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IN A FUTILE SEARCH OF TRANSI TOMBS IN SCOTLAND

Słowa kluczowe: szkocka sztuka sepulkralna, nagrobki typu transi, śmierć
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Tombs are the clothes of the dead
and a grave is a plain suit;
while an expensive monument
is one with embroidery.
Thomas Fuller

1. Introduction

In almost all civilisations, bodies of the deceased are expected to be laid to rest in a specific manner which allows for the further transition of the soul into the netherworld. These rites contain a variety of rituals, with their distinct purposes characteristic of a culture. For instance, in the Western world such ceremonies usually include commemoration of the dead in order to preserve their memory long after their demise. The most prevalent manner of achieving that is the construction of a tomb. Tombs, apart from the aforementioned aim of honouring the memory of the departed, can also be a sign of social status. This was especially true in the past, when members of the upper class wished to be distinguished from their counterparts lower down on the social ladder even after death[1].

The elaboration of funerary monuments was one of the means of discrimination between representatives of different social classes. Nevertheless, it

[1] Some errors in this article were pointed out to me by Prof. Marek Smoluk of the University of Zielona Góra, whose help in the creation of this study was invaluable.

has to be remembered that the structure of a tomb was subject not only to the current exigencies of the society, but also to the evolving religious issues of that time. The latter dictated the main purposes of tombs, which were inextricably linked with their structure. For instance, throughout Catholic Europe of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, funerary monuments could facilitate the salvation of the soul through the application of inscriptions exhorting passers-by to pray for the deceased. Furthermore, sepulchres frequently expressed hope for the salvation of the departed[2] via the incorporation of symbolic images, such as, for example, scallop shells[3].

As can be seen, achieving the salvation of the soul of the deceased was one of the primary purposes of tombs. In some cases, inscriptions asking for intercessory prayers were deemed insufficient and it was believed that inspiring pity in bystanders would be more effective. The result of such an assumption was the emergence of the so-called transi tomb. Transis, defined for the sake of this research as a "representation of the deceased as a corpse, shown either nude or wrapped in a shroud"[4], trace their origins to the fourteenth century[5]. One of the most important factors contributing to their development was the 14th–century outbreak of the Black Death. Aside from the multifarious economic and social effects of this pandemic, it familiarised the populace with the reality of death and the body's decay, and it brought about a general feeling of anxiety. Both factors were of key importance in the creation of European transi tombs.

2. Research and Literature Review

Cadaver tombs are to be found within various regions which were affected by the Black Death – viz. Italy, Germany, Austria, France, the Netherlands, and England. As the plague ravaged almost all Europe and had a devastating impact upon the populace almost everywhere, it is noteworthy that transi tombs did not appear in each and every country afflicted by it. This indicates that the contagion could not have been the sole factor conditioning the emergence of transis. In view of the above, the question arises – why and what circumstances led to the choice of cadaver tombs, and which of those should be perceived as being primary determinants?

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[2] K. Cohen, *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Los Angeles 1973, p. 3–4.

[3] Ibidem, p. 83.

[4] Ibidem, p. 9.

[5] Ariès claims that the image of a decaying body appeared as early as in 1320 on the walls of the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi; cf. P. Aričs, *Człowiek i śmierć*, trans. Eligia Bąkowska, Warszawa 1989, p. 118. Ralph Houlbrooke places the emergence of the "shrouded corpse" image in the early 15th century. Cf. R. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750*, Oxford 1998, p. 346.

The vast topic of transis has been covered by a number of scholars, such as Kathleen Cohen (*Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 1973), Erwin Panofsky (*Tomb Sculpture*, 1964), and Emile Mâle (*L'art religieux de la fin du moyen âge*, 1922). Since the origins and form of specific cadaver tombs are comprehensively investigated in these, and other, works, the primary aim of this study is to ascertain those circumstances that favoured the development of such a sepulchre type and, subsequently, to attempt to determine which of them were of primary importance.

To provide answers to the questions posed above, a comparison is made between England, characterised by an abundance of transi tombs, and Scotland, which lacks them[6]. The choice of these two particular countries is justified by their proximity, interconnected history and similar religious heritage. The factors underlying the emergence of the transi tomb as a type of funerary monument are analysed in both states, through my interpretation and discussion of the already existing works**.** It should allow for the assessment and evaluation of the question why transi tombs are non–existent in Scotland.

3. Discussion

In 1424, commissioned by Henry Chichele (c. 1364 – 1443), the Archbishop of Canterbury, the construction of a tomb that would be the first of its kind in England commenced[7]. Its novelty relied on the application of two figures placed one above the other, with the upper being a full–sized sculpture of Chichele in his robes of office and the lower presenting his corpse in a shroud[8]. Over the course of the next hundred years, similar transi tombs spread through England; as they did so their form began to diverge from that which they took in other countries[9]. Despite the local variances, comparable factors underlie the emergence of transi tombs in these (and other) countries. As identified by Kathleen Cohen, they were:

1) traditional works devoted to the art of dying,
2) the influence of the 14th–century outbreak of the Black Death,

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[6] There is one tomb that might be perceived by some as a Scottish transi. It is located in the Torphichen Preceptory in Torphichen, West Lothian, and it belongs to Sir Walter Lindsay. Cf. H. B. M'Call, *The history and antiquities of the parish of Mid-Calder, with some account of the religious house of Torphichen, founded upon record*, Edinburgh 1894, p. 259.

[7] K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 15.

[8] Loc. cit.

[9] In Germany and Austria, for example, transi figures were often covered with snakes, worms and/or frogs. England was characterised by the "emaciated corpse" type of transi, which also appeared in France, Burgundy and the Lowlands. Cf. Ibidem, p. 2.

3) general feeling of anxiety originating from the conflict between the Church's traditional teachings of humility and the growing accumulation of wealth both by the clergy and by the laity,

4) contemporary rituals concerned with burial of the dead,

5) a perceived need for intercession on the behalf of the deceased's soul,

6) the *memento mori* imagery,

7) various modes of bodily humiliation, the main purpose of which was to achieve salvation of the soul,

8) alchemical symbolism, and

9) Neo–Platonic symbolic thought[10].

As Cohen's work is concerned with cadaver tombs from all across Europe, one should not presume the preceding factors to be equally characteristic of all regions. The marked differences between European transi tombs seem to support this hypothesis[11]. This study does not discuss all the aspects presented above, but confines itself to those applicable to the appearance of transis in England.

In an era where religion and devotion permeated all spheres of everyday life, demonstrating a right and pious lifestyle was of critical importance not only for the clergy, but also for the laity. The former were obliged to preach the Word of God and to provide spiritual advice when needed, but the latter were also expected to lead a devout and godly life. Such aims were both propagated and facilitated by the traditional moralistic writings concerned with, among many other things, attaining a "good" death[12]. Their main purpose was to counter pride and to inspire people to consider the salvation of their souls, and they achieved this aim through detailed descriptions of the human body's decay and a remark on the transience of all earthly things and the inevitability of death[13]. Frequently, it was the personified dead body itself which addressed the beholder and warned them against vanity and pride. An English homily from the 12th century entitled *A Message from the Tomb* is believed to have foreshadowed this technique of the dead talking to the living, which was subsequently used in English transi tombs[14]:

> Why, wretch, dost thou toil with covetousness in this world ? or why dost thou arrogantly lift thyself up in pride and in evil habits and follow sin too much? Look on me and abhor thy evil thoughts and bethink thyself. Look on my bones here in this dust, and think of thyself. Before, I was such a one as thou art now, and thou shalt yet become such as I am now.[15]

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[10] Ibidem, p. 4.

[11] The German type of the cadaver tomb, mentioned in footnote no. 9, is a suitable example of this. Cf. Ibidem, p. 2.

[12] Ibidem, p. 4.

[13] Ibidem, p. 24.

[14] Ibidem, p. 26.

[15] *Twelfth century homilies in Ms. Bodley 343, Part I*, ed. A. O. Belfour, London 1909, p. 125.

Although this poem includes no vivid description of those processes that accompany the decay of a corpse – a literary device which preceded the emergence of transi tombs in England as well as in continental Europe – one still encounters the motif of the dead talking to the living, warning of the fragility of life, which played a vital part in the creation of the cadaver tomb. This theme also appears in another significant work connected with the history of English transis, namely the late medieval poem *Disputacioun Betwyx þe Body and Wormes*. Its importance stems partially from the fact that it was supplemented with an image of a double tomb similar to that of Archbishop Chichele in Canterbury Cathedral[16]. In addition to this, the poem describes quite graphically the fate of the body of a once–beautiful woman. It assumes a form of conversation between the corpse of the deceased and the worms which devour it. When asked by the woman to leave her alone, they respond: "No, no, we won't depart from you / While one of your bones with another's connected, / Till we have scoured and polished 'em, too, / Made 'em clean as can be, not a joint neglected"[17]. The macabre description of the state of – in this case – the dead woman's body would be crucial in the subsequent development of English transi tombs. Although later English works devoted to the art of dying seem to have focused more upon the last moments of life and on the redistribution of property and reparation of wrongs, their 11th – 13th century counterparts, such as the writings of Anselm of Canterbury[18], employed the motif of a dead body to extirpate pride in readers, thereby preparing the ground for the creation of English cadaver tombs.

Despite the close proximity to England, a search for a similar technique in Scottish moralistic writings has been in vain. This is not to say, however, that Scotland lacks *ars moriendi* literature. On the contrary, Scottish works devoted to the art of dying well include *The Book Intytulid the Art of Good Lywyng & Good Deyng*, translated into Scots by Thomas Lewington[19] and *The Craft of Deyng*[20], to name just a few. Scotland also saw several poems that might be said to have propagated the "good" death, such as *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour* by Sir Gilbert Hay[21] (15th century). Never-

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[16] K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 15–16. Its upper figure was a woman shown as she had been during her life, while the lower one was that of a transi. Ibidem, p. 29–30.

[17] J. R. Rytting, *A Disputacioun Betwyx þe Body and Wormes: A Translation*, "Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies" 2000, 31 (1), Los Angeles, p. 228, http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0c04p0xq#page-1 [accessed: 5th August 2015].

[18] K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 23–24.

[19] *The Book Intytulid the Art of Good Lywyng & Good Deyng*, trans. T. Lewington, Paris 1503.

[20] *Craft of Deying* [in:] R*atis raving, and other moral and religious pieces, in prose and verse*, ed. J. Rawson Lumby, London 1870. Both books were discussed in: G. D. Raeburn, *The Long Reformation of the Dead in Scotland*, Durham theses, Durham University 2012, p. 39, http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/6926/ [accessed 22nd July 2015].

[21] G. Hay, *The Buik of the Most Noble and Vailzeand Conquerour Alexander the Great*, Edinburgh 1831.

theless, all these works lack the macabre element describing the body's future fate, which was adopted by English moralists of the High Middle Ages. Similarly, post–Reformation writings – for example, *The forme of prayers and ministration of the Sacraments*[22] – also refrained from using the vivid images of decay in order to persuade readers to behave morally. It seems that, although *ars moriendi* literature was present in Scotland, it did not adopt the aforementioned symbolism used by the early medieval English writers. In view of the above, it may be concluded that the absence of the macabre element in Scottish *ars moriendi* might have contributed to the lack of transi tombs in this country. Notwithstanding this, one should bear in mind that such themes were not ubiquitous in English moralistic works – indeed, the relatively slight popularity of this literary device in England may well have inhibited its spread to the northern region.

The popularisation of the 11th– and 13th–century moralistic writings in later centuries is attributed to certain events, for example to the 1348 outbreak of the bubonic plague[23], commonly known as the Black Death. Much has been written on the causes and effects of this deadly pandemic in England and on the continent; the Scottish outbreak, however, is less well documented. One of the 14th–century authors to mention the contagion was John of Fordun, who recalls:

> In 1350, there was a great pestilence and mortality of men in the kingdom of Scotland, and this pestilence also raged for many years before and after in various parts of the world. So great a plague has never been heard of from the beginning of the world to the present day, or been recorded in books. For this plague vented its spite so thoroughly that fully a third of the human race was killed.[24]

As recorded in the chronicle, the social groups most impacted by the plague were the lower and middle classes, rarely the upper class[25]. In St Andrews twenty–four canons died because of their administering the Extreme Unction to the sick[26], which testifies to the potency of the contagion. The death toll (allegedly reaching one third of the population[27]) was also referred

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[22] *The forme of prayers and ministration of the Sacraments &c. vsed in the English Churche at Geneua, and approued by the famous and godlie learned man, John Caluin*, Edinburgh 1562. Cf. G.D. Raeburn, op. cit., p. 48.

[23] There are various hypotheses as to whether it indeed was the bubonic plague; the most popular theory is that the pandemic was caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pestis*. Cf. N. J. Besansky, *Distinct clones of Yersinia pestis caused the black death*, "PLoS Pathogens" 2010, 6 (10), San Francisco.

[24] J. Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum, Vol. I*, ed. W. F. Skene, Edinburgh 1871, p. 368–369, reprinted in: R. Horrox, *The Black Death*, Manchester 1994, p. 84.

[25] Loc. cit.

[26] W. J. McLennan, *The Eleven Plagues of Edinburgh*, "Proceedings of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh" 2001, 31, Edinburgh, p. 256.

[27] J. Fordun, *loc. cit*. However, the death toll depended greatly on the area; for instance, in Gloucester it reached 90% (S. Scott, Ch. Duncan, *Return of the Black Death: The World's*

to in the Book of Pluscarden: "In the year 1361 (…) began the second plague, and it raged until the next ensuing Christmas, wherein likewise nearly a third of mankind paid the debt of nature, *as was the case in the first plague* [my emphasis – E. A.]"[28]. As Charles Creighton suggests, it is possible that in this case the total body count of the Black Death was referenced, rather than that of Scotland alone[29]. Although the plague was eventually to reach Scotland via England, in the beginning the Scots seemed to have been quite content with its outbreak among the English. Confirmation of such attitudes can be found in Henry Knighton's account:

> The Scots, hearing of the cruel pestilence of the English, believed it had come to them from the avenging hand of God, and – as it was commonly reported in England – took for their oath when they wanted to swear, 'By the foul death of England'. And thus believing that a terrible vengeance of God had overtaken the English, they gathered in Selkirk forest with the intention of invading the kingdom of England.[30]

However, as he subsequently reports, the Scottish contracted the plague in that very same forest – 5,000 men are believed to have died in a short period of time, with the rest perishing some time later[31] . Furthermore, the eruption of the Black Death among the Scots was regarded as "(…) politically embarrassing because her [Scotland's – E. A.] propaganda had attributed the outbreak of it in England to moral shortcomings of the English"[32]. In spite of this belief, the plague eventually reached Scotland and did not subside fully until the mid–16th century[33]. As might be expected, it had a great impact both on the economic and social situation of Scotland and on the general mood over the period. It may be deduced, then, that it cannot have been a determining factor in the absence of Scottish transi tombs.

The outbreaks of the Black Death on the continent as well as in England had both a direct and indirect impact on the emergence of transi tombs, the

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Greatest Serial Killer, Chichester 2004, p. 37). Scholars seem to disagree on the exact number of plague victims. Some openly reject the plausibility of high death tolls; J. F. Shrewsbury, for instance, claims that the Black Death killed circa 5% of the English population (J. F. Shrewsbury, *History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles*, New York 1970, [in:] J. P. Byrne, *Daily Life During the Black Death*, London 2006, p. 10). Others state that the death toll reached even a half of the populace in the period 1348–1349 (cf. Ch. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages*, New Haven 2002, p. 233).

[28] *The Book of Pluscarden*, *Vol. VI*, ed. F. J. H. Skene, Edinburgh 1877, p. 231.

[29] Ch. Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain: From A.D. 664 to the Extinction of the Plague*, Cambridge 1891, p. 233–234.

[30] H. Knighton, *1349 – Of the Black Death*, [in:] *English History by Contemporary Writers. Edward III & his Wars 1327–1360*, ed. W. J. Ashley, London 1887, p. 124.

[31] Loc. cit.

[32] R. Mitchison, *A History of Scotland, 3rd ed.*, London–New York 2002, p. 43.

[33] W. J. MacLennan identifies eleven outbreaks in the city of Edinburgh between 1349 and 1644. W. J. McLennan, op. cit., *passim*.

latter being the pervasive sense of anxiety they had produced among the populace[34]. This, in turn, might have incited people to consider the future fate of their souls. Apart from this, during such uncertain times attempts were also made to search for the possible causes of the plague and it was frequently believed that the contagion was a form of punishment from God for people's sins[35]. This mode of thinking was applied not only to the outbreaks of various pandemics, but also to other calamities, such as famine or wars. This is not to say that at peaceful times people did not find a multitude of reasons to atone for their misdeeds. On the contrary, one of the most common concerns during such periods, especially among the rich, was the growing conflict between the rapid accumulation of wealth and the traditional teachings of the Church[36]. At that time, the Church doctrine advocated humility and austerity, often reminding the faithful of Jesus's words: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me"[37]. The poor were usually glorified, whereas the rich were presented as morally corrupt and avaricious. The Bible itself often stressed how difficult it would be for the wealthy to achieve salvation:

> Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God".[38]

Despite the teachings of the Church the economic growth of the Late Middle Ages, the development of trade and the emergence of large cities encouraged people to turn towards the more material aspects of life[39]. The significance of wealth in everyday life was reflected in the depictions of the deathbed behaviour in medieval *ars moriendi*. It was believed that Satan tempted the dying people in a variety of ways[40]. For instance, they were supposed to be shown all the things that they had accumulated during their lifetime, those very items of which Death would now deprive them – their beautiful house, the horses in their stables, barrels of wine, etc.[41] Ariès argues that the late Middle Ages were the period when people loved life most and that this found its reflection in art – particularly in the development of still–life paintings, which depicted material possessions[42]. In spite of the

[34] K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 52.
[35] Ibidem, p. 51–52.
[36] Ibidem, p. 48.
[37] Matt 19: 21 New International Version.
[38] Matt 19: 23-24 New International Version.
[39] K. Cohen, loc. cit.
[40] E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 – c. 1580*, New Haven 1992, p. 316.
[41] P. Ariès, op. cit., p. 135–136.
[42] Ibidem, p. 136–137.

many apparent advantages of wealth, it was believed to ignite pride, regarded as the "Queen of Sins"[43]. Therefore, it is not surprising that the feeling of anxiety was experienced especially by the rich. Thus it is claimed that transi tombs were a method of alleviating this anxiety by the humiliation of the body, through its presentation as a decaying corpse[44]. Together with pious bequests for the poor and the foundation of chantry chapels or almshouses (in the pre–Reformation period), such a funerary practice served to secure the salvation of the soul of the testator. Moreover, it also inspired others to behave in a similar manner[45]. Funerary monuments employing the images of a decaying corpse were not the only manner of degrading the body – the Black Death, for example, prompted some to demonstrate repentance by whipping themselves. These processions of flagellants were another sign of the pervading anxiety of the period and the perceived need to atone for sins[46]. Although the underlying impulse was similar in both cases, it would seem that people preferred to abuse a dead body rather than a living one[47]. What is more, transi tombs continued to represent the repentance and humility of the deceased long after they had departed, unlike bodily mortification, which was subject to obvious temporal constraint. For this reason, cadaver tombs appear to have been a convenient and lasting means of expressing humility in the face of death.

Perhaps the simplest explanation for the absence of Scottish transi tombs is to assume that Scotland did not experience economic growth as England did, and that the majority of the populace was not wealthy enough to feel concern for the fate of their souls. However, such a conclusion may prove hasty. The thirteenth century brought prosperity to Scotland, as to Europe in general. This is attested to by the development of both secular and sacral architecture and by the creation of Scottish burghs[48]. In addition, emulating their counterparts from abroad, Scottish nobility began spending money on expensive armour, war horses, textiles, castle–building and entourage[49]. Such love of worldly possessions, particularly in tension against the

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[43] Pride as the queen of sins appeared in 1266 in a poem *Miroire de vie et de mort* written by Robert l'Omne. Cf. K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 50, footnotes.

[44] Ibidem, p. 6.

[45] After the Reformation, even though it was believed that people were predestined to go either to heaven or to hell, during funeral sermons it was frequently emphasized that the best course of action for the bereaved was to imitate the virtues of the deceased and thus keep their memory alive. Houlbrooke claims that this took on the most significant psychological role of the intercession, which was to make survivors feel more confident and comfortable concerning the fate of the dead. Cf. Houlbrooke, op. cit., p. 317.

[46] K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 52.

[47] Ibidem, p. 61–62.

[48] *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland, 1000 to 1600*, eds. E. J. Cowan, L. Henderson, Edinburgh 2011, p. 3.

[49] R. Mitchison, op. cit., p. 43. These were costly affairs, and many found themselves unable to raise the needed funds to satisfy their desire for worldly possessions. This may well have led to the Scottish custom of serving in foreign armies – at a reasonable price. Ibidem, p. 44.

Church's traditional teachings recommending humility, might have amplified the anxiety occasioned by outbreaks of the plague, by famine, and by the impious lack of such humbleness in the society. For these reasons it is thought–provoking to find no Scottish transi tombs, which would explicitly represent the humiliation of the body and the repentance of the deceased. Although Scotland was indeed relatively poorer than England at this time, its aristocracy actively sought to imitate their English counterparts as far as expenditure was concerned[50]. One possible explanation for the absence of transi tombs might result from the Scottish custom of serving in foreign armies. Since the main purpose of such a practice was to obtain land[51], it seems possible that those who managed to acquire property abroad might have decided to be buried in the land they had been given, rather than in their native Scotland. Those less fortunate who died before obtaining an estate, whether in battle or of other causes, perished in an unfamiliar country. While it is safe to assume that they were buried according to the Christian rites, this usually occurred without any lasting monuments such as transi tombs. Thus, the Scottish custom of serving in foreign armies may have led to the absence of cadaver tombs in Scotland.

The most obvious objection here would be that the bodies of those who had died in a foreign country could easily have been transported to Scotland and buried there. However, one has to bear in mind that Protestant preachers (such as William Birnie, the author of *The Blame of kirk–Buriall*[52]), did not approve of the transportation of the dead to their ancestral grounds because it was believed that no burial place was preferential to any other[53]. Furthermore, it is possible that those who chose to travel abroad in search of money did not yet possess the funds required to transport their corpses back to their homeland if need be. This hypothesis is still subject to investigation; nevertheless, it is certainly plausible that such circumstances might have contributed to the absence of transis in Scotland.

One of the further factors leading to the emergence of cadaver tombs in England was the *memento mori* imagery. Here, as before, the 14th–century outbreak of the Black Death was of vital importance[54]. The close proximity of death and an intimate familiarity with its reality found reflection in the representation of dead bodies in art and in the popularisation of *memento mori* imagery. Its main purpose was to "remind the beholder of death and to urge him to behave morally"[55] and in this respect it closely resembled the moralistic writings, promulgating humility and pious living, discussed

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[50] Since it was mainly the wealthy clergy and laity that invested in transi tombs both in England and on the continent, the situation of the poor is of no importance for this study.

[51] R. Mitchison, loc. cit.

[52] W. Birnie, *The Blame of Kirk-Buriall*, Edinburgh 1606.

[53] G. D. Raeburn, op. cit., p. 87.

[54] K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 4

[55] Ibidem, p. 3.

earlier[56]. Not only did the onset of the plague speed up the dissemination of the already extant themes concerning the transience of all earthly things, but it also inspired the creation of various new images and motifs. Arguably, the most recognisable of them is the Dance of Death theme, which also found its way to England[57]. Having originally appeared on a wall in the cemetery of Les Innocents in Paris c. 1425[58], it arrived in England around the 1440s, first in the pardon churchyard of St Paul's in London (no longer extant)[59]. The portrayals of dead bodies in the Dance of Death motif and the figures on transi tombs reveal certain similarities. To start with, the Dance of Death theme and transi sculptures on tombs employ the representation of a corpse to convey a message to the beholder. Moreover, in both of them one may find an implicit exhortation to humility. In the Dance of Death images, all social classes are equal in the face of death, which does not differentiate between a king or a peasant, whereas transi tombs are supposed to represent a comparable feeling, depicting the deceased (who was usually from the upper class) as a corpse identical to that of a member of the lower class. Apart from that, there are variations of the same inscription from the Legend of the Three Living and Three Dead, saying: "I was like you, and you will be like me"[60], which also urged people to consider the future fate of their souls. It has to be remembered, however, that transi tombs were not perceived as merely conventional *memento mori*, seeing as their main purpose was not to urge the beholder to behave morally, but rather to secure intercession for the soul of the deceased[61]. In this respect, transi tombs express concern for the dead rather than for the living[62], which stands in contrast to the traditional *memento mori* imagery. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the custom of using the images of decaying dead bodies in art, such as in the Dance of Death motif, might have influenced a similar practice in funerary sculpture.

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[56] Ibidem, p. 84.

[57] While searching for *memento mori* images in England, one may find them, pre-eminently, in churches (St Mary Magdalene Church in Newark on Trent houses a panel painting depicting the Dance of Death in Markham Chapel from the early 16th century; there was a painting, not extant nowadays, in the Salisbury Cathedral entitled "Death and the Young Man", on stained glass in St Andrew's church in Norwich) and in paintings (Hans Holbein's famous *Ambassadors* from 1533 with an image of a skull or his series of woodcuts entitled *The Dance of Death*, 1538). For more information on the Dance of Death, see F. Douce, *The Dance of Death*, London 1833.

[58] Duffy, op. cit., p. 304.

[59] Houlbrooke, op. cit., p. 57. For the description of the English painting, see L. P. Kurtz, *The Dance of Death and the Macabre Spirit in European Literature*, Slatkine Reprints 1934, p. 138–139.

[60] K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 3.

[61] Although the moralistic aspect appears in transi tombs, it was not its main purpose. Ibidem, p. 44–45.

[62] Ibidem, p. 4.

Memento mori imagery appears in Scotland as well, although it seems that it is not as well–documented and preserved as it is in England. Among its surviving examples one may find the Rosslyn Chapel in Roslin, Midlothian, with a tombstone depicting Death as the King of Terrors, holding a scythe in his hand and carrying a crown on his head. Furthermore, a closer examination of some of the carvings on the pillars reveals a recurring motif of entwined corpses. The elaborate designs on the walls and the ceiling create the impression that the chapel was constructed out of bones. Representations of death similar to those in Roslin can be found on a number of Scottish tombs (for instance, that of Alexander McLeod in St Clement's Church, Harris, presents a bishop holding a skull[63]) and in the ruins of certain Scottish churches and monasteries (e.g. there is a relief of a skull and crossbones in the ruins of the Ardchattan Priory in Ardchattan, Argyll). It is unclear whether the *memento mori* theme was less widespread in Scotland or whether works demonstrating that motif are simply no longer extant, having not been recorded prior to their destruction. Thus, establishing whether the existence of the *memento mori* symbolism in Scotland could have contributed to the lack of Scottish transis proves problematic. In the first case, it would mean that the minor popularity of this theme in Scotland might have inhibited its use in funerary art. That said, another possibility for the lack of transi tombs in Scotland would be identified. However, if the opposite is true (i.e. the *memento mori* imagery had been equally popular in both countries but its Scottish examples were lost), then it could not have played a role in the lack of these funerary monuments.

The aforementioned dilemma might be solved in favour of the former possibility when another issue is taken into consideration, namely the nature of the Scottish Reformation. At the first glance, it may appear that England and Scotland share a comparable religious heritage. Notwithstanding this, the Scottish Reformation differed markedly from the English one. Firstly, Catholicism in Scotland is believed to have been much weaker than in England and therefore, when Protestantism arrived, there was little real resistance: "it [Catholicism – E.A.] fell in most of northern Europe, but nowhere else except in Iceland did it go down so easily to so weak an alternative"[64]. In contrast, English opposition to the religious changes of the 16th century took many forms (the 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace being only one of many examples[65]). Furthermore, Elizabeth I was forced to make conces-

[63] However, since the main purpose of a tomb was to secure intercession for the soul of the deceased and not to persuade the passers–by to behave morally, they might not be suitably classified as mere *memento mori*. Cohen claims that: "the summary dismissal by so many modern writers of transi tombs as mere *memento mori* for the living is both inadequate and superficial". Loc. cit.

[64] Mitchison, op. cit., p. 92.

[65] N. Jones, *The English Reformation. Religion and Cultural Adaptation*, Oxford 2002, p. 72–73.

sions during her reign, since the majority of the House of Lords was Catholic at that time; in order to enforce some of her laws, she had to adopt a rather moderate version of Protestantism[66]. Simultaneously, the father of Scottish Protestantism, John Knox, opted for Calvinism, which was perceived as a "fighting faith"[67], much stricter than its English counterpart. It is believed that "the Scottish Reformed Protestant burial practices were actually more severe than those that took place in Geneva"[68] . The construction of elaborate tombs, for instance, was disapproved of[69], and burial inside the churches was – at least in theory – forbidden[70]. The creation of such an intricate monument as a cadaver tomb would be somewhat futile if there were no place to instal it or if it were hidden from view (for example, in a burial aisle). In that case, the main purpose of such a tomb – securing intercession for the soul of the deceased – would have remained unfulfilled. It might, of course, be argued that these circumstances could have been insufficient to prevent the emergence of Scottish transis, since other types of tombs, placed in burial aisles, were still constructed to secure intercession. Nevertheless, it has to be remembered that these were accompanied by others, discussed in this study, which could be scanty on their own, but together they might have led to the absence of Scottish transis.

Conclusions and recommendations for further research

The absence of transi tombs in Scotland was by no means tantamount to the lack of concern for the soul of the deceased. For centuries, the salvation of the soul and the attainment of eternal life were ever–present in the minds of European populations, and the Scots were no exception. Attestations to this can be seen in pious bequests to the church and the distribution of alms to the poor. Therefore, the difference seems to stem from the fact that in England, as well as on the continent, it was sometimes deemed necessary to employ drastic images of a decaying body to inspire pity and sympathy in the living so as to render them more likely to pray for the souls of the dead, whereas in Scotland this appears not to have been an imperative. Transi

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66 Ch. Haigh, *English Reformations. Religion, politics, and the society under the Tudors*, Oxford 1993, p. 241–243.

67 R. Mitchison, op. cit., p. 87.

68 G. D. Raeburn, op. cit., p. 78.

69 K. Cohen, op. cit., p. 95.

70 Various parts of Scotland reacted differently to this prohibition. In some places, a fine was imposed on those who wished to have their dead buried in the kirk (although only the wealthy could afford to pay it). In others, special burial aisles were created, often built by a local laird for himself and his family. Burial aisles were an ingenious invention to satisfy everyone, since they were very close to the church (indeed, they were built as annexes) and they were usually considered to be extra-mural. Cf. G. D. Raeburn, op. cit., p. 71–72.

tombs represented a fitting fulfilment of this method of achieving the soul's salvation, their main purpose being to arouse pity in passers–by: pity which could – and should – be channelled into prayers.

The lack of Scottish cadaver tombs raises questions as to what factors played a part in the emergence of their English counterparts and to whether these determinants were also present in Scotland. From the selected list of circumstances contributing to the development of transi tombs in England, proposed by Cohen, two seem to have had no impact on the absence of such funerary monuments in Scotland. The 14th–century outbreak of the Black Death, perceived by Cohen as an amplifier which exacerbated (and occasionally gave rise to) other factors, afflicted Scotland as well, claiming a multitude of lives and persisting until the mid–16th century. That said, neither the general feeling of anxiety caused by the plague nor by the conflict between the accumulation of wealth and the traditional Church doctrine of the need of humility can be claimed as the reasons for the absence of Scottish transis, as it is highly probable that both were present in Scotland. The existence and popularity of the Scottish *memento mori* imagery should be investigated further to establish with certainty its influence on the lack of Scottish cadaver tombs. What can be demonstrated with relative certitude, however, is that some regional differences between England and Scotland, although they might at first appear insignificant, could have played a much greater role in the lack of transi tombs than it initially seems. Firstly, the macabre element is absent from Scottish moralistic writings of the 11th – 13th centuries. Such English poems as the *Disputacioun Betwyx þe Body and Wormes* have no Scottish counterpart. Even if inscriptions comparable in meaning to: "Hodi mihi, cras tibi" (Today me, tomorrow you) are found, there is no explicit description of decaying human remains – which, according to Cohen, was one of the most significant factors underlying the emergence of transis both in continental Europe and in England. Furthermore, the Scottish custom of fighting in foreign armies in order to obtain land may also have resulted in the construction of transi tombs on the land that had been acquired in return for the service rather than in Scotland. This would seem even more possible in the light of the fact that certain Scottish post–Reformation preachers considered the transportation of the dead to a specifically chosen burial ground to be superstitious. Last but not least, the nature of the Reformation in Scotland may also have played a role. The Calvinist version of Protestantism is believed to have been more severe than that which predominated in England, and there were general prohibitions against the construction of elaborate tombs and burials in the kirk. Taken apiece, any one of these elements may have been insufficient to prevent transi tombs from spreading to Scotland from England; however, in combination, they all may have led to their absence on Scottish soil.

This research is only one of a multitude of papers concerned with such examples of funerary art as the transi tomb. One should bear in mind that

the discussion of which factors contributed to the absence of Scottish transis is far from concluded. In connection with this topic, further analysis of the circumstances leading to the creation of cadaver tombs, as well as more extensive research into the particular character of the Scottish Reformation and into the existence of Scottish *memento mori* imagery, would be valuable in confirming the conclusions advanced by this study.

STRESZCZENIE

Strach przed zapomnieniem po śmierci wydaje się towarzyszyć człowiekowi od zarania dziejów. Świadczą o tym między innymi rozmaite pomniki, mające na celu zachowanie pamięci o wybitnych członkach społeczeństwa. Upamiętnianie zmarłych może przybrać różnorodne formy, z których najpopularniejszą i najbardziej rozpowszechnioną jest grób. Zarówno struktura, jak i nadrzędny cel jego konstruowania zmieniały się wraz z upływem stuleci, odpowiadając przemianom w społeczeństwach i w ich potrzebach.

Podczas gdy różnice w kształtach i głównych zadaniach, jakie grób miał wypełniać, nie dziwią w krajach oddalonych od siebie, odnalezienie ich na terenach leżących stosunkowo blisko skłania do refleksji. Co może zastanawiać jeszcze bardziej to kwestia, dlaczego jeden konkretny rodzaj grobu jest dość rozpowszechniony w jednym kraju, lecz nie pojawia się on w sąsiadującym państwie, które charakteryzuje się porównywalną historią. Przykładem tego jest tak zwany grób transi, który licznie występuje w Anglii, ale nie w Szkocji. Podczas gdy ogólnie czynniki warunkujące powstanie grobu transi w Europie zostały już poddane akademickiej dyskusji, ich ocena jako głównych determinantów pozostaje niezrealizowana.

Badania nad brakiem szkockich grobów transi sugeruje, że lokalne różnice pomiędzy Anglią a Szkocją, mimo iż początkowo wydają się one drugorzędne, mogły mieć zasadniczą rolę w rozwoju poszczególnych rodzajów grobowców. Przykładem takiej różnicy jest brak elementu makabrycznego w szkockich dziełach moralistycznych z XI – XIII wieku; fakt ten sugeruje, iż literatura mogła mieć znaczny wpływ na kształt grobów. Ponadto, pewne ważne wydarzenia, które uważa się za decydujące w kwestii powstania grobów transi, takie jak XIV-wieczny wybuch dżumy dymieniczej, zdają się mieć mniejszy wpływ w obliczu braku powyższego czynnika.