improper in the last degree to the reverend bishop, who shortly after addressed a letter of absolution, written with his own hand, to the archdeacon, in order that it might be demonstrated by the inspection in what state the body of that man really was, and he commanded his tomb to be opened, and the letter having been laid upon his breast, to be again closed: so the sepulchre having been opened, the corpse was found as it had been placed there, and the charter of absolution having been deposited upon its breast, the tomb once more closed, he was thenceforth never more seen to wander, nor permitted to inflict annoyance or terror upon any one.[50]

The body, as was the case with other revenants, remains undecomposed, a good indication of liminality and revenancy where "the cadaver… was condemned not to decompose in the ground."[51] The surprising thing in this anecdote would be that the letter actually worked, absolving and commencing the separation phase of the dead man post-mortem, thereby ending his liminality. The reburial or closing of the grave would then represent the reintegration stage. Thus the man rested, at last fulfilling the Rites of Passage, albeit after a detour and a shock to the community itself. The relatively fast and literal laying of the presence to rest may indicate that the man, as the bishop had foreseen, was salvageable. The previous mention that the man had been properly buried without suspicion may well indicate that an untimely death had merely robbed the man of the time he had needed to complete his separation. The effectiveness of the bishop's absolution letter here indicates the infraction may have been a relatively minor sin.

There are a few important points one must emphasize, while reading of this success. Unlike other revenants and liminal presences, this revenant claims no victims, be it through physical beatings or contagion, after terrifying the wife in the first few nights. This lack of pollution in this case of a liminal entity may have been significant to the bishop, which may have been why he deemed this particular man to

[50] William of Newburgh, *The History of William of Newburgh,* 657.
[51] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 200.

be worthy of consideration for salvation. There is also no particular mention of the devil having a hand in his walking. All in all the dead man's worst effect on the community was terror, sleepless nights, and the disruption of daily life. As such he is much less of a threat than the others in Newburgh's anecdotes. It may have been this moderation that appointed this particular liminal presence as salvageable.

Walter Map, similarly to Newburgh, recorded many a wondrous occurrence and like Newburgh he reserved place in his *De Nugis Curialium* (hereafter *De Nugis*) for revenants. The *De Nugis* is believed to have been written in intermediate stages between about 1181 and 1192.[52] Three such revenant anecdotes are of interest here, in the first of which, unlike in Newburgh's Buckingham anecdote, the advice of a bishop goes awry. In this case Map too recounts names, locations, and people of status:

> I know of a strange portent that occurred in Wales. William Laudun, an English knight, strong of body and of proved valour came to Gilbert Foliot, then bishop of Hereford, now of London, and said: 'My Lord, I come to you for advice. A Welshman of evil life died of late unchristianly enough in my village, and straightway after four nights took to coming back every night to the village, and will not desist from summoning singly and by name his fellow-villagers, who upon being called at once fall sick and die within three days, so that now there are very few of them left.[53]

The man, a Welshman indeed, is stated to have died unchristianly. As had been the case in Newburgh's Anantis anecdote, he had died without the last rites and returns to harass the community. Here, unlike in Newburgh's Buckingham anecdote, the liminal presence is aggressive and calls out people by name, spreading its contagion within the community, picking its victims. This presence is infecting, as it were, its victims, dragging them away from life itself and almost completely eradicating the

[52] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550-c.1307* (London: Routledge, 1996), 243.
[53] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles,* trans. and ed. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 202-203.

community. Gilbert Foliot's (bishop of Hereford 1148-63) reaction to the account is one that is not surprising, concluding a divine struggle to be at work:

> Peradventure the Lord has given power to the evil angel of that lost soul[54] to move about in the dead corpse. However, let the body be exhumed, cut the neck through with a spade, and sprinkle the body and the grave well with holy water, and replace it.[55]

Unlike in the Buckingham anecdote, the bishop rather than going for an absolution, goes for a merging of the common belief as to how one is to be rid of such presences, dismemberment and destruction of the body, and how one would counter evil spirits, demons, through holy water. The wording of the bishop's decision seems to indicate that, while he perceives a connection to the dead man himself, it is the dead man's evil angel. This perception does attach significance to the identity of the man, as the bishop most likely means that it is a demon attracted to the man by the man's propensity for evil deeds. Unfortunately, the bishop's recommendation fails to have any effect, implying that his theory as to what exactly was walking may have been wrong:

> So one night when the summoner had now left but few alive, he called William himself, citing him thrice. He, however, bold and quick as he was, and awake to the situation, darted out with his sword drawn, and chased the demon, who fled, up to the grave, and there, as he fell into it, clave his head to the neck. From that hour the ravages of that wandering pestilence ceased, and did no more hurt either to William himself or to anyone else. The true facts of his death I know, but not the explanation.[56]

Thus Laudun having had his name called and presumably having nothing left to lose, went after the revenant with his sword, the old-fashioned way. A rather more rigorously physical attempt is made on the presence, which seems to have worked, whereupon the liminal presence ceased its existence. The failure of the bishop's

[54] Notice that the word translated as 'lost soul' is perditi which was translated as 'wretch' in Walter Map, *Master Walter Map's Book De Nugis Curialium (Courtiers' Trifles)*, trans. Frederick Tupper and Marbury Bladen Ogle (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), 125.
[55] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles,* 202- 203.
[56] Ibid., 202-205.

advice may have been due to a mere misidentification of the phenomena, an attempt to subdue the demon through Holy Water, or perhaps a more literal approach to silencing it by cutting the throat. It is the destruction of the head, cleaved into two, that removes the threat of the liminal presence from the community, closer by far to the common belief where remedies are concerned.

There are several glaring differences between Map's anecdote and the Buckingham anecdote, this liminal entity in the former being altogether more vicious, claiming a great many lives even before the bishop is consulted. What the bishop orders here seems to have nothing to do with post-mortem absolution or with an attempt to remedy the situation of the dead man himself. But even if Foliot's precautions and countermeasures were relatively moderate, they proved ineffective and the liminal entity had to be dealt with more forcefully. However, if in Newburgh's accounts the Buckingham anecdote was an exception in its non-violent solution, among Map's accounts it is the Hereford anecdote that is an exception in its relatively violent end.

Map's next anecdote follows a pattern that was similar to that of Newburgh's Buckingham anecdote. The bishop here, like the bishop of Lincoln, takes a different approach to the liminal presence.

> In the time of Bishop Roger of Worcester, a man, reported to have died unchristianly, for a month or more wandered about in his shroud both at night and also in open day, till the whole population of the neighbourhood laid siege to him in an orchard, and there he remained exposed to view, it is said, for three days.[57]

That they allowed the presence to roam for a month before taking action is telling. It seems this one, as at Buckingham, was rather less harmful to its surroundings and the community. There are no reported victims, and once again no contagion. These

[57] Ibid., 204-205.

conditions may have been why the bishop's advice in this case is perceived to be acceptable. As at Buckingham this one too walks in daylight, and it may be too that it was after this escalation that the community took action. The revenant does not dissolve away into thin air. Once trapped in the orchard, it is indeed trapped. It can be assumed that the Church, in the person of Roger bishop of Worcester (1163-1179), is called on for help: "Roger ordered a cross to be laid upon the grave of the wretch, and the man himself to be let go[58] [his spirit to be laid]."[59]

The phrasing would indicate that it was, even in the eyes of Roger, the spirit of the man doing the walking in his apparently physical body. And that it was his unchristianly death, failed Rites of Passage, that had caused the whole debacle. The raising of the cross may well indicate that the proper rites of reintegration had somehow been denied to the man the first time around, and that with the order of the bishop, the reintegration stage would be recommenced and completed at this later date. However nothing is ever simple as that, as the following would indicate:

> When, followed by the people, he came to the grave, he started back, apparently at the sight of the cross, and ran in another direction. Whereupon they wisely removed the cross: he sank into the grave, the earth closed over him, the cross was laid upon it and he remained quiet[60] [lay in peace].[61]

After they get the man successfully back into the grave and raise the cross above him, his wanderings cease. This may be explained in two alternative ways: the liminal presence is successfully reintegrated into the community as one of the dead, and thus where it should have been in the first place and quiet; alternatively the liminal presence is trapped beneath the cross and thus cannot venture forth anymore.

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[58] Ibid., 204-205.
[59] Here the phrase "ipsumque dimitti" is translated thus. A more literal translation would be "the man himself to be dismissed/sent away". Walter Map, *Master Walter Map's Book De Nugis Curialium (Courtiers' Trifles)*, 126.
[60] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles,* 204-205.
[61] Walter Map, *Master Walter Map's Book De Nugis Curialium (Courtiers' Trifles)*, 126. Again, here the word "quieuit" was translated thus.

M.R. James's translation interprets the account in the first way, which perhaps seems to fit with the overall profile of this particular liminal presence, a rather less harmful and therefore more salvageable one. However, the revenant's refusal to pass the cross on its way into the grave may suggest elements of the second interpretation, though it might also just reflect opinion on proper burial procedure. In either case, some post-mortem change in the affairs of the living and the dead has thus come to pass, very much as in the Buckingham case.

The last anecdote of Map is similarly but more explicitly constructed:

> A knight of Northumberland was seated alone in his house after [lunch] in summer about the tenth hour, and lo! his father, who had died long before, approached him clad in a foul and ragged shroud. He thought the appearance was a devil and drove it back from the threshold, but his father said: 'Dearest son, fear not. I am your father, and I bring you no ill; but call the priest and you shall learn the reason of my coming.' He was summoned, and a crowd ran to the spot.[62]

Ideas that were indeed, by the time in question, starting to affect the liminal presence in its revenant incarnation were, as one shall see, not innovations, but older preexistent ideas as to the workings of the afterlife that had become more prevalent. These changes are clearly visible in this last anecdote of Map. This liminal presence, as with the others that show similar properties walked out in the light.[63] His demeanor is similarly non-threatening and beyond it all this liminal presence is actually communicating with his son, rather than attacking him as would have been the norm. Its actions are rather more pitiful than terrifying; it is in dire need of something only it seems the living can offer. Additionally, this presence is very clear as to what, or rather who, it needs: a priest. It is important to emphasize that both communication and the remedy proposed come from the liminal presence itself:

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[62] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, 206-207.
[63] The word "prandium" is lunch not dinner, and the tenth hour is three o'clock according to Walter Map, *Master Walter Map's Book De Nugis Curialium (Courtiers' Trifles)*, 127.

> Falling at his feet the [ghost] said: 'I am that wretch whom long since you excommunicated unnamed, with many more, for unrighteous withholding of tithes; but the common prayers of the church and the alms of the faithful have by God's grace so helped me that I am permitted to ask for absolution.'[64]

The man had died excommunicated, though presumably unknown to the rest of the community as the excommunicating priest had not named him. As such this man is a prime example of failed Rites of Passage; he was already cut off from the community at the point of his death, already in a sense liminal without the proper rituals of separation. This would perhaps argue that such a person, already liminal, could not benefit from the normal flow of the Rites of Passage. The proper burial rites in his case becoming inadequate, it would seem he would be doomed from the start.

As Watkins comments, "The revenant was identified, walking not through demonic power, but for the benign purpose of seeking aid from the living."[65] This brings a new angle to the whole situation. The norm for liminal presences, due to their very nature was hostility towards, and danger for, the community. How was it that this man could return, in possession of his faculties and ask for the setting right of the Rites of Passage? It is the revenant himself that gives the answer. It is through the prayers of the Church and the alms of the faithful. It seems the living have thus accomplished something previously unattainable for a liminal presence; they had influenced the very nature of this revenant, and allowed him to return in a fashion that would, rather than entail complete destruction and eternal lack of reintegration, attain the very opposite, a post-mortem absolution that would allow the man to be repossessed as one of the community, as one of the community's dead. At the same time from a religious point of view the man's very soul is saved:

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[64] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, 206-207. There is no corresponding word in the Latin text for the word 'ghost,' only 'ipse' is used.
[65] Watkins, "Sin, Penance and Purgatory in the Anglo-Norman Realm," 25.

> So being absolved he went, with a great train of people following, to his grave and sank into it, and it closed over him of its own accord. This new case has introduced a new subject of discussion into the books of divinity.[66]

The man thus is reinterred and reintegrated among the dead with a great audience, among witnesses and the community itself. That the dead man returns to the grave and that it physically opens for him, indicates that we are indeed still talking about a liminal presence in its revenant form; it seems clearly to be the man's corpse that did the walking. Map's last statement emphasizes that he is aware that this happening was indicative of something that would have repercussions, for the liminal dead and the community itself, as well as for the afterlife and its perception by the people, and the belief of what happened to the soul.

While Map's time of writing almost overlaps that of Newburgh — what with the dating of the *De Nugis* and the *Historia* — the reversal in the ratio of attacked, destroyed or dismembered revenants to those who could be salvaged may indicate that both versions were present and of interest to the writers. That Map focused more on the salvageable may mean simply that these specific anecdotes proved more interesting or edifying to record. As such Map's account indicates that a change was underway that would effect how the Rites of Passage could be interpreted. Liminal presences were undergoing a change, becoming more talkative for one, and aware of their own motivations; they could now communicate these motivations to those left living, and it seems they were becoming less lethal if not less disturbing for the community. This change however was not in any way uniform, nor does it seem linear. The next anecdote will suggest that old was far from on the way out.

Thought to be recorded by a Franciscan friar,[67] the Scottish thirteenth-century *Chronicon de Lanercost* provides a revenant anecdote. Almost at the end of the

[66] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles,* 206-207.

thirteenth century, this anecdote is the latest of all the examples here. However, as one shall see, it shows none of the positive threads present in Map's accounts or in Newburgh's Buckingham account. The author is very thorough, offering an exact place and the names of those involved, though not that of the revenant, perhaps to uphold the honor of the religious establishment he had belonged to. It is in West Scotland, in Clydesdale, in the house of a knight, a Sir Duncan de Insula, that it happens:

> Now there was a certain fellow wearing the garments of holy religion who lived wickedly and died most wretchedly, being bound by sentence of excommunication on account of certain acts of sacrilege committed in his own monastery. Long after his body had been buried, it vexed many in the same monastery by appearing plainly in the shade of night. This child of darkness proceeded to the house of the said knight in order to disturb the faith of simple persons and terrify them by molesting them in broad daylight, or more probably, by a secret decree of God, that he might indicate by such token those who were implicated in his misdoings. Having then assumed a bodily shape (whether natural or aerial is uncertain, but it was hideous, gross and tangible)… he so savagely felled and battered those who attempted to struggle with him as well-nigh to shatter all their joints.[68]

The man, as was the case with others before, had died excommunicated, and not to any surprise came back as a vengeful, violent remnant. It is clearly stated that he had lived a rather wicked life and died the worse for it. As was the case with the Melrose anecdote, religious affiliation does not seem to make these men exempt where failed Rites of Passage are concerned.

The association the author creates with the victims, and their probable culpability where the previous sins of the liminal presence were concerned, may indicate an attempt at justification. It is similarly evident in the last comment of the author who, after conveying the fact that the eldest son of the knight was killed by

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[67] Stevenson, Joseph, ed. *Chronicon de Lanercost M.CC.I.-MCCCXLVI: e codice cottoniano nunc primum typis mandatum. (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1839), iii-iv.* Accessed January 10 2013. http://archive.org/details/chronicondelaner00stevuoft

[68] Herbert Maxwell, trans., *The Chronicle of Lanercost* (Cribyn: Llanerch Press, [1913] 2001), 118-119.

the presence, indicates that the victim had most probably deserved it, seeing as how such creatures should have no power upon the non-wretched. Of course revenant lore in general indicates that the connection of the revenant with its victims is tethered to the relationships left behind by the liminal presence. Thus this statement seems to be more the author's assertion than a comment on common belief. The anecdote does not indicate what became of the revenant, whether it was dispatched or not. This source is relatively later than the rest and the liminal presence seems to still have retained its most basic and inherent properties; the revenant lore was still intact.

However, this particular anecdote only underlines the changes underway that are heralded in Newburgh's Buckingham anecdote, as well as Map's more positive accounts. The treatment these particular liminal entities receive indicates a different perception is becoming more prevalent: "We can detect in the ghost stories of the chronicles an intensifying desire to reinterpret the returning dead as souls in need of aid."[69] This wish, also fanned by the purgatorial ideas becoming more prevalent, allowed the community a second chance to reintegrate their lost dead, the liminal presences, back into the fold. This option becoming open at all was part of the main reasons as to why the very nature of the revenant seems to change: they seem to become less dangerous, less physical in their attacks, start to speak and make sense, their motivations become understandable to the living, allowing the latter a way to help, to try and fix failed, or incomplete, Rites of Passage that had previously represented an irredeemable situation.

These returning dead, the liminal presences, in a sense seem to become less liminal, or rather their liminality is being tempered by possibility. That this change overlaps with and is most probably triggered by the purgatorial ideas becoming more

[69] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, 185.

prominent and elaborated should not come as a surprise. The Rites of Passage, their success or failure, were already connected inherently in the minds of the community with the eternal fate of the soul, and not limited to the dying's 'social,' 'communal' fate. As such, the liminal presence in its revenant incarnation starts to display reason, a way for the living to reconnect and salvage the liminal presence.

However, the strength of liminality and the liminal presence should not be underestimated in this rather rosy prospect. As the anecdotes that concern revenants indicate, not all of their fates were mitigated, not all revenants seem to wish for or even be capable of wishing for reintegration and salvation. The fact that one cannot lump together those revenants that are salvageable and those dangerous to the very core according to chronology, may well mean that any change was sporadic, and non-linear, connected closely with the belief of the people. At times, someone like the bishop of Lincoln in the Buckingham case, who seems to have come into contact with these ideas, steers the anecdote a certain way, however the anecdote itself is heading. The bishop himself is the one who is acting out of script. If it were left up to the rest this revenant, regardless of its rather less lethal staggering, would have been dealt with like the others.

Jacqueline Simpson, noting the disappearance of the revenant from British legend, states that "this change may well be due to the more spiritual theology of Purgatory."[70] This is indeed true. However, it should be stated that the revenant was only one incarnation of the liminal presence, and that while indeed the revenant itself seems to be disappearing or at least changing to a considerable extent, the very conditions and reactions that created it remained in place. The revenant will leave its place to the next manifestation. Thus the liminal presence remained a steadfast entity

[70] Simpson, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse?" 394.

within the workings of the community. As it were, one can argue that it was less the spiritual nature of Purgatory, and more the cracking open of the door of post-mortem intervention that came about with the prevalence of the purgatorial ideas that was more effective where the liminal presence was concerned. It was thanks to this possibility of the postmortem alteration of conditions and positions that the liminal presence itself underwent a transformation. It seemed to have gained a capability to communicate, to reason, something that had seemed well beyond the original revenant. The liminal presence no longer seems to need its body to make an impression on the community, and though the connection between the liminal presence and the corpse remained, it seems to become mostly secondary in nature.

As it were, it is important to note the change and note what happened next. As one shall see, even at its prime, Purgatory will not be able to do away with the liminality of the returning dead. Regardless how timid or pitiful they may seem — and not all are that way — the inherent danger they are perceived to represent is still present within the later anecdotes. This, of course, should not come as a surprise, as liminality is an inherent part of the Rites of Passage, and more so of failed Rites, the very condition that called forth these returning dead that Purgatory would try and take under its wing.

Revenants for a time were the principal embodiment of the liminal presence in their most basic properties, in the way they came into existence, in the way they interacted with the living of the community, in their behavior as well as the actions the community took against them, both preventive in nature and as countermeasures after their walking. The liminal presence though was not in its nature limited to that single manifestation, as the liminal presence was connected to something much more fundamental in the social and human structure: the Rites of Passage. As such it shall

become apparent through the further reading of anecdotes that, as factors surfaced such as the effectiveness of purgatorial ideas, which affected the society and community to a great extent, then too the Rites of Passage, their reading by the community, even at times the process itself, were left open to change. It is such change that, as one shall see, transformed the liminal presence in the eyes of the community, enough so that the revenant, an almost perfect fit at one time, was first doomed to change and then leave its place to another incarnation of the liminal presence. The next chapter will follow the development of the purgatorial ideas, and the possible effects that the solidifying of these ideas into a place in the afterlife, Purgatory, had on the liminal presence.

CHAPTER III

THE PURGATORIAL IDEA, THE BIRTH OF PURGATORY: THE FALL OF THE LIMINAL PRESENCE?

The ideas that came to be presented within the revenant anecdotes, offering a way out for the liminal presence through postmortem action on the part of the living, initiated by one of the liminal, returning dead, show how notions about purgatory could influence the liminal presence. These notions, while having been around in some form for centuries, do seem to have become more prominent and elaborate by the end of the twelfth century, increasingly affecting the common beliefs that surrounded death, its Rites of Passage, their success or failure, the dead, and the liminal returning dead. This would change the liminal presence considerably, removing the revenant from the picture as a valid manifestation of the liminal presence, changing common belief irrevocably.

This change coincided with the period when Purgatorial notions became prevalent enough or attractive enough to solidify for themselves their very own space within the afterlife: Purgatory. Of course, by their very nature the purgatorial notions and their later manifestation as a defined place, Purgatory, were largely religious concepts, concerned with the fate of the soul and its placement in the

afterlife. The Rites of Passage that surrounded death, on the other hand, though considerably shaped by religion, were fundamentally a social phenomenon, however difficult it is to separate these aspects because religion itself was not just a set of doctrines but an inherent part of the culture.

To understand how such an interaction is possible in the first place, one must look at how these purgatorial notions came about. The notion that souls could undergo some kind of purgation long preexisted the concept of Purgatory as a physical place in the afterlife, which is one of the reasons why some, rather than subscribing to the 'birth' theory of Le Goff,[1] lean towards the theory of 'evolution' of Purgatory stated most clearly by R.W. Southern.[2] However, one should state that the development of such notions, notions that can be found as early as the third century, was hardly linear.

There were several opinions as to what happened between death and the Last Judgment, but "the most popular was the bosom of Abraham, the authority for which ultimately came from the Bible."[3] Also identified with the *refrigerium,* the bosom of Abraham was a place designated for the pure, righteous and pious. It was a "place of refreshment and peace."[4] However, this arrangement was of no concrete use to the common people who, as is the way of the world, could hardly identify themselves with saints, but who also thought themselves, tentatively one would guess, to be above the complete damnation of unbelievers and irredeemable sinners. Thus there was a general anxiety and uncertainty as to where exactly 'normal' people would be sorted into until the Last Judgment.

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[1] Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Aldershot: Scolar Press, [1984] 1990).
[2] R. W. Southern, "Between Heaven and Hell," *Times Literary Supplement,* 18 June 1982, 651-652.
[3] Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 176
[4] Andrew Skotnicki, "God's Prisoners: Penal Confinement and the Creation of Purgatory," *Modern Theology* 22, no.1 (2006): 92.

This is mostly a religious concern, a concern for the fate of the soul itself. From a social point of view, as the previous chapters have demonstrated, those dead that passed successfully through the Rites of Passage surrounding death were perceived to be part of the dead of the community. These dead in the common belief were closer to the living than any abstract location in the afterlife. The ambiguity of the religion as to the rather unsynchronized temporal planes of the earthly realm and the afterlife was of no great help. The closeness of the community's live and dead members to one another called for the dead to be in proximity to the community itself, rather than in a kind of stasis in the afterworld.

The common perception was that, regardless of their orientation, the dead awaited the Last Judgment "either in the grave or in some dark but neutral region, such as the *Sheol* of the Old Testament, which was not distinguished from the grave."[5] This answer, while in accordance with the perceived proximity of the living and the dead of the community to one another, did nothing to assure anyone of their eternal fate, especially so in cases where the dead person's soul was perceived to be tarnished and, from the point of salvation, less likely to attain eternal rest with the righteous. The problem of the properties of a person's soul at the point of death and the fate of someone who could not lay claim to sainthood was quite oppressive. This prompted further speculation and elaboration on the topic.

As was demonstrated in the previous chapters the close connection between successful Rites of Passage and the eternal fate of the soul comes into play at this point. Failed Rites of Passage were perhaps the more visible and highlighted pointers as to the fate of the particular person, as Rites of Passage fulfilled, apart from the necessary social separation and preparation, also the spiritual and religious

[5] Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 133.

preparation and separation of the subject. The last rites — confession, absolution, prayer, extreme unction, viaticum —were all rituals that were inherently religious and devised in the first place to ready the soul for its departure from the earthly realm and its arrival in the afterlife. Those that failed their Rites of Passage, who were victims of 'bad,' sudden, deaths, or their own stubbornness, were branded as suspect and believed to be stuck in an in-between stage, neither one of the living nor one of the dead; they were liminal, threshold presences. From a religious perspective however, these people were marked as most probably damned as demonstrated by their misfortune.

For a certain, probably quite common category of dead, both the existing, accepted demands of the Rites of Passage and the associated spiritual roadmap were problematic: the dead that may have had a fairly 'good' life and 'good' intentions but less time to prepare and to atone properly, who did not have time to fulfill the penitential prescriptions of a priest where their absolution was concerned. Purgatorial notions were inherently connected to, and attractive to, these particular dead, these particular souls, the souls of the repentant, the righteous, the just, which may have remained slightly tarnished whether or not their ritual integration into the dead went without a hitch. The main concern here was more for the eternal fate of the soul rather than the immediately dangerous liminal presence that could indeed be dealt with by the community, and was hardly perceived as salvageable. Thus the primary reasons that brought about the popularity of purgatorial notions and subsequently triggered the development and conception of Purgatory as a place were firmly rooted in the wish for salvation, of people for themselves and on behalf of their dead relatives and neighbors.

The point of death was in all senses and purposes the very edge of possible influence before the sending off of the soul into the great beyond. This was the case both socially and religiously. However, one should note the long history of communal practice of prayers for the dead and how communities, religious and secular, employed them as part of their commemoration of the dead, even though from a theological point of view they were in essence of no use. The perceived need for a way to affect and help out their dead, a veritable part of their society, was thus a driving force behind the purgatorial notions. The questions as to the condition of souls within the works of the afterlife, and the possible prospects of their purgation and thus salvation, called out for theories as to what happened in the afterlife before the Last Judgment: "[a] day of whose coming no man knew, when the blessed would be received into Paradise and the wicked pass to everlasting damnation."[6]

It was the common people, those neither saints nor completely evil, that faced a certain ambiguity as to where they belonged both temporarily and eternally in the schema of the afterlife. However, they were Christians, believers of the true faith, willing to repent and atone for their sins, which had to count for something. Thus the speculations that would lead to the development of the concept of Purgatory "did not result from the exegesis of the Holy Scriptures, which did not envisage the existence of Purgatory; they were dictated instead by the preoccupations of people in the Middle Ages; their fear of the eternal torments of hell."[7]

The first roots of the concept of Purgation after death lay in Platonistic thought, "the idea that the chastisement inflicted by the gods is not punishment but rather a means of education and salvation, part of a process of purification."[8] This

[6] Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages*, 19.
[7] A. Ja. Gurevich, "Popular and Scholarly Medieval Cultural Traditions: Notes in the Margin of Jacques Le Goff's Book," *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983): 78.
[8] Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 52.

thought went hand in hand with the perception of a merciful, fatherly God, for whom all the members of the flock had the potential to be salvaged: a rather optimistic view not held by all. However, this thought was the seed that bore the idea that between death and the Last Judgment, worthy Christians could perhaps expect a change in their affairs rather than the immediate universal segregation into damnation or salvation. Thus, in all its simplicity, it was mainly the possibility that change could be brought about for the dead person, for their soul in this case, after death in all its finality.

These ideas of possible postmortem purgation were also based on the categorization of souls. These categorizations were basically the answer to the question of one's fate. The most effective, where Purgatory was concerned, was perhaps St. Augustine's classification in the early fifth century. Echoing Ambrosiaster's understanding of the types of people, there were four categories in St. Augustine's conception, two of which were the saints and martyrs who went directly to heaven, and those evil and unbelieving who went to hell. The interesting part is how he treats those who do not fall into these first two categories, neither completely good nor bad: "Those who are not altogether wicked are destined to go to Hell: the best that can be hoped for them is a 'more tolerable' Hell … This leaves souls that are not altogether good. These can (perhaps) be saved by passing through a purgatorial fire."[9] Augustine argued that the good and the wicked were sorted out immediately, leaving the ambiguous lot. Thus, "with St. Augustine the doctrine of purifying and expiatory pain between death and judgment was established."[10]

That a purgatorial process existed was not doubted at this point, supported by "St. Paul's words about a man's works in wood, hay and stubble being burnt, while

[9] Ibid., 69.
[10] Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages*, 46.

the man himself was saved."[11] While, theologically speaking, there was between the sixth and the twelfth centuries no concrete or rounded out concept as to the shape, place or time of purgation, visionary literature seems to have heartily embraced the concept. However, they still depicted an afterlife that was rather nebulously structured, lacking set borders.[12] As one shall see, even when it became structured enough to be identifiable, this location of purgation was most times conveyed as a kind of upper layer of hell, a lesser hell the gates of which were not as firmly shut in the faces of the inmates.

The idea that fire was a tool of purgation seems to have been accepted by most, and this was one of the main properties that inherently bound the idea of such purgation to hell. Otherworldly visions came to sport a divided, layered, hell, which served the multiple purposes of purifying the salvageable on a higher level, while punishing the damned in a lower level. The visionary would often be given a glimpse of the entrance, generally a fiery pit wherein the damned suffered eternally.[13] Similarly, the location of purgation itself could be set apart, depicted in the Vision of Wetti, dated 824, wherein the monk was shown a specific building, suitably run down, that housed *monks* that went though their purgation therein.[14] Another example could be the vision of Drythelm, dated 735, recorded within Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum,* within which the visionary is told that the valley he had just been shown was a place of temporary purgation for those souls that had only confessed when faced with death and that "the prayers of those who are still alive, their alms and fasting and specially the celebration of masses, help many

[11] Southern, "Between Heaven and Hell," 651.
[12] Gurevich, "Popular and Scholarly Medieval Cultural Traditions," 83.
[13] Jacques Le Goff, "The Learned and Popular Dimensions of Journeys in the Otherworld in the Middle Ages," in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe form Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century,* ed. Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), 24.
[14] Eileen Gardiner, ed., *Visions of Heaven & Hell Before Dante* (New York: Italica Press, 1989), 69.

of them to get free even before the day of judgement."[15] Thus as early as the eighth century the validity of the prayers of the living for the condition of the dead is asserted.

Here one can add that the dying person who had confessed and was repentant pointed to successful Rites of Passage in the eyes of the community, just as a completed sequence of confession, absolution and penance pointed to salvation. This rather more demanding second layer, however, indicates that from a religious point of view the state of the soul, while connected to successful Rites of Passage, was not necessarily fully satisfied by that success. As such there seems to be a perceived necessity to help these dead along with their salvation. Mind that, in this study, the focus is on Rites of Passage.

Gregory the Great with his own theory as to the purgation of souls after death, would throw another wrench into the works, one that would affect the consequence of failed Rites of Passage, the liminal presence, greatly. Gregory, to support his theories, included in his *Dialogues* (593-594) several anecdotes on the dead that returned to earth to be purged of their sins.[16] Gregory thus did three things: first, he stated the possibility of the dead returning to the earthly realm, and second, he indicated that purgation could very well take place on earth where the sin had been committed. These two statements would come to form the basis of the much later *exempla*, anecdotes used by the Church and her preachers to spread the word of purgatory. However, he made a third contribution that is perhaps of even greater importance for this work: he forged the way for a possible connection between postmortem purgation and liminal entities, that is, the victims of failed Rites of Passage. It was the first two ideas that would form the stencil to which the

[15] Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People: The Greater Chronicle Bede's Letter to Egbert,* ed. Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 256.
[16] Atwell, "From Augustine to Gregory the Great," 181.

purgatorial dead and the belief concerning them would to some extent conform, and the third that would open the way for the liminal presence into these very stories. However, as of yet the concepts and descriptions in such sources, as well as the theological discussions surrounding them, had no uniform manifestation that would signify a matured and comprehensive belief, either on the popular stratum or the official, theological one.

The push that came to solidify purgatorial ideas was caused in part by Christianity itself, as even though it was a very well organized religion, the very question as to what happened to a person between the time of their death and the Last Judgment had been left unclear: "The Bible and Christian theology were far from clear on this score."[17] The question had been left alone in the early years as it was believed that the end of days were in fact not that far off. Any interim period between death and the Last Judgment was thus negligible. As such, the early Fathers did not address the issue with any specificity.[18]

However, as it became apparent that the world seemed bent on marching on, the question floated back to the surface, this time causing ripples of some urgency: "The second coming, once expected within the lifetime of the Apostles, seemed to have been indefinitely postponed."[19] The time between one's death and the Last Judgment now loomed incredibly large. Reflected in the writings and theological debates was an interest in the exact nature of the afterlife, what happened therein, who would be among the saved, and when exactly all this would occur. These thoughts and the anxiety they must have stemmed from were even more in evidence in the first half of the twelfth century when theologians focused explicitly on this

[17] Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 48.
[18] Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages*, 46.
[19] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 34.

question.[20] The possibility of purgation as well as the unsettling period of time spread between death and the Last Judgment proved to be fertile ground for the growth of ideas. It was through such an increasing interest in the fate of the soul after death that the concept of Purgatory as a place was conceived.[21]

The shape and form of Purgatory was slowly being felt out by these musings. Peter Lombard, in his *Sentences* (c.1157), approached the subject from another angle. He "declared that *any* sin truly repented is remitted by purgatorial pains after death, and that minor (venial) sins are purged even if they have not been repented."[22] Thus it was up to the piousness of the individual; no sin, it seems, was awful enough to condemn a true, righteous Christian. The idea that sins could be purged postmortem was taking hold, and it was a welcome idea. As even though penance in this life was of course possible, "this proved unreasonable for those outside the cloister."[23] This was not to be dismissive of earthly penance, but merely an acknowledgement that it was rather difficult for a person to do penance for *all* their sins, especially so when the description of what was sin was so encompassing.

Penance was not something that one could complete in a few weeks. Depending on the sin, one's imposed suitable penance could take years to complete. This arrangement thus was not very realistic for those who were not monks. As such one could suggest that the secular clergy may very well have been one driving force behind these new notions. As it were, one would think it unacceptable, or at least very unfair, that only monks or people living like monks could attain salvation and thus heaven, and avoid hell. The focus of the people and the Church was moving to

[20] Gurevich, "Popular and Scholarly Medieval Cultural Traditions," 73.
[21] Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 178.
[22] Southern, "Between Heaven and Hell," 651.
[23] Clive Burgess, "A Fond Thing Vainly Invented: An Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England," in *Parish, Church, and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750,* ed. S. J. Wright (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 63.

those within the society that were 'salvageable'. A space such as Purgatory "would not have been invented in the twelfth century unless humankind had felt the need to alleviate the contrast between the two extremes and to pray for souls whose fates were deemed undecided."[24]

Prayers for the dead were already a familiar concept to society. However, their effectiveness was a subject of uncertainty, as it was at times disputed by authorities. The custom had also been supported by the Fathers of the Church: "Augustine thought that prayers and alms for the dead were worthwhile."[25] However, St. Augustine himself was doubtful as to the good those prayers could do for the souls of the departed. Gregory the Great, on the other hand, with his anecdotes, clearly advocated that indeed the living could intercede in the name of the dead, and actually help them in their suffering: "To provide for the souls of the dead was just as important as provision for the living, and (in a period that remembered obits more than birthdays), this was an assumption common to all classes."[26]

Through the clearer conception of Purgatory, the effectiveness of the prayers for the dead was provided with a credible mechanism and area of operation, removing any theological doubts or uncertainties about it. Prayer was now more than commemoration: it came genuinely to be regarded as a practice that would alleviate the suffering of the community's dead, offering them a better place in the afterlife. The period after death was no longer one of stasis; what happened there was now a process.[27] The living and the dead both had a plan and schedule to follow: "When a

[24] DuBruck, "Introduction," 11.
[25] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 36.
[26] Margaret Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion 1350-1600* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993), 8
[27] Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, 282.

man died, his relatives had a clear and purposive picture of his condition."[28] Thus the conception of Purgatory, besides the great changes it wrought in the geography of the afterlife, would also have wide-ranging effects in the earthly realm. It changed people's perception of the dead and death, and additionally gave immense power to the Church in the organization and control of the afterlife. There was of course a worldly side to it too: "The doctrine of purgatory and the cult of intercession for the dead underlay many of the institutions and much of the funding of late medieval Christianity."[29]

According to Le Goff, who first brought forth the theory of Purgatory's 'birth' as a place within the afterlife, this could be pinpointed by the period when it was first named. Thus Le Goff places it in the period 1170-1180 when the noun *purgatorium* was first used by Peter Comestor (d. c. 1178).[30] As stated before, however, there have been other voices that have called for a different reading of the conception of Purgatory. R.W. Southern, for example, argued that by strictly connecting Purgatory itself to the usage of the noun, Le Goff had overshot the actual emergence of Purgatory by some fifty years. For Southern, rather than signifying an exact time of 'birth', the usage of the noun pointed to convenience and thus a preexistent familiarity with the idea.[31]

Another argument that is of significance for this work is that of Aaron Gurevich, who stated that Purgatory in and of itself was not created by official theology, but merely shaped by it, eventually making it official.[32] This would

[28] Theo Brown, *The Fate of the Dead: A Study in Folk-Eschatology in the West Country After the Reformation* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer ltd., 1979), 15.
[29] Eamon Duffy, "The End of It All: The Material Culture of the Medieval English Parish and the 1552 Inventories of Church Goods," in *The Parish in Late Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2002 Harlaxton Symposium,* ed. Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 381.
[30] Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 3 and 157.
[31] Southern, "Between Heaven and Hell," 652.
[32] Gurevich, "Popular and Scholarly Medieval Cultural Traditions," 88.

indicate that a common popular belief had to preexist the theological arguments in order to influence them. The anecdotes of the revenants, the liminal presences, in the previous chapter however, would argue for a rather different picture. In all three cases wherein the purgatorial effect is clearly visible, the source of said influence comes from the 'top,' that is, from persons who most probably had access to theological discussions. Thus one could argue that, at least where the liminal presences, in their revenant incarnation were concerned, the common belief was as of yet not exactly in synchronization with the novel ideas of postmortem absolution. However, either way, the start of the common usage of the noun should be seen as at least being "crucial as a linguistic badge for the new ideas about sin and penance."[33] On the other hand, these very anecdotes are dated towards the end of the twelfth century, some clearly several years earlier. This would in turn argue that indeed the ideas came to be persistent and increasingly prevalent at right around the time the usage of the noun commenced.

It was not until 1254 though, that the concept of Purgatory as a place was first recognized by Pope Innocent IV in a letter,[34] and was later officially accepted as a doctrine of the Medieval Church at the Council of Lyons in 1274.[35] Still, *exempla* and preaching on the subject began earlier. Purgatory found fertile ground in the minds of the people, for whom a new and much more preferable alternative to hell had just been clarified.

These changes within the religious concept of things would affect the social perception of the Rites of Passage; here things became less clear-cut than they had been before. The possibility of postmortem progress or change in the fate of the dead

[33] Watkins, "Sin, Penance and Purgatory in the Anglo-Norman Realm," 32.
[34] Skotnicki, "God's Prisoners," 98; F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2002), 287-88.
[35] Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 285.

opened a whole new dimension where the Rites of Passage were concerned. Inevitably the failed Rites of Passage and its consequence, the liminal presence, as well as the danger it represented for the community, was pulled into this vortex, as the rather more lenient reactions in some of the revenant anecdotes in the previous chapter would indicate. The softening of the boundaries between the earthly realm and the afterlife, one could argue, allowed for a rather less rigid conception of the consequence of failure in the Rites of Passage. After all, Purgatory was advertising the postmortem absolution of sins, the clearing of one's sins through suffering, and the prayers and solidarity of the living of a community. Similarly, the way the Church went about the promotion of Purgatory forged another connection that would be impossible to break once in place; the purgatorial dead, the ghosts of the *exempla*, were in their very essence closely related to what the community understood of liminal presences. As such it was impossible for the concept of the Rites of Passage and the liminal presence to remain unaffected by purgatorial notions and later Purgatory itself.

It is important to emphasize here that what is of significance for this work is not the exact nature of the conception of the doctrine of Purgatory, though having a rough framework does help, but rather the point of acceptance of Purgatory as a place within the afterlife as something the Church actively promoted through preaching, and thus the point when the concepts of Purgatory, purgatorial punishment and the solidarity between the dead and the living infused society through religion. The concept of Purgatory and all its sometimes-variable bells and whistles, through the preaching and the *exempla* used by the preachers, started to influence and affect the preexistent common beliefs where both the Rites of Passage and the liminal presence were concerned.

The revenant anecdotes would indicate that to some extent, roughly towards the end of the twelfth century, the influence of purgatorial possibilities were starting to seep down into the society through 'informed' parties, already affecting the liminal returning dead, even before the complete formulation of Purgatory as a place, as something regularly taught by the Church. Thus the point of focus is more about the properties that Purgatory as a place, as well as the purgatorial dead, brought to the beliefs concerning the liminal returning dead: mitigation, reason, the possibility of communication, rather than Purgatory itself, its birth, or its precise properties.

Apart from the new real estate in the afterlife, Purgatory had quite extensive effects on the world of the living as well. These effects had great repercussions when it came to the current make up of the society, as well as the relationships between the living and the dead. The ambiguity of the fate of the middling Christians was certainly softened, though with the depictions of purgatorial fire being as close as they were to the infernal fires of Hell, it is not that hard to understand why people would still like to avoid the place if possible, and if they could not, then to shorten the said stay as much as possible.

Arrangements to try to reduce one's stint in purgatory came to be commonplace. People came to make their own arrangement in their wills to ensure through as many masses in as many churches as possible, that they would escape purgatory after only a relatively short stay.[36] The period beyond death and preceding the Last Judgment was no longer perceived to be a no man's land wherein intervention for the deceased members of the community had been deemed doubtful. It is a measure of the spreading popularity of the idea of Purgatory among the people that "chantries and the hiring of priests to sing Masses for the souls of the deceased

[36] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 126.

founder and his family, or for the members of a guild or other corporation, became familiar in the religious landscape after 1300."[37]

All who died with the burden of their sins still on them, with unfinished, insufficient penance, were prime candidates for purgatorial cleansing. As things stood even those "who had insufficient penance imposed on them by over-indulgent confessors"[38] would not be exempt from time in Purgatory. However, the alternative being an eternal stint in Hell, the conception of Purgatory as a place in the afterlife mitigated the anxieties that had until that point surrounded the fate of one's soul.

The purgatorial dead, those dead hailing from the afterlife to enlighten the living, could be perceived as the answer of the preachers to the witnesses required to prove and emphasize the changes in the great beyond. The liminal presences were already existent, hence the dead were capable in instances, with enough provocation, motivation, or causes to come and intrude into the life of the living. The Church in this instance put to use the rather settled common belief as to such excursions by the dead, the liminal presences primarily, into the realm of the living, thus putting these recalcitrant presences to good use, to an extent absorbing them and reshaping their most useful properties and indications into something completely of its own, the purgatorial dead, even while inadvertently affecting and changing the original common belief that surrounded the liminal presence and their properties.[39] Hence two separate streams of belief at times overlapped and mingled, though they remained with their peculiar properties distinct.

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[37] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 54.
[38] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 341.
[39] "The dominant civilization proved unable to eliminate the folkloric element and hence partially absorbed it." Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception,* trans. Janos M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), *xvi*. While the labeling is uncomfortable, this quote does seem valid, though the later interaction between these two particular types of dead would indicate that nothing is very clear-cut where the dead, religion, and liminal presences are concerned.

Thus purgatory was universal; almost everybody would get caught in its net, if not through their own failings then someone else's. This far-reaching net however had a rather unexpected side effect. It turned out it could as well catch those that had slipped and failed the Rites of Passage, had in the eyes of the community become entities impossible of recovery, lost to the community itself. Once caught in the net however, they, possibly following the examples offered by the Church, ironically examples that in their very nature had been based on these particular entities, could reach back to the realm of the living, this time with an agenda that was given a framework through the purgatorial ideas and was understandable to the living. The living could now categorize these liminal presences as something that overlapped, at least in general, with the purgatorial dead, and thus could basically be treated with similar intent, though with greater caution.

It was this paradigm shift that instigated a change in the liminal presence, and as a result the perception of the Rites of Passage. These liminal presences now could talk, communicate, be in a sense reasonable. Their motivations were no longer, in the eyes of the living, limited to the primal, the negative, founded in taking life and destruction; rather they were focused more on salvation and the possibility of postmortem change. These changes in the liminal presences on the fringes of the society however had their very roots in the changes that concerned the afterlife, the fate of the dead of the community, and their salvation.

The purgatorial idea also had the additional effect of putting down a clear roadmap for both the dying and the survivors, where the spiritual and religious procedure was concerned. This process will sound familiar, as in its very nature it describes the Rites of Passage: "The medieval Church's round of services served to

undermine the fear and the anxiety which surrounded death."[40] Ritual equaled a semblance of control, a hint of a grand plan. Thus the ritualized services of the Church served the society at a time of loss. The bereaved had a clear idea of the condition of the dead. What was new in this situation due to the entrance of Purgatory on to the stage was that they now also had a clerically approved means of influencing the said condition: "Death was less and less a frontier. Purgatory became an annex of the earth and extended the rime of life and of memory."[41] Prayers for the dead, the way the community already commemorated the dead, were now ratified enthusiastically by the Church: "Death did not completely rupture family life and it was possible to maintain a proper regard for the ancestors by means of prayers for the dead and annual requiems."[42]

Though the anxiety of unwitting eternal damnation and suffering had been mitigated, the social interaction between the living and the dead of the community was now wrought with responsibility, guilt, duty and worry. This social interaction and responsibility was one of the main results of the conception of Purgatory, the dead were closer to the living than ever before. The dead were perceived by the society as active members of society that had every capability to communicate and act within society itself. The dead, already a part of the society, an age class,[43] had now with the support and understanding of Purgatory become an active stratum of the society, their perceived needs occupying part of the everyday life of the living: "It was believed that communication between the dead and the living was not only

[40] Andrew Spicer, "'Rest of their Bones': Fear of Death and Reformed Burial Practices," in *Fear in Early Modern Society,* ed. William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 167.
[41] Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 233.
[42] Brown, *The Fate of the Dead*, 15-16.
[43] Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 36.

possible but likely."[44] The Church had turned its attention to the regulation of the said relations.

The survivors had to say mass, give alms, follow the pattern of ritual and remembrance. It was "widely accepted by the thirteenth century, that praying for the dead means praying specifically for the souls in purgatory."[45] These social 'duties' and responsibilities were thus completed even without the returning dead having to come looking. Whereas before the two groups seemed to be independent of one another in the natural flow of things — where no mishaps forced the issue — everyone remaining on their own side of the line, going about their separate business, except for occasions where the display of respect and commemoration were concerned, now the living were put under pressure, wherein the dead *needed* the living to secure eternal peace, or at least secure it more quickly: "It was a Church that had come to accept as an established tenet of its belief the solidarity between the living and the dead."[46]

The dead were always close, a part of the society, present sometimes in name alone, i.e. in the parish church engraved with the names of those who required assistance.[47] This also strengthened the presence of the dead of the community within the everyday workings of the society, even without all the Church-sanctioned visits by the purgatorial dead: "High and late medieval sources reveal a lively intercourse between the two worlds and an enthusiasm on the part of the dead to visit the living."[48]

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[44] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 58.
[45] Anca Bratu-Minott, "From the Bosom of Abraham to the Beatific Vision: On Some Medieval Images of the Soul's Journey to Heaven," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages,* ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999),192.
[46] Atwell, "From Augustine to Gregory the Great," 186.
[47] Colin Richmond, "Religion," in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England,* ed. Rosemary Horox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 186.
[48] Rampton, "Up from the Dead: Magic and Miracle," 276.

The idea that purgatory was a physical place also brought forth with it a rather literal understanding as to its whereabouts. Purgatory was perceived to be physically present in this realm as numerous 'entrances' and stories thereof would indicate.[49] The idea that purgatorial punishment could be served in the earthly, and temporal realm, brought purgatory closer to the living in a very real sense. Aside from the 'entrances', the idea was that there could in some sense exist a certain overlapping of these realms. This similarly supported the popular belief that the dead could indeed be very close to the living. The dead became "a group who remained in intimate contact with the living through the belief that purgatory was localized, the suffering souls actually being understood as present in one's village or even house."[50]

Due to the Rites of Passage the dead were perceived to already be part of their society. Purgatory in this sense provided answers and paths to the question of eternal salvation, even while bringing the living and dead closer on a communal basis: a certain co-dependency. Though Purgatory did provide a safety net for those dying who were not quite ready, it did not by any means remove the fear and disturbance felt within a community when faced with a sudden, 'bad' death. As such, dying a good death became of utmost importance, as it was one of the indicators determining the fate of the soul and its position and suffering within purgatory. The way one died could very well affect the fate of the soul that, with the entrance of Purgatory, could now be influenced if not manipulated: "More importance than before began to be attached to the period immediately preceding death, when

[49] Carol G. Zaleski, "St. Patrick's Purgatory: Pilgrimage Motifs in a Medieval Otherworld Vision," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46, no.4 (Oct. Dec. 1985): 467-85

[50] Robert W. Scribner, "Elements of Popular Belief," in *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation, Volume I: Structures and Assertions,* ed. Thomas A. Brady Jr., Heiko A. Oberman and James D. Tracy (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 237.

repentance and emotional grief could affect the fate of souls in the other world."[51] Hereby the fate of the soul, and the perceived proceedings in the afterlife, thus became intermeshed with the already existent perceptions of a 'good' death and successful Rites of Passage. This overlap caused a fusion between the religious preparation and social preparation for death, which had already made use of religious rituals, but also in the perception of a 'good' death. The Rites of Passage came to carry parallel expectations of a successful social transition from one group to the next and at the same time the religious and spiritual connotation of the soul's fate in the afterlife: "Each person's destiny is wrought on his deathbed."[52] Though this connotation was already existent to some extent, official church support and preaching brought it to the forefront of the minds of the people.

These concerns thus surfaced in an anxiety that surrounded the deathbed and the way of one's death, as the developing of a new genre in the fifteenth century, the *Ars moriendi*, that is, the Craft of Dying Well would indicate. One of the main purposes of the *Ars moriendi* was the alleviation of the fearfulness of death.[53] The Rites of Passage and their deathbed proceedings had become important enough from a religious perspective to call for such guides. Thus safe passage from life to death, as it affected the individual, not only in the social context but also concerning the well being of their soul, and by association the physical as well as the spiritual health of the community, was of utmost importance. The printing in 1490 of Caxton's translation of the French *Ars moriendi*, or as he translated it, the 'Arte & Crafte to Knowe Well to Dye', introduced the genre to England. It was massively popular and

[51] Gurevich, "Popular and Scholarly Medieval Cultural Traditions," 76.
[52] Gurevich, *Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages*, 68.
[53] Peter Marshall, "Fear, Purgatory and Polemic in Reformation England," in *Fear in Early Modern Society,* ed. William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 158.

was reprinted over a hundred times before the turn of the century.[54] The *Ars moriendi* "outlines the crises that the dying face and describes a ritual that will lead ordinary Christians to a 'good death'."[55] It is equally a guide as to how one is to go through the Rites of Passage surrounding death successfully.

As the name would suggest, these treatises were basically guides as to how to approach one's own death. In this sense their aim and thus their method of guidance roughly correspond with one another. The *Ars moriendi* or the *Ars bene moriendi* described the deathbed scene as it was perceived to be ideal. This description had two sides to it. One was mainly the religious aspect that "described how demons would try to drag the soul off to hell, and how the dying man must combat them by turning to Christ, his Mother, and the saints."[56] This confrontation was primarily concerned with the fate of the soul and how the deathbed and one's actions at that point affected one's salvation. On the other hand, and understood to be directly connected to one's survival of the previously described scene, was the explanation of how to prepare; how to separate from life.

One can without doubt state that the preparation and one's actions on the deathbed are concerned primarily with the religious, the spiritual, the material and the social. The *Ars moriendi,* apart from the religious rites and necessities involved in the process of dying that encompass the last sacraments, also strived to "urge those about to depart from the world to make peace with their neighbors, distribute their property, provide for their families, and cultivate detachment from mundane

[54] Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars Moriendi* (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1966) Originally (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 1-2.
[55] Donald F. Duclow, "Dying Well: The Ars moriendi and the Dormition of the Virgin," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages,* ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 379.
[56] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 55.

concerns."[57] Thus what was emphasized was separation, the perhaps most important step in the Rites of Passage, when the subject removes themselves from their original social status. Similarly, according to the *Ars moriendi*, it was extremely important that everyone coming into contact with the sick and dying person "were to see to it that the sick person was warned in good time of the approach of death, and thereby brought to fulfill their duties by receiving the last Sacrament, making their will, and disposing as best they could for their dependents and households." [58] All these properties were perceived to be of importance where the separation of the individual from the community and life was concerned, that is, the first stage of the Rites of Passage. The responsibility thus lay not only with the dying person but also with the community itself. The process of dying basically should start the dying person's separation from the earthly realm, from their life and the community, religiously, emotionally, materially, economically and spiritually. Similarly, the community would start its own separation process from its sickened member.

The 'good' death was enhanced by the idea of purgatory; the liminal presences similarly were bestowed with motivations that corresponded to the purgatorial ideas and, perhaps more importantly, allowed for the integration of the Rites of Passage or the failure of such with these new mental faculties of the dead. The liminal presences thus were accordingly affected and changed, though they too influenced people's perceptions of Purgatory. However, perhaps the most important change that the conception of Purgatory brought to the liminal returning dead, the liminal presences, was a religious perspective; the previous motivations, reasons, as well as logic, or lack of such, all came to be tinted by the religious understanding of a 'good' death, the aftermath of death and the religious obligations that the dying

[57] Zaleski, "St. Patrick's Purgatory," 482.
[58] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 315.

person was perceived to have towards God, first and foremost, and then to their family, community and society. As such, the Rites of Passage were also read through this perception. The separation phase started with the religious and again ended with such, through the rituals of the Church that had already been integrated into the stages of the rites, i.e. separation through the last sacraments. These rituals as well as the Rites of Passage took on now a heavier emphasis on the religious. The anxiety about the eternal fate of souls of men overlapped with the fear of unsuccessful Rites of Passage with ease.

In this sense the conception of Purgatory did tip the balance towards the emphasis on the religious elements and meaning in the schema of the Rites of Passage. The religious preparation of the dying person was at times significant enough to overcome the most basic fears when it came to 'bad' deaths. Executions, for example, perceived as among the worst ways to die, the criminal isolated from the community and forced out of life, exiled in a sense, could now be mitigated through the allowance for religious preparation and separation, thereby allowing for the Rites of Passage to proceed – thus the religious separation had come to the forefront. Hanging a criminal "certainly cut him off from temporal, but not necessarily from spiritual society. If he had confessed and asked for or received the viaticum he merited church burial, masses and offerings for his soul."[59] This would argue that the separation was complete and reintegration thus was possible as well, even though the death could hardly be called an ideal one. As separation was complete, and all worldly affairs in order, it seems the criminal was not feared after death, his potential for return and a continued existence as a liminal presence was nullified. The display of willing repentance thus was perceived to be valid enough to

[59] Finucane, "Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion," 49.

allow the criminal back into the community through the reintegration stage, even though it is only as one of the dead. This, one would argue, was the strength of religious conviction.

"The eschatological continuity of life is preserved by recognizing that the soul is capable of purification before death … either through negligence or distraction or through sudden death something may still remain to be done."[60] As Ombres here confirms, the existence of purgatory thus allowed for a change in the dead person's status. As for the Rites of Passage, it allowed for a continued possibility of separation, and integration, if these had not already been affected. The postmortem absolution and thus a completion of separation evident in some revenant anecdotes thus became something closer to the norm. This, in turn, meant that failed Rites of Passage and their consequence, the liminal presence, were greatly affected by the purgatorial idea, even though at its very nature the purgatorial idea targeted more the normal dead of the community than the abnormality represented by the liminal presence.

What would normally be perceived as failed separation, perhaps due to a 'bad' or unprepared death, and thus failed Rites of Passage, could possibly be remedied in the fires of Purgatory, or by the intervention of the living of the community: "In Initiation rites," G van der Leeuw tells us, "fire wipes out the past period of existence and makes a new period possible."[61] An initiation rite is in its very essence a set of Rites of Passage, the subject leaving one social group behind, separating from it to join another. While Le Goff reads this quote as indicative of Purgatory being a place of transition, and identifies Purgatory with Van Gennep's

[60] Robert Ombres, "The Doctrine of Purgatory According to St. Thomas Aquinas," *Downside Review* 99 (1981): 280.
[61] G. van der Leeuw, La Religion dans son essence et ses manifestatuins (Paris, 1955), 53 as quoted by Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 7.

concept of the liminal stage,[62] one must state that this was only within the framework of salvation, that is, the eternal fate of the soul. As such one must be careful to avoid the statement that the two, the Rites of Passage and the Purgatorial stay of the soul are synonymous, either in meaning or temporally. Both concepts have their own heavy burden of connotation, social and religious, and though there is indeed, as one shall see, some overlap and interaction on both sides they are by no means the same. The purgatorial dead were not identical to the liminal presences. Nor is this work interested in making such a statement. What is of import here is to point out the changes that the liminal presences and the Rites of Passage went through as a result of the conception of the purgatorial notions and Purgatory itself.

As one shall see, the preaching of Purgatory infused its rhetoric with what the community had come to perceive as the liminal presence. The Church needed evidence of the existence and function of Purgatory. What better evidence but those dead that were perceived to have failed in some way to attain rest and thus disturbed the community as well. These witnesses to the existence of Purgatory, however, could not be horrors stumbling around the village killing folk right and left; they had to be stellar citizens as it were of this new and shiny piece of real estate in the afterlife. The transformation, however, as one shall see, was not complete. The inherent properties and the perceived reasons for these properties were too potent for the Church to be able to eradicate them completely. Thus the end result was neither a purpose-built teaching of Purgatory and its properties, nor the preexistent common beliefs on the liminal returning dead and their connection to failed Rites of Passage alone, but a fusion between the two, though properties of both still remained identifiable. The popular perception, if one is to look at the anecdotes, is one of

[62] Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 7-8.

possible separation after death; that purgatory allowed for postmortem separation, thereby to an extent mitigating the previously violent and abrupt reactions towards liminal presences. However, this was not a modification that was limited to the reactions of the living. The liminal presences, themselves, their properties, actions, and characteristics were also influenced deeply. One could argue that the one could not have happened without the other.

With Purgatory "there is this time in which to redeem the soul: to pay its debts to the living, to make up for lost time on earth, and to pass the tests that separate the soul from its true eternal essence."[63] As Fenn says here, Purgatory may indeed be seen as an extension, an opportunity to do penance for sins, put worldly affairs in order if the chance had not been found or taken before death: basically separation. This had the, perhaps unforeseen and unplanned, effect of allowing the liminal presences of failed Rites of Passage to make use of this very same opportunity. It was this possibility that changed the perception of the liminal presences; these presences had to be suitably less *liminal*, less violent, less dangerous, or at the very least more controllable. The end result was that failed separation was no longer a road of no return; separation could thus continue within the borrowed boundaries controlled and forged by Purgatory.

This was why those that hailed from Purgatory, the purgatorial dead, while they do return to the earthly realm within the *exempla*, the preaching of the Church, seldom show liminal properties to their percipients, unlike the liminal presences of the common belief, the popularly defined liminal returning dead whose liminal properties and nature form an obstacle to overcome for the percipient to help them. No doubt the purgatorial dead mimicked the liminal returning dead, the liminal

[63] Richard K. Fenn, *The Persistence of Purgatory* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 46.

presence; their story and existence was after all based on the latter. It was this mimicry that allowed for the two to mingle. However, the true liminal presence still seems to be there. The purgatorial dead, supported and upheld by the Church, displayed a controlled, neutered version of what was understood previously as the liminal presence of common belief. These purgatorial dead, in turn, also changed the common perception and belief that surrounded the liminal presences stuck in between; mitigated their liminal properties only to a certain extent, but completely changed the scope of their interaction with the living.

The minimal traces of *liminality* within the *exempla* themselves may very well be due to the fact that while they do have their foundations in common belief, the *exempla* in their inherent nature were a representation of a more restricted and mitigated version of the common belief: "Most of the surviving tales were produced under the aegis of the Church and present [ghosts] not as corpses but as souls returning from the Purgatory, to advise or seek help from the living –their visitation unsettling perhaps, but beneficial."[64] Of course one is cautioned not to limit the liminal presence to its revenant incarnation, with the presence of the corpse as its very own signature, though indeed this distinction does, in a sense, allow one an easier route in discerning the existence or traces of the liminal presence within the *exempla.* One such property is their inherent physicality, even though it is clear in most anecdotes that the corpse is not involved: "The wanderings of [ghosts] were therefore channeled but not denied, since never had [ghosts], or at least the texts that mentioned them, been so large in number."[65] Purgatory's effect seemed to have turned attention to the purgatorial dead returning and visiting the living, less

[64] Rosemary Horrox, "Purgatory, Prayer and Plague: 1150-1380," in *Death in England: An Illustrated History,* ed. Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 95.
[65] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 125-126.

disruptive by far than the liminal presence. As a result, the dead were recorded more often in conversation with the living.

Thus one could argue that Purgatory, as a by-product to its promotion, lessened the potency and frequency of the more fearsome liminal presences, the revenant incarnation especially that had hounded the living. The primary target, it is important to remember, had not been the common belief that surrounded the failed Rites of Passage, the liminal presence. However these liminal dead, perceived from a more religious perspective than merely the end result of failed Rites of Passage, were lumped together with the tarnished souls in Purgatory.

Purgatory was after all actually a prison, and by association the liminal presence too could perhaps be included among its inmates, until they could be separated from their previous identity properly through the help of the living. As the prison was God's, necessarily the souls could only roam free with permission: "In England the terminology was much more prison-like: indeed many writers described it as a 'prison' or incarceration."[66] Purgatory was perceived as a prison from which only divine permission could secure temporary leaves of absence, and therefore any sanctioned leave had to have a meaning, a reason, a purpose, a motivation and a necessity behind it: "Theologians taught that it was not the power of the dead man himself to choose to return to the earth… God alone determined such matters."[67]

However, liminal presences by definition outside of boundaries and rules, were an uncomfortable fit with this prison-like rhetoric, as some of the anecdotes in the next chapter will demonstrate, where they seem to display a disturbing liberty in their comings and goings. Still the effect of Purgatory cannot be downplayed where their motivations and actions are concerned. In the purgatorial ideas the control is

[66] Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 11.
[67] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 702.

firmly handed over to the divine. However, especially in the case of the Byland Abbey collection of stories, where common belief was concerned, the returning dead seemed to enjoy a continuing autonomy even though their 'motivations' did indeed reflect and conform with the religious conceptions of Purgatory. During the reign of Purgatory the liminal presences seem to be "policing the blurred boundary between life and death, often counseling or threatening family and friends from beyond the grave and finally, aiding in the complete separation of the dead as they pleaded for intercession on their behalf from the living."[68] These properties were a mixture of the common belief, where the consequences of failed Rites of Passage and the resulting liminality was concerned, as well as the new concept of Purgatory and the Church's preaching of it, and their effects on the behavior of the dead.

One could argue that Purgatory had made the passage between life and death smoother and less of a trouble and terror for the surviving parties in cases where things did not go exactly according to plan. Even while from a strict doctrinal point this was not supported, it indeed came to such a point during the fifteenth century that almost everyone, with the monetary means, could hope for entrance into Purgatory and mitigation of penances therein.[69] Purgatory and its preaching penetrated all layers of society. It had given the living a formula to follow, and for the things lacking or falling beyond the defined boundaries of the formula, the dead, as the Byland Abbey Collection shall indicate, were still very much capable of returning and nudging the living towards the right path. That they did this much more gently than the previous incarnation of the liminal presence, the revenants, is, it is argued here, an unforeseen side effect of the purgatorial ideas being preached. The

[68] Philip Morgan, "Of Worms and War: 1380-1558," in *Death in England: An Illustrated History,* ed. Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 131.
[69] Rosemary Horrox, "Introduction," in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England,* ed. Rosemary Horox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11.

returns came to have a rhyme and reason to them, contact, communication, motivation. As such, they were also part of a pattern that the percipients seemed to expect and understand as the norm.

Now the dead that returned, the liminal presences, had the capacity to communicate "and demanded the fulfillment of obligations towards him from those whose duty it was to fulfill them. … He was in short the embodiment of familial piety."[70] The living were thus called forth to fulfill the duty they owed the dead, the liminal presence in this case, previously thought to be lost, damned to wander and harass the living forever. What could have ended up as a case of eternal liminality thus had the potential for a transition into the afterlife, even with the bonus of a salvaged soul. However, this period of opportunity did not really remove the social necessity for separation, that was the necessity for Rites of Passage in the first place. On the contrary it emphasized the necessity further, though the emphasis now lay on its religious properties. As such, it is possible to see that most of the motivations of the liminal presences during the reign of Purgatory, while apparently focusing heavily on the religious side of things, are actually more social in nature, concerning the community in the matters of theft, debts, inheritance etc.

Purgatory as a place, and as a concept, had been built on preexistent and familiar concepts, that ranged from the coexistence of the living and the dead within the same society, to the hoped-for effectiveness of prayers for the dead, as well as the more fundamental and less controlled common belief that the dead could indeed return to the realm of the living. However, the end result, once the concept and place were fully fleshed out, differed from the previous incarnations of any one of these concepts; they were a combination and fusion thereof.

[70] Bossy, *Christianity in the West*, 29.

This, it is argued here, was paralleled where the belief in the liminal entity was concerned. Previously the liminal presences that had been trapped in their liminality due to failed Rites of Passage, could hardly be helped by the living. The only option thus for the living had been to get rid of them, remove the threat from the community, basically destroy them through whatever means possible, there was nothing that could be done to change or alleviate the situation. Once stuck as liminal presences, the liminal returning dead were trapped thus, until they were 'stopped'. Therefore what Purgatory did for the perception of souls suffering in the afterlife, to open up the possibility that their suffering could be alleviated and indeed removed completely through the intervention of the living, can also be glimpsed where the liminal returning dead are concerned. Their liminality could equally be influenced by the living, albeit through religious methods: confession, absolution, masses, alms; separation could be completed postmortem and thus the liminal presence reintegrated into the community as one of the dead. However, as the Byland Abbey Collection in the next chapter indicates, the liminal presences under the reign of Purgatory were by no means any less terrifying or unpredictable. Their liminality shone through the religious properties that made them salvageable in the eyes of the people and the Church. Thus for a comprehensive picture of the liminal presence, both the returning dead of *exempla* and of sources that focus more on the common belief have to be taken into account.

CHAPTER IV

EXEMPLARY SOURCES AND ANECDOTES REFLECTING COMMON BELIEF: SPECULUM LAICORUM, THE ELY BOOK, GERVASE OF TILBURY AND THE BYLAND ABBEY COLLECTION

Once the concept of Purgatory as a place came to be influential, the Church turned to the spreading and preaching of the idea: "Beginning in the first half of the thirteenth century and lasting until the end of the Middle Ages, preachers, both secular and predominantly religious figures of the mendicant orders, distributed *exempla* by the thousands."[1] For such a mission, there were no better candidates to inform and warn the living than the dead who suffered in purgatory. As a medium for these stories the Church used *exempla*: "These collections were written by clerics for the use of other clerics, who adapted the individual stories of *exempla* to their own sermons."[2] As such, these stories did not in all honesty reflect common belief among the people; they were basically educational stories to be used by preachers. However, they were also inherently connected to the common belief of the people, as the material to make an impact on the listener and so had to be at least familiar to the audience.

[1] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 60.
[2] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 59.

Thus *exempla* took their basic foundation from the common belief that surrounded the returning dead, the liminal presence.

There is indeed a difference between theological discourses and the things that were the stuff of common belief. However, it is also nigh impossible to study the common belief of an era without the influence and effects of the Church's preaching seeping in. Indeed, common belief, due to its inherent characteristics, cannot be conceived of as existing in some pure incarnation unaffected by religion. *Exempla* "therefore give voice to, at the same time as they themselves shape, the medieval world of ghostly apparitions."[3]

The most logical pattern to follow would thus be an examination of the *exempla,* the formation of a comprehensive idea as to the preaching of the Church where the purgatorial dead and liminal presences were concerned, and if possible to try and connect these with the liminal properties of the earlier belief concerning the returning dead, thereby trying to gauge how much this earlier belief changed and what survived. As such, *exempla* as well as anecdotes from the period provide an arena wherein common belief and the Church's preaching interact and affect one another. Based on a perceived supernatural event, *exempla* "shaped the ways in which subsequent phenomena would be interpreted and reported."[4] Thus neither the purgatorial dead of *exempla* nor the liminal presences in common belief could from this point on be read separately; these two perceptions were inherently intermeshed and connected.

The study of such sources additionally give an insight into the place of the dead of the community, the connection between the living and the dead, the fact that they shared the same community, as well as the importance of the obligations of the

[3] Ibid., 60.
[4] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16.

living towards the dead. Postmortem action taken by both the living and the dead could lead to salvation. That purgatorial ideas tightened the connection between the living and the dead is also supported by several *exempla* within the *Speculum Laicorum*, a group of *exempla* in Latin, "probably compiled by an English cleric."[5] The *Speculum Laicorum* has been identified as English in origin due to the localities specified in most of its anecdotes. Welter states that in all probability the author was of a Mendicant order, which focused considerable attention on preaching, and that evidence suggests it is to be dated later than 1270.[6] While content-wise the *Speculum Laicorum* is abundant with examples as to how the Church wished the returning dead and purgatorial ideas to be perceived, the following *exempla* focus on the dead that have already been reintegrated into the community as 'the dead,' their Rites of Passage successful and separation complete, not liminal presences. They allow a glimpse into the people's perception of their own dead.

Two such anecdotes are reported by the same person, Odo of Seriton. The first one, 161, concerns a priest in *Vasconia* who habitually walked through the cemetery, sprinkling holy water and praying for the souls of the dead, upon which the dead literally reach out of their graves to receive the holy water.[7] However, this activity of the dead, unlike that expected of the revenant, the liminal presence, does not excite fear or horror, nor are they dealt with in any way. They merely receive the water and then continue their rest. This indicates that they were the dead of the community, reintegrated successfully and literally a part of the parish, and not liminal presences. The dead were closer than ever to the living, literally, and they inspired no fear. The second anecdote, 163, similarly concerns a priest who after

[5] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 59.
[6] *Le Speculum laicorum: Édition d'une collection d'exempla, composée en Angleterre à la fin du XIIIe siècle,* ed. J. Th. Welter (Paris: Picard, 1914), v-ix.
[7] Ibid., 36.

saying mass gets an unexpected response from the dead part of the community, the cemetery; the dead respond to him with a resounding "Amen".[8] Again there is no horror in the face of this activity; instead it is perceived as an indicator of the efficacy of masses where the souls of the dead in Purgatory are concerned. The common belief that the dead were close and a part of the community seems to have held sway over the purgatorial ideas; they were indeed purposefully connected.

The last of this kind is an anecdote, 280, that concerns a matron in Kent during the reign of Henry III, who one day walking in the cemetery heard a moaning voice. Being rightfully cautious, she invoked it in the name of the Lord. Such invocations or conjuring seem to have been the sensible thing to do where the nature of the presence is unknown. Either way the voice identifies itself and reveals that it is a Christian man who had been resting in his grave peacefully until someone decided to bury an excommunicated man in his grave.[9] Thus in this case it is not the 'other' that returns but one of the community's own, disturbed by the meddling and mistakes of the living.

The matron handles the situation and the dead man is rid of the threat of an excommunicated man's corpse lying with him till eternity. It is ironic that this particular anecdote thus calls for the cancellation of a proper Christian burial for the excommunicated man. In the purgatorial scheme of things the wish for absolution and a Christian burial[10] were generally grounds for the excommunicates to return and ask for help. This story could then either be taken as a dire warning to those under the threat of excommunication, or a similar warning to the living that they should not be lenient.

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[8] Ibid., 37.
[9] Ibid., 57.
[10] See Map's two anecdotes of liminal presences, revenants, that asked and received post-mortem absolution and burial.

These examples indicate that the perception of the community's dead as part of the community, with a place of their own, the graveyard, was widespread and settled. These dead, while clearly not liminal in nature, still interacted with the priest as though they were part of his flock. Similarly, in situations where there is a liminal presence, it is clearly out of place, or there is disturbance enough from a liminal presence that the dead of the community have to take action, albeit through the living. The continued association of the grave as the place where the dead reside is more a social perspective than a religious one. However, the mention of it in the *exempla* would indicate that the belief was common enough so as to affect such records. These ordinary dead did not inspire horror: "The living were quite used to rubbing shoulders with the dead."[11] Cemeteries were part of the everyday life of the villages and towns. As such, one could argue that only certain kinds of dead were fearsome, namely the dead who had not or could not be reintegrated, those exhibiting liminal properties or those liminal presences who, after having failed Rites of Passage, posed dangers to the living and the wholeness of the community in general.

Exempla thus fulfill several functions, the main one of which was the familiarization of the populace with Purgatory as a place in the afterlife. These stories focused more intensely on the confirmation of Purgatory rather than the returning dead in particular. They present the recently deceased person returning in order to relay their condition in the afterlife and confirm that indeed such and such help by the living had been efficacious. These recently dead could perhaps be read as being in their natural 'liminal' phase, which, in a carefully controlled way had been extended by purgatory, and their contact with the living does not inspire fear; their perception seems to have been mitigated by Purgatory.

[11] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 49.

These dead, used as mere messengers to carry the word of the Church, could even be identified as a different kind of dead: the purgatorial dead. They came about in *exempla*, through the preaching of the purgatorial ideas, and while they clearly took shape from the common belief surrounding liminal presences, they became something else: shedding all dangerous or untoward liminality. Either way these two separate representations of the dead returning to the realm of the living would result in an even closer interaction later on. As a result, the purer form of the liminal entity, presented in the revenant, would be irrevocably changed, though not unrecognizably so. The inherent properties that would cause a liminal presence to exist shall, as will be visible through the later anecdotes, prevail even through these changes.

Four anecdotes from the *Speculum Laicorum* offer well-rounded examples of the purgatorial dead. Number 172, for example, focuses on a woman and her son. The woman having sinned greatly was imparted with a penance to fulfill. However, falling ill, it became apparent that she would die without the completion of her penance. At her deathbed her son, seeing her anguish, offered to fulfill the penance in her place, which he did after her death. Once he completed it his mother appeared to him, to inform him that what he did had indeed liberated her from great punishment.[12] While the woman's death from a religious or spiritual point of view is a 'bad' one, her penance incomplete, the promise of the son allows for the post-mortem completion of her penance, thereby completing her separation and her Rites of Passage. As such she is not representative of a liminal presence but one of the purgatorial dead, separation complete, returning merely to tell her son that he did well by her and rescued her. There is of course the rather inevitable emphasis that there is a Purgatory and that she was to be punished harshly before his intervention;

[12] *Le Speculum laicorum*, 38.

all of which were basic teachings of Purgatory. There also is perhaps the indication that penance may well be harsher if left until after death to be dealt with in Purgatory. Another interesting point is that there is no priestly intervention; it is all done in-house. The promise made by the son is also very much in tune with the resultant social situation where the living are bound to take on the burden of the dead.

In anecdote 149, a dying man is visited by a bishop to whom he confesses his sins and his fear of Purgatory, using the noun *purgatorium*. The bishop in turn tells the man that he should take up the cross; if he were to get well he would do a pilgrimage to the holy land, and if he were to die he would hand over his wealth to the Church, the latter of which the man did by dying soon after. After death the man appears to his brother, indicating his gratefulness to the bishop, and how effective the taking of the cross and giving away of his wealth had been, and that he is on his way to heaven.[13] Again, one might say, there is an emphasis on the effectiveness of dealing with such things before death strikes. There is, of course, possibly a more cynical reading, wherein the man's appearance would discourage the brother to contest the transfer of funds to the Church. The date is clearly stated to be 1247, rather early in the conception of Purgatory, though the usage of the noun indicates that as a place it was clearly on the radar of the population. Another interesting point would be that like the previous woman, the Rites of Passage are complete, and successful. Similarly, the dead man specifies no period of suffering, the ante-mortem precautions of the Bishop seem to have done their job. This man too, with his completed Rites of Passage, is one of the purgatorial dead returning to report the lay of land, so to say.

[13] Ibid., 34.

This anecdote is heavily echoed by number 325, so much so that they could be the same event; one additional piece of information is that 325 is clearly placed in England, and that the dead man was literally snatched out of the clutches of the demons in Purgatory.[14] Though this is not always the case, demons, within the notion that Purgatory was an incarceration, a prison for the souls suffering there, were at times superimposed over the role of wardens, guards and torturers. This similarly is an echo of the layered hell, before Purgatory had declared its independence. This man's return is benign in nature as well, again one of the purgatorial dead.

These particular purgatorial dead bear no ill will towards the living, nor do they demand anything; they return mainly to report a safe passage through purgatory, that the actions taken by the living were effective in the salvation of their souls. There is no indication of failed Rites of Passage, nor that these dead are liminal presences. There is similarly no suggestion of tangibility or physical interaction between the purgatorial dead and their percipients. Such *exempla* were primarily used to urge penance and 'prove' the existence of Purgatory, and to forge closer bonds in the minds of the people between the living and the dead, strengthening social and familial connections, as well as obligations, bridging the gap left by death. They additionally emphasized the importance of religious preparedness for death. The dead return "to warn the living of the crucial importance of confession, extreme unction, and absolution at the point of death."[15] All of these rituals were integral parts of the Rites of Passage. These dead were pointing out that successful Rites of Passage equaled salvation, but also that postmortem completion was not impossible. Thus, even with the emphasis on the religious perspective, the focus was still

[14] Ibid., 66.
[15] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 60.

successful separation and reintegration. Religious and spiritual separation coincided almost exactly with one's duties towards the community.

Another *exemplum* with a similar focus is recorded in The *Otia Imperialia*, which was written by Gervase of Tilbury for the enjoyment of Otto IV in the first few decades of the thirteenth century.[16] Gervase, traveling a great amount "from England to Bologna and Naples to Arles,"[17] had set about "recording in writing the things people said about their local customs and beliefs."[18] It is Anecdote 103, entitled "The Dead Man who Appeared to a Girl and Spoke to her, Relating Wondrous Things". It is completely focused on the lengthy description and explanation of purgatorial ideas. The messenger returns for the sole purpose of playing messenger. In July 1211, in the town of Beaucaire in the kingdom of Arles, a virgin girl of eleven is visited by her dead cousin who,

> exiled from his place of birth for certain transgressions which he had committed in the folly of his youth, and he was on his way to Beaucaire when he was mortally wounded, through no fault of his own, but as a result of a mishap for which he was not responsible. In the face of death, he forgave the injury that had been done him, and sent the man who had killed him on his way; in a proper spirit of repentance he made his confession and received the viaticum, and then died and was buried.[19]

This young man reflects thus the embodiment of a 'good' death, successful Rites of Passage. He completed his separation, even forgave his assailant, confessed and received the last sacraments. He is thus clearly not a liminal presence. His return could perhaps be viewed as his completion of the journey he had embarked on in life, but his main reason for appearance is for the benefit of the *faith* of the living. According to his testimony,

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[16] Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor,* trans and ed. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), xxxviii-xli.
[17] Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 211.
[18] Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, lx.
[19] Ibid., 761.

> he was undergoing the torments of the fire of purgatory; he added that at that moment the prior and brothers of the community of Saint-Michael had sprinkled him with water, which was most welcome and brought him much refreshment, and that they had done him enormous good by their masses and prayers.[20]

This is typical for *exempla*; the man is by all definitions one of the purgatorial dead. There is the additional connection to the sprinkling of water on graves that was mentioned in previous anecdotes, indicating that the dead were well aware of actions taken for their benefit. Still it is clear he is not after any mitigation or the fixing of any wrong; he is merely there in the earthly realm to give his report and enlighten the living: "Certainly when his purification was complete, he believed he would have no more dealings with the people of this world."[21]

The return of the young man causes no panic within the community; on the contrary there is interest and curiosity. There is no inherent danger, nor is the young girl in anyway adversely affected, as would be expected with liminal presences. The turning of a death, from a wound received through error, something that could very fast be labeled as a 'bad death,' into an exemplary death, a 'good death,' is also particularly interesting.

With the exception of the last young man, all the dead in question benefit from the actions of the living, their separation reaching completion after death. As other examples shall indicate however, the effect and existence of the liminal presence becomes at times strong and perceptible within anecdotes, even through all the purgatorial propaganda, sometimes eerily so.

Exempla, in general and where the liminal presence was concerned, did take their shape from 'actual' events, and thus were based on preexistent common belief. They generally "did not place these occurrences in a specific location; on the

[20] Ibid., 763.
[21] Ibid., 769.

contrary, these tales derived a moral lesson from the reported event, which was understood to be a universal occurrence."[22] Similarly reading older events with the new conceptual schema was also possible. The stereotypical nature of *exempla* called forth a stencil that would come to affect the common belief concerning the liminal dead irretrievably. As it were, a common trait had to be used for the preaching to have effect and long lasting impact.

This stencil in its very nature adhered to one of the main points Gregory the Great had made within his anecdotes: the dead could return in search of help and intercession: "A [ghost] returned from Purgatory because of some unrequited crime; it could not rest until it had been confessed and absolved by the priest."[23] It is important here to point out that in the purgatorial period it was almost always about confession and absolution, and seldom about the more secular and social concern of righting a wrong: "Rather less frequently, [ghosts] return to make direct amends for the crimes they have committed in this life."[24] Thus, while still being about separation, the focus was on the religious remedies and consequences.

Here it may be of import to insert that *exempla* cannot really be perceived as mere recordings of local beliefs. Apart from the official, theological injection into the events, there were also additional differences made in the form and shape of *exempla,* mainly due to their primary purpose, which called for easily recognizable patterns and rhythms that would allow widespread exposure among the audience. They were "usually shorter and they abandoned specific references to precisely named people or places; they intended to portray only human types and universally experienced situations. With the *exempla*, the narrative material also lost its variety

[22] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 60.
[23] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 713.
[24] Bowyer, "The Role of the Ghost-Story in Medieval Christianity," 189.

and was subjected to unchangeable, repetitive structures."[25] Hence the strength of the purgatorial stencil; with every repetition of *exempla* it became all the more settled.

Anecdote number 173 of the *Speculum Laicorum*, while very close in nature to 172, given above, shows some interesting differences that point to the formation of the stencil. A nun had a lapse of the carnal kind. Being pious she had repented and received penance, which she died before she could complete. In this anecdote similar to the son in 172, the Abbess and her sisters took it upon themselves to complete the woman's penance. However, here the deal is not made between the dying and the Abbess before death. Thus one could argue that, unlike the mother in 172, there had been no transfer of the burden prior to death, or thus separation. As it were, the penance is completed by the living and the nun appears to the Abbess to confirm the effect of the intervention. She explains that indeed she had been in torment, but through their actions would soon be released. [26] There is an additional mention of the Virgin in the afterlife, who explains to the nun what she needed to be liberated. The dead woman indicates that without the intervention of the living she would have been left in torment.

The Virgin it seems indicated that the nun herself had to 'elicit' the help of her living fellows; she had to be the one to ask for it. Thus while this is in a sense similar to the previous report-like appearances of the purgatorial dead to their benefactors, the nun, according to the words of the Virgin, had to be the instigator. She is indeed explicitly given divine permission to contact those that would be of help to her soul, and her fate in the afterlife. This purgatorial dead, like others of its kind thus had the divine leave to return to the earthly realm. On the other hand, the predicament it found itself in was instigated by failed Rites of Passage.

[25] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 124.
[26] *Le Speculum laicorum*, 38.

Again in the *Speculum Laicorum*, anecdote number 492 is much closer in nature to the purgatorial stencil. It concerns a monk who had given away a pair of shoes to a family member and later died. When he appeared he was completely pure, except that his feet were pitch-black. He was, he told his percipient, another brother, terribly tortured there, which was the punishment for giving away the shoes without leave from his superiors. He asks for the shoes to be restored, which would help him.[27] As such, this anecdote is rather more secular in its remedy than is usual with the purgatorial stencil. Normally, additional religious measures would have been taken rather than a simple restitution of the objects in question, measures such as prayers and alms. This may be due to the fact that the dead man appeared completely pure in all other matters, or merely that the restitution of the offending items was perceived to be part of the confession, penance and absolution cycle.

As such this purgatorial dead needs the help of the living in order to separate and complete the Rites of Passage that he had clearly had failed. The fact that he is not presented clearly as a liminal presence, ambiguous and dangerous for the community, is perhaps the best indication of how the liminal presence was reflected through the purgatorial ideas, especially so within *exempla.* The last two anecdotes are much more in agreement with the stencil that would come to affect the liminal presence greatly, and the transformation that the liminal dead were proposed to undergo through the existence of Purgatory is also quite visible.

Similar connotations can be found in an anecdote written early in the fifteenth century in Latin, in what was identified by its discoverer as an Ely Book.[28]

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[27] Ibid., 96.

[28] First transcribed by H. E. D. Blackiston, "Two more Medieval Ghost Stories," *English Historical Review* 38, no.149 (1923): 85-87, in response to M.R. James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost-Stories," *English Historical Review* 37 (1922): 413-422, and found, presumably by him, in the Trinity College Oxford manuscript. He identifies it as an Ely Book through "the rubricated memorandum of indulgences to be obtained in Ely Cathedral.": Blackiston, "Two more Medieval Ghost Stories," 85.

Initially there are two anecdotes, but the second one is left incomplete by Blackiston on the grounds that it is not as interesting as the first. The complete one is entitled "Narrative by Master Richard of Puttes … concerning the saying of masses. Year of the lord 1378." The title is helpful enough to provide a date, which puts the said anecdote firmly after the purgatorial ideas had manifested themselves into Purgatory itself. The anecdote tells the story of a man of Lancaster who came upon his dead concubine on an isolated road.[29] The isolation of the place of appearance would play a great role in the presentation of the liminal presence within common belief in these centuries. The man gets the scare of his life, becoming aware of the presence even before seeing it. The man conjures the presence to stop it from harming him in anyway. This conjuring, as was present in anecdote 280 in the *Speculum Laicorum*, demonstrates another strand of common belief surrounding the liminal presence that seems to have become prevalent by this time. It is primarily used in instances where the percipients are not exactly sure as to the benevolent nature of the apparition; the man here clearly felt threatened.

There are no indicators at all in the anecdote that the woman inflicts any harm on her percipient, or threatens to do so. Thus one could argue that the conjuration was believed to be quite potent and effective, though later examples indicate that failures were possible. The term, conjure, by the fifteenth century, "rapidly came to mean the invocation and control of spirits in a magical sense."[30] However this 'magical' practice was deeply mired with the religious; as the religious elements gave it its power. Either way the presence in question here, once invoked, identifies herself as his concubine, familiar to the percipient. This was one of the main narrative points of the previous incarnations of the liminal presence, the

[29] Blackiston, "Two more Medieval Ghost Stories," 86.
[30] Brown, *The Fate of the Dead*, 45.

revenants. The familiarity of the living towards the dead allowed them to have some power over those known to them, a connection that had failed to be broken during the Rites of Passage.

The concubine reports on her state in the afterlife, which is not that bright. She is suffering it seems for unmentioned transgressions and needs masses sung so that she can be liberated from her suffering. The man volunteers to arrange the masses for her soul. The revenant lore is thus completely overturned by the purgatorial effect; the kin and close associates of the dead person are no longer victims of rage and wanderings; rather they take on the role of saviors and benefactors. They now have a very real duty towards these dead.

The woman makes the man take a handful of her hair. The hair, which in life had been golden in color and most beautiful, was now pitch-black, indicating her need to be purified, similar to the monk with the black feet. The fact that she leaves behind evidence in the man's hand of her existence and tangibility seems to indicate that she had been physically present, and thus able to affect the earthly realm. As it were, at the time, "the reality of the supernatural… was understood as more tangible, more 'real' than the evanescence of 'this world,' of created matter."[31] In this sense she could have the capability to harm, as was the norm with liminal presences. However, there is almost no indication of any liminal properties in her personality. She seems to be the very image of the pitiful purgatorial dead. The hair, the man discovers, turns to its natural golden color, strand by strand, with every successful mass, giving a live update of the progress of purification. There is an arranged last meeting once all the masses are sung. The woman then appears to him all light and shiny and informs him that indeed his help had liberated her from the greatest

[31] Scribner, "Elements of Popular Belief," 236.

punishments. Similar to the nun earlier, this woman seems to have had leave, of the divine kind, to come beseech the man for help.

Though Purgatory once again is not mentioned by name, as a specific place, there is no indication that the woman is left roaming the road in the interim in which the man was arranging for the masses. Additionally, one could read the anecdote as to be indicating her location to be a place of punishment in between the first apparition and the second meeting. As with the monk before her, the concubine appears after death to beseech the help of the living. Thus she can be identified as having failed the Rites of Passage. Unlike the previous examples here though, the purgatorial dead clearly is in the liminal stage; this return is where the overlap and mix of the common belief and the purgatorial ideas become visible. The dead returned of their own will – albeit with the insinuated divine blessing – to persuade the living to help them out.

In these anecdotes the idea of the necessary separation, the postmortem completion of the Rites of Passage, comes to the fore. There is a reason why the dead have to return; they need the intervention of the living. As such these dead will come to form the main stencil of Purgatory where the returning dead and their motivations are concerned. The possibility of postmortem action in the salvation of a soul both by the living and the dead, which was nurtured and spread by the conception of Purgatory, lies at the basis of this stencil. As such these anecdotes overlap with the purgatorial stencil completely; the tamed liminal presence, becoming the purgatorial dead that could and would be helped postmortem by the living, were reintegrated into the community.

These changes however, as one shall see, were not all encompassing. The horror and fear inspired by the liminal dead was still potent and presented itself at

times in unadulterated form. One such liminal presence was recorded in the Byland Abbey Collection, stories which were jotted down by a Byland Abbey monk near York. These were "a series of ghost-stories set in his own neighbourhood. They are strong in local colour, and… evidently represent the words of the narrators with the some approach to fidelity."[32] M. R. James pinpoints the date of writing as around 1400.[33] These anecdotes were in all probability recorded as raw material for later transformation into exempla, though as they stand they offer great insight into the common belief. It is anecdote number IV, *'About a [ghost] that put out the eye of a concubine,'* that tells of a Jacob Tankerley, formerly the Rector of Kirby, who had been properly buried in the cemetery;

> but thereafter used to go out by darkness and one night he put out the eye of his concubine. And it is said that the abbot had his body removed from its grave complete with its coffin, and ordered Roger Wayneman to convey it to Gormyre. While this man was throwing the coffin into the river the oxen almost sank into the water in fear. May I not be in any danger for writing this, for I have written it just as I heard it from the elders. May the Almighty have mercy on Jacob Tankerlay, if indeed he was one of those predestined to salvation.[34]

The closing statement of the monk is quite telling. The way that the presence was dealt with was not something he was remotely comfortable with, appearing to perceive that the proceedings of the anecdote were of the barbaric sort, and pitying the fate of the presence. However Tankerlay, very much in accordance with the

[32] First discovered by M. R. James within a manuscript and transcribed, these anecdotes were later translated into English by Pamela Chamberlaine. The only caution to be taken is the fact that the translator seems to have chosen to use the word [ghost] exclusively while translating the world *spiritus* this should not really come as a surprise as the title of James' transcription was "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories" however for the intends and purposes of this study, wherein the later connotations that come with the word 'ghost' can only serve to confuse, in the quotes taken the word ghost will be used in brackets, so as to try and avoid the rather heavy baggage of the word. Suffice to say that the word *spiritus* was used mainly to indicate the dead person, and leave it at that. James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost-Stories," 414.
[33] Ibid., 414.
[34] M. R. James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," trans. Pamela Chamberlaine, in *M.R. James—Book of the Supernatural,* ed. Peter Haining (London: Foulsham, 1979), 43.

previous incarnation of liminal presences, revenant lore, is aggressive and attacks those who are familiar to him, his concubine in this case.

The actions, too, taken to assure his removal from the earthly realm are similar to the precautions taken by communities when faced with revenants. As such this liminal presence is perceived as unreasonable, unpredictable, a danger to the community and thus to be removed from the community completely. The destruction of the body, or in this case its consignment to a watery grave is familiar. Water, as was the case with fire, was an element of purification used to remove the body from the community altogether. Another similarity would be with the countermeasures taken against suicides, which were not limited to the stake and crossroads. Suicides "were commonly disposed of in rivers in the Middle Ages."[35]

Tankerlay's actions, as well as the reactions he garnered from the people, the presumably educated Abbot being one of them, would indicate that at this time at least the belief of the liminal presence, in its incarnation as the revenant, was still at least in some areas unaffected as of yet by the mitigating purgatorial ideas. Tankerlay was by no means, it seems, motivated by a wish to be absolved and liberated from his liminality, or to be reintegrated to the community. He is one of the vengeful returning dead, the liminal presences, whose liminality lies at the basis of the threat they posed, and thus they were dealt with as such.

That the story is related to the monk by older men could point to the anecdote being of a previous generation: "It is significant that in this instance the writer is not describing a contemporary event, but one which occurred a good many years previously."[36] This could explain the reaction of the monk himself, who was apparently shaken and taken aback by the actions taken against this particular liminal

[35] Caciola, "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual," 30.
[36] Simpson, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse?" 396.

presence, when he believed a much more lenient approach seemed possible. This would further indicate that by the time the monk was writing, accounts such as that of Tankerlay had become rarer, if not unknown. Tankerlay could thus be perceived as a link to the past incarnation of the belief where the liminal presences were concerned.

The need of the monk to read this apparition through the religious perspective and the motivation of purgatorial ideas is quite apparent, and this need would indicate that at the time the religious motivation of the returning dead, the liminal presences, was perceived as the norm. They could be helped and they could ask for help, though for some their percipients had to overcome their liminality in order to help. Examples such as that of Tankerley indicate that any changes wrought within the common belief, while tempered, could still be powerful enough to make themselves felt.

Similarly perhaps, owing to this perception of the dead, there were stories, recorded hand in hand with the *exempla* above, that defied the exemplary perception of the purgatorial dead. Anecdote number 99 in the third book of the *Otia,* for example, concerned "The Dead Man who Killed his Former Wife". The locale of the event is the county of Aix in the kingdom of Arles; even the dead man in question is named, details not typical of *exempla*. Though the anecdote itself is based in France, it is interesting and significant enough to be included here. The man in question is a nobleman, illustrious in nature and standing, of high military rank, a William de Moustiers, who had an equally illustrious wife. The good characteristics of both husband and wife are clearly established:

> Then the time came for him to die. When expressing his last wish, he enjoined on his wife by her conjugal fidelity that she should not take as a second husband a man whom he had accounted his mortal enemy, adding that if she were to contract a marriage with that man, he would kill her with a salt

> mortar on which his glance fell. The lady submitted to the life of widowhood he was imposing on her, for her mind was in turmoil with the intensity of her grief, and she was ready to agree to anything.[37]

The man himself seems to profit from a properly lengthened death, with time enough for him to arrange his affairs, receive the last sacraments and seemingly complete the Rites of Passage successfully. The promise extracted from the wife though, as well as the man's seeming obsession with his "enemies", may indicate that he was in fact not letting go of anything, and only making sure that the status quo would continue even after he was gone, the very opposite of proper separation one could argue. Either way the man remains calm and dead for several years, one of the community's dead, until, as one would guess, the fates, or rather the widow's friends, conspire to make that very marriage happen. Though Gervase clearly paints the wife as reluctant, she is at last pushed into the marriage with the old enemy:

> When she put forward the threats of the deceased as an objection, her friends replied that the dead have no power to harm. The lady was married. After the ceremony she was escorted home from the church, and when she had sat for a little while with her ladies, with a sudden scream she broke out in these words: 'Woe is me, who dare to violate the conjugal fidelity I promised! Look my husband is here, and he is going to kill me with the mortar.' Straightaway, in full view of such a festive company, the dead man raised the mortar and smashed the lady's skull. Although everyone saw the mortar being raised, no one could see who was raising it. But the testimony of his wife's cry and her subsequent death were sufficient to identify her assailant.[38]

The anecdote clearly underlines the power the dead do hold over the living, and that promises were binding. The man acts like a liminal presence once the living party breaks the promise. The broken promise was enough to bring him back to his wife, and fix the problem violently, enforcing the continuance of his rest. His violent reaction and power over the wife would also indicate that these liminal presences had influence over those who were familiar and still connected to them, more so

[37] Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, 753.
[38] Ibid., 753-755.

perhaps in the case of the wife who had bound herself to the man through the promise. To speculate: the woman, through the broken promise, becomes the cause of the liminality and her removal a return to the previous state of affairs.

There is no purgatorial effect visible in this story. It is clearly a warning where dealings of the living with the dead, and fidelity to them, are concerned, as well as social and individual responsibilities towards the dead. This man is clearly not a revenant in the traditional sense, since no connection is implied to the corpse. Thus this anecdote implies that the liminal presence was not limited to its revenant incarnation. The materiality displayed by the liminal presences, even when the corpse itself is left out of the anecdote altogether, would indicate that the liminal presence displayed its power over the living through materiality.

Another similarly intriguing *exemplum* is Number 171, the last *exemplum* to be drawn here from *Speculum Laicorum*, as the properties displayed by the dead in question hark back, to a certain extent, to the time of the revenants, whereas everything else within the anecdote is heavily influenced by purgatorial ideas as to what was owed to the dead. This anecdote comes to pass in a French monastery - or at least the author of *Speculum Laicorum* says he found it in *Gestis Francorum* – and tells of what happened when the Abbot and a great number of the brothers died. The monastery, as a result, dedicated itself to give alms for them, every day for a year. All seemed well and sound until a knight started to grumble about the amount of expense dedicated to these dead; it was this reaction of the knight that triggered the return of the dead.

The Abbot and the brothers in question not only appear to the knight to chastise him, they attack and beat him black and blue,[39] a physical attack that was

[39] *Le Speculum laicorum*, 38.

very familiar where the common belief concerning the liminal dead in its previous incarnation, the revenants, was concerned. However, these dead do seem to have their faculties completely about them as they lecture the knight as they physically assault him. Their conduct is also very similar to that of the dead husband that had assaulted and killed his wife. It seems these particular dead, while reintegrated safely, could take on liminal properties if any contract made with the living is broken. They thus have the capacity to become dangerous; a more *liminal* approach seemed to have been open to them.

These dead, unlike the abovementioned nun, did not return to ask for help; they returned to ensure the continuation of what was due to them and in doing so they displayed more liminal properties than any of the dead narrated within the *exempla* of the *Speculum Laicorum.* However, the important point would be that their return and their motivations still had rhyme and reason. Thus even these physically hostile dead, though towards one who supposedly deserved such action, were still the product of the purgatorial ideas, albeit one could argue that they carried within them a touch more of the liminal than was usual in exemplary dead. This would seem to emphasize the importance of the balance between the living and the dead of the community, everyone knowing their place and their duties.

Where the Rites of Passage are concerned, the returning dead were in general those that had failed the separation stage, and thus could neither rest nor leave the surviving alone. Whereas in their previous incarnation, the revenants, these liminal presences adhered to their very nature: dangerous, unfathomable, believed to be led by emotions such as jealousy and hate, Purgatory and the mitigations it proposed would offer a new perspective on these liminal presences that would be embraced to a considerable extent by the common belief. Turning once more to a source that is

more focused on the recording of anecdotes revealing the common belief that surrounded the liminal presence, it is possible to perceive the changes that had started to prevail in the perception of the liminal presence.

The Byland Abbey Collection is perhaps the most important of the sources that were recorded during the reign of Purgatory, as, though it is apparent that they were recorded for later use as *exempla*, the stories themselves retain almost all the details of the common belief they relay, that of the liminal returning dead. In these stories the common belief seems to be intact and in the foreground, not heavily influenced or manipulated by the writer, who seems to have taken it upon himself to faithfully record the stories with minimal comment. These stories also provide a counterpoint to the more clearly propagandistic *exempla*, purpose-built as preaching material. As such it is possible from the Byland stories to perceive the effect of the clean-cut purgatorial stencil on the liminal presence of common belief.

Anecdote number III of the Byland collection is a good point to start at, as it is the most familiar in its elements. This anecdote, "Concerning the [ghost] of Robert, the son of Robert de Bolteby of Killebourne, who was captured in a cemetery" is one of the main examples that show that the liminal presences and the common belief that surrounded them changed only slowly, retaining many properties and narrative points from their previous incarnation, the revenants. The story of Robert the son is very interesting, as even though it is one of the closest among the Byland anecdotes to revenant lore,[40] it carries within it all the trappings of purgatorial ideas. Robert "used to leave his grave at night and disturb and frighten

[40] Jacqueline Simpson in her "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse? Debatable Apparitions in Medieval England," *Folklore* 114 (2003): 390 argues that the Byland Abbey stories in their majority represent walking corpses, that is revenants. Though some of these stories do indeed carry such characteristics, i.e. Robert Jr., except for Tankerley, none of the other returning dead of the Byland Abbey can clearly be classified as revenants, if one is to perceive revenants as actual walking corpses rather than simply tangible and physical returning dead, which frankly continued to exist well into the Reformation.

the townsfolk, causing the dogs of the town to follow him and bark at him furiously."[41] This is indeed very similar in wording to some of the accounts of revenants in the previous chapter, to the very point of driving the village animals mad with its presence. The same goes for his quite physical capture by two brave young men,

> one of whom, called Robert Foxton, caught this figure as he was going out of the cemetery and held him on the lych gate, while the other shouted bravely: 'Hold him fast till I get to you.' At this his companion replied: 'You had better go to the parish priest and bring him, for with the help of God, whatever it is I have I will hold on to fast until the priest comes.' And indeed the parish priest hurried with all speed, and conjured him in the holy name of the Trinity and by the virtue of Jesus Christ to answer to his questions. Being thus compelled the ghost spoke in his entrails and not with his tongue, as if in an empty jar, and confessed his various misdeeds.[42]

That the lads did not do away with the corpse immediately at capture and went for the authority of the priest is telling. Similarly, the conjuration seems to be an effect of the purgatorial ideas, as it is present only in the revenant anecdotes that end well for liminal presences. This may have been due to the belief that, before such ideas took effect, there was not enough left of the person's personality to reason with or to use to control him through such an invocation. It is only with the mitigating purgatorial ideas that communications between liminal presences and the living were deemed possible.

As with the exemplary stencil, once invoked through God's name Robert Jr. proceeds to tell the priest of his misdeeds and, once confessed, is absolved by the priest, which allowed him to rest in peace. The physical restraining of the presence indicates that he was physically there still. Although he had indeed been a nuisance and terror to the townsfolk, there is no mention at all of physical attacks on the townspeople, or any other revenant-like behavior. On the contrary, "before the

[41] James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," in *M. R. James—Book of the Supernatural,* 42.
[42] Ibid., 42.

absolution the [ghost] would stand under the windows of houses, as if listening. Perhaps waiting to see if someone came out, so as to beg that person to help him in his need."[43] This image is rather closer to the pitiful purgatorial dead in need of help than to the vengeful revenant bent on physical retribution. It seems that Robert needed someone to invoke him so that he could complete his separation, through confession and absolution, important religious elements in the process. There was no going off and hacking Robert to pieces, as he was now perceived to be capable of being reintegrated into the society as one of the dead, no longer a roaming liminal presence, and thus of no further danger.

While a bad death is not mentioned, it is implied by his need to confess. Robert had apparently failed in his religious or spiritual separation, failing to confess that he had indeed had a hand in the killing of a certain man, and other 'evil' things, which would have led necessarily to failed Rites of Passage and a lingering attachment. One other point to make is that Purgatory is not mentioned. One could argue from this that, where the liminal presences and their interaction with the living were concerned, Purgatory, as a place, did not play a dominant role, if it played any. Rather it was the less precise purgatorial ideas and the changes they had wrought that affected these anecdotes.

In anecdote number VI, "Concerning a certain canon of Newbury, seized after his death," a similar pattern is discernible. A man from Newbury was walking along a field with a head ploughman when they were suddenly assaulted. The ploughman ran off in terror and the Newbury man was left to fend for himself. Physically struggling with the presence, which was tangible and aggressive enough to tear his clothes, it was not until he manages to overwhelm it physically that he

[43] Ibid., 42.

could compel it to speak. While it is not mentioned how he compelled it, previous examples would indicate that he probably invoked it, thus establishing some control over the liminal presence. The dead man then

> confessed that it had been a canon of Newbury and had been excommunicated for stealing some silver spoons which it had hidden in a certain place. The spirit therefore made the living man promise to go to this place and fetch the silver spoons, and take them to his prior and seek absolution for it.[44]

The crime itself rather profane, the remedy is once again religious in nature: absolution following restitution. The man had died, unconfessed and unabsolved and thus had failed his Rites of Passage. He was a liminal presence, who now had the option to seek help from the living, which he did in a way that emphasized his liminality. The physical attacks and aggressiveness until invoked thus are indicators of perceived liminality, a survival of the previous aggression glaringly embodied in the revenant lore. The possibilities and mitigations offered by purgatorial ideas, and the effective integration of religion into the motivations of the liminal presences, thereby bestowed upon them reason and communication. Still, as such anecdotes would indicate, these changes were not enough to remove all elements of liminality that seem to have continued their effectiveness within the common belief. The liminal properties are emphasized when, even after absolution the percipient "was taken ill and languished for many days."[45] The liminal presence still retained its inherent properties, still perceived as dangerous and contagious. The living were adversely affected by their encounters with the returning dead, as close contact could cause contamination, which had to be overcome for the percipient to return to his normal life and status among the community.

[44] Ibid., 43.
[45] Ibid., 43.

Similar uncanny properties are present in anecdote number I, "Concerning the ghost of a certain hireling of Ryvall who helped a man to carry some beans". This one tells of a man who, due to his horse breaking its leg, is left carrying a bag of beans to his destination, when he sees something that looks like a horse standing on its hind legs. The man's reaction is immediate: he begs the creature not to harm him in the name of the Lord. Something about the appearance of the horse seems to have tipped the man off; he was aware that whatever it was before him was not a real horse:

> After this the creature went along with him, as a horse, and very soon afterwards it appeared in the form of a rolling truss of hay with a light in the middle of it. The man said to it: 'Go way, because you will bring me ill-luck.' But as soon as he said this the apparition turned into human form. Then the spirit told him his name and the reason for his haunting and how he could be helped.[46]

The percipient seems bolder once he invokes the presence in the name of the Lord, secure, it seems, in its protection over him, enough so as to interact relatively comfortably with the thing that was now in the shape of a rolling truss of hay. The presence seems to have waited, or been forced to wait, until the living man acknowledges him, by speaking to him for the second time. It is only after this exchange that he takes on a human form: "Speech prohibitions and rituals are common in the domain of folklore; here the invoking of Christ served to protect the percipient, to banish possible demons, and to give a limited degree of power over the apparition."[47] In a sense it seems to be used to gain some semblance of control over the liminal presence; this idea of control seems equally connected to the purgatorial ideas.

[46] Ibid., 36.
[47] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 82.

Similarly, the percipient is not by any means surprised that he comes face to face with a dead man, or his demands. Indeed there seems to be no doubt at all that it is a dead man standing before him rather than something else of supernatural persuasion. Shape-shifting, already foreshadowed in some of the revenant anecdotes, was a known association with liminal presences, perhaps emphasizing their otherness, and strangeness to the community. As one shall see, it was rather a common element linked with liminal entities in the common belief of this period.

The dead man even offers to carry the beans for the man and the whole meeting becoming a deal between the living and the liminal presence. The latter gives its name, identifies itself, and the reason for its walking, quite similar to Map's revenant, the father of the knight: "After this he had the spirit absolved and masses sung, and thus freed from his ghostly state."[48] The postmortem absolution and its success here is of no surprise to the recorder; he recounts it as one would an expected fact.

Still, there is no mention made within the narrative that the dead man had been suffering in Purgatory. The rescue itself would seem to be focused on freeing the dead man from his 'ghostly state', which instead of smacking of Purgatory, sounds more like the consequence of being stuck as a liminal presence in the aftermath of failed separation in one's Rites of Passage. However, the separation itself is heavily influenced by the conception of Purgatory, being inherently religious in nature and employing religious rituals. However, the encounter is not a comforting one. As is the case in most of the Byland anecdotes, the dead appear on deserted roads, isolated stretches of land, where the percipient is at the mercy of the

[48] James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," in *M. R. James—Book of the Supernatural*, 36.

returning dead. These places were also regarded as liminal in nature, borderlands, and thus suitable for those sharing in those properties.

The site of the meeting is similar in anecdote number II, "Concerning a marvelous discussion between a [ghost] and a living man in the time of King Richard II." The percipient is a tailor called Snawball and the incident happens possibly close to York, where some of the revenant anecdotes are said to have taken place. This is the most detailed anecdote in the Byland Abbey Collection, though almost all Byland anecdotes are richer in detail and length than the rather sterilized *exempla.* Similarly, more is visible and tangible in the sense of the individuality of the liminal presences and their motives.

The tailor, similar to the previous percipient, is on the road. It is nighttime when he comes upon an ailing crow, which he discovers is not, by any means, a normal crow:

> The tailor dismounted to pick up the crow and as he did so he saw sparks of fire coming out of the sides of this same crow. Then he made the sign of the cross and begged the crow, in the name of God, not to bring him any misfortune along that road. At this it flew away with a great shriek, to a stone's throw distant.[49]

Although the percipient, aware of the danger, is quick to invoke the name of the Lord, he is not as lucky as the previous percipient, as this 'crow' is much more aggressive. Similarly, although the percipient throughout the anecdote 'begs' in the name of the Lord, and eventually has some effect, there is no real command gained over this particular presence.

In the end the crow attacks the tailor, unhorsing him and wounding him in his side. A struggle ensues, the tailor trying to defend himself with his sword against the crow, which is quite tangible and physically present. The physical tangling is

[49] Ibid., 36-37.

familiar from the revenant-lore, though in this case the corpse is not present, but the properties of the liminal presence seem to be quite preserved: "It seemed to him as if he was striking a peat-stack in a marsh, so he held him off."[50]

A second invocation is similarly ineffective. The crow reappears as a dog with a chain around its neck. The tailor, understandably aggravated and terrified in the face of all this activity, decides to invoke the thing in front of him once again:

> 'What is to become of me? I will beg him in the name of the Holy Trinity and by the power of the blood of Jesus Christ of the five wounds, to speak to me and not to harm me in any way, but to stand still and answer my questions and tell me his name and the cause of his trouble and a suitable remedy.'[51]

It is clear that the tailor is expecting this shape-shifting aggressor to be a dead person, a liminal entity. The presence is replete with liminal and dangerous aspects that understandably make the percipient wary and cautious. It seems though this time the items invoked have a strong enough influence to be binding: "I did such and such a thing and for my deeds I was excommunicated."[52]

It turns out that the dead man needed an absolution from a certain priest: "Obdurate excommunicates and heretics, who forfeited communion with the Church when alive, had to be prevented from contaminating it after death: likewise suicides."[53] This meant that most of the time they were refused a Christian burial in a Christian cemetery and were at times, similarly to suicides, banned to crossroads and roadsides. Excommunicates, as previously mentioned, were already imbued with liminality, exiled from the community while alive; from a social point of view their connection to the society is already cut. Doomed to fail their Rites of Passage, they are primary candidates to be liminal presences because they cannot truly be separated from their sins or be reintegrated.

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[50] Ibid., 37.
[51] Ibid., 37-38.
[52] Ibid., 38
[53] Aston, "Death," 217.

It was only through purgatorial ideas that any remedy was deemed possible. With postmortem absolution becoming a possibility, the opportunity for these liminal presences to be properly reintegrated into the society as one of the dead was no longer impossible. This particular liminal presence was no different. He was very specific as to which priest was to be approached as well as to how many masses there were to be. The liminal presence however is not a hapless soul in torment within the walls of purgatory, out on a temporary lease, pitiful and begging for help. On the contrary, the presence in this particular bargain is in a position of power, controlling the other party completely. As such, the effect of his liminal qualities comes to the fore when he makes his ultimatum to his percipient:

> Either you return to me alone on a certain night, bringing back the reply from those of whom I have spoken, and I will tell you how you can be healed… Or your flesh will putrefy and your skin will weaken and fall away from you completely in a short time.[54]

All these aspects support the continued belief that liminal presences were dangerous and contagious, that contact with one could likely affect the living adversely. Indeed, the tailor himself falls ill for a few days after the first encounter: "Pollution or danger classically comes into play in these situations in which an entity is 'betwixt and between' falling between categories in our classification of the world."[55] The tailor is bound to his word; his very life depends on it. It is important to emphasize that this liminal presence, while not the pitiful soul from purgatory, is similarly not the revenant stumbling around wearing its corpse, completely stripped of logic and reason. This liminal presence is perhaps the best representative when it comes to the effects of purgatorial ideas on common belief.

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[54] James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," in *M. R. James—Book of the Supernatural*, 38.
[55] Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 24.

Another echo of the revenant anecdotes lies in the fact that the apparition seems to be happening just by the grave of the man in question. The liminal presence is adamant in the secrecy being upheld as to the whereabouts of his grave; he has in fact the percipient swear on it.[56] This also brings to mind the burials of excommunicates and suicides being located outside of communities, and at crossroads. That the man was buried by the roadside would thus suggest that he had already been perceived as a danger to the community at the point of his death. As the community must have believed his Rites of Passage to have failed, they thus dealt with him as best they could, banishing him in burial as well as identity. The liminal presence himself seems also anxious to keep his identity a secret, perhaps still fearing dismemberment or burning, in case his grave was discovered.

The tailor proves the authenticity of the apparition when he whispers a sign to the priest in question to verify the identity of the dead person. Once receiving the letter of absolution, which was given only after great deliberations and counsels, and then with great reluctance, probably indicative of the seriousness of the crimes of the dead man, he is given instruction by the priest, "having sworn that he would not harm the dead man, but secretly bury the scroll in his tomb beside his head."[57]

This little passage is very telling, as the harming of the dead man can only be read as interference with or destruction of the corpse, the traditional method of remedy where revenants are concerned. The tailor buries the letter in the grave and goes to meet the liminal presence as arranged. To ensure his safety, the tailor uses a 'magical/religious' circle to protect himself; ironically this circle is proposed by the liminal presence itself. One can see here the overlapping and intermingling of religious and common beliefs where the dead were concerned: "Christian language

[56] James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," in *M. R. James—Book of the Supernatural*, 39.
[57] Ibid., 39.

and practices appear in incidental details in most of the tales."[58] The tailor is given the remedy to his wound, and some tips as to a successful future, and then the dead man takes his leave.

One additional interesting point would be that the tailor, once he comes to an agreement to help the liminal presence, wants to banish him to some distance until he returns, most probably to avoid any further contact with the living. However, the important point would be that this liminal dead was not in any way perceived to be going back to Purgatory, or the otherworld. The tailor's belief is that the liminal presence would continue to haunt the road, and his grave. That this is a reflection of common belief is further strengthened when the liminal presence warns the tailor of other dead roaming the road and their dangerous nature. These dead were being punished according to their crimes. One, having killed a pregnant woman, had to haunt the locality until the Day of Judgment without the option of speaking, and therefore unable to ask for help from the living. Thus one could argue that there is still anxiety and ambiguity as to the exact nature of these liminal presences and their placement in the afterworld.

Again, there is no mention of Purgatory itself. However, the liminal presence informs the tailor that he had been tortured by three devils in the meantime, thus the idea that purgatorial punishment or something similar could come to pass on the earthly realm seems to be among the beliefs of the people, intermingled with a rather more terrifying idea of the liminal dead seemingly hanging around of their own volition, or at least continuously rather than on a short-term, sanctioned visit. Still one should notice that, regardless of his very tangible and dangerous nature, this particular liminal presence, with his shape-shifting and demands, as well as threats,

[58] Simpson, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse?" 395.

embodied something quite different from the revenant lore that preceded him, even if he did retain the essence of what made the liminal presence a liminal presence. Of the Byland dead, Schmitt comments, "Even when they came expressly to request suffrages, these spirits are purposely aggressive, dangerous and feared."[59]

Similar to the mute, doomed presence that the dead man described to the tailor, the *Speculum Laicorum* has an anecdote that does not quite fit into the purgatorial stencil, or rather it provides a look at the other side of the coin. While the percipient had clearly been warned of the danger that the mute presence embodied, this one is clearly the epitome of a pitiful soul suffering. In anecdote 415, a holy man of Clervaux, hearing a lamenting voice, invoked it in the name of God, ordering the voice to reveal the reason for the crying. The voice answers that it is a damned soul, with no prospect of salvation.[60] The dead man is not visible; only his voice is heard. He is not dangerous, even though popular belief would insist that his presence should indicate threat and abject horror. One of the reasons as to why it is perceived as pitiful may have been due to this inability to manifest itself.

If he is indeed a liminal presence doomed to walk the earth, he has clearly been made harmless. The only reason for such a return from a religious point of view would be to demonstrate the dangers of unabsolved sin. One could argue that Purgatory opened the way for these dead to be perceived as pitiful, at least where their representation in *exempla* is concerned. As the previous anecdote would indicate, this does not by any means mean that this Purgatorial stencil removed the fear of the liminal entity present within the society. It did however open the possibility of a new perspective, more controlled and filled with pity instead of horror where the dead were concerned.

[59] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 144.
[60] *Le Speculum laicorum*, 80.

This perception however did not mitigate the fear felt when one came upon such a presence on a deserted road. Anecdote VIII, in the Byland Collection, "Concerning the [ghost] that followed William of Bradeforth and howled for three nights", is one such example. William of Bradeforth is accosted by a presence three nights in a row. The presence itself seems to have been more vocal than physical, shouting why, three times. It was on the fourth night, on his way to the town of Ampleforth, on the road, that William hears a voice shouting behind him, coming closer. Up until this point the percipient has not seen the liminal presence, though it still manages to scare William to great extent:

> And a third time it shouted at the crossroads ahead of him, and at last he saw a white horse. At this his dog barked a little, but was terribly frightened and hid between his legs. Upon which William enjoined the same [spirit] in the name of the Lord and by virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ to go away and not block his road. On hearing this the [ghost] took the form of a revolving wine-vat with four angles and rolled away. From which it was assumed that the [spirit] longed dearly to be questioned and effectively helped.[61]

Even with the shape-shifting, there seems to be no doubt in the narrative that the apparition is a dead person, a liminal presence, albeit unable to exactly communicate its needs, which brings to mind the mute presence from anecdote II, doomed to walk.

It seems to be trying to force the hand of the percipient to invoke it, which backfired in this case, as the percipient only asked it to go away rather than for its condition, name and remedy. That William succeeded in sending it away indicates that indeed the invocation was believed to bestow control over the presence. The last sentence indicates where the monk of Byland stands when it comes to such encounters, as was the case with Tankerley. He seems to feel pity for the liminal presence that had to leave without help, and perhaps there is a hint of reproach at the actions of William Bradeforth.

[61] James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," in *M. R. James—Book of the Supernatural*, 44-45.

That perceptions had indeed changed to accommodate a more lenient approach at times is also indicated in anecdote number XI, "Of a marvellous work of God who can call up things that do not exist", which is indeed about a liminal presence, though a very special one. It is about a man, Richard Rountree, from Cleveland, who leaving behind his pregnant wife, went on a journey to the tomb of St. Jacob, probably a pilgrimage to Compostella. In the woods close to the highway, while on watch, he heard the passing of a great many travelers, and went to investigate. The procession is identified clearly as the dead.

The man shows remarkably little fear in the face of this procession of the dead, and when he sees something towards the end, similar to a baby rolling around in some kind of shoe, he approaches and questions it:

> 'You should not ask me, for you are my father and I am your son born prematurely, buried without baptism and without name.' When he heard this, the traveler took off his shirt and put it on his son, and christened him in the name of the holy Trinity, and took with him that old shoe as a testimony of this incident. And indeed the child, when thus named, rejoiced greatly and even stood upright on his feet instead of rolling on the ground as before.[62]

The wording seems to indicate that the father baptizes his son himself; it is a postmortem baptism and naming. The effect of both is immediate, and seems to be everything desired by the liminal presence. The presence of a priest in this case is not necessary at all. As such one could argue that it was primarily about acceptance into the community.

The man, once he returned home, asked for his shoes, of which only one could be found. Once he produced the other of the pair, the midwife confessed that she had indeed buried the unbaptized infant in the shoe in question. When it comes to the death and burial of unbaptized infants, reactions varied greatly. However, in all probability this was due to emotional reasons rather than any disagreement as to

[62] Ibid., 47-48.

the meaning of an unbaptized death. As the previous chapters would indicate, such children and infants were perceived as 'suspect'. The reasons were twofold: first the children, unnamed, had never been integrated into the community, and as such were already inherently liminal, and second, from a religious point of view they were still burdened by original sin and outside of the Church: "As with funerals, the social aspect of baptism was at least as important as its religious function."[63] Though again, the religious function was itself in part "social", the community and the Church being regarded essentially as the same. As such these children were perceived as something other than normal that had to be removed from the communal and social locality. However, it should also be emphasized that there were counter forces when it came to the death of a child. The social and religious rejection was balanced, at times, with familial connection and thus emotional reaction; the reaction of Richard would be one example. It should be taken into account that religion, beliefs, and emotions constitute a complex trifecta in themselves. Arguably there was no mainstream burial for unbaptized infants: some were buried in the north aisle; some in the north side of the cemetery; some outside the walls of the cemetery; some were buried properly and in the Christian way, and some were indeed completely shunned in burial. Even if they received a burial at all, they were at times transfixed into their graves with stakes, similarly to the burials of suicides.

This anecdote however would indicate that at least, within the common belief, the effect of the purgatorial ideas and the possibility of postmortem intervention, had opened a gate for such prematurely dead. Similar to postmortem absolution, Richard's child was able to receive a postmortem christening and thus moved on to join the rest of the procession, perhaps an analogy of reintegration into

[63] Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 83.

the dead of the community. The child is in all times described as the 'victim', with no apparent dangerous properties. Thus one could argue that in all possibility the purgatorial ideas had some additionally mitigating effects for unbaptized infants as well as for the other, older failed subjects of the Rites of Passage. However, this anecdote sadly stands by itself in this period when it comes to the depictions of any liminal dead infants returning, and receiving a postmortem christening. Anecdotes dated after the reformation however point to a similar trend where the postmortem naming of the liminal presence is the very thing that presence is seeking out.

The last few anecdotes from the Byland collection offer a closer reflection of the purgatorial stencil, though with slight variations that are telling in their own right. Anecdote number VII, "Of a [ghost] which begged indulgence for its misdeeds", tells of a servant of a householder. This dead man also had to be invoked to speak his mind and need: "He used to steal sheaves of corn which he gave to his cattle so that they should appear fat. And he said that he ploughed his land not deeply but very shallowly, wishing his oxen to remain plump."[64] These misdeeds are rather against the community, the town and his obligation of neighborliness. However, the remedy is still religious in nature. This liminal presence, as did some of his counterparts, needs indulgence from the person he has wronged and thus a kind of absolution that would result from it. These demands are in line with what one would expect in the social settling of one's affairs, present in the framework of the Rites of Passage.

This anecdote seems to be straddling the social and religious motivations, where the crimes and the remedy for said crimes are concerned. The narrative does not attribute any liminal properties to the dead man. However, this may well be due

[64] James, "Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories," in *M. R. James—Book of the Supernatural*, 44.

to the fact that the narrative begins *after* the dead man was invoked, that is, after he was most probably subdued in some way. He also seems to identify a place where others like him, fifteen to be precise, were being punished, but he is not clear as to its whereabouts, nor does he name Purgatory itself. Some more local place was certainly possible, as was the case with the 'crow'. This would indicate a continued vagueness in the minds of many people about Purgatory as a place in the afterlife; the liminal presences were still at home haunting deserted roads, and crossroads.

A similar angle is presented in the next anecdote. However, this time the narrative, while rather Spartan, does touch on what had happened before the invocation. Anecdote number IX, "A story about the [spirit] of a man from Aton in Clyveland", tells of a liminal presence, which after doggedly following its percipient, was invoked, and helped. The returning dead man in question had been excommunicated, but after a postmortem absolution and amends, he rested in peace. The monk then adds a little exemplary comment: "In all these God showed himself, since he who justly makes amends is not punished and no harm comes to him, and on the contrary no good comes to him who has not made amends."[65] Thus the monk emphasizes that events and their results accord with God, and that the fates of men, whether presences or percipients, depend on their morality. Additionally, the possibility of postmortem absolution is accepted clearly, indicating that there was no need for those whose Rites of Passage had failed due to outstanding sins or tethering attachments to be stuck as liminal presences after death. It is ironic, however, that after this little exclamation, the monk indicates that the control of God over such incidents and their results was no hindrance to liminal attributes, as the dead man before he was invoked "threw the man over the hedge and caught him coming down

[65] Ibid., 45.

on the other side. When questioned he replied: 'If you had helped me at the start, I should not have harmed you. But you were terrified, and so I did this.'"[66] One could argue that while the liminal properties remained inherent to these returning dead in the common belief, these dead were slowly becoming something more; they now had potential. Their liminality is only an obstacle for the percipient to overcome.

A final anecdote is deservingly a mixture of strands wherein purgatorial effects and the common belief that surrounded the liminal presence mingle. It is anecdote XII, "Concerning the sister of old Adam de Lond seized after death according to the account of the ancients". The wording of the title may indicate an earlier period than any of the other anecdotes, which may also be why it takes the shape it does. This anecdote is rather unique. This uniqueness, however, is not due to the fact that the liminal presence is a woman, though this is exceptionally rare. What sets this anecdote apart from the rest is the motivation behind the woman's return. After her death, this sister of Adam de Lond, who remains strangely unnamed, is buried in a cemetery in Ampleforth and is caught shortly after her death above ground by one William Trower the elder. Once she is questioned, her reason for return becomes apparent. She

> confessed that she herself walked the earth at night because of certain documents which she had handed over wrongly to her brother. The fact was that one day, after a quarrel had arisen between her husband and herself, she had given over to her brother the aforesaid documents, to the prejudice of her husband and her own sons. So after her death, her brother violently drove her husband out of his home which was a plot with a house in Ampleforth.[67]

This particular dead woman seems to have gone through her Rites of Passage without a problem, at least on the surface, as her proper burial in the cemetery may indicate. Her objective is neither religious nor spiritual salvation; she simply wishes

[66] Ibid., 45.
[67] Ibid, 48.

the land to be returned to her husband, the loss of which had been her own fault, and thus she asks her percipient, William, to talk to her brother: "Otherwise she could in no way rest in peace until the judgement day."[68] This would indicate that from a social point of view she had failed in putting her affairs in order, especially those that would guarantee the continued welfare of her family; a very important thing when it came to the continued well being of the community after the loss of a member. The liminal presence, seemingly armed with reason, speech and communication, all due to the effect of the purgatorial ideas, is focused on the remedy of a failing that is communal in nature.

William, agreeing to help, tries to convince the brother, and when that fails, the next night brings along the dead woman. This bit is rather rare too, as most Byland Abbey returning dead only appear to their percipients in isolated places, preferring to deal only with one person. The brother, even when faced with his dead sister beseeching him to return the documents, refuses. At this point, the presence, when she is refused the completion of separation she seeks, shows a rather more vengeful face. In a sense, she curses her brother with the same burden, that he will after death walk in her place, quite the turnabout from the pitiful image she had shown up to this point and a very liminal thing to do: "You shall know therefore that I cannot rest until your death, but after your death you will walk instead of me"[69]

She also leaves his right hand useless and black, perhaps a side effect of coming in contact with her presence and refusing to cooperate, perhaps something to do with his interaction with the damning documents. The woman thus does seem to have some power over the living, and is not completely benign. She was a liminal presence, dangerous and most probably perceived as a threat by the people, which

[68] Ibid., 48-49.
[69] Ibid., 49.

would explain their following actions: "At last the sister was constrained to lie at peace because the people of the town were frightened at night by these terrors."[70]

How they made her stop walking is unclear, though it seems to be forceful action rather than any completion of separation. It is rather more reminiscent of the way villagers dealt with previous revenants, though one would expect the monk to be more vocal about such a thing, similar to his horror at what was done to Tankerley. Either way, the narrator is quick to reassure us that the land was, indeed, restored after the death of her brother, in which case her constraining could be read as a temporary solution. The possibly earlier dating of this anecdote may also explain the actions of the village towards the woman.

The uniqueness of this anecdote, as mentioned above, lies in the motivation of the woman's return. There is no mention of postmortem absolution, or masses or prayer. Her reason for return lies in the emotional, communal and material failure of her separation, the righting of a wrong, in a secular capacity. Such objectives are very rare where the effect of purgatorial ideas encroach on the liminal presences. Nearly everything — murder, theft, inheritance, lies, conceit, crimes of secular nature — are dealt with through religious remedies: prayers, absolutions, masses, etc. Such explicitly social motivation would only later, after the abdication of Purgatory, come to the fore.

Thus it could be stated that the dead also "stepped in when necessary to restore social imbalances, to remedy injustices in the secular realm."[71] However, these motivations, at least until the removal of Purgatory, would remain secondary. As long as Purgatory reigned supreme, and purgatorial ideas were prevalent, the dead returning for non-religious reasons, with secular motivations, remained a

[70] Ibid., 49.
[71] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 75.

minority. Thus this anecdote, though it seems to be older than most of the Byland anecdotes, points towards the future, and the Reformation.

The anecdotes of the Byland Abbey Collection, unlike ordinary *exempla,* seem to provide a recording of genuine belief, closer to the community, and thus reflect varying properties, and emotions. The reactions of the community, as well as of the witnesses, all shine through the short passages. Even though on the surface these anecdotes seem to be in accordance with the purgatorial stencil, under that thin layer there are indeed the very deep and dark waters of common belief concerning the liminal presence: "The reasons and goals of the apparitions conformed with the usual schemas of ecclesiastical ideology. Spirits manifested themselves because of sins that had not been expiated."[72] However, their appearance and behavior differ greatly from that which the normal *exempla* seem to offer.

These dead, at least in the eyes of their percipients, seem to be more ambiguous in their nature, less predictable, more proactive and definitely not always friendly or pitiful in their dealings with the living. Similarly, while these anecdotes indeed do reflect the effect of purgatorial ideas on the common belief, they hardly ever mention Purgatory, or specific purgatorial ideas. The dead, and more worryingly perhaps, the liminal entities, were still close presences to the living and their communities.

All in all, it should be stated that all these anecdotes altogether provide a glimpse of a belief that surrounded the liminal presences and an alternative kind of returning dead, the purgatorial dead. The liminal presences represented a common belief that had been deeply affected by the conception of purgatorial ideas, and it is argued here were inherently changed by it. The liminal presences, contrary to their

[72] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 143.

previous incarnation, the revenants, had been given rhyme and reason through the effect of the purgatorial ideas that had become prevalent enough to affect the afterlife, the dead of the community, and even those dead that were believed to be exiled and unredeemable by the very same community. They bestowed upon the liminal presence its identity and faculties, layering its base qualities with a certain tameness.

The possibility of postmortem intervention on the part of the living allowed for liminal presences to be viewed as entities that could perhaps be salvaged, restored to the society. As such they were no longer perceived by the living as to be motivated by simply by anger, hatred and jealousy towards the living, as monsters that are sprung into motion by their incapability to fulfill the necessities of the Rites of Passage, lost to the community forever. This was the case even where they remained somewhat violent or angry or even deadly. While their actions and conduct had changed accordingly, they were still inherently connected to the Rites of Passage; still born from it. Separation, and a liberation from liminality, become the main interlinked motives.

They were still clearly identifiable through their very nature and actions: their liminality, strangeness, otherness and power over the living. There were, at times, consequences if the percipients dared to cross the liminal presences or ignore their wishes and warnings. All in all, the echoes of revenant lore remain in the physicality, tangibility and liminality of these presences. These remains, in turn, point to the potency of the common belief. Even through all the changes affected by purgatorial ideas and purgatorial preaching, with the liminal presence taking on more of the properties of the victim, they did in no way disappear into the purgatorial dead. They were not, nor could they be, completely removed or overwritten.

This partial humanization of the liminal presence allowed for legitimization and communication between the liminal presence, that is, the returning dead, and the living: "Late medieval eschatology, through the doctrine of purgatory, ensured that the living and the dead were closely bound by ritual rites."[73] The living could do something to help the dead, though caution was called for. The main aim, as especially visible in the Byland Abbey Collection, is the urgent need to reincorporate the liminal presences back into the community. As such, these anecdotes are not "about maintaining contact between the living and the dead, but about ensuring the finality of their separation."[74] Every member of the community needed to be properly in their own category, and there should be no trespassing if at all possible.

The revenants in the previous chapters that acted unlike the lore, being instead docile or non-violent, could perhaps be seen as the harbingers of the oncoming purgatorial ideas. Still, even after the spread of the purgatorial ideas, regardless of the positive, mitigating affect of the purgatorial ideas on the liminal presence's reason, faculties, and motivation, as well as to some extent it's conduct, and also its uneasy capability of being classified as benign in nature, did not erase the popular understanding that liminal presences were dangerous, unpredictable and at times even contagious in their very essence. They can perhaps best be described through the term uncanny: "The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar."[75] It is this familiarity that gives said object a much stronger hold over the person, making the fear or uneasiness much more potent. The liminal presence, in this sense, is the very embodiment of things

[73] Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England*, 22.
[74] Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, 17.
[75] Sigmund Freud, "Appendix: The 'Uncanny'," in "Fiction and Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche (The 'Uncanny')." *New Literary History* 7, no.3 (1976): 620.

going inherently wrong with the order of the world. This was true for their previous incarnations, the revenants, as well as their later incarnations.

As such, one could argue that faced with this disturbing entity, Christianity merely shaped, organized, and to a certain extent, with the purgatorial teachings, forged a control over the liminal presences that were believed to exist, and offered a way for the living to reintegrate, rescue, and subdue them. Thus perhaps one could argue that the purgatorial dead and even purgatorial ideas themselves would not have been able to exist without the liminal presences, the perceived dangers of failed Rites of Passage and the revenant. Ironically, the latter could not continue to exist in their inherent natural form with the presence and effects of purgatorial ideas becoming potent and widespread.

When Schmitt states that *exempla*, through the spreading of the word had "transformed and saved the [ghost] story",[76] he may indeed be right that the liminal presence, the returning dead and the common belief surrounding them was saved by purgatorial ideas. However, it is also important to note that though purgatorial ideas undoubtedly and irretrievably changed the liminal presence of the common belief, they did not obliterate the belief itself. The liminal presence was quite capable of holding its own against the persuasive messages of the purgatorial dead. The Byland Abbey Collection, with its peculiar liminal presences, would attest to that fact.

The coming changes, with the spread of the Reformation and the abolition of Purgatory, would support this view, as what survived the removal of Purgatory was not the creature of *exempla*, the purgatorial dead, neutered and docile, but that which had previously existed, before the purgatorial ideas dominated, albeit changed by those ideas. These surviving liminal presences would retain their reason, their

[76] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 223.

faculties; they would speak and communicate, threaten and cajole. Thus the gift that the purgatorial ideas and resultant *exempla* had bestowed upon them would survive the abolition of its origin amidst the turbulent waves that the Reformation caused for the relationships between the living and the dead, as well as for the position of the dead in the weave of society.

CHAPTER V

BEWARE THE REFORMATION: IT IS COMING…

The liminal dead had already been irrevocably changed by the purgatorial ideas and their indication of the possibility of postmortem change. They had become a different breed from their previous incarnation, the revenants, as well as from the purgatorial dead native to Purgatory and all their trappings. If the gradual seeping in of the purgatorial ideas and the conception of Purgatory can be stated to have been a rather steady flow of change that smoothly and without much resistance changed the shape of the religious perceptions surrounding death and the afterlife, then one can safely state that what came next, the Reformation, was a much more intense period of change, the alterations themselves abrupt and spread over a limited amount of time when it came to the changing of the vista of current religious practices.

The Reformation, being the vast subject that it is, will only be contemplated here where it affected the perception of death in society, the dead of the society, the relationship of the community with its dead and most essentially the liminal presence. While it indeed had great impact on perceptions of the afterlife, this impact remains secondary, as one shall see here, where the Rites of Passage that represented death were concerned. Similar to the situation with Purgatory in the previous

chapters, while a relationship did indeed exist between the success or failure of the Rites of Passage and the perception of the salvation or damnation of the soul of the individual, this relationship did not shape or reshape the Rites of Passage in their entirety.

Most studies that concern themselves with the liminal presence, the returning dead, ghosts, and apparitions in the Reformation period, use the abolition of Purgatory as their focal point. This is a natural thing to do, what with all the contemporary uproar that surrounded Purgatory being intricately tied in with the possibility of the dead returning to the earthly realm, or rather the impossibility, and from there going on to the redefinition of the 'nature' of these apparitions. Where theological discourse was concerned the returning dead had to be redefined so as to avoid playing into the hands of the Catholics who had long since in their own theological discourse attempted to monopolize the returning dead – whilst creating their very own brand, the purgatorial dead – as proof of the existence of Purgatory and support for the related, and financially significant, practices of indulgences, masses, prayers for the dead etc. This being stated, the previous chapter has already indicated that the purgatorial dead of preaching and *exempla* were not representative of the liminal dead, the liminal entity, that the community faced in cases of failed Rites of Passage. It was clearly in the perceptions of the people as well as in the anecdotes a different creature altogether. Thus a similar conflict is immediately evident in the discourses that surround the dead in the Reformation era as well, as getting rid of Purgatory would and did have a rather minimal effect on the perceived *existence* of these liminal presences. Regardless of loud denials the liminal dead did not cease their appearances. The varying effects the Reformation did have on the

nature of the liminal entity, as well as the perception of the liminal entity by the community, are quite intriguing.

The fact that the change wrought by the purgatorial ideas had not been limited merely to an orientation of the motivation of the liminal presence towards religious salvation, as it had seemed to be on the surface, was one of the main reasons as to why the purgatorial ideas can be argued to have had repercussions that lasted much longer than the relatively short reign of Purgatory itself. The purgatorial ideas had sparked the possibility that a comprehensible motivation and as a result a logic and reason could be found in these dead, a rhyme and reason to their return, as it were, which the living in turn could understand and act upon. If not for this rather seismic alteration in the nature of the liminal dead then the reign of Purgatory could have been erased completely as a factor of change where the liminal entity, the liminal dead, were concerned, once purgatory and all its trappings were removed rather abruptly from the picture by the Reformation, except of course in regions where dominant or considerable Catholic communities remained. However, as one shall see, the effect of purgatorial ideas was indeed long reaching, as the most insidious change wrought by purgatorial ideas, not Purgatory itself mind you, was lodged in the connection between the living and the liminal presence, the possibility of communication, and postmortem reintegration.

Even when the trappings of Purgatory were stripped away over a period of time rather effectively, this inherent change would remain valid for the liminal presences, and the failed Rites of Passage; though the exceptions when present are interesting in their own right. However, glaringly obvious changes were also apparent. They mainly concerned the removal of religious motives from the liminal presence, as well religious remedies offered to the liminal presence, the very

remedies that were believed to trigger reintegration into the community as one of the dead. From this point of view the impact of the abolition of Purgatory on the liminal dead was great indeed theologically. However, this impact was perceived to be much greater than it actually was. Due to the fact that the Catholics had used the liminal presence, or a shade of it in the purgatorial dead, as evidence of Purgatory's existence, the reformers could not allow these entities to exist while still identified as the dead. The dead, they argued, could not return to the earthly realm nor could they communicate with the living.[1] This was perhaps the one argument that was of most interest to those who have studied the returning dead, ghosts and apparitions in the Reformation period; the fact that within theological discourse these dead were rejected, their existence denied completely, and when that failed to discourage apparitions, re-identified them as something else.

The changes invoked by the Reformation, historically seen, were introduced rather rapidly, though as with all such changes their absorption by the society did indeed happen gradually. People were slow to slip from one habit to another, and that was how these things were actually perceived by the people, customs and habits. There was a perception that things ought to be done a certain way, which was generally perceived to be a continuation of the old rather than the new and alien. The people were "more inclined to respect than to reject its customary beliefs and practices."[2] The abolition of Purgatory was similarly gradual, the main motive behind it mostly financial, an attempt to limit and restrict the fiscal profit the Church made from almost everything surrounding Purgatory, death and the dead; ranging from indulgences to masses. Luther had declared war on the concept and how it was

[1] Bruce Gordon, "Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels: Apparitions and Pastoral Care in the Swiss Reformation," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 99.
[2] Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 201.

exploited by the Church in 1530.[3] As such, prayers for the dead, inextricably linked to Purgatory and purgatorial profits of the Church were also targeted. Prayers for the dead could also be attacked as offering a twisted perception of the otherworld, limiting the omnipotence of God and allotting too much power to mankind, in that they seemed to allow mankind to dictate who would and would not be saved, rather than God. And for those Protestants inclined more to an already determined spiritual fate, they appeared especially dubious. As such, Purgatory, both as doctrine and as something unjustifiably exploited financially by the Church came under fire.

Going along with more general Protestant trends, a similar perception was existent in England as well. This progress can be followed most clearly through the decrees, acts and prayer books of the period. The first step was to distance oneself from Purgatory, the shape it had been given by the medieval Church, and almost every practice that surrounded it, even though the fact that the community had been emotionally invested in it cannot be denied. This emotional investment and perceptions of duty to deceased family members to ensure peace in the afterlife were perhaps the main reasons as to why the abolition of Purgatory was somewhat gradual. Regardless of all the monetary threads hanging from it, Purgatory, apart from its purpose in the process of religious salvation, was actually also fulfilling an emotional and social need.

This gradual distancing of the Church and society from Purgatory started with the last of the Ten Articles of 1536, wherein it was stated that while prayers for the dead were indeed a useful and valid practice, the whereabouts of the said dead were deemed uncertain.[4] Thus the first step towards the rejection of Purgatory was taken. However it is important to state that prayers for the dead, the very

[3] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 38.
[4] David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell, ed., *Religion and Society: In Early Modern England: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), 23-24.

embodiment of the duty felt by the living towards their dead, remained untouched. While indeed there is no direct rejection of Purgatory the fact that it was not named as the place of the dead in question in the afterlife is quite telling. It would be from this point on that Purgatory as well as prayers for the dead would come under attack. The removal of prayers for the dead was perhaps a bit more complex than the removal of Purgatory, as the prayers were perceived as a duty and responsibility between the two strata within the society, the living and the dead, a part of the daily life of the community. While the dead themselves were not the recipients of the said prayers, which would traditionally be addressed to God or the Virgin, the prayers could still be argued to be a conduit for contact. Prayer was a way for the living to take care of their dead, through God, a communion, as it were, of the living with their dead. It represented a show of solidarity within the community; the dead were not far from the minds of the living.

It was a social as well as religious practice, not limited to the institutional Church nor necessarily involving financial expense, though indeed the Church had offered itself as, and been accepted as, an intermediary, a role which had all but encompassed the relationship between the living and the dead completely. The Church itself would pose as an intermediary and by doing that work as a gated wall that separated the living from the dead, all interaction only through the Church. However, the Church's participation and overbearing presence, where the relations between the living and the dead were concerned, did not mitigate the fact that such contact was perceived as necessary and within the normal flow of events. It was most probably due to this fact that the practice of prayers for the dead was approached more cautiously. Henry VIII decreed in 1538 that prayers for the dead

were uncanonical, but there was no direct or complete rejection of its validity.[5] Such prayer was as much a social act as it was religious, a continued tribute and remembrance to its family members, members of the community, and as such could not be done away with in one swoop. These changes, as well as the abandonment of sacraments, did not escape reaction; they were important in leading to the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536.[6]

Meanwhile on the anti-purgatory front another blow was struck in the 1543 Book; there was no mention at all that souls were in anyway in pain after death.[7] This clearly eliminated Purgatory as their location. The popular image of Purgatory, encouraged by the Church was firmly one of pain, suffering, penance and fire, a period to be endured by the soul through the help of the living, mostly through monetary contributions that initiated Church intervention on behalf of the deceased. Similarly the term 'Purgatory' was removed, and prohibited. In this Book an additional reassurance was made by leaving out the statement that infants dying could only be saved by baptism and nothing else; it left "open the possibility that unbaptised children could be saved."[8] This attempt at reassurance may well indicate the ongoing concern as to the fate of such children; this concern was not merely religious, in sparking the fear of the child dying in sin, and original sin at that, but was also one of social nature, concerning a new member of society that had been lost before it was even introduced into the community, one of the bulwarks of the consequences of failed Rites of Passage.

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[5] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 38.
[6] C. S. L. Davies, "The Pilgrimage of Grace Reconsidered," *Past & Present* 41, (1968): 67; Janice Liedl, "The Penitent Pilgrim: William Calverley and the Pilgrimage of Grace," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 25, no.3 (1994): 585.
[7] Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, 197.
[8] Will Coster, "Tokens of Innocence: Infant Baptism, Death and Burial in Early Modern England," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 270.

Another step was taken in 1547 with a new Act that confiscated funds that had been designated for intercessory masses and lights,[9] with the firm statement that Purgatory was a vain opinion.[10] Any mention of Purgatory as a location in the afterlife was completely removed in the 1549 Book, in which prayers for the dead still managed to hang on at least where one ritual was concerned: the funeral. The dead here were still directly spoken to in their funeral, "because in some sense they still belonged within the human community."[11] However, this respite would indeed be a short one. Any such interaction with the dead person was removed entirely in the 1552 Book.[12] The corpse became merely an object within the funeral service, no longer the very subject of the ritual, the focal point, as it were, and no longer addressed as a person. "They could neither be spoken to nor even about, in any way that affected their well-being."[13] Thus in theory the dead were almost completely removed from the society itself by the 1552 Book, though how effective this was is open for debate.

These provisions could be argued to be a break with what until then had been continuous in medieval society; the dead were no longer an age group, that is, no longer part of the society: "The protestant Reformation brought about a radical alteration in attitudes towards the dead, initially at the theological level through the abolition of Purgatory, and more gradually, thanks to the efforts of the Reformed clergy among the population at large."[14] However, it should be stated that while it is true that the dead were clearly cut off doctrinally by the theological discourse,

[9] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 38.
[10] Marshall, "Fear, Purgatory and Polemic in Reformation England," 152.
[11] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 475.
[12] Ibid., 475.
[13] Ibid., 475.
[14] Clare Gittings, "Expressions of Loss in Early Seventeenth-Century England," in *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal,* ed. Peter C. Jupp and Glennys Howarth (London : Macmillan Press ltd., 1997), 20-21.

thereby removing their everyday presence through masses and prayer, they undoubtedly still existed within the society and the community. Even religiously they were slow to hand over their place; as provisions for prayers for the dead were still made as late as the 1570s.[15] Similarly, the official removal could hardly put a dent in the social, communal and personal perceptions of the people towards their dead. Prayers seem to be still in evidence among the laity.[16] Remembrance and commemoration on the other hand had never left in the first place, the connection between the living and the dead even in medieval society had not been limited to the religious, even though the Church had provided an easy to use structure which fulfilled most necessities. At the very basis of the relationship between the living and the dead lay communal solidarity, personal and familial connections, love and the perception of duty, a rather universal set of properties.

Change, especially enforced change, is never easy to integrate smoothly within society. As such the abolition of Purgatory had left another point of anxiety behind as well, one that is recognizable from the previous era pre-dating Purgatory and which was perhaps to some extent one of the reasons it had come into existence: "There was a degree of uncertainty surrounding both the geography and the chronology of the Protestant hereafter."[17] If not in Purgatory where exactly were these souls in the grand scheme of the afterlife until Last Judgment came to pass? This anxiety in turn called forth once again the whole shebang surrounding the possible geography of the afterlife. The Reformers it seems were no more immune to the question than their predecessors. A variety of opinions were discussed. Abraham's bosom was once again pulled out of storage and dusted off though it too

[15] David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 398.
[16] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 39.
[17] Clare Gittings, "Sacred and Secular: 1558-1660," in *Death in England: An Illustrated History,* ed. Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 152

was soon rejected.[18] Common belief of course had its own perception that generally was founded on the closeness of the dead rather than the opposite. The removal of Purgatory, it seems, had a rather reverse effect on the perceived proximity of the dead: "In Yorkshire in the seventeenth century it was believed that after death departed souls lingered over the moors."[19] The ambiguity of what exactly happened after death was not cleared up to any great extent. This anxiety and the perceived necessity to give the Last Judgment its accustomed importance in turn brought on the theory that the righteous rested peacefully, with no threat of pain at all, until judgment.[20] The belief in the sleepers, that the dead —body and soul — remained close to the living, seems to have been common. Luther's own inclination that the souls were sleeping must have contributed to this stance greatly.[21]

However it also had the side effect of recalling and strengthening the belief that the dead were asleep in their resting places, which were lo and behold right there amidst the living, in the cemeteries. After all if the dead were not in Purgatory or in any other set place within the framework of the Hereafter, then what was more logical than to perceive them right next door, where the community had interred them with great respect already. This idea that the dead were slumbering in close proximity to the living was not new, nor was it as disturbing a thought as it would seem to the modern mind; on the contrary it was a relief. "It was comforting and commonplace to think of churchyards and sepulchers as 'the dormitories of

[18] Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 227.
[19] Barry Reay, "Popular Religion," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England,* ed. Barry Reay (London: Routledge, 1988), 115.
[20] Thomas, *The Ends of Life*, 227; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 40.
[21] Gordon, "Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels," 99; Peter Marshall, "'The Map of God's Word': Geographies of the Afterlife in Tudor and Early Stuart England," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 116.

Christians'."[22] As long as the dead were successfully reintegrated into the society as one of the dead, there was nothing for the living to fear; what remained was peaceful co-existence unless anyone was disturbed in any way. The belief in the slumberers with their close proximity to everyday life and their living relatives would indicate that the dead were as close as ever to the living. Thus one would argue that the dead were indeed still an age group within the community, with a settled place and order to things.

The fact that the Church removed its own influence may actually have emphasized the social connection which, due to the effect and reach of the medieval Church, had been submerged beneath the religious considerations of Purgatory and salvation, as well as monetary ones. The Reformers, through the removal of the purgatorial doctrine, and the related argument that the dead could not and did not appear to the living to ask for any intervention to better their condition in the afterlife or directly for salvation, were in part on the path to directly remove the dead in any religious capacity from the society. They thus severed any ties and relations between the living and the dead that had seemed to be initiated, supported and strengthened by the "papist" invention of Purgatory in the first place. This was however not the case, and the connection between the living and the dead was too strong to be swept aside in any real sense. The common belief in the sleepers, as well, seems to connote a rather different opinion that was settled within the community, that the dead were merely sleeping, among the community: "The dead continued to play a part in the world of the living, especially where rites of separation were inadequate or incomplete."[23]

[22] Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 385.
[23] Scribner, "Elements of Popular Belief," 254.

The firm stance of the Reformers as to the impossibility of the dead returning to ask for the intervention of the living in the form of masses, postmortem absolution etc. — a clear attempt to counteract the Catholic preaching of the purgatorial dead to prove and enhance the existence of Purgatory — caused unexpected consequences. The Protestants argued that there had been no indication of such returns of the dead in the scriptures; as such it had to be a papist invention aimed to part the believers from their money and bolster the coffers of the Church. The one possible apparition that could perhaps have been 'mistaken' as a ghost, one of the dead returning, within the pages of scripture, was the incident between Saul and the witch of Endor, with the result of 'something' in the guise of Samuel appearing before Saul to answer his questions. The return of Samuel at the behest of the witch was a hotspot of argument as it could be read either way: the Catholics argued that of course it was Samuel's soul appearing at the behest of God, the witch a mere tool, while for the Protestant thinkers the general opinion held was that it was clearly a demon in disguise. It was clearly not Samuel nor a good angel as it had gone as far as receiving obeisance from Saul, something they stated a good angel would never do.[24] Similarly, if it was a good angel why would it deceive Saul and appear in the shape of Samuel at all: "If the one scripturally attested ghost was in fact the devil, then it followed that subsequent appearances served an explicitly Satanic agenda."[25]

Thus armed with the statement that no ghost had been recorded in scripture, and as such the dead could not return to the realm of the living, the Protestant thinkers were left with a bit of a conundrum. Disregarding Catholic preaching and theory was all well and good; however, reality it seems did not cooperate with their

[24] George Sinclair, *Satans Invisible World Discovered,* c.1685 (General Books, 2009), 32.
[25] Peter Marshall, "Deceptive Appearances: Ghosts and Reformers in Elizabethan and Jacobean England," in *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe,* ed. Helen Parish and William G. Naphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 191.

efforts. People continued reporting incidents where the living brushed shoulders with apparitions in the shape of their dead, the nature of which had been questioned by the Reformation. The dead continued to appear to the living, at least common belief much to the chagrin and displeasure of the Protestant writers continued to perceive these apparitions as the dead: "Admonitions against backward and superstitious beliefs were perhaps to be expected in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, but the refrain is constant throughout our [the Reformation] period."[26] There indeed did seem to be something afoot. *Something* did seem to be appearing, or rather witnesses and those listening to them seemed convinced; apparitions were reported, most clearly in the shape and identity of the deceased. Thus the discourse did not deny the possibility of apparitions, only that these apparitions could in no way be the souls of the dead.[27] Thus commenced the struggle to explain the nature of these apparitions, as their authenticity was never questioned or doubted. The world was full of the supernatural; there was no denying that. It was, as it were, proof of the divine at work, that something greater than man existed. However these apparitions clearly could not be the souls of the dead returning; that would only lend credibility to the Papists and their 'vain' invention of Purgatory. What then were these apparitions?

The answer coincided with their interpretation of the Witch of Endor and Samuel's return among the living. Clearly these beings had to be spirits, good and bad, and by spirits they meant angels and demons, or as they would phrase it, good and bad angels. The very existence and appearances of these beings was proof of the greater scheme of things, the divine. However, such apparitions should not be allowed to be wickedly misinterpreted by Catholics to prove that these were the dead

[26] Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, 246.
[27] Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 188.

returned and thus proof of Purgatory.[28] Many tracts were written emphasizing the non-existence of the dead in the earthly realm, and attempting to explain the nature of apparitions. This reading of the liminal returning dead as demons parallels some attempts to interpret the liminal presence in its revenant incarnation as the work of demons.[29] These tracts were reflective of attempts "by some of the Protestant clergy not merely to police but to transform popular belief and action."[30] However the recorded actions of the entities and the reactions of the percipients indicate the persistence of the common belief.

The most prominent tract written was by the Swiss, Ludwig Lavater, *Das Gespensterbuch*[31] printed in Zurich in 1569, the English translation of which appeared in 1572: *Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by nyght, and of strange noyses, crackes and sundry forewarnings*.[32] As with those tracts that would follow in its footsteps, Lavater's *Of Ghostes and Spirites* has the open intention of clearing the air as to exactly what these apparitions are, and emphasizing what they were not: the dead. His English translator, Robert Harrison,[33] similarly cites the reason for his translation as the fact that

> this one question touchying the appearying of spirites and soules departed, hath not ben much handled amongst vs, and therefore many, otherwise wel affected in religion, vtterly ignoraunt herein, I thought it not amisse to take in hande some good and learned treatise concerning the matter.[34]

This statement itself suggests that the demonic/angelic explanation of such apparitions had not won much ground, regardless of official sweeping away of

[28] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 92.
[29] See Chapter II, 44-45
[30] Clive Holmes, "Popular Culture? Witches, Magistrates, and Divines in Early Modern England," in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe form Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century,* ed. Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), 86.
[31] Literally translated the Book of Ghosts.
[32] Gordon, "Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels," 95
[33] Marshall, "Deceptive Appearances," 194-5.
[34] From the translator's note, R. H., "To the Reader" in *Lewes Lavater: Of Ghosts and Spirits Walking By Night 1572*, ed. J. Dover Wilson and May Yardley (Kessinger Publishing, [1929] 2003).

Purgatory and the returning dead. As Bruce Gordon writes, "What men and women see and hear, Lavater explained, are angels. They are not the dead, but they can take the form of the dead in order to fool the living; for there are good and malevolent angels."[35] The refutation would argue that men and women did indeed perceive these apparitions as the dead.

British Protestants would soon feel the need to follow with their own tracts and musings as to the nature of these apparitions. The main aim of these tracts thus was not in any way to dispute the existence of such supernatural phenomena: "Learned men argued about their [supernatural forces'] nature and the source and extent of their power, but none questioned their existence."[36] It was to set to rights the misconceptions that were very frequently encountered at the pastoral level. People believed these beings to be the dead returned and that would not do, because it provided too big an opening for Catholic purgatorial ideas. The need was thus to assure the reader that while, yes, the apparitions were real, they were the manifestations of spirits, there with the permission of God. If possible, one should not associate with them, as ironically it was attention they sought.

The fact however remained that these apparitions appeared in the shape of those dead, mostly the recently dead. Their reasons for return were similarly mired in the previous life lived by the deceased, or concerns that would necessitate the warning of the heirs or family members of the deceased of wrongs that needed righting. It would be these clear actions that would later cause some Protestant thinkers to start leaning away from the demon theory. Henry More would argue that

[35] Gordon, "Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels," 100.
[36] Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: Culture Cognition, and Everyday Life* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 215.

it was illogical for demons to be helpful or concerned in any way about the living.[37] Lavater and others had argued that such conduct on the part of the apparition was to earn the trust of the living to enable further mischief later on, to lead the believers astray,[38] which was rather unconvincing when faced with accounts of apparitions that, once their wishes and demands were fulfilled, would disappear not to appear again. Richard Baxter on the other hand was not sure whether one should declare every apparition bad: "Yet it is hard to think that it *is* not rather a good spirit, that speaks for some notable good work, where no by-end is discernable."[39]

Nevertheless, the main consensus within the Reform discourse remained that these apparitions could not be, and more importantly must not be, the dead appearing before the living; they had to be demons. Thus the general purpose of the recording of these apparitions was entangled with the wish to assert their nature as demons or angels, whether good or bad. While the earlier recording of revenants had often been unsure or hesitant about their true nature, perhaps as much seeking an answer to the curious events as providing one, here the agenda of the recorder was more often, though not invariably, to impose a theologically satisfactory explanation on the story. As such, one of the most prominent effects was the theological demonization of the returning dead, something which, as we have seen, was not entirely new or unprecedented.

The effect was such that Protestant demonology, in spite of itself, came to reflect the liminal dead to a considerable extent.[40] The wandering spirit, damned in its in-between existence, liminal and dangerous, not to be trusted by the living

[37] Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, 263; for Henry More, "Cambridge academic and Anglican priest-theologian", see Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 275.
[38] *Lewes Lavater: Of Ghosts and Spirits Walking By Night 1572*, 171-172.
[39] Richard Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced* (La Verge: General Books, [1691 &1702] 2009), 45; concerning Richard Baxter, "celebrated independent pastor and spiritual writer", see Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 276.
[40] Marshall, "Deceptive Appearances," 200.

without precaution, with no choice but to pester the living, remained discernible at the foundation of most demon apparitions, and in discourses on demonology. This inevitably affected the perception of the apparition as well, as nothing exists in a vacuum. One such example would be Lady Fanshawe who came into reluctant contact with a ghost in Ireland in 1650; she and her husband, after much discussion, decide that it was due to the general lack of faith of the Irish that left presumably the whole region and those within it open to the Devil's attacks.[41] Thus the ghost is identified as the work of the devil and the influence of the devil tied into the receptiveness of the local people, who did not know better or were willfully ignorant.

They do not seem to doubt that it was the devil's work that had beleaguered them, and not the dead, regardless of the local belief concerning the subject, Lady Fanshawe, as it were, provides an example as to how such apparitions and the belief and receptiveness of the local community may have been perceived by those convinced of the validity of the protestant theological arguments. It seems the changes wrought doctrinally were slow to spread among the common folk, unable to push out the settled common beliefs and perceptions. There were additionally those who did not subscribe to this new perception of religion at all. These catholic sections would also continue to pray for the souls of their dead, lighting fires at midnight before All Saint's Day.[42]

The reading of the liminal dead as demonic entities seems to have sought to remove the liminal presence that was still persistently appearing, something that was perceived to be a threat to the current affairs and arguments. The continuance of the apparitions, and the perseverance of properties that pointed to the dead as the culprits, made denying that the dead could return to the world of the living difficult.

[41] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 704.
[42] Ronald Hutton, "The English Reformation and the Evidence of Folklore," *Past & Present* 148 (1995): 104-5.

That was perhaps why the attempt to demonize the returning dead was as widespread as it was. The human soul, as was the case with the revenants, could not and must not possess such willful and widespread effect over the living members of the society, especially not if it played into the hands of the Catholics. This does not however alter the fact that due to the very nature of the belief and its longevity among the people, demonization itself proved insufficient to completely erase the properties of the returning dead, the liminal presence.

Peter Burke remarks, "After about 1650 it is possible to find scholars in England, France and Italy who distinguish between learned culture and popular culture, reject popular beliefs, but find them a fascinating object of study."[43] A similar trend was in evidence with the perception of the revenant phenomena within some of the anecdotes presented in the previous chapters. However, the same anecdotes would caution that this divide between cultures was not always present, nor was it clear-cut. In the reformation period some scholars even went as far as to record these curiosities mostly for the sake of recording them, thereby preserving in a sense the common belief as it was. This is why the main primary sources to be used here are particularly of interest. Richard Bovet, Richard Baxter, Henry More, John Aubrey and Joseph Glanvill, especially, unlike many of their contemporaries, were interested in recording the common belief existent among the people as it was, rather in the way the anonymous recorder of the Byland Abbey anecdotes did. This willingness to provide a rather unobstructed glimpse into common belief makes these sources especially precious. The thoughts of the authors on the happenings are clearly identifiable as the authors', and these are also quite enlightening. Insofar as they had an agenda of their own, they wished to prove that the supernatural existed

[43] Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 283.

in a world where doubts had begun to be expressed. They could fulfill this purpose even if the apparitions turned out to be the dead themselves.

As such, both Aubrey with his *Miscellanies* and Joseph Glanvill, who had compiled the *Saducismus Triumphatus: or a full and plain evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions,* and by proxy Dr. Henry More (1614-1687), who reedited this work,[44] offer a less obstructed picture of the actual common belief that surrounded these apparitions, the liminal presence, and the consequence of failed Rites of Passage. How these particular dead were reported, the reactions of the percipients, the actions taken against or for these particular dead, as well as the perceived nature of these liminal presences, become thus available for study: "Reversing the traditional order of priorities, this school of thought actively sought out stories of the weird and the supernatural from traditional culture."[45]

These particular two sources, *Miscellanies* and *Saducismus Triumphatus*, are very useful in helping one perceive and understand the actual changes and repercussions the Reformation and its variants made to the actual and continuous common belief that had surrounded the liminal presences, the liminal dead, in both their religious and social aspects. Glanvill, writing on the disregard displayed towards common belief, states that "the people are as much to be believed, as the most subtile Philosophers and Speculators; since here, sense is the Judge."[46] Glanvill thus identifies the belief in apparitions — and witches — as belonging to the common people, rather than the Church or academia. It was a sign of the times. With

[44] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions (1689): A Facsimile Reproduction with an Introduction by Coleman O. Parsons* (Ann Arbor: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 2000), xvii. The *Saducismus* was edited and reedited anonymously after the death of both Glanvill and More from their papers and letters, the 1688 edition thus offers a culmination of the very school of thought that had moved Glanvill and More to record the relations in the first place. Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 275.
[45] Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 271.
[46] Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 107.

Glanvill and Aubrey, in a time when atheism was seen as a clear and present danger, the main concern had shifted from denying that these apparitions were the dead or asserting the demonic or angelic nature of the apparitions, to confirming the presence of the supernatural, whatever the specific nature of its manifestation. This change in attitude allowed, one could argue, perhaps a more straightforward representation of the common belief. Thus the dead, even after having been rejected in favor of demons by the discourse of Reform, could be stated to have reasserted themselves to affect the debate. This did however take some considerable time and cannot be appreciated unless the full extent of the effects of the Reformation on the Rites of Passage, the returning dead and the liminal presence is explored.

As the situation of prayers for the dead indicated, the Reformation of its own self removed the influence of the Church from the relations between the living and the dead. However, the dead were, regardless of counter arguments, still a part of society, and the liminal dead were equally perceived as failed and possibly salvageable members of the community. The Church's willful distancing of itself from such affairs, declaring liminal presences 'non-entities', while not seriously threatening their persistence, did tend to bring to the fore their more secular and social aspects. The abolition of Purgatory, and with it the attempt to abandon clerically sanctioned prayers for the dead, had indeed important consequences, though these differed greatly from those intended.

Where the dead and the Rites of Passage that surrounded death were concerned, the Reformation had another effect that was almost as important, if not equal in importance, to the consequences of the abolition of Purgatory and the prayers for the dead. This was the steady de-ritualization of Church practices. As Keith Thomas argued, it was an attempt to separate magic from religion: "From the

very start, the enemies of Roman Catholicism fastened upon the magical implications which they saw to be inherent in some fundamental aspects of the Church's ritual."[47] Medieval Christian religious rituals owed a great deal to local and common beliefs and "superstitions" that the Church, where it could not subjugate or conquer, had assimilated into its own body of rituals, allowing for a rather smooth co-existence in most cases. Death, in itself, a mystifying as well as terrifying ambiguity, had a fair share of rites within its process. Such rites were in evidence not only in the main ritual structure of the Church, such as funeral customs, wherein at times herbs or pieces of flint were deposited in the grave, and in the popular perception of the rite of extreme unction at deathbed, but also in a more extreme and altered fashion as the Byland Abbey anecdotes would indicate, with their magic circles strengthened and made up of religious items and prayer, as well as the conjuring of the presence in the name of the Lord. Protestants were eager to restore Christianity to a purer version that could be identified as authentic through the rigorous study of scripture, rejecting what had crept in from other origins.

As with the abolition of Purgatory, the Prayer Books and Acts indicated a steady weeding out and changing of rituals, of which those that surround death and the process of dying are of interest here. Some of these were replaced with less ritualized alternatives while others disappeared from official regard completely, like the prayer for the dead, intercessory masses etc. The manipulation and forced alteration of these rituals, in both their meaning and execution, is of great importance where the effect of the Reformation on the liminal presence and the dead in general is concerned. This is due to the fact that these rituals embodied the very thing that the Church had offered to the Rites of Passage surrounding death in the first place.

[47] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 88.

Before the Reformation the process of the Rites of Passage had come to depend heavily on rituals supplied by the Church. The ecclesiastically determined rituals had been utilized and redefined to fit the purpose and flow of the Rites of Passage so as to meet the expectations of the community, as is evidenced by the community's perception of extreme unction. Thus the de-ritualization instigated by the Reformation had an impact on the Rites of Passage and the liminal presence that was at least as effective as the abolition of Purgatory itself. Together however, these changes had important repercussions, creating an environment that would redefine the liminal presence's standing within the community and its relations with the living.

As mentioned above, the funeral rites were among the ecclesiastical rites drastically changed through the Reformation. An intricate mixture of social and religious customs surrounding the departure of a member of the community and identifying their point of return into the community as one of its dead, the funeral carried within itself heavy strains of grief, religion, social duty and solidarity, which were reflected through participation in its process and rituals. Prayer for the dead and funerals naturally were closely connected, and changes to one inescapably affected the other. In the 1552 Book of Prayer the deceased were left out of their own funerals, no more a party to be addressed. The burial ritual was now more clearly simply about the corpse, the soul having already departed at death. The corpse was still worthy of the highest respect, as having once housed the soul, and due, with the promised resurrection, to house it once more, but in the meantime it was a mere object, deprived more clearly of its maintained connection with the soul, something which, like the belief in the "sleepers", had never had any ecclesiastical authority. The rather lengthy, cathartic rituals of the medieval Church in relation to death were

removed and the desacralized burial of the Reformation "failed to provide the reassurance that was needed to overcome this fear [of death]."[48]

The priest in the 1552 Prayer Book speaks of the deceased in the third person. His audience is the congregation and at this point the deceased is indicated to be no longer a part of it. This would suggest a perception that indeed the dead were no longer believed to be part of the social order, at least from an ecclesiastical perspective. The Reformation was in general quite keen on both severing the living from the dead and the dead from their bodies, probably in the main because these connections were seen as weaknesses through which Catholics could make ground against the Reformation. However, as indicated by the persistent belief in the sleepers, the connection between the corpse and the 'soul' of the dead seems rather to have been strengthened instead of weakened with the Reformation, at least in the eyes of the community, as any alternative location for the soul to reside in during the afterlife, primarily Purgatory as well as Abraham's Bosom and limbo, had been eliminated as possibilities. Similarly, the common belief did not so easily let go of its practices as the theological changes would suggest: "The remnants of the old burial rites become the folklore practices of early modern England. Among these was the holding of a wake around the corpse, for which food, drink and lights would be provided."[49] One could argue that these practices reflected the place and perception of the dead within the community itself. Practices such as the sending off of the member of the community from its old identity and position and providing a welcome to their new identity and position persisted. These survivals thus were related to the social and communal perception of the rites, their perceived social and communal necessity and function. The continued utilization of some of the rites

[48] Spicer, "'Rest of their Bones': Fear of Death and Reformed Burial Practices," 178.
[49] Gittings, "Sacred and Secular," 153.

seems "to indicate that the rationale behind many practices associated with burial was not exclusively a spiritual one."[50]

A similarly interesting and rather ironical point would be that the priest was now ignoring the deceased at the very point of their reintegration within the community as one of the dead, one of the sleepers, the point wherein they became, in the eyes of the community, once again a member, a familiar presence, with a set place. Notice that the stage of reintegration is actually brought forward, more concentrated immediately after the burial. This was mainly caused once again by the Reformation and its disregard of the thirty-day period after the burial. Recognition of this marker ceased,[51] as it had previously been pinpointed by religious prayer, now abandoned, as well as social remembrance. Thus one could argue that with the Reformation period, the last stage of the Rites of Passage surrounding death, the reintegration of the subject back into the community as one of the dead was accelerated, and more simply and quickly completed. Although this would seem to reduce the scope of the liminal period, the continued perception of liminal presences, and the continued importance given to separation and reintegration, would indicate that it was still a crucial time for the community and the dead. Rather, its focus had shifted from the religious and ecclesiastical to the social aspects of the rites. The funeral was thus communally still perceived as essential to the Rites of Passage; reintegration was initiated through it. Any other delay in reintegration is explained through questions surrounding the completion of the separation that had been arranged before death, chiefly through the will and testament, and these were principally secular in nature. Once these affairs had been dealt with and settled, the

[50] Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 180.
[51] David Cressy, "Death and the social order: the funerary preferences of Elizabethan gentlemen," *Community and Change* 5, no.1 (1989): 104.

reintegration was perceived to be complete and successful. This turn to the secular is visible in almost all layers of the Rites of Passage and was without a doubt triggered by the Reformation and its hostility towards and abandonment of ecclesiastically sponsored rituals, which it perceived as deviation from the original shape and content of Christianity.

Extreme unction, previously a vital part of the Rites of Passage, which the common belief had appropriated for its own use and designated with additional utilities, was also a victim of this ecclesiastical search for the authentic. It had survived the 1549 Prayer Book, though its sacramental content was removed.[52] Ironically, the reason why the Reformation went after this particular ritual was lodged deeply in its official perception; that it was a ritual of healing, but one with no real chance of success. As we have seen, even success when it came was dreaded by the community rather than welcomed, due to the common perception of the rite as part of the separation that death represented. Reformers argued that the healing intended by the rite may have been possible at the time of the first preaching of the gospel, but that the rite itself was not mentioned in Scripture and in any case such healing was not available to later generations; thus the rite was falsely offering the hope of healing and was therefore unacceptable.[53] On this basis Extreme unction was completely removed in the 1552 Book, "focusing attention on recitation of the Articles of Faith and repetition of the baptismal promises,"[54] a spiritual education for the dying, as it were, to prepare and sooth the soul for departure. This removal had put out of commission one of the main rituals that, in the eyes of the community and common belief, had pinpointed a ritual separation. A ritual, sanctioned by the

[52] David M. Loades, "Rites of Passage and the Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552," in *Prophesy and Eschatology*, ed. Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 209.
[53] Larson-Miller, "'Healed to Life'," 8.
[54] Plant, "Spencer's Praise of English Rites for the Sick and Dying," 406.

Church that had been perceived to commence the literal separation of the soul from the body, the subject from life, was no longer available to the Rites of Passage or the community.

Similarly confession, it was deemed, should be up to the choice of the dying person and not a necessity.[55] Where the last rites were concerned however, there was no attempt to remove confession completely from the flow of events. It remained within circulation, available to those who wished for it, but as a ritual it was no longer obligatory: "The Protestant Reformation abolished extreme unction, laid down conditions for the celebration of the Communion of the Sick and left the sick person to decide whether to make a confession."[56] While the Church seems to have deemed confession optional, its continued existence and usage may indicate that the people perceived it as necessary. The resulting situation was such that separation and the settling of the affairs of the subject from the earthly realm came to be focused less on religious, priest-led confession and its implied positive or negative results, and more on the secular and communal. As such one could perhaps argue that confession as a ritual came to signify more to the people than it did to the Church. The members of the community, through their coming to the sick room and the bedside of the dying subject, already had an outlet for such a settling, forgiveness, the settling of debts, the saying of goodbyes. As such, the less import the Church itself bestowed on to confession, the more it would become a matter between man and God, or the dying and their social circle and as such one could argue that in the communities eye the focus turned to the secular and communal separation of the dying process.

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[55] Ralph Houlbrooke, "Death, Church, and Family in England Between the Late Fifteenth and the Early Eighteenth Centuries," in *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement,* ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (London: Routledge, 1989), 26.
[56] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 181.

Before the Reformation the bells had rung throughout the town to announce impending death or death itself, clearly helping to involve the community, signaling that preparations had to be made, affairs settled, goodbyes said, separation initiated, but the Reformation put an end to this. Such bell-ringing was condemned "as 'superstitious' and was forbidden by both the Edwardian and the Elizabethan Reformations."[57] Yet this hardly prevented death being a social event, even though the Church's bells could no longer be utilized. The community still looked on and visited the sick room to partake in the Rites of Passage. Isolated death was still a fearsome thing, a perceived failure of religious and social duties, both on the side of the subject and the community itself.[58]

One might expect, with the removal of the ritual of extreme unction and other ecclesiastical rituals surrounding death, the emphasis on the deathbed, the Rites of Passage, and separation, to recede into the background. However this was not the case, the social and communal necessity for the Rites of Passage was strong enough to uphold it at the point of death and ensure its continued importance. From a purely religious point of view, this may have been in part due to the fact that predestination had not found any fertile ground with the English.[59] One's conduct through life and on the deathbed was still of the utmost importance in a good death and in the end result of damnation or salvation. However, while, as previously stated, the overlap of the Rites of Passage and the fate of the soul still existed, as one shall see, the communal and secular was starting to come to the fore: "After initial attempts to abolish or reform life cycle rituals, many, such as churching and confirmation,

[57] Hutton, "The English Reformation and the Evidence of Folklore," 104.
[58] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 194-5.
[59] David William Atkinson, ed., *The English ars moriendi* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), xix; David W. Atkinson, "The English ars moriendi: its Protestant Transformation," *Renaissance and Reformation* 6: 1 (1982): 2; Loades, "Rites of Passage and the Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552," 207.

reappeared in modified form, even within the Reformed tradition."[60] These rituals and practices were less about religion in their utilization for the community practicing them and more about social obligation; the same goes for the successful completion of these "social" rites, the most prominent of which was undoubtedly the Rites of Passage surrounding death.

One could argue that the rituals of the church, while happily utilized and reassigned with new properties, were in the end not essential to the inherent nature of the Rites of Passage, which was communal. These rituals had indeed been assimilated into the Rites of Passage and as such affected them in turn, bestowing a religious reflection, connection and intricacy to the Rites of Passage, which entangled its meaning and practice wholly with the Church. However, once the Church disowned these rituals the Rites of Passage were not left without foundation. One can say that they reverted back to their most basic function, that of the communal and social Rites of Passage, supporting the transition of the members of the community from the living into the dead. As far as the Rites of Passage were concerned, the community, as it had in the Middle Ages, took what was usable and ran with it.

The good death was thus perceived to be as important as ever, and its strictures overlapped with those of earlier years, with less emphasis on ritual perhaps, but more so on preparation itself. The *Ars moriendi*, underlining the importance of a good death, a prepared subject, continued its existence throughout the Reformation. Works about this were popular more than ever, and most were Protestant.[61] One could hardly state that the *Ars moriendi* had a primarily secular and communal idea of separation, emphasis remained on the preparation of the soul, and

[60] Robert W. Scribner, "The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the Disenchantment of the World," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (1993): 483.
[61] Atkinson, "The English ars moriendi: its Protestant Transformation," 1.

the struggle it would have to go through to attain a good death, and the aimed-for salvation. However, the depicted preparations of the dying subject, their family and the community within the pages are quite telling as to where the emphasis of separation in the eyes of the community seems to have moved once the 'papist' rituals had been removed from the equation. "In line with Protestant theology, depictions of deathbeds in early modern England concentrate on worldly, rather than on spiritual matters."[62]

Perkins in his *Salve for the sick man's Soul*, writing in 1595, perhaps to counter any backsliding, explains the proceedings of both a Catholic, 'papist' and wrong deathbed and a righteous Protestant one. His disparaging account of the Catholic preparations have the ironic effect of indicating that there seems to be, under all the bluster, not that much of a difference between the two progressions. Even while explaining why extreme unction is a "papist" and useless practice in his passage on the Catholic proceedings, he seems to indicate that an anointing of the dying does seem to go on in the Protestant version as well, though he states it to be a completely different affair from the "greasie sacrament of the papists, for they put in practice this miraculous gift of healing, which gift is now ceased."[63] He glosses over this practice, stating that as previously written it was not effective, but the fact remains that at least for a certain amount of time extreme unction seems to have lingered in the deathbed procedures. This may have been due to the social and communal perception of the rite as one of death rather than of healing, a mark of separation. However, the Reformation would eventually do away with it completely. The greater interest in Perkins's account though lies in his recording of the correct duties of the *moriens*, the dying subject.

[62] Gittings, "Sacred and Secular," 154.
[63] Williams Perkins, "A Salve for a Sicke Man 1595," in *The English ars moriendi* ed. David William Atkinson (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 144.

He indicates that there are specific duties assigned to the subject that they must fulfill in order to die well. These duties are to God, to the neighbor, and to their own selves, which includes those to their family. The duty to God is self evidently a reckoning of ones life and a preparation to shed the connection remaining to life through sin and earthly concerns; this includes confession. According to Perkins it is the 'manner' of confession that sets apart the 'papist' and the proper Protestant practices, the second of which required "onely a confession of that or those sinnes which lie vpon a mans conscience when he is sick, but the papish doctrine requireth particular enumeration of all a mans sinnes."[64]

Thus this duty to God indicates spiritual and religious separation, and this is also emphasized by the reading of Scripture to sooth and prepare the soul for departure. The part of the priest had been minimized;[65] most of the religious separation and duties were handled on the individual level of the subject. This part is representative clearly of the religious facet of the Rites of Passage. It is the other duties however, explained in detail and emphasized, that make up the bulk of the separation on the deathbed. They represent the social Rites of Passage and concern themselves with a good death and a smooth and successful transition of the subject into one of the dead of the community, rather than a question of religious salvation or damnation. The focus of the community as well as the dead, one would assume, turned to the rather more attainable and immediate concerns during the process of death, and separation, communal and secular.

The duty of the subject to their neighbor and community was clearly the settling of all affairs: "The first is the duty of reconciliation, whereby hee is freely

[64] Perkins, "A Salve for a Sicke Man 1595," 147.
[65] Houlbrooke, "Death, Church, and Family in England," 26.

too forgive all men and to desire to be forgiven of all."[66] This encompassed forgiveness given and received for perceived or real infringements on either side. This duty made sure that the subject was severed from the community as a living member, and that there remained no attachments that would hinder their later reintegration under the new identity as one of the community's dead. Such settlings included the payment of debts, the giving back of loaned objects, the settling of disputes etc, but it had however another, emotional level as it included the saying of farewells both to the members of the community and specifically to the members of the family. It was a shedding of identity, in a sense a collective and communal duty; the subject needed the participation of others. Thus in death, "good encompassed the duties of all present in the death chamber regarding the quality of the event itself."[67]

The last duty is owed to the subject's self, though actually focuses on the family. This is to ensure that the family, those left behind, the heirs, are well looked after. This was mainly accomplished through the drawing-up of a will, and, if the subject is of high standing within the society, the additional attempt to ensure that their passing shall not affect the community adversely. Any transfer in money, power or land should commence smoothly and without any ripples to the everyday life of the community itself.[68] The will itself embodies the economic separation of the subject from the family and community. Thus Perkins's writings would indicate that there is still a threefold separation, spiritual and religious, emotional and communal, and economic.

The secular and communal concerns, the need to ensure a smooth separation for both the subject as well as the community, seem to have taken center-stage. This

[66] Perkins, "A Salve for a Sicke Man 1595," 154.
[67] Lucinda McCray Beier, "The Good Death in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement,* ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (London: Routledge, 1989), 45.
[68] Perkins, "A Salve for a Sicke Man 1595," 154-55.

concern with the secular will be evident in almost all stages of the Rites of Passage, from the separation, the liminal and the reintegration. As the Church removed itself from the picture quite willingly the communal concerns and motivations rushed in to fill the void created by this retreat. Whereas before the re-utilized religious rituals had been made to fulfill communal uses under their sacramental and ritualistic surface, now it seems that the purely secular and communal motivations had been urged to step forward. Perhaps it could be argued that indeed the Reformation Church had temporarily gained the upper hand in its struggle against the sacramental, the ritual, though the resulting changes in the Rites of Passage and the liminal presence were inadvertent at best.

Death was a time and situation best approached with caution and preparation. As such, the idea of a 'bad' death was still prevalent within the community. Childbirth was still a valid and dangerous threshold for both the expectant mother and the infant. Similarly, deaths suffered at this crucial point were perceived as failed Rites of Passages, of giving birth and childbirth as well as death. These infants were at times still regarded as those un-baptized children "whose remains, clearly, were sometimes eaten by animals or left to rot by the wayside. The treatment which their corpses received suggests these babies were barely considered to be human beings."[69] The general practice seems to have been less extreme, but it was without doubt that un-baptized infants were perceived and treated differently in death. They were at times buried apart from the community, outside the churchyard, in the less desired northern section or in a completely separate section.[70] These practices, while still discriminating, seem to be much more lenient in nature than the previous stakings: "In practice, in most cases, children who died before baptism were given

[69] Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England*, 83.
[70] Coster, "Tokens of Innocence," 269.

decent burial in the churchyard. Some ministers… allowed them to be interred alongside family members in prime positions, others assigned them marginal ground."[71] This may have well been due to the fact that the people had started to act faster to try to prevent un-baptized deaths. Midwives were at times authorized to baptize infants at birth, clearly a response to necessity. There seem to be additional records of birthing-room baptisms where children were named during birth. This resulted in logs of names such as 'Creature', wherein most probably only the head of the child was as of yet visible and there was thus no identifiable indicator of gender during the naming, or burials of mothers with children of the same name.[72] It should be noted that, in cases where such precautions failed, these little liminal presences were known to return. Nor were they, as one shall see later on, in any way cuddlier, kinder or more approachable than the rest; quite the contrary.

A willingness to bury mother and child together, and without any excessive precautions, perhaps suggests acceptance and thus perceived integration of the subject. This is similar where the case of the expectant failed mother is concerned. Once again there is no prominent wish to desecrate the body in any way, or to bury it outside of the cemetery, though the north, the rather undesirable section of the graveyard, still seemed to have been reserved for those whose deaths were in some way 'bad', ranging from the stillborn, to mothers dead at childbirth, to executed criminals. This may actually indicate a mitigation of earlier practices. However, this does not in any way mean that the perceived danger of failed Rites of Passage was ignored; the actions of the living speak for themselves: "Women who bled to death during childbirth, or succumbed to puerperal fever or other childbed complications,

[71] Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 117.
[72] Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation & Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 13-14.

were commonly buried within twenty four hours"[73] This post-haste burial could possibly have been due to the perceived necessity to remove the contaminating corpse from among the living of the community as quickly as possible. Thus one could argue that the Rites of Passage and the consequence of their failure were still strongly effective within the community. Even if integration was seen as possible, in the absence of other aggravating factors such as murder, crime or even unsettled affairs, the relative leniency was not unlimited.

Another indicator that it was indeed the properties of the subject and the way they died that affected their perception by the community surrounds the burial of the suicide, the most unforgivable of bad deaths. Actions were taken to mitigate the situation where the suicide was concerned, the coroner and the dead person's peers coming together to determine whether the subject at the time of the self-murder had been sane, and thereby determining the punishment that would be imposed on both the deceased and the family: "A suicide whom they [the Jury] deemed sane was returned a *felo de se,* a felon of himself; one who was insane was proclaimed *non compos mentis,* not of sound mind."[74] If the subject was deemed to have been sane, it meant that not only the dead person but also the family would undergo punishment, for this 'self-murder'. The family would be paupered, all inheritance and goods removed.[75] The secular and economic duty of the deceased within the Rites of Passage was thus completely obliterated.

The burial of the corpse, however, almost completely retained its previous shape: "The night following the inquest, the officials of the parish, the church wardens and their helpers, carried the corpse to a crossroads and threw it naked into a pit. A wooden stake was hammered through the body pinioning it in the grave, and

[73] Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 426.
[74] MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 16.
[75] Ibid., 15.

the hole was filled in."[76] This procession was described as an official affair, part of the punishment fulfilled. There were no religious elements to the burial, no funerary rituals; it is clearly not a funeral but a disposal of the body. The location selected for the burial is telling as well; the suicide was placed in areas that belonged to no one, in literally liminal, boundary lands, thereby condemning the suicide to remain outside the community, physically as well as conceptually. These practices, while not dictated through the judiciary system or even religious law, were accepted and embraced by both.[77] The suicide may well prove to be the only instance where the stance of the common belief — the exile of the liminal presence from the community and precautions taken against its return — and religious and judicial perceptions — punishment of the perpetrator of the greatest sin and felony, aimed also at deterring others — overlapped peacefully and seamlessly in an agreed course of action. Elements of this punishment clearly belong to the perceived presence and danger posed by the liminal entity. The suicide is thus perceived to pose the utmost danger to the community and is dealt with. It is exiled and cut off from the community; the aim being to ensure that reintegration remains forever impossible for these entities. Rather than a specifically religious rejection – though that is also present here – of the subject of the failed Rites of Passage, the liminal entity, the burial is a communal and social exile and rejection of the failed member. This form of burial or disposal had survived the abolition of Purgatory, the onset of the Reformation, and the subsequent de-ritualization. It would continue until the mid-nineteenth century.[78]

The Rites of Passage and their success or failure remained a strong influence where the treatment and perception of the dead were concerned. The good death, preparation and successful overcoming of the Rites of Passage remained of great

[76] Ibid., 15.
[77] Ibid., 20.
[78] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 711.

concern; the liminal presence, even with its rejection by the Church, was not swept aside. This fact perhaps more than any other proves that the liminal presence was a concept and a phenomenon that was of greatest concern to the community itself and which had burrowed into religious practices and beliefs, allowing itself a continued existence within medieval society. Once such trappings became superfluous it shed them and continued its existence within the Protestant community of the Reformation. The belief in ghosts "was to be found among almost all religious groups, and at virtually every social level."[79] As it were, the dead, as liminal presences or reintegrated into their own community, never really did need Purgatory to justify their existence regardless of the Catholic or Protestant stance on the issue.[80] It may actually have been the other way around.

It was with the Reformation that secular motivations would surface in other aspects of the Rites of Passage concerning death, and the consequence of their failure, affecting the liminal presence itself as well. Forcing back Purgatory and all the practices that it had encouraged and instigated, the Reformation allowed for a certain candor in the relations between the living and the dead. Thus it may be argued that the abolition of Purgatory may have contributed to a purification of the relations between the living and the dead. The church had rejected the returning dead, but "this did not mean that ghosts ceased to appear but merely that the church abdicated its authority over them, and renounced the sacramental means of laying and exorcising the ghost."[81] This removal of Church support as it were must have left the people adrift, as they could no longer count on a set remedy and rules of action when it came to the returning dead. Any connection by necessity would become more secular in nature once the religious superstructure was shouldered away. This

[79] Ibid., 708.
[80] Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, 262.
[81] Bowyer, "The Role of the Ghost-Story in Medieval Christianity," 190-191.

had happened contrary to the aim of the Reformation discourse; which had rather intended the dead to be pushed out of the current concerns of the society and community, and with them any 'papist' practices that aimed to profit from the relations between the living and the dead: "The Reformation failed to eradicate a widely held belief in the possibility of the dead making contact with the living."[82]

It had turned out that the connection between the living and their dead, the communal spirit, as it were, was too prevalent and strong to allow itself to be shoved off the stage. What that communal spirit actually did was to usurp the whole production, introducing its own actors in the shape of liminal presences who acted out their own scripts. The same can be stated about the de-ritualization of death and Church practices; the effectiveness and importance of the Rites of Passage themselves were not diminished in any way, even with prominent religious rituals, previously utilized to color the process of the Rites of Passage, being removed. The popularity of the *Ars moriendi,* and the increase in the number of such works in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[83] would indicate that preparation for a good death was still a major concern.

This is not to say however that the Reformation did not have a great effect on the Rites of Passage and the consequence of their failure, the liminal presence. It did indeed have an important effect, as great an effect as purgatorial ideas had had earlier, though not the one that was planned. One could even argue that, though contradictory, the effects of purgatorial ideas and the Reformation complimented one another, bestowing upon the liminal presence properties that it had lacked in its previous incarnations. The motivations of the liminal presence's return now implied more secular concerns, the trappings of religion and even of the afterlife stripped

[82] Marshall, "Deceptive Appearances," 203.
[83] Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, "The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 20, no.2 (1989): 263.

from it, but still often with the rationality and ability to express its concerns that had emerged with the purgatorial dead. The concerns lay within the secular, the secular separation within the Rites of Passage and the secular integration of the dead into the community, but the ghost's "movements were not random or aimless; he was invariably believed to have some end in view and some message to communicate, even if contemporaries sometimes failed to determine just what the message was."[84] It was ironically less about the divine now than ever. The dead rested in their corner of the town and the living went on about their lives. They were still an age group, it is argued here, though sleeping and inactive, their presence was still felt. In cases where failed Rites of Passage displayed consequences in the shape of the liminal presence, it was no longer the Church, postmortem absolution or prayers that could fix the problem; on the contrary the problem lay in the secular and the communal and would thus be solved in the same way, by the people.

The Church, perhaps inadvertently, had removed its support from the living in their relations with the supernatural, among which the liminal presence, due to its previous connection to the living and the community, held a special and rather intimate place. Officially rejected or not, it was a new era for the liminal presence, opening up new relations, expectations and motivations, and in a sense liberating it from the religious hereafter almost completely. The perceptions of the living were similarly affected by these changes and were thus reflected upon the properties of the liminal entities themselves. It was a brave new world, as it were, wherein contrary to official argument, the living were much closer to their dead, and the liminal presence was closer still.

[84] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 712.

CHAPTER VI

ANECDOTES: UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND THE LIMINAL PRESENCE

The main effect of the Reformation, be it through the abolition of Purgatory and the prayer for the dead or the de-ritualization of the deathbed and death itself, had at its very basis the distancing of religion and the Church itself from the affairs that surrounded the relations between the living and the dead. The aspects surrounding death, the dead and the community's relations to both were thus heavily emphasized and defined through secular and communal concerns rather than the religious as was the previous norm. This inevitably was reflected, perhaps best, in the perception of the liminal presence and how it was believed to manifest itself.

In this incarnation the form of the liminal presence is not and never will be as clear as it was with its manifestation as revenants. This fact was most probably primarily due to the vast changes that had been wrought on the Rites of Passage and the liminal presence itself by purgatorial ideas as well as the Reformation, but secondarily it was due to a surplus of the supernatural, one could perhaps call it, in the period. This wide ranging variety of creatures and apparitions recorded make the assigning of any single one of these categorically wholly as an incarnation of the liminal presence difficult at best. The soundest approach perhaps is to indicate that

indeed the liminal presence had come into its own in the form of the ghost, though in all honesty the term ‘ghost’ was as of yet incomplete and not exactly independent as a category itself. The word ‘ghost’ comes to be more and more associated with the liminal dead, even though at particular points the uncertainty of the anecdotes and those recording them concerning the true nature of the phenomena bleeds through. As such one could argue that the ‘modern’ idea of ghost lore, was starting to take shape around the liminal presence and the failed Rites of Passage. The idea of unfinished business, lingering attachments, the necessity to sever said attachments and alter the status posthumously, gradually came to be an unshakeable property of the liminal presence. It was connected and intertwined deeply with its inherent nature born out of the Rites of Passage itself.

Apparitions in the form of spirits, poltergeists, demons, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ angels had at times the liminal presence hidden in them. However, throwing a blanket over it all and declaring every single such lore a representation of the liminal presence would, aside from being a gross misstatement, rob a whole region of common beliefs of its variety and color. As such, a careful approach is necessary when pinpointing liminal presences; certain properties have to be met. These presences can only be identified through properties unique to them that were bestowed through the Rites of Passage. It was their actions, motivations, and perception by the living as liminal presences, previous members of the community that had failed the Rites of Passage that surrounded death, that identifies them as such. Unlike in the previous period however, at this point almost all the conditions set before the subject at death were communal and secular in nature and thus the liminal presence, too, reflects such a paradigm shift in its properties. In this

particular period the liminal presence came to be much closer to the community it was trying to break back into.

The prevalence of the supernatural, and the interest of the people therein, allowed there to be recorded a vast variety of anecdotes, which it has to be stated could not have been, and were not, all about the liminal dead nor even the dead in general. However, the existence of such anecdotes would certainly indicate a community and society open, even hungry, for the strange. The tracts and accounts indicate an overabundance of the supernatural in the period, a bit ironic once the determination of the Reformation to remove the magical and ritual from religion itself is considered. One such supernatural entity with close relations to the dead, the fairy, similarly occupied the imaginations of people, though it is always wise to approach them with caution, face to face or in study.

The lore that surrounds fairies has its own variations; even learned opinion was not exactly in agreement as to what they were: departed souls, or fallen angels, or denizens of a 'Third Kingdom' of spirits, a middle ground as it were between heaven and hell.[1] A clear picture is difficult to call up. It was however the common opinion that mainly tied the dead to the fairies. Most prominently fairies at times were perceived as the dead themselves.[2] The spying of dead persons in fairy gatherings, or the practice or belief in having a fairy mount next to a graveyard, would indicate as much.[3] The fairy mounds at close proximity to graveyards are especially of interest here, as they were believed to house the resting souls of the

[1] Barry Reay, "Popular Religion," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England,* ed. Barry Reay (London: Routledge, 1988), 116.
[2] "Most modern scholars have missed the simple explanation – that fairies, ghosts, and other such being share a similar nature, with a certain overlap among the categories." Brian Walsh, *The Secret Commonwealth and the Fairy Belief Complex* (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2002), 126.
[3] Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 160-161.

dead waiting to be reunited with their bodies during resurrection.[4] This would argue for the fact that the belief in the "sleepers" was strong and prevalent enough to slot in with other beliefs that concerned the whereabouts and nature of the dead of the community. There are similarly other such overlapping properties, mainly due to the fact that liminality in and of itself, a universal property, was also a property of fairy lore. The land of the fairies, clearly called also the land of the dead, endangering any that inadvertently stepped into it, are liminal spaces, the intruding human being becoming a liminal entity.[5]

However, the important point to remember would be that while fairy lore itself shared a deep connection and indeed common characteristics with the beliefs that surrounded the dead, the fairy, for the purposes of this study, is perceived as its own supernatural entity, another creature. Arguing the contrary would diminish and limit a rather vast lore. Liminality is a universal context and can be applied to many subjects as well as situations. However, it is important to remember that for the purposes of this study the liminality present within the workings of the Rites of Passage, as well as the liminal presence resulting from failed Rites of Passage that surrounded death, are focal points. This study focuses on the dead, the restless dead, the liminal presences that return to wander among the living carrying with them motivations and connections that are deeply mired within the living and the community. The fairy will thus be avoided in this study so as to avoid further confusion.

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[4] Walsh, *The Secret Commonwealth*, 43.

[5] Similarly the belief that women at childbirth were especially vulnerable to fairy abductions could in a sense be connected to both liminality and the Rites of Passage, the subject being especially vulnerable during this process of transition. Such abductions were believed to leave behind a facsimile of the woman to later on sicken and 'die', thereby explaining one of the prominent failed Rites of Passages, wherein the subject is in a sense kidnapped before the conclusion. These women would then be forced to play nurse for fairy children and once the kid was old enough given the chance to either remain with the fairies, return or die. They would thus in a sense become liminal entities themselves trapped in the fairyland. Walsh, *The Secret Commonwealth*, 37.

The important point would be not to allow the liminal presence to be eaten up by the rest, which include fairies, witches, even demons and angels that were believed to have visited the earthly realm. As not all fairies can be the representation of misunderstood presences, not all demons and spirits recorded were liminal entities. For the liminal entity to be ascertained certain conditions have to be met, ranging from actions to motivations and properties belonging to the lore itself. However, there were additional complications such as the overlap of lores when connections were forged between one and the other. Through the rejection of the possibility of the return of the dead, the resultant demonization, for example, a link was established between "the apparitions of spirits and sorcery."[6] Inadvertently or planned, it was one of the effects wrought by Reformation.

It thus can be argued that the alterations of the Reformation caused there to be different variations and perceptions of the liminal entity. The one is the rather more familiar incarnation, which came into existence through the very changes of the purgatorial ideas and the Reformation, wherein the dead person, the liminal presence is easily identifiable. Whereas alternatively, perhaps as a reaction to the almost complete removal of the religious from both the Rites of Passage and the dealings with the liminal presence postmortem, there is a much stronger impression of the liminal, and an almost complete loss of identity in some cases. These liminal presences, a bit like their predecessors, the revenants, seem to have lost their rhyme and reason; communication with the living is muffled at best. They present themselves as a primal force, one could argue. It reminds one of the Byland Abbey anecdotes before the liminal presence is ever conjured. In some cases it is clearly the liminal presence, at times deteriorated; in others there is no indication of the

[6] Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 224.

presence of the dead at all. On the contrary, outside forces such as witches are brought in to explain them. That is perhaps why the poltergeist proves itself to be such an elusive creature and hard to categorize: "Though examples can be found in earlier centuries, this form of spiritual harassment only becomes commonplace in the post-Reformation era."[7]

They are dangerous to some extent almost impossible to reason with or understand; whatever motivation lies behind the return is hidden from the living, while they suffer through the havoc that the presence unleashes upon them. As such, perhaps due to the prominently evident liminality, and hostility displayed by the presence, they were more often identified as bad 'spirits' or demons rather than the liminal dead. Again, like the revenant, their excessive liminality and lack of understandable motivation and communication made them easier targets for demonization. These particular liminal presences seemed to have lost their identity and personality completely; liminality at this point seems to have taken over in all its capacity. Rather than reintegration, the presence seems to desire disturbance.

The label poltergeist is given mainly due to its actions, the manifestation of which included knockings and noises. Here it is important to insert that not all poltergeists are manifestations of liminal presences, though some liminal presences indeed manifest themselves as poltergeists. Poltergeists were believed to be the dead, demons, spirits, or maledictions of witches. There was no monopoly of any of them, though the witches did come close. It could be stated that the liminal presence in its poltergeist form seems to have been stripped of all the lingering and permanent effects of the purgatorial ideas, thus it is easier to lose sight of it among all the other variations that vie for the attention of the living. A typical poltergeist anecdote

[7] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 139.

would be as follows: once a certain place was identified as haunted — mostly these would be houses and homes much to the discomfort of those inhabiting them — it became a point of interest and curiosity for the community.

In Glanvill's *Saducismus,* Relation XXIV,[8] one Mr. Andrew Paschall, with his family and a guest gentlewoman, had the misfortune of becoming the focus of such a visitation that went on for three nights. The primary focus of the presence in the house seems to be, by Paschall's testimony, the gentlewoman, who had chambered with his sister. The proceedings are familiar: first there is the sound of fabric dragging on the floor along with foot-steps, announcing the presence of someone or something else in the house. Slamming doors, thrown objects, an enthusiastic attempt on the side of the presence to rearrange the furniture, are manifestations displayed by the presence. What is of interest though is that on the second night a whispering commenced in the bed chamber of the girls, and this was heard by all the family members once the candle was removed from the chamber: "There was scarcely any of us, especially she her self [the gentlewoman], that did not Conjure that Whisperer, by the most Sacred Names, to speak out and tell us its intent, but nothing was to be seen, nor any answer made."[9]

The whispering of the presence is thus perceived by the percipient as some kind of an attempt to communicate, or at least an indication that communication may actually be possible. The 'conjuring' of the presence thus was a continued practice when dealing with unknown and possibly hostile presences, as was previously also indicated in the Byland anecdotes. The third night displayed a similar escalation, with knockings, pullings, and uninvited ventures into the women's bed. The whispering continues and even more remarkably after the attempt at conjuring it fails

[8] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 445-449
[9] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 447.

once again, Paschall states, "I spake to it very earnestly to speak out or whisper louder. Hereupon it hissed out much louder than before, but nothing intelligible to be heard."[10]

The conviction here seems to be that if only they could communicate with it they would be able to remedy the situation. The fact that the presence reacts to the request of the young man seems to correlate with this logic. In the end communication remains impossible; it is a lot of prayer on the mother's side that seems to remove the presence from the house. Henry More, writing below in the advertisement section wherein most explanations and musings on the nature of the recorded apparitions are given, seems to be of a similar mind where the attempt at communication with the presence is concerned: "This troublesome Spirit I suspect to have been the Ghost of some party deceased who would have uttered something, but had not the knack of speaking so articulately as to be understood."[11]

This particular poltergeist then is identified clearly by both the percipients and More to be a liminal presence and probably a dead person, albeit one that is beyond helping, as it itself is unable to communicate. Communication and the conveying of motivations are thus perceived as of utmost necessity where the relations between the living and the liminal presence, the liminal dead, is concerned.

An anecdote recorded by Aubrey in his *Miscellanies* seems to emphasize this point as well. Even though the dead person displays no properties that would identify him as a poltergeist, the regret of the percipient not having engaged in conversation connects these two rather different liminal presences. The dead person is Henry Jacob, who having died a week previously in Dr. Jacob's house, appears to him, his

[10] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 448.
[11] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 448.

cousin. The place of apparition is the bed chamber. The dead man makes no move nor does he attempt to speak; the doctor does not make any moves either:

> And Henry Jacob stood there still; he [the Doctor] should have spoken to him, but he did not; for which he has been ever since sorry. About half an hour after he vanished. Not long after this, the cook-maid, going to the wood-pile to fetch wood to dress supper, saw him standing in his shirt upon the wood-pile.[12]

In the end Henry makes no attempt to communicate. However, the implication is that he needed prompting, that is conjuring, to speak his mind, and that his visit may have had a deeper reason rather than a mere farewell, though farewells as well were part of the separation process as previously indicated.

Henry More, still musing over the poltergeist that was unable to communicate its needs, then goes on to indicate that indeed the dead are wont to communicate, and actually do have motivation to do so. More, as an example, tells the story of a Jacob Brent who conversed with a ghost and

> received several things in charge from it to be done, and was commanded secrecy in some special Matters; but it gave such instructions, and made such discoveries, as right might be done to some that had been wronged by the party deceased. Upon which performance of Jacob Brent, the disturbance in the house ceased.[13]

This presence, like the one described by Paschall, had exhibited behavior that is usually attributed to poltergeists, though it is clearly identified as one of the dead, and more importantly a liminal presence. It personifies in a sense the missing link between the poltergeist and the liminal presence. The ceasing of hostilities, to a certain extent, once conjured, as well as the eagerness to communicate and give instructions to be completed to their percipients, a property that had, through the purgatorial ideas, been infused into the liminal presence, making it possible for it to be reintegrated, is a clear indicator that the entity is a liminal presence.

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[12] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects* (Tennessee: General Books, [1696] 2010), 38.
[13] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 449.

The Paschall poltergeist is thus also perceived as a liminal presence, as the attempt at conjuration by the percipients would indicate. However, the presence is lost in its own liminality, in all possibility not retaining enough identity or personality to communicate with the living, and thus limited to disturbance where its actions are concerned, more a pitiful image one would argue, though a relatively dangerous one. Thus contrary to what Simpson has indicated, that with the Reformation this interpretation of the apparitions being identified as the dead and helped through the clergy "was forbidden, and a bogey henceforth could only be a bogey, never a ghost,"[14] cannot be upheld, or at least a cautionary interruption to state that prohibitions seldom hold is necessary. The 'bogey', at times clearly, at others vaguely, is still identified as the dead. This time though the remedy is different. Thus one could argue that what changed was the interpretation of the 'bogey' and its needs and motivations. There was no more need for priests or monks, nor was the Church volunteering its services. The Reformation thus brought on a change in perception, motivation and mitigation, which had their reflections in the nature of the liminal presence.

These changes thus can be argued to have brought on a duality of change on the liminal presence, the one that seems to be more easily approachable and the one where its inherent liminality becomes the very thing that condemns it. The best example perhaps comes from Bovet in his *Relations*. Bovet drew from the same school of thought as Glanvill which "rather than seeking to dampen down beliefs in weird or marvelous occurrences and to confine them within a strict metaphysical system", advocated the recording of such beliefs.[15] The anecdote in question is the Fourth Relation, "Giving an account of the Daemon of Spraiton in the Country of

[14] Simpson, "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse?" 400.
[15] Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 275.

Devon, Anno. 1682".[16] What Bovet describes is not a demon but two liminal presences, a rarity in itself, connected to one another. It is the story of one Francis Fey, coming upon an apparition that displayed remarkable similarities to his master's (a Mr. Philip Furze) late father. The dead old man approaches the servant and states that some legacies in his will had been left unpaid, ten shillings a piece to two people, and that the servant should make sure his Master goes on to pay the debts. The presence also asked for twenty shillings to be given to his sister. If the servant were to fulfill these instructions he would leave the servant alone.

Until this point the liminal presence follows the lore almost exactly; the changes that are perceptible are all directly connected to the effects of the Reformation. All instructions the liminal presence leaves the servant are secular and worldly in nature, connected intricately to the will the man left while dying. One interesting point is that the sister of the deceased refuses the money sent to her, stating it was sent by the Devil. This may well mean that the demonization of the liminal presence, the returning dead, was not in any way limited to the Protestant theological discourse on the Reformation. However, everyone else seems to take it as read that the old man was indeed the dead man returned, a liminal presence back on account of affairs and debts left unsettled. As it were, the sister seems to have no complaints in accepting the ring made with the money, as per instruction of the liminal presence, which may mean that she was not as adverse to receiving jewelry from the Devil as she was money.

The liminal presence, after everything is settled and before leaving, proceeds to warn the young man about his second wife, calling her a wicked woman. The meaning of this warning however, only becomes apparent after the servant fulfills

[16] Richard Bovet, *Pandaemonium, 1684: with an Introduction and Notes by Montague Summers* (West Yorkshire: EP Publishing, [1951] 1975), 107-113.

the instructions of the liminal presence, who "hath seemed to be at rest, having never given the young man any further trouble."[17]

On his way back from completing the errand, with witnesses to boot, the young man is accosted, quite literally by the apparition of the wicked second wife, who throws him off his horse and continues to abuse him. In the passage she is clearly labeled a daemon, though this may have been due to her wicked nature, as it is also clear that she is identified as the second wife, one of the liminal dead returning:

> She appeared sometimes in her own shape, sometimes in forms very horrid, nor and then like a monstrous Dog belching out fire, at another time it flew out at the window, in the shape of a Horse, carrying with it only one pane of glass, & a small piece of iron.[18]

The presence continued to accost the young man with much violence, resulting in bruises and bloodshed and several close calls. Thus far she is perhaps the most dangerous of liminal presences this side of the revenant. Her actions, the usage of various items, such as a scarf and furniture in her attacks, would mark her as a poltergeist, pulling at clothes, rearranging furniture. However, she is not as docile or harmless as those in the previously recounted anecdotes. There is no recorded attempt by the servant or any of the witnesses to conjure her. It seems her liminality, and hostility precluded any such attempt. Nor is there any attempt on her part to communicate. Her fixation on the servant that had helped out her late husband may also be of significance. Liminality was perceived to be a contagion, and the contact with the first liminal presence may have left the servant open to her influence and attacks. Bovet, in his short comment section following the relation, states :

> The Female Ghost comes with a great deal of violence, and an impetuous Temper, as if disgusted for the performance of what the other Spectre

[17] Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, 108.
[18] Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, 109.

> enjoined, and this seems the more probable, if we consider how quickly she gets behind the young man, after he had answered the desires of the other Ghost.[19]

One could even state that jealousy, one of the baser emotions and motivations, and a strong motivator for the liminal presence where the basic Rites of Passage and their failure as well as the attitude of the liminal presence towards the living is concerned, was a strong trigger for this particular entity. The late husband gained his wishes, while the late wife seems incapable of even formulating them. She thus may have been a closer existence to the revenant incarnation of the liminal presence than any of the others related here. As it were, there is no conclusion to the anecdote; the young man remained at the mercy of the escalating hostility of the liminal presence.

Similarly, the late wife's predilection for shape-shifting can also be seen as a manifestation of her liminality. Shape-shifting was deeply connected to liminality, the ambiguity as to the nature and shape of the apparition reflective of its liminal nature: "Ghosts that take animal form are unusual in that they are often malevolent and even physically dangerous to the living."[20] One must, however, add that liminal presences are always dangerous to a certain extent due to their very nature. Thus one can argue that while indeed the Reformation had pulled the motivations of the liminal presence to a more manageable secular and communal level, it may also have had the side effect of removing any mitigating control of the religious, thereby allowing for the manifestation of both more worldly and sociable liminal presences, and those that drowned in their liminality. The category of the poltergeist will thus be taken for the purposes of this thesis as a category that indeed at times hosted the liminal presence.

[19] Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, 113.
[20] Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and The Dead*, 181.

The liminal presence shouldered the mantle of the poltergeist and its trappings if the correct conditions arose. With the loss of personality, and thereby most of its capability to communicate any motives it is left with, the possibility of the liminal presence's being reintegrated into the community dwindles to nothing. This may have been why some apparitions that surround the dead changed shape and the concern of the living is turned in these cases towards the exile of the liminal presence rather than reintegration. The sending away of the presence to riversides, to weave a rope out of sand, only to make its way back one cock-stride every year,[21] could be one such manifestation of the belief that some liminal presences, as in their previous incarnation, the revenant, were not capable of reintegration and had to be dealt with as such, to protect the community, the living. At times this was the case even if the community knew well and clear who it was that was actually clattering around in the house. It seems it was the ability or inability of the liminal presence to communicate its motive that decided its fate. In such cases it became an endeavor of getting it out of the house, out of sight and out of mind, possibly someplace from where it could not make its way back for a very long time. Here there is no real concern with laying the presence to rest, reintegrating it. It is however of great interest that even when the identity of the presence is known, the possibility of the physical destruction of the corpse does not occur to the percipients.

However, the overabundance of liminality and the manifestation as poltergeist were not always the end for the liminal presence. Anecdotes arise wherein, similar to the Byland Abbey anecdote of the unbaptized infant, children come back to haunt their parents. One distinct change, and most probably directly connected to the effects of the Reformation, was the fact that these little ghosts were

[21] Brown, *The Fate of the Dead*, 26, 32-33, 36.

neither as outspoken as their previous counterpart nor as peaceful: "One recurrent narrative involves the bereaved parent mistaking the infant ghost for a horse, dog, or neighbour and addressing it mistakenly by name."[22] Their appearance was mired in shape-shifting, a property shared by those who displayed their liminality to the utmost among the Byland Abbey anecdotes, those that were perceived as the most dangerous. This could be tied to the fact that these subjects practically died before becoming part of the community and as such lack any real personality or connection to the living that could be utilized in their return. The only connections were the parents and these were generally the percipients of such apparitions. They were closer to the poltergeist in their actions, their activity seemingly volatile, communication minimal, though their main aim seems to remain unchanged. These liminal presences desired to be named preferably by one of their parents: "Sometimes all that was required from these little ghosts was for the haunted parent to give the infant ghost a name."[23] At times the parents are merely scared and bullied into naming the entity, or inadvertently naming it by shouting out in fear of it, one could say almost tricked into naming it.

This objective would seem to argue for a rather more secular approach to christening; more than baptism, it was about the naming. The naming of the liminal presence thus initiated the inclusion of the entity within the community by the bestowal of an identity where the liminal presence had lacked it previously. This lack of identity is more prominent than with most other liminal presences. As such these particular little presences due to never having been part of the society and community in the first place, are offered almost no solace of familiarity or reason; They are almost purely creatures of the liminal. Their aim and desires, however,

[22] Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and The Dead*, 183.
[23] Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and The Dead*, 183.

remain firmly connected to the Rites of Passage, to gain entry into the society and community through the naming and the identifying and thus becoming a part of something that the failed Rites of Passage had left them completely detached from. As such, the aim is less religious. It is not about the salvation of the little soul from the first sin; it is about identity. This differentiation points to the effect of the de-ritualization of the Church rituals through the Reformation. Baptism thus reverted back in the perception of the people to its fundamental communal and secular function, the integration of a new member of the community. These little liminal entities, following the example of the others, also seem to have adjusted to a more secular worldview and motivation.

As previously indicated thus, the liminal presence is motivated by rather more worldly concerns than previously displayed before the Reformation. Similarly, the remedies were focused on the fixing of the situation rather than a set selection of actions, as was the case during the reign of Purgatory. Similar to the older gentleman mentioned before, the liminal presence in its most fleshed-out shape — wherein there is no doubt as to what the presence is, nor what it wants — concerns itself with secular, earthly affairs, personal, familial, and communal. These presences were quite frequently recorded, and more than the rather less defined poltergeist, they carried within themselves the clearly defined silhouette of the liminal presence. They are representative of the main form the liminal presence took once it went through the changes wrought by both the purgatorial ideas and the Reformation.

Baxter's work can also be counted among the anti-Saducismus treatises that aimed "to prove that spirits, divination, ghosts, and sorcery really existed in the first place, in the face of what was claimed to be a systematic and 'atheistical' disbelief in

spirits among their contemporaries."[24] Baxter has three such anecdotes listed in his *The Certainty*. Relation V[25] is related to him by the elder Countess of Donagal, who is closely connected to the case. A man had agreed to put his and his son's lives on a new lease for a farm with the lord, who happens to be the elder lady's husband. The man paid half the money necessary but then died. His wife, remarrying, completed the payment. However, having paid from the second husband's purse, she put *his* son's name on the lease instead of the dead man's. The case is clear-cut: all the things that have gone wrong are very much apparent. There is money left unpaid, as a result of which an heir that is left bereft of what is rightfully his. The apparition at this point should not really surprise anyone. The dead man appears to a porter, a man of the earl, and wants him to go tell his wife to fix the situation or she would get no rest. The porter, a bit put off by being chosen, as it seems he had no connection to the dead man nor the wife, is similarly warned to comply with the requests of the dead man. The rather civil contact with this liminal presence is thus undershot with a veiled threat. The presence indicates that the porter is connected to the whole situation and is thus the right person to fulfill his requests. The previously existent perception that the liminal presence could and would appear to those familiar and connected to them thus still seems valid. These dead still seem to appear to those connected either to the situation that is the source of the problem or people familiar to them.

There are no details as to how the dead man 'haunted' the porter. However, the 'or else' seems loud and clear. As such, this was not a pitiful soul to be hastened along with prayer: "He [the porter] went to the minister of the town, and told him of

[24] Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 270.
[25] Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced*, 23-24.

it, who counseled him to tell the woman."[26] The reaction of the minister is telling. There is no mention of the impossibility of the situation, denial, nor of any demons, angels or tricks. The minister, mimicking the grander scale of things and the Church itself, deems it fit not to get involved at all. It was perceived as a communal and familial situation and dealt with as such; religion was not eager to step into the whole affair, it would seem. The woman understandably is not keen on remedying the situation even after the token of the identity of the liminal dead is given. It is not until she herself is molested that she acts to fix the situation. Thus the liminal presence in this case is present enough and powerful enough to enforce its wishes. In the end the name is altered and the lease sealed; the dead man is not heard from again. The securing of the heir's future, ensuring that those left behind are accordingly taken care of, is clearly parallel to one of the three duties that Perkins had listed in his *Ars Moriendi*, that is, the way to ensure a good death, making sure that oaths are kept and things remain as arranged, as the gentleman with the wicked wife had done. The motivations of a liminal presence's return can be argued to be still deeply mired in the perception of what was a good death, even though that perception had veered clearly away from the religious.

However, here there seems to be less emphasis on the type of death that the subject died. More than the type of death, the attention seems to have moved to the fulfilling of the duties of the dead man and thus the separation stage of the Rites of Passage. The focus is still directed at the motivations, the reasons that prompted the return which are all connected to unsettled business. The necessary duties and preparations that surrounded a good death, and one would assume, failed Rites of Passage, an unprepared for death, are implied within this anecdote. The presence that

[26] Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced*, 23.

the living encounter is clearly perceived by them to be a liminal presence: the dead husband keen on fixing what went wrong. The emphasis lies in the actions and reasons of the liminal presence. As it were, unless the return and motivations of the liminal presence are directly related to the death, i.e. a murder victim, whether the subject had died a bad death is not mentioned with any particular emphasis in this period. The focus seems to be firmly on the affairs that need settling, that is, the very things that keep the liminal presence liminal and unable to join the dead of the community completely. This, one could argue, may have been due to the de-ritualization of the deathbed, through which the postmortem communal concerns, which are embodied in the motivations of the liminal dead, come to the fore.

This is not to say however that the age-old motivations were not as strong as ever. Murdered people were indeed very stubborn when it came to the settling of their business. Murder, one could argue, forged a very strong connection both to the culprit and life itself, and it also made the victim's death as unprepared as they came. Aubrey tells of such a murder in Yorkshire. The victims are Mary Barwick and her unborn child; the perpetrator is her husband, William Barwick.[27] The man threw her in a pond, hid the body, and the next day buried her by the pond. A drowning, already perceived as a rather unsavory way to die, is further inflamed by the murder and the hasty, unmarked grave. The woman seems to have been heavily pregnant. Both she and the infant were prime candidates for liminality. Indeed she appeared to her brother-in-law as a ghastly presence by the pond, wearing the clothes the dead woman usually wore: "An apparition went before him in the shape of a woman, and soon after sat down a rising green grass-plat,… she seemed to dandle something in

[27] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects*, 44-47.

her lap, that looked like a white bag (as he thought)."[28] The bag, identified by the brother-in-law Thomas Lofthouse, was probably a representation of the infant. That Lofthouse cannot clearly identify it as a child or infant may be connected to its being unborn, yet 'unshaped' and without identity.

The woman is rather calm; there is no accusation or even communication. However, it is indeed her appearance to Lofthouse that starts the investigation into her disappearance. Her appearance triggers Lofthouse's awareness of the inconsistencies of the husband's words and leads him to go to the Lord Mayor of York to get a warrant. The trial commenced. Aubrey included details on it as well as testimonies, the testimonies dated 1690: "Aubrey was not interested in passing judgement or crafting a philosophy about the phenomena he reported… he simply collected the evidence that seemed interesting."[29] The case must have been of great interest to him as he was mainly known simply to jot down a few sentences or paragraphs on an event and move on.[30] The amount of detail on this case is thus quite unusual.

The body of a woman was found buried by the pond, and the husband confessed after resisting for some time and was thus sentenced to death. The presence of the entity seems to be diluted, a wraith more than a vengeful spirit, though she did indeed get what she wanted, and managed to ensure her husband's death as well, one would guess. Additionally, Lofthouse feels no self-conciousness in testifying in a trial that the whole matter had been brought to his attention though an apparition. That indeed the whole case is triggered by an apparition seems to

[28] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects*, 45.
[29] Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 284.
[30] Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 237.

imply that the community still gave great importance to the appearance of and signs from the dead.

The case of Anne Walker is of a similar nature. It was recorded in the *Saducismus triumphatus*, within the body of one of Dr. Henry More's letters to Glanvill. More is in turn recording the story from the work of one Mr. John Webster, who included the anecdote in his *Display of Supposed Witchcraft*, though More ventures ahead with additional research into the apparition, thus ascertaining details not mentioned in Webster's version. It is the year 1632 — or according to More's investigation and the testimony of a Mr. James Smart of Durham, 1631, which places the trial at Durham in August that year. A woman named Anne Walker, servant to a Mr. Walker who was her kinsman, was sent away with a Mark Sharp, a coal miner.[31] She was suspected at the time of being pregnant, like Mary Barwick, a detail worth keeping in mind, and the apparent reason for her being sent away. She was not heard of again until she literally made herself heard:

> In the winter-time after, one James Graham or Grime… being a Miller, and living about two miles from the place where Walker lived, was one night alone very late in the mill grinding corn… the Mill-doors being shut, there stood a Woman upon the midst of the Flour, with her Hair about her Head hanging down and all bloody, with five large Wounds on her Head.[32]

Mr. William Lumley's testimony, added in by More, indicates that the presence appeared a mere fourteen days after the supposed death, and the mill was located six miles from the Walker home.[33] More seems to take this testimony to be accurate, and the faster appearance of the presence also fits the lore better. The mill itself is close enough to be accounted as a familiar place for the dead woman to appear.

Either way, the man is exposed to the liminal presence when alone, in the middle of the night, a trait similar to those displayed by liminal presences from

[31] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 16-22.
[32] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 18.
[33] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 20.

previous periods. His reaction as well is fitting. He blesses himself and asks her who she was, what she wanted, in a way one could argue that he was conjuring her to state her business. The presence identifies herself, and it is again the presence itself that confirms the pregnancy. Thus, as with the previous anecdote there is, in addition to the murder victim, a second unborn victim in the narrative. Anne Walker, unlike Mary, is not averse to speech. This may have been due to the fact that Lofthouse had not tried in any way to attempt communication, or that he already had enough information to piece together the murder. Anne on the other hand is quite talkative. It turns out that Mark Sharp, contrary to the promised safe haven until the child was born, had murdered her by a moor.

Her testimony is supported by her battered appearance, reflecting the violence practiced upon her. This is a trait that is common in the Reformation period, though it may also have its roots in the older and mostly still current belief that a corpse would bleed from its wounds when faced with its murderer.[34] It was a visual display of the act, as it were. It has the additional effect of emphasizing the otherness and liminality of the presence. She is clearly dead, but present, her death itself carved into her appearance. She indicates that the Miller has to expose her murder, or else she would give him no rest and haunt him. While in Webster's version there is no mention as to how she goes about haunting the Miller, the fact that she is threatening and frightening him is clearly stated. Mr. Lumley's testimony on the other hand includes a passage that indicates she was "continually appearing night by night to him, and pulling the Cloathes off his bed."[35] Though seemingly rather unthreatening her actions are reminiscent of behavior of a poltergeist. Similarly, it seems enough to scare the Miller into action. Like Lofthouse he directly goes to the

[34] Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and The Dead*, 164.
[35] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 20.

magistrate, telling them what he knew which included apparition of the presence: "The Body was found in a Coal-Pit, with five Wounds in the Head, and the Pick, and shoes, and Stockings bloudy, in every circumstance as the Apparition had related unto the Miller."[36]

The hidden burial of the victim, much like in the case with Mary, is an additional insult to the murder itself; a good funeral was still perceived as necessary for both the wellbeing of the subject and the community: "Another way to help counteract a bad death was to have a good funeral."[37] As such the criminals in both cases are doubly guilty where the liminal presences are concerned through the bad death and the hidden burial without proper rites. The secret killing is exposed by no other than the victim herself.

That the Miller, like Lofthouse, feels no compunction about officially stating that he had seen a murdered dead woman, who had then described the circumstances, and the evidence perfectly indicates that apparitions of the liminal presence were perceived to be, and their testimony accepted, as the ultimate proof of foul-play. The fact that in turn the Miller himself had not been accused of the murder for knowing too much — a more cynical mind would deduce the most probable murderer was the Miller himself — suggests that the indicated presence of the liminal entity is given credence beyond anything else. In the end it was Mr. Walker and Mark Sharp that were tried and executed of the murder. Though the accused never seemed to have confessed in any capacity to the murder, a helping push seems to have been introduced by the apparition during the trial. While Webster indicates that there were rumors that Anne herself had appeared to either the Judge or the Jury Foreman, he states that he is not certain of the matter, whereas Mr. James Smart from Durham

[36] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 19.
[37] Gittings, "Sacred and Secular," 156.

stated in his testimony "that he heard one Mr. *Fairhair* give Evidence upon Oath, that he saw the likeness of a Child stand upon *Walker's* shoulders during the time of the Tryal."[38]

This must have been strong enough evidence for the judge as well, as Walker seems to have been charged with impregnating his kinswoman as well as conspiring with Sharp to murder her.[39] Thus the presence, the indication of its existence or even a testimony as such is enough to sway justice towards the liminal presence, whatever conspiracy actually lay behind the situation. However, the important point would be that the people accepted the reality of the existence of the liminal presence, and the necessity to provide it with justice, or closure. The fear of the liminal presence, while still clear and present, through its threats, is not emphasized in the narrative as it was in the Byland Abbey or the revenant anecdotes. The motivations of the liminal presence, personal, secular and communal in nature, as well as the duty of the living and the community to remedy the situation, are the points that are underlined.

Baxter has a similar case, though it lacks the fanfare of the previous examples. In Relation XI he tells of a soldier who, it seems, had enlisted after killing his own master for money:

> For a long time, when ever he lay alone, somewhat like a headless man stood by his bed, saying to him [*Wilt though** yet confess?*] And in this case of fear he had continued, till lately it appeared to him when he had a bed-fellow (which it never did before), and said as before [*Witt Hum**, yet confess?*] and now seeing no hope of longer concealing it, he confessed.[40]

This version seems rather harmless, though there is indeed an escalation once it becomes apparent that the man is not inclined simply to confess. In this there are no third parties; the apparition appears to the murderer himself, and it was apparently his own confession that would lead to legal proceedings. One could argue that

[38] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 22.
[39] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 22.
[40] Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced*, 26.

perhaps this presence was much more resourceful and threatening in its conduct, albeit in the form of psychological warfare, enough to sway its own murderer into confessing.

Liminal presences do not take kindly to being forced into exile, especially if the sending off was a violent one. Obscurity seems to be the most effective trigger in such cases, the hidden murder something to be brought to light not only for the sake of the victim but also for that of the community. Aubrey, as it were, is impressed with the way of the world, and how it at times fixes itself:

> As murder is one of the greatest crimes that man can be guilty of, so it is no less strangely and providentially discovered, when privately committed. The foul criminal believes himself secure, because there was no witness of the fact…. The very ghosts of the murdered parties cannot rest quiet in their graves, till they have made the detection themselves.[41]

Aubrey perceives these apparitions to be the work of providence. However, it also has the communal and social connotations of a hidden warning, a sign that certain rules have to be upheld for the community to continue its tranquil existence. The community itself seems to be open if not amiable towards the existence of these presences, as the generally ready acceptance of otherworldly testimony in trials and investigations would indicate.

Baxter records another instance, though much more detailed, in a letter from one Tho. Emlin, which he includes in *The Certainty*. This passage tells of the wife of a Charles Loftin, who had been assaulted when she refused to allow entrance into her house, in Drumbeg situated close to Belfast, to the servants of the archdeacon when they were trying to enforce a warrant.[42] The woman died several days after her injury and nothing was done about her death until she forced some hands. This she attained through "her strange appearance to one Thomas Donelson (a spectator of the

[41] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects*, 44.
[42] Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced*, 56-58.

violence done to her). She affrighted him into a prosecution of Robert Eccleson, the criminal."[43]

She intimidated this rather unwilling witness into declaring what he had seen: a lesson in public responsibility, one could say. She was rather heavy handed going about this, pulling him out of his house bodily, her actions witnessed by many and believed by many more. This seems to be ratified by a second letter from a Mr. Gilbert, that Baxter inserts after the first one. It concerns itself with the same anecdote and apparition, though there are indeed several details not included into the first: the woman was called Magdalen, and appeared four weeks after her death. The battering of the would-be witness was similarly mentioned, though this time her statement was recorded as well: "That she would trouble him no more, if he did faithfully prosecute the cause of her death."[44]

The liminal presence in this period can thus related directly to the Byland examples, the same creature so to say, that still retained enough power and control over the living to persuade them:

> Upon this the said Donelson deposed what he knew of the aforesaid violence, before Mr. Randal Brice, a neighbour-justice, and confirmed all at the assizes of Down, in the year 1685… to the amazement and satisfaction of all the country, and of the judges, whom I have heard speak of it at that time with much wonder; insomuch that the said Eccleson hardly escaped with his life, but was burnt in the hand.[45]

The liminal presence's reasons for return are thus remedied, allowing her perhaps to fit into her designated place within the community as one of its sleeping dead. The fact that the society lacked any official investigative process that would engage when faced with unexplained deaths or disappearances might well have been effective in the persistence of the belief. Murders with only the murderer and victim as

[43] Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced*, 57.
[44] Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced*, 58.
[45] Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced*, 57.

participants especially presented a dead-end where justice was concerned, unless the murderer suddenly had the irresistible urge to confess. As such, the belief that the victim could in any way bring about justice must have been a factor of reassurance for the community as well as deterrent for possible future culprits. As such, in situations as such as these, one can safely indicate that it was not only the culprit that could end up with a haunting, but anyone who stood in the way of the liminal presence's motives. Witnesses not coming forward in this instance are also sufficient to allow the liminal presence to enter the stage and fix the flow of events itself. Similarly, note that the judges and those at the trial seem to be impressed by the liminal presence itself, as it was its appearance that allowed for the trial to take place. This attitude however, while there, was not the only reaction.

While liminal presences were perceived as solid proof of foul play by the community at least, they were not always perceived as positive influence on trials. Relation XIV,[46] the appearance of one Mr. Bower of Guilford (probably Guildford), recorded in *Saducismus*, presents one such case. An elderly gentleman, Mr. Bower, was assaulted on the highway, was robbed and had his throat cut. Two suspects were captured and put into prison. It is in the prison that the presence makes itself felt, to a third highwayman who seems to have had the misfortune of being in close proximity to the suspected culprits:

> That Night, this third Man was awakened about one of the Clock, and greatly terrified with an old Man, who had a great gash cross his Throat, almost from Ear to Ear, and a wound down his Breast. He also came in stooping, and holding his hand on his back. Thus he appeared, but said nothing.[47]

The robber was understandably shaken and eager to share his story, very much convinced that the apparition had been real. In the end the rumors made it back to a

[46] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 414-416.
[47] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 414.

Mr. Reading, Justice of Peace in Surrey and the deceased's cousin. He interrogated the robber as to whether he had ever heard of the deceased, which he had not. The robber's account of the presence fit the description of Mr. Bower in both life and death, the locations of the wounds being correct and telling. Mr. Reading, thus convinced that the two suspects were the actual culprits — and note that he does not suspect the third robber at all — pursued his investigation, though there was no specific accusation on the part of the liminal presence except for the proximity of the suspects. And while Mr. Reading clearly believed that it was his cousin who appeared to the robber he was not particularly eager to use this fact publicly: "Mr. *Reading* being a very discreet Man, concealed this story from the Jury at the Assizes, as knowing that this would be no evidence according to our Law."[48]

Reading is keen on finding evidence unrelated to the apparition itself, of which he finds enough to have the two men convicted and executed, though the men refuse to confess. This avoidance of declaring the return of the cousin and using it in the trial may indicate that supernatural evidence was not keenly accepted by the law, though the Walker and Barwick cases seem to imply that it could at times be influential: "Though apparitions were believed to play a part in such cases, it was recognized that as legal evidence they may be less than satisfactory."[49] Still, the presence, while completely mute, both in action and words, managed still to attain its wishes and fulfill its goals, very much like Mary, presumably resting in peace among the dead of the community after the executions.

Thus it was the hidden death, the sudden, violent and secret death of a murder victim, and the secret and unceremonial disposal of the body, that motivated these particular liminal presences. The Rites of Passage, the victim's separation and

[48] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 415.
[49] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 127.

their death having been pushed out of the social community into the realm of the hidden, were thus doomed to fail after what was clearly a bad death. The victims sought acknowledgement, in a way, of their death by the community, and thus their failed Rites of Passage. The trial and sentencing of the murderer, one could argue, became their ritual of separation. The murderer, perhaps the strongest attachment the liminal presence had in the earthly realm, was in most cases executed, pushed out of the community, the society and life itself, thereby removing any unsettled attachments of the liminal presence. This allowed, one could argue, for them to "sleep" in peace among the other dead. The "revenge" of the liminal presence is hardly practiced through its own actions, and more seldom on the murderers themselves. Unlike in the case of the revenant, the direct attack and removal of the familiar person — and here it is the murderer — does not seem to come into play. The most these anecdotes offer, in this capacity, is the murderer being "forced" into a confession. All action focuses on pushing the wheels of the community into dealing with the culprit, and the secret death of the victim.

However, it was not always the victim that returned, as the severing of all ties from the community also included instances where it was the guilty party that had to come clean. This function was mostly covered by the utilization of confession. The confession of sins, the receiving of forgiveness previously mostly covered by the religious ritual, took on a more secular and communal angle with the Reformation, having become optional in the eyes of the Church: the decision now rested on the subject, though one taken very seriously by some Protestants. One could argue it was now about communal or even personal disclosure and closure, which at times was synonymous with communal stability.

Added to this was the common trait that could be described as familial connections and concerns. In *Saducismus*, Relation IX, Thomas Goddard of Maleborough (probably Marlborough) is recorded as stumbling upon such a necessity on 23 Nov. 1674.[50] The anecdote seems to have been related by Goddard himself, who pinpointed the first time he comes upon the apparition as nine o'clock in the morning, on the highway some distance from his lands. The meeting was again conveniently placed on a deserted stretch of highway. Where the liminal presence is concerned this setting of the meeting at a place of isolation is a common occurrence, connected as this was to wayside burials, to crossroads and borders, geographically liminal places: "The liminal boundaries between the natural and the supernatural played a potent part in popular belief."[51] It was the borderland, the no man's land, so to say, places where the living crossed paths with the dead. The time of early morning in this case however is rather less common. The presence that appeared before Goddard was his father-in-law, dressed in his usual attire. This particular presence was very conversational, trying to ensure that his son-in-law did not desert the presence in its endeavor:

> *Are you afraid?* To which he answered, I am, thinking on one who is dead and buried, whom you are like. To which the Apparition replyed with the like Voice, *I am he that you were thinking on, I am* Edward Avon *your Father-in-law, come near to me, I will do you no harm.* To which *Goddard* answered, *I trust in him who hath bought my Soul with his precious Blood, you shall do me no harm*.[52]

The presence converses with his son-in-law, inquiring about the remaining family members, mostly his children. It was not until the apparition produced some twenty or thirty shillings of silver that Goddard shirks back. The presence wished him to give the money to *Sarah*, his widowed daughter with whom in life he had parted on

[50] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 398-406.
[51] Scribner, "Elements of Popular Belief," 254.
[52] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 398.

negative terms. Goddard, invoking Jesus, refused the money, which the presence took in its stride, stating that as Goddard was afraid he would come another time, not exactly a reassurance, and disappeared. The money being readily produced by the liminal presence itself in intriguing, as in most cases there was merely an order that the percipient or someone they were to inform should pay this or that to a certain person.

The next few visitations were at night and at places familiar to Goddard himself, his shop, his house, intentionally or unintentionally exacerbating the man's fear, invading his private space. At last the presence caught him out on the highway again, when a hare jumped in front of his horse and unseated him. Whether the hare itself was related to the presence in any way is not clear, though the possibility certainly exists. The presence bade Goddard to tell William Avon, the dead man's son, to go get a certain sword that his father had given him, and go to a certain forest on the way to Alton.

> 'For with that Sword I did wrong about Thirty years ago, and he never prospered since he had that Sword. And bid *William Avon* give his sister *Sarah* twenty shillings of the Money which he had of me. And do you talk with *Edward Lawrence*, for I borrowed twenty shillings of him several years ago, and did say I had paid him, but I did not pay it him; and I would desire you to pay him twenty shillings.'[53]

It is a veritable wish list and quite reminiscent of the preparations and reparations one would go through on one's deathbed, the settling of affairs, debts, confession of wrongdoings, and making sure of the prosperity of one's heirs. The presence of the sword involved in the father's wrongdoings subsequently harming the son is also telling as to the effects such actions were believed to have on the family and community itself. It additionally insinuated a rather darker tint to the whole apparition than a mere post-mortem alteration and manipulation of the will. As it

[53] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 401.

were, the debts he mentioned seemed to have remained hidden until he came and declared them to exist. The liminal presence left additional instructions for his widow, which he emphasizes with an 'If she does not comply remind her that I will see her personally', which in itself is quite the threat. *Avon* also added in a deadline; he wished everything to be settled by the first anniversary of his death.

The matter with the sword is revealed when Goddard and William Avon, his brother-in-law, take it to the copse of trees mentioned. Goddard is the only one to see his father-in-law, though this may have been due to the stubbornness of William who invokes the Lord to be exempt of the vision. However, this did not stop William hearing a second voice conversing with Goddard. Either way the presence bade Goddard to follow him with the sword. At this point a mastiff dog made its appearance next to the presence. Indicating in turn a certain spot on the ground, the presence states that he had buried there the body of a man he killed in 1635. Upon hearing this Goddard invokes the presence as to the reason for this murder, which is provided:

> '*I took Money from the Man, and he contended with me, and so I murdered him.* Then Goddard askt him, who was Confederate with him in the said Murder? And it said, *None but my self.* Then Goddard said, *What would you have me do in this thing?* And the Apparition said, *This is that the World may know that I murdered a Man, and buried him in this place, in the year 1635.*'[54]

Goddard's questions and his subsequent confusion as to what to do with the information he has been given is not surprising when the previous apparitions are taken into account. Most such apparitions seem to have the purpose of bringing about a sort of justice, whereas here there were no others to prosecute. However, there is a secret to be revealed, a hidden death, and burial without rites to be exposed, and that is exactly the purpose of Avon's appearance. The unknown debts

[54] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 402-3.

to be repaid are properties that share the same fundamental concept. A thirty-nine-year timespan would seem to mitigate the necessity for exposure not at all. The Mastiff Dog that had appeared by the presence itself could additionally be read as the victim of said murder, connected to both the place of burial and the culprit of the crime itself, perhaps faded to the extent that communication is impossible. However, the lack of enough detail makes this unclear.

The late Mr. Avon is almost a perfect example of the liminal presence, reflected through the changes brought on by the Reformation, as far as his motivations and actions are of concern. The things he needed done are all secular, and communal in nature. Not once is the religious aspect of his crime taken into consideration, or even called a sin for that matter. Nor was his final destination or the fate of his soul mused upon. His motives are based firmly on the compensation of debts, his heirs, and coming clean about the murder he had committed. The religious aspect, pushed to the background, seems to be utilized only when invoking the presence, and then it is in the form of conjuration, influenced by magical perception as much as religion itself.

Avon, though special in the sense that he produces almost the perfect package of secular motivations, was not alone in making his crimes known; nor was this a new trait, as what else was postmortem confession and the seeking of postmortem absolution under the heavy influence of Purgatory and the purgatorial ideas. People, as hungry as they are for scandals today, seemed to have been eager to hear of these scandalous happenings then as well. This possibly is one of the reasons as to why the liminal presence and its visitations in the earthly realm and among the living were of such great interest to the people. Thus the liminal presence also surfaces in sensationalism. Their appearance is deemed worthy of pamphlets

containing wondrous, dreadful happenings that people seem to find endlessly interesting. Thus anecdotes were not limited to collections alone, and one of the methods of the introduction of the liminal presence and its appearance was through the printing and distribution of pamphlets.

One such pamphlet focuses on an anecdote that is reminiscent of the apparition of Thomas Goddard's father-in-law. The motivation behind the appearance of the liminal presence in this case seems to be its burden of guilt, its attachment to the life left behind is thus represented through its victims. The pamphlet dates the appearance of a Mrs. Adkins as 16 March 1679.[55] Mrs. Adkins seems to have been a respected midwife while alive, though the pamphlet seems to insinuate that she had some quirks that were misjudged as frivolous but may have been indicative of her true nature or what was to come. Sometime after her death, the date of which is not given, the following occurred:

> Since her Transmigration from the Regions of Mortality, a shape like hers, if not her Wandering Spirit, has Alarmed the House in *Middle Row* where she formerly lived, and noises have been heard, nocturnal Visions and Impetuous Groans have sounded out the dismal Ecchoes of some strange Event, but the spirit finding none that would or fare reply, at last began to be more importunate… would no longer keep concealed what was the cause of its disturbance.[56]

The author of the pamphlet makes sure to cover all bases by inserting the possibility that, while it is probably the dead midwife herself, it could as well be something that assumed the said shape. However, the narrative itself is consistent with the appearance and motivations of a liminal presence. Similarly, the location of the apparition, the dead woman's own house, would indicate the haunting of a familiar

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[55] *Great News from Middle-Row in Holbourn, or, A True Relation of a Dreadful Ghost which Appeared in the Shape of One Mrs. Adkins to Several Persons, but Especially to a Maid-Servant at the Adam and Eve, All in a Flame of Fire on Tuesday-Night Last, Being the 16th of This Instant March, 1679*. 1680. 1-4 Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 1403:18 http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:45585 Last Accessed 07.07.12

[56] *Great News from Middle-Row*, 2

space, as well as the very location of that which made it liminal as the narrative would later reveal. The presence, before making its main appearance, seems to display the properties of a poltergeist, and escalates only when no one conjures her or inquires as to the reasons for her return. On a Tuesday, March 16, at about nine o'clock in the evening — one just has to admire the precision — the liminal presence made itself felt to a servant maid, who had the misfortune of working and perhaps living in the dead midwife's house. The appearance of the liminal presence is frightful, a mirage of flames surround it, so much so that the maid believes the chamber to be on fire:

> The immortal spirit bid her not to fear, for its Commission was not to injure her, but charged her to tell *Mary* (which is since supposed to be her Grandchild) that she should take up two Tiles in the hearth, and under them should find a board and what she found beneath, that she bury, and so in a Flash of Lightning Vanished.[57]

The wording of the narrative is interesting, as the spirit indicates herself to be commissioned, presumably by God. Also of interest is that she does not state the exact nature of what is to be found beneath the hearth, though her appearance shrouded in fire seems a portent of rather bleak news, as is later confirmed. In the end what is found in the designated location are the bones of possibly two children, though definitely those of one, as the condition of the bones was not pristine:

> It is conjured that they had been Children Illegitimate, or Bastards who to save their Mothers Credit had been Murdered, and buried there, and in the Opinions of divers Chirurgions might have lain there since their first repose, a considerable quantity of years.[58]

The wording of the liminal presence would indicate that a proper burial of the infants was necessary, both for the rest of the infants, one would presume, as well as that of the liminal presence itself. The appearance of the presence enshrouded in flames

[57] *Great News from Middle-Row*, 3
[58] *Great News from Middle-Row,* 3

may suggest a connection to Purgatory or perhaps the more ominous and probable option of Hell. The house, home to the liminal presence in life, as well as the bones of the children, the very evidence of her wrongdoing, most probably functioned as the tethers that kept her liminal. Thus it was not only the secret murder that motivated the liminal presence's to return, but also the secret deed, the hidden action that, undisplayed to the community, worked as a hindrance towards the separation of the subject at the time of death and led to failed Rites of Passage. Thus the liminal presence fulfills its own role, personal and communal. Any musing on guilt and divine punishment is mulled over more in a secular communal context than the religious:

> For know, that Murther bears a lasting stain and clogs the Conscience of the Guilty Soul with the restless fears and jelosies which often make despairing Mortals unaccused by Man, betray themselves, or if not so, at least when Death, has closed their Eyes, and as the World imagines, they repose in a long slumber, till the deadful day of rendring Account, their restless Spirits forced about the Earth, do wander up and down until they have made known those Crimes.[59]

The perceived 'punishment' then is not divine or religious in nature but more of an exile, a wandering between worlds, belonging neither here nor there. The writer seems to be of a mind that even the condemned do not immediately go to Hell, but linger close to the living. The guilt of the dead in this case seems powerful enough to negate the possibility of rest and reintegration; the liminal presence is thus forced to return. However, this return, in this period, is generally not explicitly spelled out as being connected to the salvation of the soul of the dead but rather it is about crime, sins against the community, though as in most things there is a strict correlation between communal right and wrong and religious right and wrong. The emphasis does however seem to have slipped from the religious consequences of unconfessed

[59] *Great News from Middle-Row*, 4

sins, that is damnation, to the social duties and responsibilities the said sins disrupted. Some of these liminal presences clearly return to declare loud and clear their own crimes, thereby exposing themselves. The reactions of the living would indicate that with the sin exposed and expunged, reparations made, the criminal was most probably allowed back into the fold, reintegrated as one of the dead. However, the fate of the soul in the afterlife seems to have lost its place as the primary point of focus, even though one would guess that, once the dead are reintegrated, they could hardly still be perceived to be in dire straights in the afterlife. Religious consequences, at least in this context seem to have taken a step back in the face of their social counterpart. The secular and communal motivations of the liminal presence reflected the current society: "The dead were still functioning in society, were concerned with ongoing trivial social and familial problems."[60]

Such secular and communal concerns had come to be the very forces that motivated or stalled the liminal presence. The duties of the dying towards the community and family were one such motivation, and are thus very much present in almost all liminal entities that make their presence felt. These obligations towards the community varied, from personal wrongdoings previously un-righted, to injustices concerning inheritance and the securing of the heir's prospects, from simple revenge to the confession of crimes. Glanvill has several such Relations recorded within the pages of *Saducismus*, two of particular interest here. The first, Relation XV,[61] focuses on the Ghost of a man of Guilford whose sole purpose was to ensure the inheritance of his son, very much like the first example from Baxter. The man at the time of his death was in possession of a plot of land, which was to go to

[60] Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, 150.
[61] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 417-418. This Relation shares its basic properties with Relation XXVI though the presence there is a bit more forceful. Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 454-459.

his children or, if he lacked those, to his brother. The man having no children, the brother inherited the land. The widow, when asked by the brother whether she was with child, had answered that she thought not, which turned out to be a premature conclusion. Once she realized that she was indeed with child she went to the brother but was turned away and called a whore for her troubles. Much distressed, she left. The child turned out to be a son who grew to adulthood:

> Her Husband appeared, and bid her go to his Brother and demand the Field. Which she did, but was treated very ill by him. He told her, that neither she nor her Devil (for she had told him her Husband appeared, and bid her speak to him) should make him forego his Land.[62]

The brother is clearly set on refusing that it is the actual husband that is returning, and demonization is as convenient a tool as any. Once the husband realizes that a more direct intervention is necessary he appears to his brother, and scares him witless. The brother, at this rather vehement reminder that there is indeed something appearing, goes to the woman and tells her that she had set the devil on him, and she could have the land. The phrasing is important as the brother seems to still be convinced that it is not his late brother returning but a demon in his appearance. Additionally, the phrase can be read as an accusation of witchcraft, perhaps a counter-move of the brother, so as to neutralize the effect of a dead relative appearing and accusing him of wrongfully claiming the land.

Perhaps due to the first reading of the anecdote of the Witch of Endor, the relationship between witches and the dead was perceived to be a close one. Witches were intricately connected most of the time to the demonization theory. However, as the actions of the brother would indicate, far from being two sides of a single coin, or belief as it were, rather than the witch and the ghost being inseparable,[63] the

[62] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 417.
[63] Gillian Bennett, "Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Folklore* 97, no.1 (1986): 3.

witch's presence is threatening to that of the dead. Where the witch came in the liminal dead lost their identity, their personality, becoming something less. The very existence of the witch endangered the identity of the liminal presence, as well as its existence as an independent entity with its own common belief. The liminal presence is read as a mere tool, a weapon in the hands of the witch. The motivations, nature and properties of the liminal presence become secondary to the malediction of the witch. It was probably in this development that the accusation of the brother had its basis. However, it remains a mere accusation, as in the end the brother conceded and handed over the field, thereby allowing the liminal presence to fulfill its duty to its heir, and ensuring the correct flow of inheritance, and the future of its family.

The anecdote of Mrs. Bretton, Relation XVI *Saducismus*, [64] is more concerned with the righting of a wrong done in the deceased's name than anything else. The name of a person, their name and reputation within the community seems to be almost as important as the other motivations that guided the liminal presence. However, this should not come as a surprise, as the name of the deceased can also be perceived as an inheritance of sorts, the assurance that the standing of the deceased is whole even after death. Mrs. Bretton's particular concern was about a bit of land that should have gone to the poor. She appeared to her old servant, at night, when the latter was alone rocking her infant to sleep. She answered the knocking at the door and came face to face with a lady who looked remarkably like her old mistress: "Were not my Mistress dead, I should not question that you are she. She replied. I am the same that was your Mistress, and took her by the hand. Which Alice affirmed was as cold as a Clod."[65]

[64] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 419-421.
[65] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 419.

It is clear that until the presence speaks the servant was convinced that the likeness was a mere coincidence and she was facing a live person rather than a dead one. As such the appearance of the lady must have displayed none of the ghastliness of some of the narratives given earlier. This may be due to the fact that she was not a victim of violence. The only evidence of death is her temperature. Also note that she is physically present enough to touch the servant. However, it seems that the servant was the only one she could interact with in this way. The presence had been unable to garner the attention of her husband:

> [She] had several times been in his Chamber, but he was still asleep, nor had she power to do more than once uncover his Feet, towards the awakening of him. And the Doctor said, that he had heard walking in his Chamber in the Night, which, till now, he could give no account of.[66]

Mrs. Bretton seems to have been limited in her interaction with her husband to actions that would normally be perceived to be properties of a poltergeist. Her attempts at waking him let alone communication were futile. Thus it was up to Alice to fulfill the wishes of her late mistress. Going out for a stroll the two came upon the plot of land in question where the presence measured a section and indicated that this land had belonged to the poor and had been wrongfully gained. She asked Alice to go to her brother and tell him it was her wish that it be returned. The presence indicates that this wrongful deed was not a fault of her brother's but her father's and that it had been done with her name on some documents, which seems to be the main reason for her presence. The lady imparted a secret to the servant so that she could prove to her brother that it was indeed Mrs. Bretton who had done the appearing. Once the presence had convinced Alice to help, the two women did something rather less common. They sat down and talked the night away. From this it would seem that

[66] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 419.

Mrs. Bretton was much more rounded in her appearance and personality than most presences represented in anecdotes.

This usage of the token to identify the presence seems to have become quite accustomed in such apparition stories, perhaps brought about by the demonization theory, and the resultant doubt that it is indeed the dead person doing the appearing. The abolition of Purgatory thus seems to have left some issues of trust where the relations between the living and the dead are concerned. The token is both used in convincing the percipient that the presence is indeed who they say they are, but also and mainly utilized by the presence to assure that the go-between, that is the percipient, can convince the main target. This also raises the issue that while indeed the percipient is almost always a person familiar or connected in some way either to the deceased, the family of the deceased or the problem, it is less frequently the actual person for whom the message was meant for, creating the necessity for the token.

To return to the story, the brother, unbelieving, laughed, but only until the secret was mentioned. Then he was all business. The land was indeed handed over and Mrs. Bretton presumably satisfied. One interesting point would be that Mrs. Bretton's father, the indicated wrongdoer of the anecdote, similar to the brother of the Guilford case, refuses to acknowledge that it was his daughter that had appeared but the Devil. There seems to be the hint of a trend here; those rather unhappy about the news seem to prefer the perception that it was the devil's manipulations rather than the return of the deceased. As such they are in all probability rejecting any responsibility or guilt.

Another interesting point would be that women seem to be much more active in this period as liminal presences, be they murderers, murder victims, old ladies

making sure that everything is as it should be, or rather dangerous, vengeful presences taking on poltergeist like properties as did the wicked second wife in Bovet's Fourth Relation as recounted above. They are very much present. A female presence was a rare happening under the reign of purgatory, visible mostly among the purgatorial dead, and almost unheard of in the revenant incarnation unless there was outside influence on the lore.[67] This new abundance in female presences may have been due to the change in motivations; the female dead were as invested in the communal and secular affairs as their male counterparts. Regardless of the specific reasons for such a proliferation, which undoubtedly are intricately connected to the changes within the community and the society, it is certain that it surfaced during the Reformation and thus must have been influenced by the changes wrought through it.

The above wicked second wife, however, is special even among the female population as her actions and disposition are very close to that of the late revenant. In this sense the second wife is a presence one must take notice of, as she is quite unlike the other female liminal presences recounted here: the murder victims whose actions and attacks are rooted in a set necessity to remedy their failed Rites of Passage and the attaining of reintegration. The second wife presents no such properties; she seems to be literally drowned in her own liminality, with no intention or capability to communicate and remedy her situation. She is ruled by the baser emotions, as was the case with the liminal presence of Van Gennep's schema, which was the foundation of the dangerous revenants. She could thus perhaps be identified as a throwback to the revenant incarnation.

Another female liminal presence, recorded by Aubrey, displayed some similar properties to the wicked second wife, but was also notable for travelling long

[67] Fairies, as evidenced in Map's anecdote of the dead woman pulled out of a fairy dance by her husband who then lived on to bear him children. Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 160-161 and 344-345.

distances abroad. She seemed to have attached herself to the source of her ire, predictably a man. She was also special due to the way she had died.[68] A Sir John Burroughes was sent to the emperor as an envoy by King Charles I, which dates the story to early or mid seventeenth century. He took with him his son Caisho for experience's sake. The young man left alone in Florence had an affair with a courtesan, the mistress of the Duke, which soon ceased to be a secret, in turn prompting the Duke to plan for the removal of the young man. Caisho was warned and made his escape. However, he left behind one very slighted lady, who, rebuked by the Duke, and seemingly quite in love with Caisho, killed herself. This lady is literally the first suicide victim that this study has come across that made her return among the living and as such must be treated with the respect she is due:

> At the same moment that she expired, she did appear to Caisho, at his lodgings in London; Colonel Remes was then in bed with him, who saw her as well as he; giving him an account of her resentments of his ingratitude to her, in leaving her so suddenly, and exposing her to the fury of the Duke, not omitting her own tragical exit, adding withal, that he should be slain in a duel, which accordingly happened.[69]

While it appears to be a mere severing of ties, an emotional farewell perhaps, the lady is not appeased. She continued to appear to and pester the young man until the day he died. As such one would assume that, with the way she had died, that the young man was lucky indeed, as though scared out of his wits, he was not harmed in any physical way. This may have been due to the gender of the liminal presence, as the suicide had at all times been perceived as the most dangerous of deaths, though the violence exhibited by the wicked second wife would argue against such discrimination. Either way, the Florentine lady seems to have been more focused on psychological warfare than anything else, and successful she was:

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[68] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects*, 35-36.
[69] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects*, 35.

> As often as she did appear, he would cry out with great shrieking, and trembling of his body, as anguish of mind, saying, I God! Here she comes, she comes and at this rate she appeared till he was killed; she appeared to him the morning before he was killed.[70]

All in all, the anecdote seems to have been common knowledge as it, according to Aubrey, garnered the attention of the King, who sought to find out about the authenticity of the story.[71] One could argue that this particular presence was not concerned with reintegration, only perhaps, as an anthropological view would suggest, motivated by the desire to take her target along with her, her very attachment in life and cause of her death. Almost needless to say, after the psychological torture imposed by the woman, Caisho would indeed die in a duel.

In Relation XXVII of the *Saducismus Triumphatus*, a letter by a Thomas Alcock, David Hunter also has a rather unpleasant experience with a dead female presence, though in his defense he does not even know her.[72] An old woman appeared to him at night. Her appearance is enough to make him run back into his house, but she is nothing if not dogged. She continues to appear to him for almost three quarters of a year. It is not until one day on the highway, a familiar turn of events, she appears once again to him and he, at his wits end, cries out.

> *Lord bless me, would I was dead; shall I never be delivered from this misery?* At which *And the Lord bless me too,* says she: *It was very happy you spake first, for till then I had no power to speak. Though I have followed you for so long. My name,* says she, *is Margaret.*[73]

Her last name is sadly redacted. However, this introductory speech verifies most of the suppositions made earlier. This particular liminal presence, like so many others, indeed needs to be invoked so as to state its business. The invocation has also a more disturbing side effect as Hunter will later discover. After the quite long period of

[70] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects*, 35.
[71] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects*, 35-36.
[72] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 459-461.
[73] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 460.

exposure to one another the presence herself seems relieved to at last be able to get on with her business. As she now said, she needed Hunter to take the first step. Her wishes are consistent with the lore; she wished her elder son to pay off her debt with the 28 shillings she had buried under the hearth, as well as the charges of her funeral left unpaid. She additionally wants Hunter to warn her other son that he should fix his ways or woe to him. Hunter however seems to be stuck on another point. He states that he did not know her at all, almost as if this fact should have been enough to emancipate him from both her presence and the errands she would press on him. The presence replied that yes, indeed he did not know her, but he was the messenger she would use, and if he did comply she would never harm him:

> But he deferred doing as the Apparition bid him, and she appeared the night after as he lay in Bed, and struck him on the shoulder very hard; at which he cryed out, and askt her if she did not promise she would not hurt him? She said, that was if he did her Message; if not, she would kill him.[74]

With all her rather more cheerful countenance, her patience seems to be limited, as was her goodwill towards the man. His invoking her seems to have had the additional effect of giving her power over him, as implied by the previous period of several months of association lacking any such violence; until then it was more psychological pressure than anything else.

As long as he complied with her wishes she remained amiable and once the tasks were completed she even asked for a hand up while leaving and disappeared in music. This particular anecdote seems to bring together the liminal aspects as well as the motivations of the presence to the fore. The liminal presence once engaged is a dangerous entity to meddle with, but it seems that ignoring it is not an option either. While Lavatar in his *Of Ghostes* firmly stated, "Aske them not who they are, or why

[74] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 460.

they have presented them selves to bee seene or hearde",[75] it is clearly easier said than done. Lavater clearly wanted to seal and limit contact between the percipient and the apparition, though with all the conjuring going on right and left this seems to be a futile attempt. Hunter himself had given in after a quarter of a year of co-existence. The old woman, in the scarcity of anyone familiar to her seems to have latched on to Hunter at random, but it does seem that Hunter was in a position to give her what she wants, which must have been the main concern. Her motivations, as with all liminal presences in this period, are secular and communal, concerned with the payment of debts and family members. Except for some well placed music there is no indication at all as to the destination of the presence once her wishes are fulfilled.

None of the liminal entities presented herein are doubted in their existence, or even mostly in their nature as liminal presences, the returning dead. While indeed difficult to classify into a single incarnation, except under the rather broad and ambiguous title of 'ghost,' it is undeniable that these liminal presences display common properties that had long since identified the liminal presence. These common properties had similarly been altered through the Reformation. These properties varied from the appearances of the presences, to their motives and actions, and as such are enough to identify a liminal presence. Those that recorded these anecdotes did so while believing in their authenticity and that these anecdotes implied certain things about the shape and structure of the world, the community. More in his Postscript in *Sadicismus* writes: "That they have a Power of appearing in their own personal shapes to whom there is occasion, as *Anne Walker's* Soul did to

[75] *Lewes Lavater: Of Ghosts and Spirits Walking By Night 1572*, 196.

the Miller; and that this being a faculty of theirs either natural or acquirable, the doing so is no miracle."[76]

The Reformation, even though it was rather less successful in denying the existence of the dead within the community and the return of the liminal presence, had indeed succeeded to a considerable extent in the separation of religion from the affairs and relations between the living and the dead. This removal of religion, however, did not destroy any of the foundations of the pathways laid down by the purgatorial ideas, though it did inadvertently reshape the image of the liminal dead within the community, and thereby emancipate the liminal dead from the partial hold of religion. The general tendency of the motivations of the liminal presences migrated towards the personal, communal and secular, the logical, understandable and attainable.

These presences were becoming warning signs as to how one should prepare oneself, how one should act within the community, the extent of one's responsibilities and connections to the community. As such, these liminal presences have also been identified as social agents the main function of which was to control and stabilize the social behavior of the living. The liminal presence appeared "to rectify some existing social arrangement, to restore ill-gotten goods, or denounce an undetected evil-doer. This was the kind of apparition most commonly reported after the Reformation."[77] This reading however should not blind one to the rather ambiguous nature and motivations of the liminal presence; they were after all presences to be approached with caution and a healthy dose of fear. The emphasis was more on the dead than the living where the significance of their motivations and the changes they wrought within the community are concerned. This, however, does

[76] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 48.
[77] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 713.

not change the fact that in most cases what was desirable and necessary for the reintegration of the liminal presence, and its peaceful rest, was usually paralleled by what was perceived as necessary for the stability of the community. Every single one of these motivations are connected to the properties perceived to be necessary in ensuring a good death, successful Rites of Passage and thus a settled place among the rank of the dead of the community; the sleepers. Through the long lasting effects of first the purgatorial ideas, and then the counter balancing of the Reformation, slowly but surely the liminal presence and its perception by the living was irrevocably altered. The resultant presence would become the foundation of modern ghost lore with its 'unfinished business,' a clear reflection of the personal, secular and communal motivations displayed by the liminal presence in the Reformation period.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Rites of Passage, at the level of a concept, has existed within human society for a long time, as it takes its foundations out of the very human conditions that support and carry the community and society itself. Van Gennep's tripartite schema of the Rites of Passage, the mapping of the transition of the member of the society from one status and group within the society into another is invaluable in simplifying and allowing one to grasp and perceive the existence of the Rites of Passage within various societies as well as various periods. Dealing with the example of Medieval and Reformation Britain demonstrates this well.

The stages of separation, transition and reintegration that make up the Rites of Passage, according to Van Gennep, especially in case of the passage that was death thus provide an interesting insight to both common belief and the people that make up the society and community itself. Death, a transition that was more of a journey than an end in this period, allows the perception of another dimension to the society, one that to the modern mind is awkward to imagine. The presence of the dead within the society was due to the very existence of the Rites of Passage. Their presence was not a disruption, but, in their proper place, a completion. These Rites

existed to ensure the continued peace and tranquility of the community in overcoming the loss of one of its members, a loss that is transformed into the addition of the member in another capacity back into the community, as one of the community's dead. The disruption when it did indeed surface was similarly intricately connected to the Rites of Passage, or rather their failure. The liminal presence, which came into existence when the subject of the Rites of Passage failed to complete any of the three stages of the Rites, was an entity that represented to the community something that was inherently wrong; outside of the natural order.

In death, the liminal presences that returned, the returning dead, were an essential by-product of failed Rites of Passage, the in-between presence, a source of horror and dismay, not only for the fate of the individual in question but for the whole community. Within history the liminal presence took many shapes, some of which have been given in this study. Of all these shapes the most natural one, one that reflected the consequences of failed Rites of Passage almost exactly, was the revenant. This incarnation of the liminal presence can thus be perceived as perhaps the purest. The dual existence of the liminal presence is reflected through the very nature of the revenant. Returning to the earthly realm in their very own corpses, these dead were on the surface neither alive nor dead, refusing to stay put in their graves. This duality, however, was not limited to the presence of the corpse alone. As these dead were not loved ones returned, their return was not something to be cherished. They were walking corpses wearing familiar faces. They tended to attack those that had been closest to them in life, an abomination, as it were, to the relatively smooth continuity that the Rites of Passage had the potential of providing to the community.

The community, faced with this deviation from the proper path, did not have the means to reintegrate the liminal presence into the community. What it did in turn was to exile it, to remove it completely from any position that could affect the community. The revenant caught, was dismembered or burned, the body completely destroyed. This rather harsh custom was primarily the instinct of survival, the attempt to protect the status quo on the part of the community. The subject, once stuck as a liminal presence, had no prospect for reintegration. The pure incarnation of the revenant, a clear reflection of the liminal, unadulterated and simple in its actions and nature, thus spread fear and caution within the members of the community, whose only available code of action in the face of the revenant was the destruction of the body and through it the presence.

This rather hopeless picture, however, would be altered by a very simple perception, that perhaps there could be the possibility for post-mortem intervention, that the dead and their condition could perhaps be influenced by the living. The effect of the purgatorial ideas and the religious perception of the afterlife and the fate of the human soul opened a possibility of reintegration. The liminal presence was thus bestowed with reason and motive. Post-mortem intervention and the resultant possibility of reintegration for the liminal presence became the main reason for the appearances. The liminal presence, through the purgatorial ideas, had come to be armed with communication and, if necessary, persuasion of a rather harsher sort, to attain its goals, which due to the content of the purgatorial ideas were mostly religious in nature.

The idea of postmortem intervention opened a door for the liminal presence that had previously been firmly closed: the idea that reintegration could be possible, that postmortem separation could allow the liminal presence to be reintegrated into

the community as one of its dead. The liminal presences that are recorded after the wave of effect caused by the purgatorial ideas, and the resultant conception of Purgatory as a place in the afterlife, display radical differences in comparison to the revenant. Where the revenant was almost always a force of destruction, with no particular aim but to wreak havoc among the living, the liminal presence affected by the purgatorial ideas displays the capacity to communicate and convey its motivations. These motivations, previously non-existent, became the pivotal point of these apparitions. These presences sought separation and the opportunity for reintegration. A side effect however was that all such communication and motivation, due to the heavy effect of the purgatorial ideas and Purgatory itself, was religiously oriented. Any postmortem intervention on the part of the living was possible through the Church, through religious practice. These liminal presences seemed to seek masses, the opportunity to confess and attain absolution. It was through these religious practices that the separation stage could be completed postmortem, with the hope that the liminal presence could be reintegrated into the community as one of the dead.

The Church, eager to use such an opportunity to interact with and influence the community, made prompt use of the perception that the dead could return among the living to seek help. However, the existing liminal presence could only act as a prototype; in most aspects its nature was too ingrained and dangerous to make it properly usable. The artificial purgatorial stencil and the resultant purgatorial dead of Church preaching, thus allowed the liminal presence to keep its personality, identity, emotion, and even crimes, through the failed Rites of Passage. Purgatory, if not as a place itself, in the conception of the very ideas that would form its foundation, had thus bestowed upon the liminal presence its identity and faculties and covered its

base liminal qualities with a certain tameness, which was not always enough to muffle all the sharp edges that came with dealings with a liminal presence. The reign of Purgatory, however, that had allowed the liminal presence to attain its reason and motives, and that had bestowed upon it a way towards reintegration, albeit through the religious rather than the social, was rather short lived.

It would be the Reformation, another great change in the religious practices of the Church and the people that would again shake the liminal presence, so much so that most of its religious trappings that had been added on by the effects of the purgatorial ideas would come loose and fall off. The most important and basic alteration made by the purgatorial ideas however, that it could communicate and have reasonable motivations for its appearance, would remain and in a sense support the continued existence of the liminal presence through the rather turbulent waters of religious change and the rather cold shoulder that the Church turned towards the dead in general.

The liminal presence would thus change once again through the Reformation. The abolition of Purgatory and the de-ritualization of the Church with its wide-ranging effects on the dead in general, the liminal presence in particular and the Rites of Passage that surrounded death, caused the liminal presence to alter its shape once more, though not exactly as planned: "The Reformation failed to eradicate a widely held belief in the possibility of the dead seeking communication with the living."[1]

The Reformation in this sense had not thrown open the doors of the prison that was Purgatory; instead it downright demolished the prison, bringing home the dead, to sleep and co-exist with the community, in their own place. This reading of

[1] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 261.

the Reformation may contrast greatly with the argument that the Reformation had removed the dead as an age group in the society. From a theological point of view that statement may well be true. However, the common belief seemed to indicate that the dead, in the perception, memories, duties and geography of the town of the living, were still clearly felt as a presence. As such, one should perhaps argue that the dead were still very much in existence within the community, either slumbering away peacefully as the reintegrated dead or intrusive as the liminal presence. The Rites of Passage that surrounded death were still as valid as ever, even after going through the storm of the Reformation. They merely adapted themselves to the changing circumstances as well as to the tools available in the shape of religious rituals.

Through the Reformation one could argue that the Rites of Passage were freed from the crutch of religion previously provided through the Church. And while this abandonment was initiated and enforced by the Church itself, the end result was perhaps a purer and more focused rendering of the Rites of Passage that surrounded death. The secular and communal focus of the Rites called for the relations between the living and the dead to be depicted in a more open and straightforward manner, and this general attitude was similarly reflected on to the liminal presence, which inherently was always connected and influenced by the changes the Rites of Passage underwent.

In no anecdote recounted above in the Reformation section is there mention that any prayers or religious practice is necessary to reintegrate the liminal presence. From this point of view the Reformation was certainly successful in its removal of the religious from the affairs of the dead, and the liminal dead. However, the fact remains that the dead continued to return; the liminal presence was a formidable

entity and it continued to employ the help of the living, communicating and demanding. As such the actual effects that the purgatorial ideas had had on the liminal presence, the perception that postmortem reintegration was possible, that the liminal presence had enough reason to be understood and helped by the living, that it could and indeed did communicate its motivations to the living to attain postmortem intervention and thus reintegration, remained very much in effect. The purgatorial ideas created a much more porous relation between the living and the dead of the community; the borders between them were not as clearly drawn and protected anymore.

The Reformation stripped these interactions to their very foundations, removing the religious properties that had heretofore, through the presence of Purgatory, dominated the relations between the living and the dead. The liminal presence, when it retained enough mind, was able to attain its wishes, and when it did not, it was perceived to be lost to its own liminality, becoming one of the many poltergeists that had no identity or personality to speak of, merely wreaking havoc where they could. As such a return to the revenant incarnation did not happen, and this would emphasize the effect the purgatorial ideas had had on the liminal presence, and the community's perception of the liminal dead. Thus both the purgatorial ideas as well as the Reformation period brought on changes that were irrevocable and carved into the very being of the liminal presence, altering it to a great extent.

With the Reformation however, a subtype of liminal presence, the poltergeist, also became more common. It came down on the complete opposite side of the spectrum where its properties where concerned. These particular liminal presences, the poltergeists, were generally uncommunicative, impossible to reason with,

disruptive, hostile and at times violent. Although they were generally invisible their physical manifestations and attacks on people were quite tangible. These poltergeists can perhaps be argued to be a throwback to the original revenant lore. However, their ambiguous nature, with their lack of identity, reason and individuality, also allowed for Reformation theology to catch up to them, causing them to be identified varyingly as the dead, demons, spirits, or maledictions of witches. It was the last one that robbed these presences further of their identities, as they came to be identified mostly as mere tools in the hands of the witches. However, their existence calls for further research as to the effects of the Reformation on this specific manifestation of the liminal presence.

Poltergeists apart, the liminal presence in general, once assimilated into religion through the purgatorial ideas, had both gained and lost part of its identity. It could no longer exist as the rampaging revenant; the possibility of postmortem intervention for the sake of reintegration had allowed it to change. The purgatorial ideas had thus to a certain extent tamed the liminal presence, though not so much as to turn the liminal presence itself into the stenciled purgatorial dead of Church preachers. Once the liminal presence was disowned by religion through the Reformation, the strong effects of the earlier assimilation make themselves felt even more, as the liminal presence does not revert back to its previous incarnation; instead it is once again transformed. The resultant liminal presence is neither the revenant, nor the presence narrated within the Byland Abbey anecdotes. It is a new creature that would usurp the category of the ghost for its own uses.

The one thing that remained unaltered was the foundation of the Rites of Passage that surrounded death. Van Gennep's tripartite schema holds firm under all the changes wrought by first the purgatorial ideas and then the Reformation: the

separation, liminality and reintegration of the subject within the community under its new identity, or alternatively the consequences of failed Rites, the liminal presence. The liminal presence is shaped beyond anything else through the Rites of Passage, a concept the universality of which is confirmed here.

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