

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Magic

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## 'RITUAL LITTER' REDRESSED

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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-108-94964-4 — 'Ritual Litter' Redressed  
Ceri Houlbrook  
Frontmatter  
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## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

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It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108949644](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108949644)  
DOI: 10.1017/9781108954761

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First published 2022

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-94964-4 Paperback  
ISSN 2732-4087 (online)  
ISSN 2732-4079 (print)

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DOI: 10.1017/9781108954761  
First published online: April 2022

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**Abstract:** Ritual deposition is not an activity that many people in the Western world would consider themselves participants of. The enigmatic beliefs and magical thinking that led to the deposition of swords in watery places and votive statuettes in temples, for example, may feel irrelevant to the modern day. However, it could be argued that ritual deposition is a more widespread feature now than in the past, with folk assemblages – from roadside memorials and love-lock bridges to wishing fountains and coin trees – emerging prolifically worldwide. Despite these assemblages being as much the result of ritual activity as historically deposited objects, they are rarely given the same academic attention or heritage status. Besides exploring the nature of ritual deposition in the contemporary West, and the beliefs and symbolism behind various assemblages, this Element examines the heritage of the modern-day deposit, promoting a renegotiation of the pejorative term 'ritual litter'.

**Keywords:** ritual litter, folk assemblage, ritual, magical thinking, heritage

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ISBNs: 9781108949644 (PB), 9781108954761 (OC)  
ISSNs: 2732-4087 (online), 2732-4079 (print)

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