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Title: The British media's portrayal of Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon deviant burials with emphasis on the vampire myth

Date: 2013

Originally published as: University of Chester MA dissertation

Example citation: Guilliano, S. (2013). *The British media's portrayal of Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon deviant burials with emphasis on the vampire myth*. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Chester, United Kingdom.

Version of item: Submitted version

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/322682>

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

**THE BRITISH MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL
OF ROMANO-BRITISH AND ANGLO-
SAXON DEVIANT BURIALS WITH
EMPHASIS ON THE VAMPIRE MYTH**

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2012-2013

Word Count: 17, 272

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Howard Williams for guiding me and giving me the best possible advice over the past few years and throughout the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank the handful of very good friends in my life for keeping me motivated and going out of their way to make the last couple of months as stress-free as possible. And finally, I would like to thank my mother and father for supporting me throughout my entire academic life up to this point and encouraging me to do what makes me happy.

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Chapter 1

Aims

The aim of this thesis is to discuss and investigate how the British online media portrays discoveries of deviant burials, particularly decapitation burials from Roman Britain, early Anglo-Saxon and late Anglo-Saxon periods, as well as some recent Eastern European discoveries. An investigation into how the media portray deviant burials and whether they are quicker to call deviant or decapitated burials ‘vampire burials’ in Eastern European examples due to their history of vampire folklore will also take place.

Finally, comments made by the public on these online news stories will be analysed in order to understand how society is reacting and viewing these stories within their wider context. The main focus will be on decapitation burials suggested to be ‘vampire’ burials, or burials used solely for the purpose of burying those who were feared would return as vampires once deceased. Some of the Romano-British burials discussed in this thesis have been dismissed as being war graves and thus an investigation into why these are being dismissed as such while other mass deviant cemeteries are not will also take place in chapter 6.

Literature Survey

Roman and Anglo-Saxon mortuary practices have shed light on the changing attitudes and practices towards the dead in the first millennium AD. The changes that came after the Roman invasion included the addition of Mediterranean styles of funerary practice which intermingled with the already present indigenous practices. The spread of Christianity in the

third and fourth centuries brought about more changes in funerary practices. From the seventh-century, the process of state formation saw the beginnings of separate execution cemeteries, while the conversion to Christianity led to distinctions between burial in consecrated grounds for Christians and burial in un-consecrated grounds for non-Christians and felons (Buckberry & Hadley, 2007, 324). Within this diversity, many new discoveries have been widely reported in the media, frequently focusing on the unusual, deviant burials. The media appears to be significantly more interested in Roman and Anglo-Saxon graves that are seen to be unusual, a reason for this may be that the general public is more interested in archaeology that exhibits themes they are not used to, or rather, the unknown, such as unusual burials. However, it has also been suggested by Holtorf in 2005 that people are also interested in archaeology that they can relate to, which could explain the immediate interest when vampires are mentioned by the media, as they are commonly known about throughout the world thanks to the spread of Eastern-European folklore and Western cinema and writings from the 1920's onwards. The media will therefore be more likely to report on archaeological stories that will appeal to the public, which is why these types of stories have been chosen for this thesis in order to determine how these stories are being portrayed for the public.

Methodology

Data Collection

For this thesis, I have used a range of news stories from various British online news websites dating from 2006 to 2013. Their titles, along with the images used and the language within the body of the story have been analysed. Each story will be compared and contrasted, for example a typical tabloid newspaper, such as the *Mail Online*, will be compared with a

typical broadsheet newspaper like *The Guardian*. The reputations of each newspaper have also been considered when choosing which ones to include; newspapers known for being more intellectual have been chosen alongside newspapers notorious for exaggerating the truth. In order to obtain the largest possible range of information from the media and the public, many different types of online media have been selected; media websites that are purely online and media websites that spawned from a physical newspaper have been used. The comments made by the public will also be analysed and used to show how the public are reacting and relating to such news stories. News stories will be analysed chronologically, with Roman burials being discussed first, and Anglo-Saxon burials being discussed last. Geographically, Britain will be discussed first whilst Eastern European burials will be discussed last.

Data Analysis

Analysis will take place in the form of written analysis using the information obtained from the news websites and comments. Analysis will also take place in the form of tables depicting the frequency of certain words or phrases being used by both the news website and the public in order to gain an understanding of how the public view deviant/decapitation burials within the context of vampirism and how the media are portraying such burials.

Pitfalls

This thesis will only be discussing the news stories created by the British media. In order to obtain a larger understanding of the public attitude towards deviant burial stories, a much larger investigation must take place. Only a British sample is being used here as British online news websites are easier to access than foreign websites, as well as easier to understand. Also, some online newspapers in the UK are behind a subscription pay-wall; these newspapers behind a pay-wall have not been used in this thesis.

Existing Literature

The media plays a large part in archaeology, now more than ever with the emergence of smart phones, tablets and online newspapers. The way the media portrays archaeological stories has already been discussed by a number of academics in order to gather how both professions work together to provide the most accurate and best possible news story.

Discussions on archaeology and the media have mostly been reserved to discussing television and physical newspapers with the main topic being the mistrust of newspapers.

The mistrust of the media within archaeology has been discussed extensively. Brittain & Clack dedicate a section to this in their 2007 book *Archaeology and the Media*; ‘the susceptibility to inaccuracy or blatant misrepresentation remains a common matter of anxiety and mistrust towards media journalism’ (p. 23). This mistrust appears to stem from a number of bad experiences; Brittain & Clack describe this as ‘most archaeologists who have had contact with journalists will have a tale to recount of an occasion of inaccurate reportage to varying degrees’ (p. 23). A harsh editorial piece by Stoddart & Malone in 2001 is written against the media for the reasons described by Brittain & Clack. The opening line of the paper is ‘you must begin to extricate yourself from the media if you are going to exist as a respectable archaeologist’ (p. 459). This line sets the tone of the paper as a negative piece about television and newspapers, but why have archaeologists been so weary of the media? According to Stoddart & Malone this weariness is due to ‘outrages and mistakes’ (p. 459) in the past. They refer mainly to the relationship between archaeology and television media as does Brittain & Clack and Kulik (2006). According to Kulik (2006) the rise of British channels like *BBC2* and *Channel 4* ‘rebranded the image of their factual output by investing heavily in archaeological programmes’ (p. 75) and in an age where ‘information overload’ (p.

77) was and still is a very real thing, the media was tasked with portraying archaeology in a good light. As a result of this portrayal and increase in archaeological programming, there was a recorded rise in the number of archaeology students and visitors to archaeological sites (Kulik, 2006, 88). There appears to be conflicting ideas when it comes to the relationship between archaeology and the media, although it seems archaeologists are far more likely to praise television than newspapers.

Moving away from the mistrust of the media, which is frequently touched upon by academics, Holtorf discusses the relationship between archaeologists and newspapers in relation to the public in his 2007 book *Archaeology is a brand* where he suggests the public respond well to newspapers as they contain information that is relevant to what readers 'perceive to be close to them' (p. 47) and include information on 'what they already know' (p. 47). While keeping this in mind, there must be more work done using this information in order to see whether the public are attracted to things and themes they are familiar with in the media. We need to find out precisely how the public are responding to themes they are familiar with, for example vampire folklore explored in this thesis. Holtorf (2007) investigated the relationship between the public and the media using some research exploring the use of words in article titles like 'sensational', 'spectacular' and superlatives like 'first', 'rarest' and 'oldest' (p. 47). He suggests that use of words like these will draw in an audience because they create the perception that the story is relevant to the reader.

Other academics who have explored the relationship between archaeologists and newspapers are Stoddart & Malone (2001), agreeing that media 'visibility seems to be a way of getting ahead, and newspapers and the Web are a good way of finding it' (p. 459)

While these academics are writing about the relationship between media and archaeology, there is a significant lack of academics discussing archaeology and online

newspapers. A somewhat new medium of media, the online newspaper, is slowly becoming a fantastic and fast way of getting new discoveries seen however there has been no work on the subject so far. The emergence of online newspapers has yet to be explored in relation to archaeology but the significance of the online newspaper has been touched upon by Thiel (1998) and Allan (2006). Thiel suggests online newspapers are becoming their own niche, appealing to young, tech-savvy people (p. 1) and allowing people to directly view stories they might be interested in rather than ‘thumbing through’ numerous pages (p. 1). For Thiel, the interactivity of online newspapers, allowing readers to click and ‘revel in the gestalt of easy travel through words’ (p. 4) is one of the main reasons why the online newspaper has become so successful.

The way the public respond to burial archaeology has also been explored. In 2002, Hedley Swain’s article *The ethics of displaying human remains from British archaeological sites* explored the issue of museums displaying the dead to the public. He states that ‘skeletons help us, as do ancient clothing, homes etc, to help us empathise with the past people’ (p. 99); it is only when the skeleton has a name or living family members when it becomes taboo to display and view them. Swain again discusses this issue in his 2007 paper *The Value of Human Remains in Museum Collections* where he concludes that human remains are valued by society, but ‘these values are multiple and distinct to different people and communities at different times’ (p. 196). The discussion on how the public react to burials is still being reviewed by academics due to an increase in mass graves being found and the issues raised with museums about displaying the dead. The public are attracted to ‘the uncanny’ as Moshenska in 2006 (p. 91) says. He argues that this attraction is mediated by popular culture and is causing alienation between the public and burial archaeology (p. 91). The role that the ancient dead have in modern society has been explored by Duncan Sayer in his 2010 paper titled *Who’s afraid of the dead? Archaeology, modernity and the death taboo*.

He discusses the fact that death and dying in our modern society is much more of a taboo subject, 'grief has become private, but mourning still takes place in a public arena' (p. 481). He also explores the fact that we are faced with our own immortality when we are able to view the dead since there are many ways to 'prevent or postpone death to old age' (p.482). Sayer suggests that 'modernity has made the challenge of timing death more urgent' (p. 483). When we face our own immortality and have an opportunity to view the dead in museums, we become far more interested and our morbid curiosity takes over.

Duncan Sayer also explored how the public react to dead bodies in museums in his 2009 paper *Is there a crisis facing British burial archaeology?* He outlines a study by Cambridge Archaeology that recorded public awareness of archaeological research; '88 per cent of those who responded believe that skeletons should be kept for future research' (p. 201). He recognises that archaeologists themselves become attached to skeletons they excavate 'often giving a name to the skeleton they spent several hours revealing, cleaning and recording' (p. 202). So not only does the public feel drawn to displays of the dead, but archaeologists too form a strange bond with the deceased.

The vampire and its associated folklore have been explored by historians and archaeologists in the past, by Matthew Beresford in his 2008 book *From Demons to Dracula* which gives a detailed account of the origins of the vampire and how the folklore spread into modern society and by John Blair who in 2009 explored *The dangerous dead in early medieval England* with emphasis on the spread of vampire superstitions from Eastern Europe into medieval England. The public are interested in sites and artefacts that are unknown, or surrounded by mystery, Moshenka in 2006 explored the 'archaeological uncanny' where members of the public are 'simultaneously attracted to and alienated by the uncanny in archaeology' (p. 91). He sets out to explore what the public find so appealing about archaeology, as Holtorf did before him in 2005. More importantly, archaeologists such as

Moshenka have set out to determine why the public find ‘archaeo-appeal’ in burials and dead bodies. Moshenka goes on to say ‘Archaeology brings dead people, dead places and dead things into the world of the living; a potentially fascinating, discomfoting and uncanny process’ (p. 98)

Cornelius Holtorf is one of the most prominent archaeologists to have discussed how the public respond to these popular themes in archaeology. In his 2005 book, *From Stonehenge to Las Vegas*, he goes into the role archaeology plays in popular culture describing it as ‘what they [the public] find appealing or interesting’ (p. 8). Holtorf uses the word ‘archaeo-appeal’ (p. 150) to describe the way archaeologists provide exciting experiences and scenarios for the public.

Taking into account the research that has so far been done on these subjects, there is no work so far documenting how the online media portray news stories on deviant burials in particular, particularly those dealing with vampire folklore or stereotypes. In order to move forward within the research of the media and its role within burial archaeology, this research must take place.

In this thesis Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon case studies will be used as background data in order to explore the topic of this thesis. English examples have been used for both Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon cases with the use of Eastern-European examples of deviant burials used as a comparison tool.

Chapter 2

Romano-British Burial

In order to discuss deviant Romano-British burials and their place within the British media, we must first discuss the most common methods of burial from this period. After this is done, a discussion on deviant burials can take place and these deviant burials can be placed in their wider context of regular burials, and therefore their uniqueness and deviance can be discussed.

Roman Britain, in its early days and most often in the south-east, still practiced cremation as a common burial method. Even through an influx of immigrants, merchants, the Roman army and Roman administration, cremation was practiced continuously regardless of difference in culture or race (Philpott, 1991). In the mid-2nd century, there was a gradual movement away from cremation towards inhumation, however in smaller towns and areas where Roman involvement was at a minimum, inhumation continued unaffected (Philpott, 1991).

In the south-east late Iron-Age cremations were broken up by sporadic inhumations which were not in crouched posture. Crouched posture was most common in areas outside the south-east, however the few early inhumations we do see represent ‘the continuation into the Roman period of a sporadic Iron-Age rite of inhumation among the rural native population’ (Philpott, 1991, 57). By the late second-century we see an increased use of coffins in places such as Worth Matravers and Poundbury in Dorset.

Here, burial furnishing will not be discussed in detail as there is only an interest in the burial methods themselves and body positions of inhumations. Grave furnishing for both cremations and inhumations will be discussed briefly, outlining the most common items that would be included in inhumations.

Cremation

In Roman Britain cremation methods varied from region to region. In the south-east of England from the mid-first to early third century, the majority of cremations took place on a pyre which was not in the same location as the final burial site. There is a lack of known pyre sites in Britain but this might be due to practical or technical reasons preventing pyre sites from being regularly used (McKinley, 2000, 38) such as providing a stable platform suitable enough to carry body weight. Bones would have been collected and placed in a pottery jar and then placed into a pit, often oval, and sometimes lined with wood, stone slabs or a basket depending on the extent of extravagance (Philpott, 1991). We rarely see instances where cremation took place *in situ* on the same location where the remains would ultimately be buried. There was a gradual movement away from cremation onto inhumation during the second-century AD. This transition started in Rome and was relatively swift across the Roman Empire, making inhumation the most common burial method throughout the provinces by the mid-third century (Philpott, 1991). In Britain, however, the swift introduction of inhumation appeared to have most of an impact on the Romanised towns and in the south-east where cremation was a principle rite during the first two centuries of Roman occupation. In areas of Britain where inhumation was practiced continuously, there was instead a change in body position and treatment of the body (Philpott, 1991) which mimicked the new treatments taking place in Rome.

Cremations were sometimes furnished with a range of common items. The inclusion of pottery could vary from flagons, bottles, cups, beakers, bowls or platters and occasionally fragments of objects would be burnt with the body on the pyre and also included (Philpott, 1991, 8). Non-ceramics such as brooches, pins, rings, beads and vanity products like tweezers and mirrors can also be found in cremations. These furnishings are the most commonly seen in cremation burials; we must acknowledge that furnishings do differ depending on region.

Inhumation

During the late Iron Age, the body was most commonly buried lying on its side in a crouched position which continued as a tradition far into the Roman period. By the mid-second century inhumations were almost always laid supine, however in certain circumstances the body would be laid prone, which will be discussed in further detail when discussing deviant burials.

There were considerable variations in positions of arms, legs and heads, with a small minority of fourth century burials showing signs of deliberate decapitation or signs of being 'otherwise mutilated' (Philpott, 1991, 53). By the late second century the body was usually placed in a wooden coffin, which was a clear indicator of status within Roman Britain. Coffins made out of lead and stone, particularly seen at Poundbury in Dorset (Farwell & Molleson, 1993), could indicate high status. These lead coffins are often seen as being filled with plaster whilst the wooden coffins are seen as being held together by nails or brackets (Farwell & Molleson, 1993). During the late fourth century there is a decline in the use of wooden coffins, for example seen at Lankhills, Winchester and are no longer seen in the post-Roman burials at Poundbury (Philpott, 1991).

Romano-British grave pits are frequently seen as being lined with slabs or tile, while the body itself could be subject to some kind of post-mortem application of gypsum, lime or

embalming. 'In some cases the body was wrapped in a shroud, although evidence for clothing at burial is largely confined to worn hobnailed footwear or brooches' (Philpott, 1991, 53) and there are instances of other clothing items like belt buckles also being included in grave pits. Inhumation methods did however vary from region to region in Britain; in the south-east the change between the first and second centuries are clearly visible at Alington Avenue, Dorchester, where 10 crouched inhumations were found in simple chalk-cut graves accompanied by pottery, food offerings or jewellery, while 58 extended burials with evidence of wooden coffins were found in the same cemetery dating to the late 2nd and mid-4th centuries (Philpott, 1991). Poundbury's cemeteries 1 and 2 also display a similar transition showing the earlier phases of burial in Cemetery 1 and extended burials with the use of wooden coffins found in the later Cemetery 2 dating to the 3rd century.

In south-central England, sites such as Cirencester and Gloucester show evidence of cremation being adopted, however crouched inhumations are seen as being more common within these sites. In south east England, already briefly touched upon, there is evidence inhumation was practised before and after the Roman conquest. In St Pancras, Chichester, several of the 9 inhumations found at a large cremation cemetery can be dated to AD 200 and the crouched position and absence of grave goods would indicate low status burials (Philpott, 1991). At Victoria Road, Winchester, 92 cremations were present as well as 12 adult and 68 child inhumations, dated to 50-200 AD. Inhumations however appeared far more regularly in cemeteries from the mid-2nd century onwards, and earlier inhumations such as the ones seen at St Pancras and Victoria Road could be cases of 'natives adhering to their traditional customs' (Philpott, 1991, 57) or immigrants were being buried in accordance to their own societal customs.

Posture within inhumations can vary and are a good indicator of variables such as illness, social status and age (Parker Pearson 2009, 54; Philpott 1991, 87). The most frequent

posture seen is the supine, extended posture, with crouched burials being seen less frequently in urban cemeteries (Philpott, 1991). At Cirencester we see some adults buried on their sides rather than in crouched or flexed positions which could have been a result of a spine illness; in Grave 206 there is evidence of osteophytosis and osteoarthritis in the skeleton which would have prevented the body from being laid supine (Philpott, 1991). Children are also found to be placed in crouched or flexed positions more often than adults, indicating different treatment in relation to age, while adults who are buried crouched or flexed are usually assumed to have problems that would prevent the corpse from being laid out, be it an illness involving the bones or some sort of abnormality (Taylor, 2008, 102)

Grave furnishings within inhumations can vary greatly. In Alington Avenue, Dorchester, most inhumations were accompanied by at least one object, one pottery vessel, a food offering and an item of jewellery (Philpott, 1991, 54). Other furnishings typically found in Romano-British inhumations include pottery, glass, coins, jewellery, metalwork and food. (Philpott, 1991, 54)

Deviant Burials

In Roman Britain we sometimes see deviant burials, or burials that go against the burial norms discussed in the previous section. These irregular burials are identified (Philpott 1991; Tsaliki 2008) by a few common displays of deviance, such as mutilation after death, prone posture, or decapitated skeletons. Here, the different ways in which burials are considered deviant and what could have motivated these types of burials will be explored.

The idea that Romans could take part in the mutilation of bodies, deliberate decapitation after death and throwing their dead into graves face down is not one that many classicists like to imagine, understandably. The reality is the Romans were just as violent and superstitious as other cultures, and the impression that they are sophisticated and educated

does not change that. Some of these deviant burials are sometimes described as merely being careless burials, however we know that burials such as these found in Rome are usually associated with the poor and those of a less desirable personality.

Deviant burials in this case are considered to be burials showing evidence of human sacrifice, execution, punishment after death, fear of ghosts, and infanticide (Taylor, 2008). More specifically, they involve some sort of decapitation, prone burial, unusually secure graves and dismembered remains. In this instance, there will be a focus on decapitation, prone burial and unusually secure burials, as these are most associated with superstition, fear and possible 'vampirism'.

Prone Burials

Mutilation after death, or some sort of dismemberment after death is thought to have carried out as an 'extra punishment added to execution or after normal death for some perceived fault' (Taylor, 2008, 95). Mutilation of limbs could have also been carried out to ensure the ghost of the deceased would not be able to walk or leave their grave. Prone burials, said to be 'an expression of censure or punishment' (O'Brien, 1999, 5), could also share this reasoning, as burying a particularly bothersome person face down would guarantee they could not dig their way out of their grave but instead dig their way further down (Philpott, 1991). Philpott (1991, 75) however suggests that prone burials could have been carried out as a result of ritual, a hasty burial with lack of concern over the deceased's posture, a deliberate attempt to dishonour the deceased or the because the body was not able to be laid out supine.

Philpott (1991) outlines the different types of prone burial and divides them into four individual categories. The first is prone burial showing signs of coercion which is suggested if there is evidence that the hands have been tied behind the back or the head is missing or removed and placed at the shoulder. The second type outlined by Philpott includes hasty or

careless prone burials. Bodies under this type are usually buried in unconventional graves such as ditches or hastily buried close to the surface; they are not usually buried within coffins and lack grave furniture (Philpott, 1991). Simultaneous double burials form Philpott's third prone burial type, where two bodies are buried with each other, with one body facing upwards and the second body buried face to face with the body underneath. An example of this is seen in Grave 335 at Lankhills, where a pair of bodies were buried in the same coffin, lying face to face (Philpott, 1991). The last prone burial type comprises of formal or semi-formal prone burials. The body is buried prone but is also buried within a coffin or with grave furniture. In this category it can be possible that perhaps the body could not be buried supine for physical reasons and it has not been buried prone out of disrespect (Philpott, 1991, 72).

At excavations between 1983 and 1990 at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, a large Roman cemetery produced a number of deviant burials, mainly decapitated burials. Most of the burials (96.7%) were found supine and a very small number (3.3%) were found prone (Barber & Bowsher, 2000, 87). Burial B459, a female prone burial, showed no evidence of a wooden coffin and was buried with ragstone rubble on her lower back perhaps in an attempt to restrain the body or spirit (Barber & Bowsher, 2000, 87).

Decapitation

Decapitated burials are the main focus of this thesis. The majority of decapitated burials are of Late Roman date; however there is some evidence of decapitations in every phase from the mid-third to late fourth century in Kempston, Bedfordshire (Taylor, 2008). There are many different types of decapitation where the head has been placed in different areas or missing entirely from the grave (O'Brien, 1999, 7). Also, the circumstances surrounding the decapitation can vary and can be determined by the trauma, or lack thereof, on the spine or on the skull. Philpott (1991, 77) determines that there are three main types of decapitation that

can be found. The first is when the head has been removed and is missing from the grave entirely, the second is described as the head being replaced at the neck as if it had not been removed and the third is the most common type of decapitation discussed in this thesis, where the head is in the grave but has been placed elsewhere in the grave, usually near the legs or feet.

Decapitation, similarly to prone burial, was thought to prevent the body or spirit returning to haunt the living. Usually this fear was for those who had been murdered, executed or considered to be evil (O'Brien, 1999, 54). Clearly (2000, 127) suggests decapitation may have had sacrificial connotations, regardless of whether the person was alive or dead at the time of decapitation.

Decapitations with the Head Displaced

Decapitation has, throughout history, been used as a form of execution. The act itself is often associated with savagery in the modern world; it is easy for us to assume this type of mutilation was not carried out positively. Decapitations where the head has been placed near the legs or feet are often found within cemeteries and are the most common type of decapitated burial (Philpott, 1991). These bodies are often found with chop marks on the neck and the skull is often found with the top vertebrae still attached (Taylor, 2008, 102). The removal of the head from the body is often thought to be carried out post-mortem or perimortem with one single blow however evidence for multiple blows in the form of multiple cuts on the vertebrae have also been found (Philpott, 1991). Decapitated burials such as this are generally suspected as not being the initial cause of death (Taylor, 2008, 103). Decapitated burials of this type have been found at Towcester, Northamptonshire, with one burial showing the skull placed over the lower legs near the feet (Anderson, 2001) and at

Kempston, Bedford where a number of burials were found with the skull at the ankles, feet, below the feet or between the knees (Boylston, Knüsel, Roberts & Dawson, 2000).

Decapitations with the Head Missing

Decapitated burials where the head is missing are thought to be a result of judicial execution or battle injuries (Philpott, 1991). Decapitated burials of this type can be found at Alington Avenue, Dorchester, however the burials found there were more unconventional, with two burials lacking a skull and one of those burials including a dog which was also decapitated (Philpott, 1991, 83). A third burial at the site was buried in the prone position and weighted down with flints. At Gambier Parry Lodge, Kingsholm, nearly half of the seventy skeletons excavated were missing their heads entirely while a ditch nearby contained a number of crania, all of which were lacking mandibles (Philpott, 1991, 77).

Decapitations with the Head in Correct Anatomical Position

This type of decapitated burial consists of the severed head being replaced at the neck as if it were not removed. Examples of this can be found at Bath Gate cemetery in Cirencester and are seen in six burials (Boylston, Knüsel, Roberts & Dawson, 2000, 246)

Evidence for Perimortem and Post-mortem Decapitation

The differences between perimortem and post-mortem decapitations can be determined from cut marks and traumas on the neck and skull. At Kempston, Bedford, perimortal trauma was indicated by cut marks on the vertebrae with polishing of the bone surface (Boylston *et al*, 2000, 244). Where cut marks exhibit a polished appearance, it is suggested the bone contains the same amount of collagen that it did during life and therefore decapitation took place if immediately after death or may have been the cause of death (Wenham, 1989). Wenham (1989) also mentions that splitting of the laminae also indicates that the ligaments are present and intact, which is further evidence for perimortem trauma rather than post or ante-mortem.

If decapitation was the cause of death, it would be common to see clean, precise injuries using a sharp-edged weapon as seen at Towcester and Lankhills. It is suspected that one of the two decapitated skeletons found at Towcester took place as an execution of a criminal that was tightly bound (Anderson, 2001) due to the presence of clean injuries. The second body found at Towcester had its skull placed between its knees and it is thought that the cause of death was a 'clumsy and unprofessional attempt at ritual decapitation' (Anderson, 2001, 405) displaying several blows from a sharp weapon and evidence of possible use of a knife to complete the decapitation.

At Lankhills cemetery, skeleton 1517 had its skull placed between the legs, near the feet. The third cervical vertebrae showed a cut mark on the left inferior articular process; the superior portion of the process had been sliced off in an inferior to superior direction, exposing the internal trabecular bone. This type of decapitation suggests that the process involved more than one cut through the vertebrae and the spinous processes of the fourth and fifth cervical vertebrae were damaged post-mortem (Booth *et al*, 2010, 369).

Romano-British Instances of Deviance

For this thesis I will use a small number of Romano-British case studies in order to provide some background to the sites that will later be discussed alongside media stories. The small number of case studies for this Romano-British discussion indicates a small number of diverse media stories relating to decapitation in Roman Britain. Reasons why this has occurred will be discussed in the conclusion.

York

At Driffield Terrace in York, 49 out of 56 excavated individuals were adult males, 30 of whom had been decapitated with a sharp blade or sword (Taylor, 2008, 105) with a high incidence of other peri- and antemortem trauma (Müldner, Chenery & Eckardt, 2010). The

skeletons date from the first to the fourth century AD (Mount, 2010). The methods used in order to decapitate the bodies were a single clean cut which would indicate a professional execution, or hacking into the neck from both front and back in a less clean manner. Three of the burials at the site contained grave furnishings in the form of late-second to early-third century pots. One decapitated body was found in a double grave with its ankles bound by iron shackles; there was sign of infection caused by the shackles on the ankle bones which indicate that they had been worn for a long period of time before death (Taylor, 2008). The origins of the decapitated skeletons are thought to be very diverse and non-native, perhaps the remains of slaves, gladiators or foreign soldiers (Müldner, Chenery & Eckardt, 2010, 280).

This case study is being used due to the large amount of decapitation burials found at the site. The site has been dismissed as being a gladiatorial graveyard due to the evidence of origins found, which would make it interesting to see how differently the media portray the site when reporting on it.

Norfolk

The Great Ellingham site in Norfolk is one of the biggest Romano-British burial sites in the region. 85 graves dating from between the second and third centuries were discovered and dated to the second and third centuries (Hilts, 2012). There was only one decapitated burial found amongst the other burials, which had its skull removed and placed between its feet.

This case study has been chosen due to the small amount (just one) of decapitated burials on site. The fact that 85 graves were found and only one was decapitated and had its head placed between its feet raises the question of whether the media then reported on the decapitated skeleton in more detail since it is more unusual at the site, or focused more on the other 84 burials.

Chapter 3

Anglo-Saxon Burial

Here, conventional methods of Anglo-Saxon burial will be outlined followed by an outline of characteristic deviant burials. A number of case studies will then be used in order to discuss deviance and the attitudes towards the case studies within the media and public.

Anglo-Saxon archaeology is rather lacking of ritual deposits or structures until the arrival of Christianity, this might be due to a lack of evidence for any belief systems between the end of Roman Britain and the Conversion to Christianity (Crawford, 2010, 87) even though we have evidence of paganism being practiced. There is considerable variation within the archaeological record for Anglo-Saxon burial practices. In the early Anglo-Saxon period, communities made use of only one cemetery site and commonly included grave furnishings with burials (Sayer, 2013). Once the transition into the Christian period had taken place in the seventh century, grave goods were not as commonly found, however this might not be due to the transition into Christianity (Sayer, 2013, 133).

In the early Anglo-Saxon period people made use of both cremation and inhumation, including in them a large amount of grave good ranging from food, jewellery and weapons. In the early period cemeteries and burial mounds were most commonly seen, however they were known to use ship burials sporadically (Hutton, 1993). The early Anglo-Saxons were typically pagan; we see evidence of pagan burial practice at sites such as Sutton Hoo, where a number of items that would typically be thought of as pagan were found such as a lyre, feasting vessels, clothing fasteners, a shield and spears (Sayer, 2013).

Emerging from the transition into Christianity were four different types of burial location, minster, churchyard, field cemetery and execution site (Sayer, 2013; Reynolds, 2009). Within these four types of location, burials were then placed according to rank, religion, family and deviant status (Sayer, 2013, 133). At this point, cremations had ceased to take place and inhumation within church cemeteries had become the sole form of burial.

By the eighth century furnished burials are no longer commonly found and by the tenth-century a judicial system was in place meaning places of execution were commonplace. However there is evidence that those in more rural areas had been used to seeing public executions before the Anglo-Saxon Kings introduced the strict judicial system (Crawford, 2010).

Cremation

Cremations are normally dated from the fifth to seventh centuries. Individuals were normally placed in a ceramic pot and placed in pits with associated grave goods (English Heritage, 2011). Crawford (2010) suggests that the majority of grave goods were burnt with the body as well as buried with the body after cremation. Cremations can also be found within barrows as well as in pits.

Inhumation

Inhumations were usually buried supine or loosely crouched within a sub-rectangular grave cut, sometimes placed within a coffin or wooden box and accompanied by several grave goods (English Heritage, 2011). Inhumations are most commonly found in places such as Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Wiltshire, Derbyshire and much of Yorkshire (English Heritage, 2011, 6). In Final Phase cemeteries, we see little to no grave goods (Crawford, 2010) and the bodies being buried east-west, this marks the beginning of the transition into Christianity in the seventh century. The Final Phase is considered to be the

period between the Pagan and Christian transition and therefore there appears to be a mix of burials in this phase. It can also be said that this period saw political and social changes which could have also contributed to the changes in burials. Into the eighth and ninth centuries differentiation within churchyard burials are found between body containers, above-ground markers and location, suggesting that social factors played a part in burial location within the churchyard throughout the Christian transition (Crawford, 2010), grave goods were also no longer customary.

Church Burial

Burials within churchyards do not appear to have any apparent relationship between grave furnishings and the sex of the deceased, however they do appear to have an ‘internal organisation system’ (Sayer, 2013, 138). Some sites have been found to contain areas of same sex burials and groups of individuals that may have shared the same lifestyle. This could indicate that people of a certain lifestyle were indeed segregated from the rest of the cemetery for unknown reasons, perhaps due to illness or societal ranking. Socially distinct individuals could also be found at the edges of the cemeteries indicating that deviant individuals were preferred to be buried separate (Sayer, 2013).

Execution Cemetery

Within the range of cemetery types in the Anglo-Saxon period is the execution cemetery. Execution cemeteries can be found in south, east and central England (Sayer, 2013) with only one site, Walking Wold being found North in Yorkshire. Individuals buried in execution cemeteries are thought to have been buried hastily, usually supine but occasionally prone, and with their hands placed on their body (Sayer, 2013, 136). There is also a characteristic lack of females buried at execution sites and the few female burials that have been found display the

same treatment as the males (Sayer, 2013). This could indicate that women had more relaxed laws within the judicial system or were punished in alternative ways.

Deviant Burials

With the emergence of execution cemeteries and a strict judicial system in the late Anglo-Saxon period, deviant burials become easier to distinguish. Seventh-century burials within the Final Phase type were characterised by west-east aligned burials arranged in rows, many of which would contain grave goods (Buckberry, 2008, 148). As these Final Phase burials become easier to identify, so too do deviant burials of the time. A lack of grave goods along with unusual positioning of both the grave and the body indicate deviance.

Characteristics of deviant burials range from positioning, such as supine or prone, mutilation, such as decapitation or the lack of limbs, or restraint, where the arms or legs have been tied or the body has been held down by an object or multiple objects (Buckberry, 2008; Reynolds, 2009). Reasons for deviant burials have been discussed and theories have emerged, most notable is the theory of superstition or fear of the body coming back to life, which was also present during the Romano-British period. Cemeteries dating between c.550-700 contain bodies that share characteristics with the vampire-slaying techniques of Eastern Europe (see chapter 4) (Blair, 2009).

We can also mention that people who were generally feared in the Anglo-Saxon period were buried in bogs or waterlogged areas (Beresford, 2012; Blair, 2009; Parker Pearson, 2009).

The characteristics of deviant burials within the Anglo-Saxon period are very similar to those of the Romano-British period. Deviant burials were most often found prone, decapitated or restrained. In some cases burials can be found both decapitated and prone, which can be interpreted as a 'violation of the integrity usually accorded a corpse and both

indicating a need for extra control' (Buckberry, 2008, 101). In this instance there will be focus on Anglo-Saxon case studies showing evidence of decapitated burials. These decapitated burials are a mix of decapitations with the head missing and decapitations with the head between the legs or feet.

Anglo-Saxon Instances of Deviance

There are two sites in particular that I have chosen to discuss in this section. Anglo-Saxon deviant burials appear to catch the interest of the media more than Romano-British deviant burials. Perhaps due to the fact that Romano-British deviant burials are discussed as being gladiatorial graveyards, whilst Anglo-Saxon deviant burials are associated with pagan and Christian superstitions and the emergence of the judicial system.

Walkington Wold, Yorkshire

Walkington Wold cemetery has previously been interpreted as being a late Roman early post-Roman cemetery, however, the inclusion of a series of mid- and later Anglo-Saxon burials has shed new light on the possible period the cemetery was in use (Buckberry & Hadley, 2007). The cemetery contains a number of decapitated burials which has caused the cemetery to be interpreted as the only execution cemetery found in the north of England (Buckberry, 2008). Decapitated burials, as discussed in the previous chapter, were also commonly found in Romano cemeteries, however they were usually found within other, larger cemeteries rather than in separate cemeteries like Walkington Wold (Philpott, 1991; Boylston *et al*, 2000).

The excavations between 1967 and 1969 yielded 12 burials, ten of which were buried without their crania; there was also skeletal evidence of decapitation. The burials were in no noticeable pattern and were buried in an 'apparently haphazard manner' (Buckberry, 2008, 151). Three out of the ten burials missing their crania were found with their mandibulae

and/or the superior cervical vertebrae articulated with the cranium (Buckberry & Hadley, 2007, 314). Buckberry & Hadley (2007, 314) suggest that these crania ‘must have been buried *in situ* before the soft tissue holding them together had fully decomposed’. The remaining seven burials that were missing their crania had no mandibulae or vertebrae attached to the skull, which indicates they might have been deposited after the soft tissues had decomposed (Buckberry & Hadley, 2007; Buckberry, 2008).

Decapitation cannot be assumed to have taken place amongst all 11 skeletons missing their crania; however the three skeletons that show evidence of having their crania removed shortly after death show signs of having their heads removed (Buckberry & Hadley, 2007). Evidence of trauma was found in five individuals (two skeletons and three crania); Skeleton 1 showed evidence of a perimortem blade injury that was consistent with decapitation while Skeleton 11 also showed signs of a perimortem fracture to the base of the skull (Buckberry & Hadley, 2007). Skull 2 had three blade injuries to the back of the skull delivered in ‘an upwards direction, indicating that the victim was most likely bent over with their head held in extreme flexion’ (Buckberry & Hadley, 2007, 317). The injuries found on the skeletons and skulls at Walkington Wold are not consistent with decapitation, however the amount of attempts evident on the bone and the direction of the blows could indicate that decapitation was being attempted. Buckberry & Hadley (2007, 319) suggest that the injuries on Skull 2 could be the result of a ‘botched decapitation’.

It is thought that a minimum of four individuals found at Walkington Wold have injuries that are consistent with a violent death or execution, or even post-mortem mutilation (Buckberry & Hadley, 2007).

Southwell, Nottinghamshire

The site of Southwell is considerably different to Walkington Wold. The site was first excavated in 1959 where the remains of an Anglo-Saxon inhumation were discovered. This particular inhumation (out of 250 inhumations unearthed at the site so far) is thought to be from the early sixth- to seventh-century and was ritually staked with iron nails at the shoulders, heart and ankles (Beresford, 2012). The grave also contained the remains of one other leg bone and forearm. The skeleton's burial is believed to be outside the cemetery boundaries, and therefore was purposefully buried in an attempt to dishonour the body. Staking of the body was usually associated with people who had died unnaturally or there was reason to fear the dead (Blair, 2009; Beresford, 2008; Reynolds, 2009). Heart-staking was made famous by Eastern European accounts from the 16th and 17th centuries, later spreading to Western Europe through the film industry and literature (Beresford, 2012).

There are a number of Eastern European sites that will be discussed in chapter 6 alongside online media stories about them. These will be used purely to discuss the differences between media portrayal of Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Eastern European sites.

Chapter 4

The Vampire and The Uncanny

“Where there is mystery, it is generally supposed that there must also be evil.”

- Lord Byron

The belief of vampires goes back centuries to the first vampire reports from Eastern Europe. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, reports of vampire epidemics in Eastern Europe began spreading from Istria in 1672, Prussia in 1710, 1721 and 1750, Hungary from 1725-30, Silistria in 1755 and finally ending in Russia in 1772 (Beresford, 2008, 99). The spread of these reports to Western Europe is thought to have been caused by travellers or soldiers (Beresford, 2008) who in turn fascinated those hearing the stories back home. Italy, Germany, Spain, France and England were all subjected to these new horror stories and reports; subjected due to a recent integration of what once previously was the Ottoman Empire into Europe, which can explain the spread of these reports into Western Europe (Beresford, 2008).

As the reports of vampires spread to England at this time, is it worth remember that in the early medieval period, England had already feared the dead or ‘dangerous dead’ (Blair, 2009, 539). Blair (2009, 539-540) describes what he calls ‘a scene’ which involves the feared dead;

“The villagers of Stapenhill, and the nearby hamlet of Drakelow, stand nervously around the graves of two recently buried peasants who have been seen wandering around Drakelow with their coffins on their backs, banging on doors and summoning the inhabitants to sickness and

death. The graves are opened, and as the coffin-lids are wrenched off, expectations of an unholy continuing life seem to be horrible confirmed; the corpses have resisted the natural process of decay, and the cloths over their faces are stained with blood . . . The heads of the corpses are severed and placed between their legs, their hearts are torn from their chests and graves are backfilled.”

This narrative is entirely believable if we had been told it came from Eastern Europe, but the fact that it comes from early medieval England is curious. There are also stark similarities between the early medieval method of ridding the community of a vampire and the Eastern European methods. Blair’s story shares similarities with a fairly recent 2004 Romanian case from the village of Marotinu de Sus. The Romanian family exhumed a buried uncle suspecting him of being a vampire and cut out his heart, burned it and mixed the ashes with water for the victims to drink in the hopes it would rid them of their problem (Blair, 2009, 540). In our early medieval case from Stapenhill and Drakelow, the heart was cut out and burned but was not consumed; the resonance between stories is remarkable.

A narrative by William of Newburgh in the 1190’s (as cited in Blair, 2009) describes instances of possible vampirism in England; the bodies are said to have left and entered their graves as animated corpses and were capable of being wounded (p. 541). The vampires described in the narrative were exhumed and found to be bloated in the face with their shrouds torn; we see this similarity in Eastern European narratives where the shroud is also described as torn. This hints ‘at the familiar conception of vampires as neurotic obsessives: fidgeting nervously, chewing on their shrouds’ (Blair, 2009, 541).

But what are the similarities between vampires from Eastern Europe and Western Europe? Or rather, what caused someone to be suspected of vampirism when they died? There are a number of similarities pointed out by Beresford (2008, 100); the vampire is typically described as appearing bloated, as if recently gorged on blood, it is also described as

visiting family members and bothering them or bringing them death and illness. The characteristic torn shroud in the burial is thought to be synonymous with nervous and neurotic characteristics (Blair, 2009). The traits of vampirism however can almost certainly be explained by decomposition, diseases or plague and are frequently used by the west to dismiss eastern claims of vampirism. However, the east appear to apply seemingly logical answers to questions; the answer for a suspected vampire having blood around its mouth is that it has been drinking blood, another example is when bad or malevolent deeds occur but no vampire-like figure is anywhere to be seen, the deeds must be caused by an invisible or form-changing vampire (Beresford, 2008, 102). This allowed people to believe that a vampire could have an involvement in any situation and if this is taken into account it is easy to see why the folklore and superstition has allowed the vampire to become so well-known in society.

The Vampire as a Blood Sucker

One of the primary characteristic common to all of us is the presence of its fangs, or the ability to drink blood by biting into the neck of its victim. While this stereotype has been born from films like Bram Stoker's 1931 adaptation of *Dracula* and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's 1922 film *Nosferatu*, this characteristic was also known when the folklore of the vampire was first created. In folklore it is hard to find a description of a vampire with the stereotypical fangs often associated with the modern vampire; however teeth still appeared within the folklore, assumed to be the method of drinking blood even though the most common method for a vampire to drink blood in Russian folklore was through the use of its sharp tongue which lacerated its victims (Beresford, 2008, 104).

These stereotypical characteristics of vampires could have stemmed from the Middle Ages, where suffers of a disease called porphyria caused those infected to be sensitive to

sunlight, have pale skin, have more hair on their bodies and have slightly more elongated, or protruding teeth (Beresford, 2008, 104). The disease begins in early childhood and the severe sensitivity to sunlight causes blistering on the skin, if these blisters are infected and scar over it can leave the individual looking rather disfigured (Cox, 1995). Blood transfusions are said to be one form of treatment, however bone marrow transplants are the only truly effective treatment (Cox, 1995, 644). There are some inconsistencies with this theory however, as the Eastern Europeans believed that vampires could be out-doors during daylight hours, which cannot be explained by porphyria as sufferers are sensitive to light. Additionally, vampires were described as looking healthy, which porphyria sufferers do not, therefore when the body would be exhumed and the body looked noticeably diseased, they would be dismissed as not being vampires (Cox, 1995). In consideration of this, porphyria could well have been a factor in the encouragement of vampire folklore; however there are pitfalls in this theory that cannot be explained.

The Vampire as Undead Malevolence

Vampires were known for coming to relatives', lovers' or other members of the public's houses at night and causing a disturbance. In some stories the vampire was visible and seen as a physical entity; in other stories the vampire was not seen and assumed to be an invisible entity, or a house pet in some cases. As Beresford (2008, 102) describes; "...if some malevolent deed occurs and it is deemed the work of a vampire, and yet no vampire is present, then the vampire is an invisible vampire, or if a cat is present then the vampire *is* the cat."

Vampirism in Anglo-Saxon England

When Christianity replaced pagan religions and England began practicing Christianity as its primary religion, fears of the undead, the devil and vampires were allowed to merge into

society (Beresford, 2008). It can be said that the need to control society and ward off evil caused the Church to encourage the folklore of the vampire; the Church was able to take the myth of the vampire and associate it as a creature of the devil. It has now been established that these fears were deep-rooted and went far back into pre-Christian English culture. Evidence of these fears are seen in the sixth- to seventh-century execution cemeteries for the ‘deliberate disablement of corpses’ (Blair, 2009, 542). The Anglo-Saxon vampire does have some differences to the Eastern European vampire, for example the Anglo-Saxon vampire was considered to be more ‘socially integrated’ and ‘people of usually good standing and sometimes high status in life’ (Blair, 2009, 547).

The Anglo-Saxon methods of ridding the society of a suspected vampire put emphasis on restraining or holding down the body, to ensure it cannot rise again (Blair, 2009). This can be seen through staking and shackles on the ankles or hands. Another popular method used by the Anglo-Saxons was exhuming the body and reburying it in a bog. Examples of deliberate burial can be found at Quintfall in Caithness and Arnish Morr on Lewis, where both bodies had received blows to the head (Giles, 2009, 77). The Worsley Man, found in Chat Moss near Worsley was found to have been decapitated after receiving a blow to the head and being strangled (Giles, 2009), also many bog bodies are found to be restrained or pinned down with stakes or poles. We see these types of treatment in deviant inhumations either in execution cemeteries or sole burials on the edges of a cemetery, therefore it can be said that bog-bodies are an extreme result of superstition and fear that the body will come back to haunt, and burying the body within a bog can be seen as extra protective measures.

The Uncanny

People throughout the history of society have always been fearful of the dead, or the afterlife. In every culture there is a version of hell, the devil and evil spirits or entities that will try to

bring you into hell or harm you. Now in modern society that fear is still present amongst some of the more superstitious populous, but it appears to have been replaced by curiosity. Chances are most people will never see a dead body in their life, unless their loved one opts for an open-casket funeral like is commonly used in the United States. Therefore, sometimes the only opportunity the public has at viewing a dead body is at a museum.

Not only were vampires a fear in the past, but there were other reasons for bodies to be buried in what we consider to be a deviant fashion. As explored in previous chapters, illness and disease or a criminal past could have caused you to be buried undesirably. Therefore when continuing with this thesis, this must be taken into account as not all the case studies used are thought to be ‘vampire’ burials but rather the burials of ‘the uncanny’.

As the spread of vampire folklore occurred due to story-telling and then later was rekindled due to 1920’s literature and film, we must explore how the vampire myth is being portrayed now, in the twenty first century. We know why the myth began and how it spread, and we know why the vampire has began a household name through literature and film, now we must explore what part archaeologists and the media play in the continuing portrayal of the vampire and the archaeologically deviant.

Chapter 5

Archaeology and the UK Media

The media is responsible for portraying news stories to the public. Archaeologists and the media require clear dialogue in order for the right story and the right details to be published to the masses. However, the public enjoy reading what they themselves perceive to be interesting which requires modern archaeologists to tell the story of a certain site or artefact in a way which will appeal to the public. Holtorf (2005, 150) describes this appeal as ‘archaeo-appeal’.

Archaeology is increasingly being associated with magical new realms and experiences as well as being recognised as a scientific discipline (Holtorf, 2005). Archaeology carries with it a large number of popular motifs of Western culture; therefore it attracts a large number of people who are curious to find out more about discoveries and ancient worlds (Holtorf, 2005, 156) while being able to relate it to their own personal interests. Holtorf suggests that some archaeologists believe that popular folk archaeology, or the continuing interests in folklore, are ‘a threat to the values and prospects of scientific archaeology in society’ (2005, 11). In relation to this thesis, it could be said that the public’s knowledge of the vampire as folklore or as a man dressed in a cape with fangs can affect the way a news story about a decapitation is interpreted.

Archaeologists do however take advantage of this archaeo-appeal, and must use the media as a way of reaching the public in order to keep archaeology in the public eye and relevant. Folk archaeology, as well as being disliked by some archaeologists, can be of

benefit for getting a story heard and having the public relate to it and enjoy it. The public's knowledge of vampires and the most modern vampire films like *The Twilight Saga* means that news articles that mention the word 'vampire' will load the reader with pre-conceived ideas of Dracula, capes and bats. The reader will become significantly more interested in opening the article and looking for a photo of a skeleton with fangs in place and a wooden stake through the heart. While this image is not believable, the public look for it with excitement in the hopes that the folklore we have all grown up with is unbelievably true.

Amongst the need for archaeologists and the media to cooperate, there are some archaeologists who believe there will always be tensions between the two (Stoddart & Malone, 2001). Stoddart & Malone believe that archaeologists must live in a media-conscious world aware of the information they convey to the tax-paying public, who usually fund council archaeologists (2001, 459). In their opinion, stories need to be 'hyped up' (459), which is a fair claim, since most of the stories explored in this thesis are most definitely hyped up in order to appeal to the public. Brittain & Clack (2007, 23) also believe there is some mistrust of the media within archaeology; they state 'the susceptibility to inaccuracy or blatant misrepresentation remains a common matter of anxiety and mistrust towards media journalism'.

The deregulation of broadcasting and the expansion of media outlets such as online news has resulted in even more competition and a divided audience where each outlet is attempting to appeal to a certain type of person (Brittain & Clack, 2007). With the emergence of online news, it is now easier than ever to create and publish a story to thousands of people who are interested in the subject-matter, such as archaeology news websites. The ability to search within seconds for information on a site, artefact or monument is being used by millions and therefore, archaeologists should use this to their advantage whether or not they enjoy appealing to the masses.

Archaeology and Newspapers

Newspapers, particularly local newspapers, have the benefit of being able to reach an audience that is interested in local matters and therefore can provide in-depth information about a certain site or artefact (Holtorf, 2007). Much larger newspapers like *The Guardian* or *The Independent* have to work harder with archaeologists to get the public interested in reading their story compared to more political or world news. Newspapers have increasingly become more interested in archaeological news stories as TV news channels have reduced their number of archaeological stories, saving air-time for more worldly affairs. TV channels at the moment are favouring educational archaeological programmes such as *Time Team* and one-off specials while newspapers are able to ‘celebrate the work of archaeologists mainly in terms of clue-hunting, discoveries, mysteries and revelations’ (Holtorf, 2007, 50) whenever they wish. Niche channels such as *The History Channel* were expected to increase the demand for more specialist programming, although according to Kulik (2006, 78) programme-makers found that these channels paid less than broadcasters like *Channel 4* or *Five*.

Newspapers play a part in how archaeologists as a whole are depicted. Frequently depicted as treasure hunting men with greying hair and khaki coloured cargo-pants, archaeologists are also struggling with keeping their image as clean as possible. The public can often think that the archaeologist has no business digging up the past and putting it on display, for example a comment on a *Huffington Post* article from July 2013 on the discovery of beheaded skeletons in Bulgaria said the following; “why are people with little education who sell the burial artifacts [sic] to private collectors called grave robbers and the highly educated people who sell them to museums called archaeologists?” It is therefore up to the archaeologist and the media to ensure they are not perceived as people who disturb the dead or unlock past magic designed to keep the dead, dead. As Ascherson in 2004 says, ‘while the

twenty-first century mass media do not believe in dragons, it is apparent that they are still, on occasion, inclined to see the archaeologist as desecrator and violator' (pp. 147). In an article by The Daily Mail in June 2012 on Bulgarian skeletons found with iron rods staked through their chests, the title of the article included the line; "Are you sure digging him up is a good idea?" with a public comment reading; "Please don't take the stake out." Another comment adding; "I say do not disturb it and trust in God." As we can see there is still some superstition associated with the dead and the media allows people to voice these concerns. Archaeologists will also constantly be invited to declare a new site or discovery as unique (Ascherson, 2004, 148) as we see in a Daily Mail article dated to June 2012 where the skeleton discovery is described as 'rare' in the article title.

For this thesis I am particularly interested in online news, both from already established newspapers or purely online news websites. Online news is appealing to the young, the computer savvy and those hungry for extra news (Thiel, 1998) which makes it the most up-and-coming source of news in the modern world. News from all over the world is available at the click of a mouse or the scroll of a touch-screen phone or tablet. In research carried out by *Ofcom* (2013) it was established that 21.7 million people in the UK have a broadband connection at home with a further 75% of UK adults having fixed & mobile broadband. The potential to access online news stories in 2013 is vast which is a factor contributing to why online news websites are becoming more popular.

Readers of online news also have the advantage of going directly to their page of interest, for example Culture, World News or Science pages, this means we no longer have to 'thumb through' news stories we have no interest in (Thiel, 1998, 1). The media have been able to partition subjects into more specialised and manageable sections which in turn results in 'smaller groups of more committed readers' (Kulik, 2006, 77).

The use of prominent headlines and constantly updated news twenty four hours a day, seven days a week allows readers to stay informed regularly. The use of digital images to accompany online news stories adds the extra appeal, where multiple high-definition photos can be added to a news story as opposed to one greyscale image on a broadsheet. Readers especially expect accompanying photos with archaeological news stories, as it allows them to have a peak at something they would not otherwise see. A comment made on a November 2012 *Daily Mail* article on the Soutwell skeleton reads; “No photos?? Just a stock one from Bulgaria. Pathetic.” A stock photo clearly was not expected by the curious public, which emphasises the importance of up-to-date and immersive photos for archaeological news stories.

Another advantage of reading an online newspaper is the ability to translate each article into a language of your choice using online tools, this means news stories from different countries can be accessed by people all over the world. Online articles are also archived and searchable, allowing the public to research articles from any date (Allan, 2006).

In a country where there are hundreds of newspapers publishing similar stories daily or weekly, the credibility of a newspaper affects the way their news stories are interpreted by the public. For example, a broadsheet newspaper like *The Times* and *The Independent* would typically be trusted more by the public to accurately interpret and portray the news. Borderline tabloid newspapers like *The Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* already have a reputation in the UK for being unreliable or giving inaccurate information. In this sense, it is interesting to see how different types of newspaper portray the news on decapitated burials and ‘vampire’ burials. It is also interesting to see whether the public commenting on these types of news stories change with each online newspaper, which brings us onto the topic for the next chapter.

Chapter 6

The Media and The Public

In this discussion a number of UK online newspapers will be analysed for their titles, their content in chronological order with Romano-British articles being discussed before the Anglo-Saxon examples. Eastern European articles will be analysed last in order to achieve some sort of comparison depending on location. The birth of the vampire myth in Eastern Europe is expected to spawn more sensationalised and vampire-esque articles. Finally, public comments will be analysed in order to ascertain how the public is responding to the portrayal by the media.

The frequency of certain stereotypical words that might appear on such articles on deviant or vampire burials has been included in a series of tables (See Tables 1-3).

Romano-British Articles

Current Archaeology is not typically a newspaper; however their coverage of the discovery of a Roman cemetery in Great Ellingham, Norfolk is a good example to compare to other, less formal stories. In this November 2011 article titled “Roman cemetery discovered in Great Ellingham” the title used is informative and to the point. The reader is told what period the cemetery dates from, what the discovery is, and where it was discovered. It allows readers who are interested in any of those things to find out more. The article itself uses a series of photos to keep the readers’ interest, including two colour photos of the burial in question, with the skull clearly shown between the skeleton’s legs and additional photos of the skull and other burials.

The exclusion of any deviant description in the title and a brief paragraph in-text on how the burials could be the result of punishment or ritual is probably due to the fact that this article is on the *Current Archaeology* website, used by archaeologist or archaeology-savvy people. Archaeologists are less likely to respond to exaggerated titles and articles, as they already possess a certain amount of background knowledge of burials. Also, the fact that this website deals with only archaeological stories while other online newspapers report on everything under the sun means that *Current Archaeology* have no need to try and pull readers in with flashy titles and exaggerated backgrounds on deviant burials. Seeing how articles like this compare to articles on websites such as *The Daily Mail* who are targeting the general public will prove interesting.

BBC News wrote about the same cemetery in Great Ellingham in July 2012, eight months after *Current Archaeology*. The title, “Large Roman cemetery discovered in Norfolk” is wholly similar to that from *Current Archaeology*, however the use of the word ‘large’ and the generic use of Norfolk instead of Great Ellingham might be an attempt to draw more readers. The word ‘large’ is far more likely to attract readers; however *BBC News* is less likely to sensationalise its news articles as it is seen as a serious, respected news source in the UK. *BBC News* unlike *Current Archaeology* is not a specialist news website however, which would require them to draw more readers who are interested in archaeology to these types of articles.

In the body of text, it is mostly descriptive as the article from *Current Archaeology* was, including all the same information that would have been given to the press by the archaeology company in charge. There is no attempt to sensationalise the article in any way. *BBC News* is known in the UK for being a serious news source where one would go for serious, informative news without the option to comment. Those looking for gossip mixed with serious news (albeit erroneous) would go to a tabloid newspaper, which might

sensationalise articles such as these far more and allow you to comment with your ideas and opinions.

The Roman discovery of 80 people in York was reported by *The Telegraph* in June 2010 as well as by *The Guardian* on the same day, the 7th. The *The Telegraph* article is titled with a direct quote from the archaeologist in charge of excavation; “‘Gladiator burial ground’ discovered in York.” The byline mentions it is the ‘world’s best preserved’ gladiator burial, going back to Ascherson’s statement that archaeologists and newspapers will always try and make the discovery sound as unique as possible to attract readers (2004, 148). This story did not gain popularity due to the burials themselves, many of which showed signs of decapitation, but rather because the individuals buried have been proven to be foreigners. The article states; “...their likely origins are only now being revealed thanks to extensive forensic analysis”.

The ‘gladiators’ are described as having “...sustained brutal weapon injuries consistent with gladiatorial combat” and “...some of the men had been killed by a hammer blow to the head.” While this is all true due to the evidence found at the site, there is no mention of other reasons for this type of burial however a quote from Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill from Sidney Sussex College says; “If you have decapitations there’s something pretty remarkable about the burials. These are not ordinary people who have had ordinary deaths.” While he has acknowledged that these burials are not ordinary, the article does not elaborate on decapitated burials or deviance, however the public would have been drawn to the article due to the rarity of the discovery. As we have already discussed, rarity of a site increases the chances that the public will want to read about it (Holtorf, 2005).

The Guardian’s article on the site, published on the same day in 2010, and takes a different approach to the title and body of text. The title reads; “Scars from lion bite suggest

headless Romans found in York were gladiators.” While The Guardian makes this information the main subject of their article, *The Telegraph* reserved this piece of information to one paragraph. The inclusion of the lion bite in the title is far more likely to get the general public interested; one would maybe expect to be faced with a photo depicting a large cartoonesque bite out of someone’s femur, however we are faced with a stereotypical photo of two archaeologists kneeling in the dirt looking busy in contrast to *The Telegraph*’s video on the article which I curiously could not watch when I tried to play it. The Guardian also goes into the theory of decapitation as a ritual or “pogrom against a minority group such as Christians” but dismisses the evidence for this as lacking. Using the uniqueness of the situation, a quote by Dr. Michael Wysocki is used; “Nothing like the bites marks has ever been identified before on a Roman skeleton” further drawing readers into the article. Comments are also not allowed on this article, which would prevent the public from voicing their interests and opinions on the article.

BBC News also reported on this particular story but two years earlier in April 2006. At this time only 49 adult skeletons were presumed to have been found, but an isotope analysis on tooth enamel had already shown them to be foreign. The title is not particularly descriptive; “A heady discovery” but draws the reader in through the Archaeology section of the website. The layout of the article is particularly easy to read as it is divided into a few questions and answers; one question asks whether the individuals were criminals or part of a religious ritual, the reply states that ritual decapitations were not unknown in Roman-Britain however this was usually done to both males and females, whereas only males were found at York. This article does allow comments as it an archived BBC article. One comment reads “Could they have been converts to Christianity who were beheaded for treason...?” which was one of the ideas explored in The Guardian’s article.

It appears that when Romano-British deviant burials are being discussed by the media, they are far less likely to sensationalise the story with supernatural or superstitious information. There appears to be good dialogue between the archaeologists involved in these excavations and the media who reported on them as they have followed the information given by the archaeologists and have not attempted to sensationalise the story. When we look at Anglo-Saxon deviant burials and the articles that accompany them, there appears to be far more emphasis of deviance and vampires within them than the Romano-British examples.

Anglo-Saxon Articles

The Anglo-Saxons are notorious for being superstitious and overtly religious, and previous discussion on this thesis has allowed us to come to that conclusion. In this section, Anglo-Saxon deviant burials are more likely to be called vampire burials, and articles are more likely to try and attract the public.

The site of the Southwell Vampire, as it has come to be named, in Nottinghamshire dates to the early Anglo-Saxon period. This news story gained notoriety due to the rarity of the case being found in Britain. Only one skeleton was found within a deviant burial. The story was reported on by a number of British news websites. *The Telegraph* reported on the story first on November 1st 2012 and the title read; “Buried with a stake through a heart: the medieval ‘vampire’ burial.” This is the first article we see that puts the word ‘vampire’ in their title. This would draw more readers expectant to see some real evidence of vampires; however they are then drawn to the large image of skulls directly under the byline even though it is a stock image. A few quotes from Matthew Beresford’s 2012 report on the 1959 discovery are used in-text and a relatively detailed description of what deviant burials are and the circumstances behind them have been included to inform the reader. An interesting quote by Beresford says; “If you look at it in a spooky way you still have the potential for it to rise

at some point” and due to the fact that the body was not removed during the 1959 excavations, the body might still be there. All of this information would definitely intrigue the reader, and is represented by the article being shared over 2,000 times on social networking site *Facebook*. There is no way to comment on this particular article so interest is portrayed through social network sharing.

The Daily Mail also reported on the Southwell deviant a mere three days after *The Telegraph* on the 4th November 2012. This newspaper is synonymous with exaggeration and sensationalising news stories. David Stacey in a July 2013 opinion piece for *Daily Life* describes *The Daily Mail* as “barely passing as news” and “It’s a mirror board for global desire, that short circuits deep thinking and traps readers in a shallow sweat of news onanism, of guilt and fear and disgust”. With that said, articles written by *The Daily Mail* are more likely to be judged and picked apart.

They open their article on the Southwell deviant with the title; “Rare skeleton of ‘vampire’ discovered in Britain with spikes through shoulders, heart and ankles.” This title is sure to draw more readers to it than *The Telegraph*’s article, as mention of staking of the heart which is synonymous with vampires is used. The use of the word ‘rare’ also ensures its uniqueness and acts as a magnet for interest. The title appeals both to the ‘archaeo-appeal’ of vampires and myth, and the appeal of rarity and uniqueness (Holtorf, 2005, 150).

The images used in the article are not of the Southwell deviant. The first photo encountered is of a deviant burial from Bulgaria showing a metal spike through the shoulder and as we scroll down the page, the second image is of the Southwell high-street. Information-wise, similar quotes are used from Matthew Beresford and his 2012 report as used in *The Telegraph*’s article, however the opening sentence of the article is slightly more relaxed; “Long dismissed as myth and legend, the vampire is associated with spooky stories

or – for many teenagers- a Twilight heartthrob.” Immediate reference to the vampire stereotype and additional mention of vampire movies *The Twilight Saga* immediately appeals to those who are familiar with modern vampire folklore and representation. While I am sure Matthew Beresford was not best pleased about having the article opened with mention of modern vampire movies, the information on deviant burials that follows might make up for it. A brief explanation of when and where the burial was found is included, however after this explanation is given, the article reverts back to popular culture; “In the 1950’s the Hammer Horror films were popular and so people had seen Christopher Lee’s *Dracula* so it would have been quite relevant.” This quote is given by Beresford himself in order to explain the significance of the discovery back in the 1950’s. Beresford is also said to have joked about the original discoverer checking the skeleton for fangs. The entire article references popular culture and oozes archaeo-appeal with the added mystery of mentioning the skeleton is now missing. The comments accompanying this article are interesting; however they will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

In order to compare both *The Daily Mail* and *The Telegraph*’s articles on the Southwell deviant, a brief look at *Discovery News*’ coverage of the deviant on the 8th November 2012 will prove as a good comparison of journalism. The article written by Rossella Lorenzi is titled; “Vampire Skeleton Rediscovered in Britain.” The word vampire is not put in apostrophes as it is in *The Daily Mail* and *The Telegraph* articles. The title also suggests the skeleton has been rediscovered, or found again which it has not. The same quotes used by the other journalists have been used in this article also; however what stands out about this article is the use of an actual file image from 1959 showing the skeleton alongside another deviant burial. Comments are allowed on this article but there have been none made although the article has been shared on *Twitter* once and “liked” on *Facebook*

fifteen times. *Discovery News* is perhaps not as popular as tabloid online papers like *The Daily Mail* and thus has not received the influx of different types of people from the public.

The next notable Anglo-Saxon deviant discovery that was covered by multiple online news websites was the discovery of around 50 decapitated Anglo-Saxons in Weymouth, Dorset. The first website to report on the story was *The Daily Mail* on the 11th June 2009, written by a mysterious 'Daily Mail Reporter'. There is no mention of vampires or superstitious goings-on as it is a mass burial instead of an isolated case however the site is suspected of being some sort of execution cemetery.

The title reads; "Dozens of decapitated bodies found in mass Roman war grave unearthed on the route of Olympic Highway." Firstly, the mention of it being a Roman war grave is interesting, as articles produced after this particular on date the site to AD 910-AD 1030 while *The Daily Mail* dates the site to AD 43. Perhaps at that time not enough was known about the site itself and 43 AD was the best estimate, or perhaps it was incorrect information or bad journalism, it is hard to tell. The leap between this first article on the site and the subsequent article on the site by *BBC News* a whole 9 months after the initial story in March 2010 may indicate the 43 AD date was estimated and then later adjusted. Returning to *The Daily Mail's* article, the images used depict the stereotypical modern archaeologist in a hard-hat crouched next to a grouping of skulls, a photo further down of the top half of a decapitated skeleton surrounded by earth, various photos of the location in Weymouth and some archaeological shots of a skull and a few bones found at the site. The photos themselves are quite informative, and portray the site effectively as being what is has been described as in the title. Returning to the title however, the interesting inclusion of the fact that this discovery was made during the building of the new Olympic Highway for the 2012 Olympics is tactful, as at the time England was full of anticipation and excitement for the Olympics.

Thus, the inclusion of this information at that time would have appealed to the public and encouraged them to read the article.

The content of *The Daily Mail's* 2009 article is descriptive even though they include extensive information on the Roman situation in the area at the time, later announcing; “archaeologists are waiting to carry out radio-carbon testing on the newly discovered butchered remains but believe the skeletons could be young local men killed by Roman soldiers.” There is no certainty at the point of writing the article that the remains were indeed remains of those killed by Romans, so inclusion of this information in the title is confusing, perhaps to draw more readers to the article. In terms of deviance, the idea that a mass execution could have taken place is included but not touched upon further; instead a historical background of the Romans in the area is elaborated upon. There are no comments to accompany this story, which is unusual for a *Daily Mail* article.

The next website that reported on the Weymouth discovery is *BBC News* on the 12th March 2010. In this article the date of the site appears to be clarified as being between AD 910 and AD 1030 and the skeletons are described as being ‘Scandinavian Vikings’ in the title. Immediately below the title is an image of another archaeologist in a hard-hat crouched down beside decapitated skulls and other body parts. Images like this continue to portray archaeologists as people who are working on site as well as on finds which encourages the image of the archaeologist as ‘digging up things’ (2007, 49).

The information provided in the article itself is informative. An analysis of the teeth from 10 of the skeletons had taken place by the time this article had been written, which allowed archaeologists to date the skeletons appropriately. We are then told that “Archaeologists from Oxford believe the men were probably executed by local Anglo-Saxons in front of an audience.” In a case like this it is somewhat clear that these deviant burials were

a result of criminality or a mass cull of foreigners; the bodies were also thought to have been buried naked which is a reoccurring theme in deviant burials. The information portrayed is interesting and the use of a few images draws in the reader. There is no attempt at sensationalising the discovery at Weymouth in this article however there is some sensationalism in *The Daily Mail*'s article discussed previously. *BBC News* is considered to be a more trust-worthy news website that is no way associated with tabloids and gossip.

The Telegraph posted an article on the same day as *BBC News* on the 10th March 2010. Their information is equal to that in the *BBC* article and says in the title how the remains "were probably executed Vikings." Information on decapitations and mass executions is given. What is interesting about this discovery is how the site is reported in articles during its discovery and subsequent dating and then there are no more articles reporting on the discovery until 2012, when conveniently enough there is a documentary being released about the discovery.

Information about the Weymouth deviants is given again in two articles, one by *The Daily Mail* on the 25th January 2012 and another by *The Telegraph* on the exact same day. *The Daily Mail*'s article is essentially correcting their information to the new dates for the remains and then move onto new research being carried out which has resulted in a *National Geographic* documentary to be aired that night. *The Telegraph* also revisit the information published in the article written two years prior but include the new research being done and the fact that a programme would be on that night about the site. The same image of the researcher who had produced the documentary is used in both articles; a blonde-haired woman standing over a rather clinical looking table with bones laid on it. Information of the show and what time it was to be aired is included in a last line on *The Daily Mail*'s article while information on the new documentary is given mid-text in *The Telegraph*'s article. Promotion of archaeological shows is encouraged which in turn encourages the public to

learn more about archaeology and certain sites, however the initial 2009 article by *The Daily Mail* giving information that was not yet confirmed in their title was misleading the public in order to gain interest. There are comments in both 2012 articles and these comments will be analysed in order to ascertain what the public's reaction to these stories was, this will be discussed further along in this chapter as will the other comments.

Eastern European Articles

Eastern European articles are being used in this thesis in order to ascertain whether deviant burials from Eastern Europe are more likely to be reported on by UK news websites as being vampires or other superstition-fuelled entities. So far, Romano-British deviant burials have not at all been named as vampire burials even though correct information and background on deviant burials has been given. For Anglo-Saxon deviant burials, the UK media is far more likely to label the discovery as a vampire and relate the discovery to modern popular culture in order to gain readers.

The first case study for this section is the somewhat recent discovery of decapitated and staked burials in Bulgaria. The discovery was made in the summer of 2012 and subsequently reported on that summer by a number of online newspapers. Again, the first newspaper to report on the story was *The Daily Mail*, their ability to write a quick news story becoming more evident, which could be a negative or positive fact. The article written by Daniel Miller on the 5th June 2012 is titled; "Are you sure digging him up is a good idea? Archaeologists find Bulgarian 'vampires' from Middle Ages with iron rods staked through their chests." The false fearful tone of the opening question adds to the novelty of the article, the public seems to respond well to this article as there are 69 comments in total for it. *The Daily Mail* suggest that the finds "shed new light on just how seriously people took the threat of vampires and how those beliefs transformed into the modern myth." While this is true,

burials showing signs of decapitation and staking were not necessarily feared to be vampires and more information on deviant burials of this type should be discussed in articles. The mystery surrounding the word ‘vampire’ definitely proves successful in drawing readers and their opinions. There is a large table containing information on how the vampire folklore began in the Middle Ages, which contains accurate information discussed in Chapter 4, however they have sensationalised the piece by including an image of Christopher Lee as *Dracula* in the 1958 film. The public will have these images placed into their minds while reading the article and will respond to the reference to popular culture within the comments. *BBC News* lives up to its reputation and writes a short, informative piece on “‘Vampire’ skeletons found in Bulgaria near Black Sea” on the 6th June 2012. There is more emphasis on the location of the burial in this title, and there is only one, low-resolution image of a crouched archaeologist dusting away at a group of bones in a grave. Information on the fear of vampires at the time and methods of killing these suspected vampires is given however Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* movie is mentioned at the end of the article in one small paragraph, in contrast to *The Daily Mail*’s larger piece on the association with Dracula including an image that the public could easily relate to.

In contrast to the *BBC*’s news story, *The Mirror*’s piece on the 6th June 2012 on the Bulgarian deviants is titled; “Grab the garlic! ‘Vampire’ skeletons with iron rods stabbed through their hearts found in Bulgaria.” Garlic is commonly associated as warding off modern vampires and inclusion of this in the title will cause the public to know the article will be about vampires. The first image we see is a photo of the skeleton with some sort of iron object on its left side, supposedly the stake being spoken about; in-set they have placed an image of Christopher Lee as Dracula, a theme we have commonly seen within articles from Eastern Europe. The use of this type of popular culture serves to draw in the general public who will be interested in finding out more about a topic they know about, but is still

surrounded with an air of mystery. Further down in the article is a larger image of Christopher Lee as Dracula in 1958. With the inclusion of images of Dracula as we know him through popular culture, *The Daily Mail* and *The Mirror* appeal to the member of the public who is familiar with these images and the stereotypical image of the vampire.

The Huffington Post, a purely online newspaper with websites for both the USA and the UK, wrote about the Bulgaria deviants on the 7th June 2012 on their UK website. The article was written by Sara C. Nelson and the title was; “‘Vampire’ Skeletons With Stakes Through Their Heats Found In Bulgarian Black Sea Town Of Sozopol (PICTURES).” The first thing that stands out is the fact that they have very clearly announced that the article contains pictures, knowing the public will want to see images of the site thus drawing them to the article. Before the article even begins, there is an image of the skeleton with a clear metallic stake on its left side. There is no attempt at sensationalising the story or saturating it with images of Dracula or clever stereotypical associations, but rather a clear explanation of the beliefs of those living in the area is described, ending with an image of an archaeologist in a baseball cap dusting away at a skeleton. There is a obvious difference between articles from *The BBC* and *The Huffington Post*; both these websites do not feel the need to include images of Dracula or other popular images and text we associate with the image of a vampire we are familiar with. *The Huffington Post*’s article also received 51 comments from the public, which shows that popular culture used within these types of articles about deviant burials will not necessarily draw more interaction from the public.

The second case study for this section is the very recent discovery of decapitated burials in Gliwice, Poland. The discovery was made back in July 2013, and a number of online newspapers jumped at the chance to gain some readers with this mythical discovery.

Again, *The Daily Mail* were first to report on this discovery. On the 15th July 2013 they titled the story; “Archaeologists unearth ‘vampire graves’ containing decapitated skeletons with skulls placed between their legs on Polish building site.” Again, the use of ‘vampire graves’ by the author, Matt Blake, appeals to reader’s curiosity of things that are unknown and foreign but also appeals to the familiarity of knowing what a vampire may look like stereotypically. The article opens with a landscape image of a supine skeleton on some sort of table, but the image is from the Bulgarian discovery discussed earlier in this section. The similarities with their other stories on deviant burials discussed earlier are clear to see. Images of popular 1922 film *Nosferatu* and the cast of *The Twilight Saga* are seen next to each other half-way through the article. The information within the article is correct and they delve quite deeply into the folklore surrounding the vampire myth, however the inclusion of these images appeal to the public’s perceptions of vampires and encourages like-minded comments.

On the same day, *The Huffington Post* covers the same story, again including the fact that they have photos of the skeleton by announcing “(PHOTO)” in the title. The author is Meredith Bennett-Smith, and the article appears to have been updated three days later on the 15th, possibly to correct some information. Instead of an image, there is a video about the discovery at the top of the page explaining the site and the circumstances around the decapitations. Videos are more likely to attract readers as it means there is less reading to be done, the video however uses clips from vintage vampires movies while information is given. The photo of the skeletons is included in the video, with no stand-alone photo within the article. This article has collected an impressive 726 comments from the public; perhaps the use of a video instead of multiple photos has increased feedback.

The last article to be discussed is by *The Guardian* on the same Polish deviants. Written on the 16th July 2013 by Leo Hickman, the title is; “What is the meaning of the

‘vampire graves’ unearthed in Poland?” The byline mentions there may be a “less spooky explanation” for the decapitated burials. Directly under the byline is an image of a skeleton from the site with its skull placed between its knees. Hickman continues to give a brief history of the vampire and how its folklore began, and then we see another image of Nosferatu, the same used by *The Daily Mail*’s author, Matt Blake. *The Guardian*’s article draws 198 comments from the public, perhaps due to its reputation or perhaps due to the use of images, particularly that of Nosferatu.

Public Comments

A total of 21 news articles have been used in this thesis in order to establish how the media is portraying deviant burials, 11 of these articles were laden with vampire stereotypes either in their titles, the text or the comments. In order to discuss the comments accompanying these articles to ascertain how the public is reacting to these stories of deviant burials, three tables have been created showing the most common words in these 11 articles and how often they appear.

Table 1: *Frequency of words in media story titles;*

Word	Frequency
Vampire	13

Table 2: *Frequency of stereotypical words in media story text;*

Word	Frequency
Dracula	3
Twilight	2

Table 3: *Frequency of stereotypical words in comments section;*

Word	Frequency
Dracula	13
David Cameron	2
Generic Political Reference	30
Blood-Sucker	4
Margaret Thatcher	1
Buffy The Vampire Slayer	6
Zombies	4
Bats	3
Werewolves	2
Twilight	3
Garlic	4
Fangs	3

These results provide interesting conclusions; it will be interesting to see whether the large amount of Dracula comments fall mainly under those articles that have mentioned or used images of Dracula in their articles. Blake’s 2013 article for *The Daily Mail* on the Polish deviants found contains one photo of Nosferatu and one image of the cast of *The Twilight Saga* along with 13 comments by the public. Here it will be worth mentioning that there is a voting system for comments on *The Daily Mail* where a comment can be up-voted or down-voted. When discussing comments, their up-vote or down-vote amount will also be displayed in this format: (+/- 00). For this reason, all *Daily Mail* articles will be analysed first using the vote system and then other newspapers will be discussed without the vote system. One comment on this 2013 *Daily Mail* article reads;

“How Twilight Should Have Ended” (+ 35)

This user has responded to the use of *Twilight* imagery in the article, and has decided to make a humorous comment relating to it. This comment has also been up-voted quite a number of times, which suggests other members of the public have also responded to the *Twilight* imagery and comment. The imagery used on the *Daily Mail*’s article from June 2012 on the Bulgarian deviants sparked comments from the public;

“Lol, DM I wasn’t expecting to see Christopher Lee in that last pic! :)” (+ 36)

A positive response from someone who recognises the popular culture used in the article, and thus responds well to it. The + 36 rating means more people agreed with the comment and could relate to the article in that way. A further comment showing that the public react positively to these news stories with references to popular culture they can relate to is;

“Buffy has a lot to answer for!” (+ 19)

Reference to a popular television programme about vampires after reading an article on ‘vampires’ suggests that the article draws readers who can associate vampires to their own knowledge of popular culture.

The lowest rated comment *The Daily Mail*’s June 2013 article on the Polish deviants is;

“Not vampires, demoniacs” (- 44)

This is interesting as it appears the public do not like comments that are overly superstitious or seem too fanatical even though the article itself suggest superstition. A thought that runs throughout most of the 11 articles analysed is the fact that these deviant burials were decapitated whilst still alive, causing many members of the public to be outraged and make angry comments. The same thing is seen in another *Daily Mail* article written in November 2012 on the Southwell deviant. A comment reads;

“This is a real possibility if one looks at it through the lens of the Bible and extra-biblical books that tells the story of fallen angels tinkering with the DNA of people and animals. Our bodies are animated by our souls/spirits so who’s to say that a demon cannot animate a “dead” body making it one of the “undead”? Just sayin”(- 8)

The comment has received a rating of – 8, suggesting the public are not in agreement with the religious and superstitious post. There are also people reacting positively to this story, with one reader commenting;

“What a cool archaeological find!!!!” (+ 18)

Readers like this respond well to the imagery used and are possibly able to relate it to their own interests within popular culture as Holtorf (2005) discusses in his book *From Stonehenge to Las Vegas*.

A frequent theme throughout the article analysed is the amount of politically motivated comments from the public on articles that have no political content. A very unpopular comment on *The Daily Mail*'s November 2012 article on the Southwell deviant reads;

“I didn't know Tony Blair had died.” (- 300)

This comment received a rating of – 300, not being received well by the rest of the public at all. It seems while people are willing to making political comments in an attempt to appeal to those who are interested in current affairs, they are instead making an irrelevant comment which is not received well by those genuinely interested in the archaeological aspect of the article. Another comment like this is seen in *The Daily Mail*'s November 2012 article on the Southwell deviant, where a member of the public says;

“You should do this in America, would cut down on the dead voting on polling day for Democrats.” (- 4)

In another article on *The Daily Mail* written in June 2012 about the Bulgarian deviant burial, a political comment reads;

“No different than Obama lovers today.” (- 38)

The public are also responding to the ways in which articles are written and displayed. The public seem to expect a certain number of informative images within each article, and are displeased when faced with stock images or no relevant images of the skeletons found. This is seen particularly in the November 2012 article in *The Daily Mail* on the Southwell deviant. The article uses two images, one of which is from the Bulgarian discovery of deviant burials and the other of which is a photo of Southwell's highstreet. Comments expressing annoyance are as follows;

“No photos?? Just a stock one from Bulgaria. Pathetic.” (+ 36)

“Where's the file photo of a vampire, DM? You're slacking now.” (+ 101)

“2012, the modern age but The Mail uses a stock photo.....” (+ 15)

“Why has a photo from abroad been used?....” (+ 39)

The large number of positive ratings for these comments suggests the public do respond well to articles that include relevant imagery of the actual discovery, possibly appealing to their morbid curiosities. People have also reacted to the titles, with one comment on the *Daily Mail's* article on the Bulgarian discoveries saying;

“I thought the headline was very funny.” (+ 17)

The number of positive ratings suggests the public were reacting well to the inclusion of “Are you sure digging him up is a good idea?” in the title, appealing to people's knowledge of the modern vampire as resurrecting if disturbed.

The Guardian also has its own version of votes for comments, you can 'recommend' a post but you cannot down-vote it in any way. In *The Guardian's* July 2013 article on the Polish deviants, the comments differ. A comment playing on the stereotypical view of vampires and popular culture says;

“They can’t be vampires. I’ve seen Buffy, they turn to dust.” (+ 22)

There are also a number of political comments in this article as we have seen in many *Daily Mail* articles;

“I wonder what “precautions” where [sic] used when they buried Margaret Thatcher?” (+ 15)

“I remember this story from the week Thatcher died.” (+ 8)

“Politicians who had been a bit creative with the expenses?” (0)

A small amount of comments criticize the article for its title, which is by no means as sensationalised as others discussed in this thesis;

“What is the meaning of headlines that suggest an article might actually be informative?” (+ 3)

“Gee, if this weren’t the Guardian I might almost call this headline Clickbaiting.” (0)

The public are reacting and aware of the fact that articles like this are being written in such a way that they are purposefully attempting to attract readers by including certain information in their titles.

The Huffington Post offers the most amount of comments from any article in this thesis. The article on the Polish deviants racked up 726 comments, possible due to the fact that they advertise “(PHOTO)” in the title. There is no voting system for these comments. Comments range from political to stereotypical like the other articles discussed. There are many comments trying to correct information in the article or pointing out the reasons why bodies would have been given this treatment. Amongst the 726 comments are politically charged comments;

“Perhaps they were the early Dem/Progressives and Liberals.”

“Vampires?! I didn’t know there were Republicans in Poland.”

“I think they were buried that way to show they were liberals.”

There are also a number of comments that are a result of popular culture;

“What about all the zombies?”

“I blame the werewolves.”

“Did their bones sparkle in the sunlight? If not than [sic] they are not REAL vampires.” (In reference to characters in the *Twilight* films).

These types of comments are made by those who associate vampires with the stereotypes we are generally raised with, encouraged by the 1920’s and modern culture. Articles like this appeal to those who are familiar with these modern cultures and stereotypes, in turn keeping the stereotypes alive. In another *Huffington Post* article from June 2012 on the Bulgarian deviants, there are significantly less comments, just 51. In these comments we see similarities with the other articles; there are a number of comments offering more information on the reasons behind decapitation and staking, comments reacting to stereotypes and sensationalism and one politically driven statement;

“Cameron watch out!!!”

Comments relating to stereotypes and sensationalism are as follows;

“fangs for that , nice to hear the tooth for a change.”

This comment is a play on words and uses the stereotype of fangs associated with vampires to make a comment.

“Iron? Shouldn’t it be wooden if they were vampires?”

Using knowledge from what stereotypical vampires are associated with, this comment is a reaction to information within the article. The use of this knowledge in the article shows that popular culture makes the public question whether archaeological discoveries have merit when portrayed as ‘vampires’ in the media.

In comparison, comments from the *National Geographic*’s June 2013 article on the Polish deviants by Heather Pringle are not politically driven in any way, and are more likely to ask more questions and be intrigued, however there is one comment that react to the vampire stereotype;

“I still feel as though vampires do indeed exist, but this is my opinion. Whether or not people think that I am crazy will not change my mind on how I feel about vampires. I believe that vampires are blood-sucking carnivores and they will stop at nothing to kill their pray and keep ‘what’ they are a secret from all.”

This person obviously believes in the vampire myth, thus they would have not taken the article lightly and may have been drawn to it more than a non-believer. Therefore one could say the use of ‘vampire’ in the title could attract those who believe in the myth.

In an article by *BBC News* written by Katy Wright in April 2006 on the York discovery, the comments are what would be expected from those who read *BBC News*. The comments inspire debate and communication, offering up opinions and interpretations such as;

“Could they have been converts to Christianity who were beheaded for treason?”

“Perhaps they are descendants of Germanic Alemanni tribes who arrived with Constantius Chlorus. Some of which helped the pict with their invasion of northern Britain.”

There are no comments in this article from the public that relate to any stereotypes of the undead, perhaps due to the fact that the article is on Roman-Britian and not Anglo-Saxon or Eastern European deviant burial.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the different ways in which the media portray deviant burials from the Romano-British period, the Anglo-Saxon period and the Eastern-European examples of deviant burial.

When Romano-British deviant burials are written about, there seems to be no attempt to name them as vampire burials however there is some explanation of deviant burials and the reasons behind them. In all the articles written about the York and Norfolk burials, there is not one mention of vampires or any other supernatural myths. The few comments associated with these articles do not raise the issue of vampires or the undead either, perhaps because those online newspapers used for this thesis are of high reputation and are not counted as tabloid newspapers, therefore they have no need to sensationalise the stories in order to appeal to more readers.

The Anglo-Saxon stories are far more likely to be dubbed vampire burials or associated with the supernatural however we do not see this occurring when the mass grave in Dorset is reported on (Cohen, 2012) in *The Daily Mail*. Perhaps mass graves are more likely to be dubbed gladiator burials or the result of war rather than superstition. In the UK it may be more unlikely to find one or two deviant burials in a seemingly normal setting, like the Southwell deviant which attracted a significant amount of attention.

Eastern-European stories have been found to be far more sensationalised. This may be due to the fact that the folklore of the vampire began in these countries like Poland and Bulgaria, therefore making deviant burials far more likely to be a result of past superstitions.

Images of Dracula seen in popular cultural films are used in these articles more than the other Anglo-Saxon or Romano-British articles. These articles in turn are receiving more comments that relate to these images or stereotypes associated with those images. These articles also receive more comments based on other popular cultural films and television programmes based on vampires and the undead.

The comments analysed result in many political comments, however these political comments are far more likely to appear in tabloid newspapers such as *The Daily Mail*. This might be due to the fact that these newspapers generally draw in this kind of reader, who is interested in party politics and gossip, therefore when newspapers like these attempt to target a different kind of reader, frequent readers also read them and try to form the story into a politically driven comment. There are also many comments on tabloid newspapers perpetuating stereotypes and reacting to the use of stereotypes and sensationalism in the articles in a positive way. People are also reacting to the images of Dracula positively. However, there are also comments criticising the blatant sensationalism in titles and article text.

People are far more likely to comment on an article when popular culture is referenced, or if there are photos of the deviant burial in clear view. If there are no relevant images in the article, the public ask why they have not been included and expect them in order to fully enjoy the article. Those who comment positively with encouragement for these articles are responding well to the sensationalism and imagery on the article.

The public are indeed drawn to things that they deem familiar, like the vampire myth and the story behind it, however they are also drawn to the unknown and therefore when they are faced with an opportunity to see the skeleton of a possible 'vampire' they jump at the chance to view something unknown in a context that they are familiar with. When the

information given is not the information they were expecting, they ask where that information is, or why that information is different to what they know. Moshenska (2006, 91) suggests that people are 'generally attracted to archaeology by the fascination with origins' which may be what we are seeing when more people are attracted to stories from Eastern Europe, as the vampire myth is known to come from this area.

In archaeology, giving people a link between the dead and the living is always welcomed, especially in the west where we are not typically required to come in contact with the dead depending on local, national or cultural traditions (Sayer, 2010, 484) . When you give the living a link not only to the dead, but the deviant dead, you receive much more interest, as we are all morbidly curious about superstitions and whether or not there is something supernatural in this world.

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