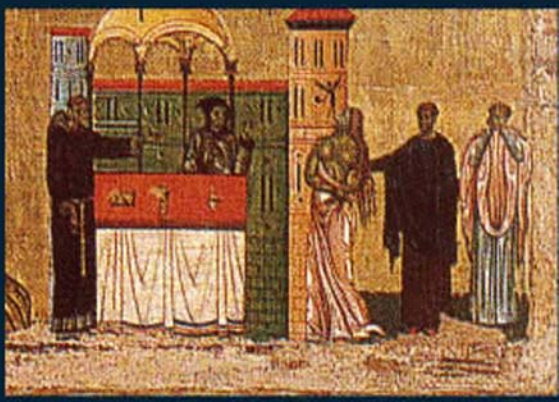
Demons, Spirits, Witches/1

Communicating with the Spirits



Edited by
Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs

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Demons, Spirits, Witches

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GÁBOR KLANICZAY and ÉVA PÓCS

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COMMUNICATING WITH THE SPIRITS

Edited by

Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs

in collaboration with Eszter Csonka-Takács

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INTRODUCTION

GÁBOR KLANICZAY and ÉVA PÓCS

The essays collected in this volume come from a broader pool of studies. This is the first volume in a series of three, containing eleven essays of altogether forty-three articles based on the topics of the interdisciplinary conference held on "Demons, spirits, and witches" in Budapest, in 1999. Historians, ethnologists, and folklorists from four continents presented and discussed their research on this important area of universal human mental experience: the forms and the techniques of communication with representatives of other worlds, and the basic religious–ethnological concepts used for making sense from this experience.

The 1999 conference was the culmination of a series of research activities, which started in the early 1980s with the formation of a discussion group for the folkloric and historical research on the documentation of Hungarian witch-trials at the Ethnographic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The original plan of our group was to prepare a computer-based analysis of the thousands of Hungarian bewitchment narratives and hundreds of witchcraft confessions to be found in these "archives of repression" where recent historiography discovered a treasure-mine of historical folk-beliefs. Our project was to approach and systematize witchcraft mythologies and bewitchment narratives on the basis of encoding and classifying information in the judicial source-material. This design, however, proved to be too ambitious. At first we had enduring debates on the structure of our very sophisticated questionnaire, and renewed attempts to experiment with various and more flexible types of database software (ending with κλειω, devel-

oped at the Max Planck Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen). We also managed to recruit a group of enthusiastic students willing to engage into this collective enterprise, and subsequently we spent much time with ordering, correcting, standardizing the vast set of encoded data. We still have not arrived, however, to a point where our databank could be put, as we had originally hoped, for collective public use (cf. Klaniczay, Pócs, Tóth G., and Wolosz, 2001). Yet, our activities did produce tangible results in three unforeseen domains: source editions, international contacts and a broadening of our research perspectives.

The systematic exploration of unedited source materials on witch-hunts in Hungarian archives and those of the neighboring countries lead to the edition of seven volumes of witch-trials (Sugár, 1987; Klaniczay, Kristóf, and Pócs, 1–2; 1989, Bessenyei, 1–2, 1997–2001; Kiss and Pál-Antal, 2002; Balogh, 2003), with three more in the pipeline, appearing very soon. An ambitious repertory of all these witchcraft prosecutions also resulted from this work (Tóth G., 2000), and numerous books and studies (Pócs, 1989, 1999, 2001; Klaniczay, 1990, 1991; Kristóf, 1998; Klaniczay and Kristóf, 2001).

A second result of our research was the successful relationship established between different international circles of witchcraft research. The exciting set of problems emerging from the comparative overview of early modern European witchcraft at the conference in Stockholm, in 1984 (Ankarloo and Henningsen, 1990) which included, for the first time, some insights into witchcraft prosecution on Europe's "peripheries," Scandinavia and East-Central Europe, prompted us in 1988 to organize a second such comparative conference in Budapest: "Witch Beliefs and Witch-Hunting in Central and Eastern Europe" (Klaniczay and Pócs 1991–1992). This meeting had the merit to bring together several innovative experts of current witchcraft research in the West with a large number of historians and folklorists from East-Central Europe, whose materials had been hitherto largely unknown and ignored by international research. The documentation of late witchcraft prosecutions in these regions, still dragging on in the eighteenth century, considerably modified the comparative picture in this field. The examination of East-Central

European and South-East European materials, shamanism, fairy-beliefs, other archaic sorcerers and folk-mythologies also furthered the discussion of a much debated problem, the origin of the concept of the witches' Sabbath.

In the 1990s, there was a real boom in large international gatherings discussing the historical anthropology of European witch-hunts: the conference paying a tribute to the seminal book *Religion and the Decline of Magic* by Keith Thomas (1971) in Exeter, in 1991 (Barry, Hester, and Roberts, 1996); the 1992 conference at the ENS in Fontenay-Saint-Cloud on the witches' Sabbath (Jacques-Chaquin and Préaud, 1993); the important regional overview in Lemgo in 1992 (Wilbertz, Schwerhoff, and Scheffler, 1994); the 1994 conference on witchcraft and healing in Amsterdam; the workshops organized by the German "Arbeitskreis interdisziplinäre Hexenforschung" (Lorenz and Schmidt, 1994; Lorenz and Bauer, 1995); the discussions and researches related to the origins of the Sabbath imagery by the working group around Agostino Paravicini Bagliani in Lausanne (*L'Imaginaire du Sabbat,* 1999); the 1998 conference in Swansea, Wales on the "languages of witchcraft" (Clark, 2001). The conference we organized in Budapest in 1999 was a part of this series of gatherings. Instead of playing down the important role of this conference for the formulation of the essays in our three volumes—like most collections of studies do nowadays—we should like to stress the importance of the stimulating discussions there. The conference tried to assemble a new constellation of experts around the history of witchcraft and demonology—involving, among others, significant groups of scholars from Scandinavia, the Balkans, and Israel—and providing an opportunity for many doctoral students of the Central European University to present their fresh insights into these historical problems. Our intention was to approach the problems of witchcraft, shamanism, spirit possession and demonology from a new, synthetic angle, a point of view that relied upon the broadening field of enquiries of the research group in Budapest.

This is actually the third "unintended consequence" of the enquiry we started in the 1980s: the systematic extension of discussions on the historical conflicts of witchcraft prosecution to the

broader context of the historical transformations of folk beliefs, the archaic background of fairy beliefs and shamanism (Hoppál, 1984, Pócs, 1989, 1999), on the mutual influences of "learned" ritual magic and "popular" practices—mediators of the communication with the supernatural sphere. Hungarian folklorists and historians have recently discussed these problems in a series of workshops: on "Ecstasies, visions, dreams" (Pócs, 1998), "Soul, death and the other world" (Pócs, 2001a), "Microcosmos and macrocosmos" (Pócs, 2003), "Blessing and curse, miracle and witchcraft" (Pócs, 2004). The thematic panorama of the 1999 conference on "Demons, spirits, and witches" was formulated in this vein as well.

In the formulation of our broad thematic grasp we could also rely upon recent international tendencies: the phenomena of present-day witchcraft and other mental systems (such as shamanism and possession) were examined in the 1990s with a revived interest by scholars working with the methods of anthropological enquiry based on fieldwork and participant observation. In some regions on the "periphery" of Europe, such as Portugal, South Italy, Greece, former Yugoslavia, Baltic countries and Hungary, there are still a few isolated rural communities with a continuity of folkloric traditions preserved by oral transmission. On-going research on this also allowed the discovery of new relevant data for our subject. Meanwhile the thematic field of these studies had to be extended to another direction, and include modern paganism and New Age esoteric movements as well. Traditional ethnographic and folkloric research gradually absorbed an up-to-date anthropological approach, examining folklore phenomena and mental systems in their social context and communal function. This is partly due to the internal paradigm change of individual "national" ethnologies, and partly to the inspiration coming from cultural and social anthropology, which considered European peasantry as yet another anthropological field where the "other" has to be understood. We could mention here the South-East European investigations by English and American researchers, such as the excellent study of "Demons and the Devil" on the Isle Naxos by Charles Stewart (1991) or the "internal" enquiries by Italian anthropologists concerning manifestations of spirit possession (Pizza, 1998). The com-

plex approach on culture by historical anthropologists could have been another stimulus in this field: as to the expansion of the themes and the sources of their research they are frequently a few steps ahead of folklorists nowadays. Let us refer to the work by Owen Davies on *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736–1951* (1999) where witchcraft in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is analyzed on the basis of the printed source materials of popular culture, newspapers and journals. It was equally historians who presented a colorful panorama on traditional witchcraft accusations in twentieth century European village societies in the last volume of the series "Witchcraft and Magic in Europe" (Blécourt, 1999).

It seemed obvious, consequently, that the themes we intended to investigate have to rely upon a close cooperation of ethnographers, historians, anthropologists, and historians of religion. One of the central objectives of our 1999 conference was to provide a "meeting point" for the representatives of these disciplines. This endeavor has been present in various other recent international conferences. This is exemplified by two recently published conference volumes by Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt (2004a and 2004b), where historians and folklorists jointly provide a number of case studies on how European witchcraft beliefs developed "beyond the witch trials," from the age of the Enlightenment to the twentieth century.

The various disciplines represented in our three volumes were convened on the basis of these premises. Besides traditional folklore studies and historical anthropology, we involved researchers of the history of religion, ethno-psychiatry, art history, literary studies and other disciplines on the relationship, coexistence and conflicts of popular belief systems, Judeo-Christian mythology and demonology in medieval, modern, and contemporary Europe. We examined local differences in the structures of various European popular mythologies, in the degree of influence of Jewish and Christian demonology, paying a special attention to the divergence between Western and Eastern evolution, and consequently to the different relationship of learned demonology to popular belief systems in

the two parts of Europe. The studies published here are engaged in a phenomenological and theoretical inquiry for characterizing typical concepts, actors and situations related to this problem: witchcraft, sorcery, trance, vision, and possession; the conflict of saints, healers, seers, and shamans with the representatives of evil; the special function of escorting, protecting, possessing, harming and healing spirits; the role of pre-Christian, Jewish and Christian spirit-worlds, the haunting dead, the appearing ghosts or the antagonism of the devil and the saint. In the framework of these topics, attention is paid to the relationship between rites and beliefs, folklore and literature; the examination of temporal changes; the legacy of various pre-Christian mythologies; the study of syncretistic forms of ancient, medieval and modern belief- and rite-systems. A few "pure" examples from religious-ethnological research outside Europe are also used for elucidating European problems.

Within this broader set of problems the present volume focuses on the problem of communication with the other world. The authors discuss the phenomenon of spirit possession and its changing historical interpretations, the imaginary schemes elaborated for giving accounts of the journeys to the other world in order to communicate with the dead. Finally, the historical archetypes of this type of religious manifestation—trance prophecy, divination, and shamanism—are analyzed in a comparative framework.

The five studies dealing with possession, the recognition of demons, and the interpretation of diabolic visions and apparitions examine this communication with the supernatural from different points of view: focusing alternatively on their role in the life of an individual or a local community, or more broadly, in ecclesiastic or 'popular' culture. These investigations also complement each other from the point of view of their chronological field. Their common central problem is broadened by each author into a different direction: some of them elaborate the connection of spirit possession with other mental systems, such as witchcraft and shamanism, others situate the historical source materials into the context of contemporary medical discourse, or examine the role of these manifestations in broader religious and political debates of their age.

Nancy Caciola dedicates her attention to a recently much discussed problem of late medieval feminine piety, the discernment of spirits. She approaches her theme from the 'outside' (i.e. from the point of view of the signs of the changing relation of body and soul perceivable by the external observers), and from 'above' (i.e. from the angle of the theologians trying to find clear criteria for their judgment on the internal spiritual identity of the concerned persons). In her vivid description we can observe the exciting historical evolution of how some representatives of late medieval clerical elite attempted to naturalize the process of discernment, how they elaborated a physiological theory for distinguishing divine and diabolic possession, and finally, how this theory proved to be useless in the end.

While Caciola analyzes the general lines of evolution, *Renata Mikolajczyk* examines the interesting personal views and theories on the nature of the demons by Witelo, a thirteenth-century Silesian scholar. Witelo claimed that, instead of immortality, demons could only have a fair amount longevity, and that these intelligent beings could not be made responsible for seducing men to sin. The visions and apparitions were explained by him with natural causes, theories originating from contemporary 'humoral medicine', and thus providing an interesting example of the rationalistic attitude of medieval natural science.

Moshe Sluhovsky provides an important complement to the reasoning of Caciola concerning the theologians' attempts of elaborating a theory of the discernment of spirits. Investigating the famous early modern possession cases in France, Sluhovsky concentrates upon the precedents of the clerical/medical treatment: the 'self-transformation' of the possessed persons, experienced first by themselves and their immediate surroundings. Through his analysis he comes to the important conclusion that the discernment of spirits should be viewed not only as a theological concern but also as a process of negotiation, involving men and women, the laity and the clergy.

Sophie Houdard deals with the early seventeenth-century reinterpretation of the theories on the discernment of spirits. She deals with more and more generalized doubts concerning the reality

behind any mystical and visionary experience, and thus the ambiguity of the signs upon which the discernment of spirits could be based. The emerging new approach of an evolving rationalism becomes the guiding line for the analysis of the biographies of these mystics, and the different concepts on how God and the demons could allegedly appropriate a physical place in the bodies of the possessed. While she observes the marginalization of the 'good' and 'bad' angels as traditionally spectacular signs of the supernatural, she demonstrates, on the other hand, that the possession cases acquire a new function in this age and become important tools in the political life of the French monarchy.

The study of *Éva Pócs* examines the possession systems in the context of exchanges between clerical and popular culture, starting with the Christian forms of divine and diabolic possession, and continuing with the archaic beliefs related to possession by the spirits of the dead and different varieties of mediumship. She also examines other belief-systems, such as witchcraft and *mara/mare/mora* beliefs, which, though not identical with possession, allow such readings as well. She comes to the conclusion that the various systems of spirit possession are much more abundant in European cultures on the peripheries of religious life than what we have presumed so far. They probably had a greater role here in the communication with the supernatural than the so-called shamanistic belief-systems.

A second group of studies in the present volume deals with an important group of syncretistic (pagan/Christian) practices of communicating with the supernatural: the different forms of contact with the spirits of the dead. They examine new, hitherto unknown aspects of these phenomena on the basis of recently discovered documents and new folklore data.

The study by *Wolfgang Behringer* shows how the Waldensians came to be regarded as witches in the fifteenth century, and his investigations provide interesting insights into several questions regarding the beginning of witchcraft prosecutions, among them the origin of the demonological concept of the witches' Sabbath. With a careful analysis of the judicial sources, the theological

treatises and the iconography of the images related to the geographic zone where late medieval Waldensians lived (Switzerland, Savoy, Piedmont), at the roots of the demonological accusations of 'nightly flying' and the attendance of the witches' Sabbath, he discovers all kinds of beliefs and rites in these rural Waldensian communities which were related to the communication with the dead. He supports with data from early modern folklore the supposition that some spiritual leaders of rural communities maintained a quasi-shamanistic relationship with the "good people" (i.e. benevolent dead, fairies) (cf. Behringer, 1994). Besides this decisive influence, the emergence of witchcraft accusations against the Waldensians might also have been prompted by the real nightly gatherings of the members of the heretical sect, and their non-Catholic rites, as well, but all this only in the quality of *tertium comparationis*.

Tok Thompson writes about the connection of fairies in Irish folklore with the domain of the dead. His examples are taken from legends mostly alive to this day—on the basis of which he attempts to build a holistic model which can also make use of the results of historical, archaeological and linguistic researches.

The Slovenian folklorist *Roberto Dapit* made his fieldwork on a Slovenian territory in Italy, in the valley of Resia. He analyzes the vision-motifs in the corpus of folk legends of his own collection from the point of view of the experiences of his informants. In the course of this he makes valuable observations concerning the communal role played in our days by the communication with the ghosts of the deceased.

In the field of ecstatic and visionary experiences, the last three studies concentrate upon various aspects of trance and shamanism. The first article, by *Christa Agnes Tuczay,* deals with medieval European material. Instead of discussing 'European shamanism' as such, she focuses on medieval sorcerers and diviners whom she defines as 'shaman-like figures' on the basis of their divinatory techniques based on trance. With sources originating from Germanic documentation, she presents a varied series of diviners and their techniques (hydromancy, crystal gazing, dream divination), stressing their antique cultural roots and their relationship with Christian mystical currents.

Peter Buchholz offers an overview of one of the purest forms of European shamanism known to us, the vestiges of Nordic shamanism recorded on the settlements in Iceland and Greenland. The sources he had already presented in his earlier works are complemented here with the testimony of recent archaeological finds, enriching our scarce knowledge of the *útiseta* rite. He also proposes some new interpretations concerning the world-view, the cosmogony and the rites of Germanic shamanism (related to the 'earthly otherworld' and the 'shaman-tree').

Finally, *Rune Hagen* analyzes a sixteenth-century source related to the other 'pure' variant of European shamanism, that of the Lapp (Sami) people in Northern Norway and Northern Russia. He enriches our images on the interference between shamanism and witchcraft beliefs with the fascinating story of the transformation of a 'shaman cat' into a 'witch cat'. The document he analyzes is the chronicle of the naval journey of Christian IV, King of Denmark and Norway in 1599 to the northern territories. On his trajectory the king came across some Lapponian sorcerers, who told him about their shamanistic techniques. King Christian took away their cat, and subsequently, on their way home the Danish fleet was struck by a devastating storm. The cat of the Sami shamans was made responsible for this. Two years later witch-hunting began in Finland...

The contents of the second and the third volumes are appended to this preface. The essays in the second volume juxtapose Christian demonology with popular mythology. The demonologies they study come from learned and popular culture, medieval, early modern and contemporary periods, Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish context, the studies concentrating on Scandinavia, East-Central Europe and the Balkans, and are seasoned with a few more remote examples: Ireland and Mongolia. The third volume focuses on the new insights this broader perspective can provide to the understanding of witchcraft mythologies and persecutions. The recently elaborated new vision on the emergence of the concept of the witches' Sabbath, with special attention paid to the influential and debated propositions by Carlo Ginzburg (1989), is one of the central issues of the common agenda discussed by the studies.

Other series of questions are related to legal mechanisms, social contexts and folkloric legends shaping witchcraft beliefs throughout history.

At the end of this brief introduction let us express our special thanks to Eszter Csonka-Takács, who assisted us in the care of the texts. And we should like to express our gratitude to the organizations which supported the conference and the resulting publication: the Hungarian Soros Foundation, OTKA (Hungarian Scientific Research Fund) providing two grants (T30691 and T46472) and Collegium Budapest – Institute for Advanced Study.

December 2004

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PART I

DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS AND POSSESSION

BREATH, HEART, GUTS: THE BODY AND SPIRITS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

NANCY CACIOLA

In the 1230s William of Auvergne, Bishop of Paris, was moved to comment upon the various non-canonical beliefs and practices of his less learned contemporaries. Among them he described the cult of Lady Abundance, whose retinue of flying female spirits were known as the "nighttime ladies." This belief, William states, was deeply implanted in old women who continually spread their superstitions among others of their sex: "In regard to the nighttime ladies, they [i.e., old women] chiefly persuade [other] women that they are good ladies, and that they bestow great good things on the households that they visit" (William of Auvergne, 1674, t. I, 1066). Far from agreeing with his oral sources that Lady Abundance and her followers were good, however, William interpreted these spirits as demonic, precisely because they manifested a female form. His reasoning is instructive: "[T]he female sex was created from man for the sake of reproduction and for children. But reproduction is impossible for an abstract spiritual substance. [...] This difference of sex [among spirits], or the appearance of it, is therefore a clear sign: good angels only appear in the form of men, and never in female form, as do evil spirits" (William of Auvergne, 1674, t. I, 1068).

Here William deploys a familiar set of nested binary oppositions: man is aligned with the higher intellect and with the angels, woman with the body (especially with its sexual functions) and with demons. Another of the Bishop's comments about sexual differences emphasizes the intimate connection between female physiology and female relationships with spirits. Addressing himself to the question of why women in particular should be attracted

to the cult of Lady Abundance, William explains that it is a matter both of female temperament, and of the female soul: "Many of these visions and phantastic apparitions are produced in many people from a melancholy disposition, but mostly in women, as you can see even in the case of true visions and revelations. And the cause of this is especially, as the doctors say, the nature of feminine souls, particularly because they are easier to make an impression on than the masculine, even from a distance" (William of Auvergne, 1674, t. I, 1066).

William's triple apprehension of the feminine as fundamentally bodily and sexual; as a signifier for the demonic; and yet as particularly receptive to spiritual impressions, both malign and benign, is "good to think with," to borrow a phrase from Lévi-Strauss. The Bishop's juxtaposition of the nighttime ladies, of unclean spirits, and of authentic women visionaries provides an apt starting-point into my present investigation into demons, spirits, and possession. William presents the female body as a site of competing impulsions: natural and supernatural; sexual and visionary; "phantastic" and "true." As such, he speaks to three linked themes that I wish to explore further. My thoughts on these themes will not be presented as a tightly-woven argument, but rather as a series of inquiries into the internal logic that underlay medieval constructions of female bodies and their relationships with various kinds of spirits. The presentation moves from interrogating ideas about the surface of the female body as a mediating field between outside and inside environments; to considering the internal territory of the body as a potential habitation for spirits. Thus, I first show that William was not unique in ascribing an elemental "openness" to female bodies that renders them more vulnerable to spiritual influences and more receptive to visions and revelations. We have widespread evidence, from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, that describes women's natural affinity for techniques of spiritual dislocation (ecstasy), as well as their particular vulnerability to spiritual invasions (possession). These fragments of evidence present the surfaces of women's bodies as highly frangible, or breachable by spirits, both human and supernatural. Second I explore, in a preliminary way, the consequences of this situation for medieval under-

standings of female identity. If women were spectacularly successful both in effusing their own spirits, and in absorbing foreign spirits, then social constructions of female identity are rendered peculiarly labile. In short, I shall argue that the highly gendered identity problem known as the discernment of spirits—that is, the attempt to distinguish the demonically possessed from the divinely inspired—hinges upon constructions of the female body such as William's. Lastly, I will discuss attempts by medieval intellectuals to adumbrate a physiological mechanism for the discernment of spirits. This attempt to naturalize the process of discernment, by setting forth precise distinctions between the ways in which a divine and a demonic spirit might enter the body and interact with the human spirit inside, extends the basic linkages made by William in new ways.

The Open Body

I begin with the idea that the female body is particularly "open" to ecstatic effusions of the spirit, as well as to invasions by supernatural spirits, divine and demonic alike. The logic of both these conceptions subsists upon a dialectic between the interior and the exterior environments of the body. As Johannes Nider was to write in his *Formicarius*, "I have sometimes seen, and often heard of women [...] who are snatched [...] from their exterior senses to their interiors, just as they sometimes go into an ecstasy from devotion" (Johannes Nider, 1602, p. 185). The maintenance of personal identity assumes a more or less conscious effort to keep the reified "self" or spirit in, while keeping other, potentially more powerful or domineering spirits out: the body's surface becomes a boundary that must be controlled if it is not to be transgressed. Yet medieval texts consistently represent the surfaces of female bodies as lacking the proper degree of "border control that differentiates inner from outer" (Butler, 1990, p. 136), and thus as especially vulnerable to the intake and the outflow of spirits.

The strongest evidence for this fact is indirect: namely, the degree to which women predominated as both voluntary and invol-

untary specialists in techniques of possession and ecstasy. The following discussion is abbreviated and schematic, but it can serve to direct attention to some important parallelisms that have not yet received much scholarly attention. Among voluntary cases of possession we may count the supposed spirit flights of the nighttime ladies, also sometimes known as the "good things," which offer an example of a female cult explicitly premised on a controlled body–spirit transgression. Our grasp of the broader belief structure is limited by the point of view of the documents which typically, like William's, voice the disapproval of clerics for this "superstition" rather than recording the self-understanding of its adherents. However, the theme that interests me here, that of women as particular specialists in techniques of ecstasy or of spiritual dislocation, clearly is central to beliefs about the nighttime ladies. Indeed, one source that highlights the feminine solidarity of the group also presents them as avowedly hostile to the male sex. Étienne de Bourbon recounts how, "an old woman, wishing to flatter her priest, said to him in Church, 'Lord, you ought to thank me: I saved you from death. For, when I was going with the good things, in the middle of the night we entered your house with lights and I, seeing you asleep and naked, covered you quickly lest our Lady see your nudity. If she had seen this, they would have beaten you to death" (Lecoy de la Marche, 1877, p. 324). The implication is that the ecstatic, wandering spirits of the female good things would be deeply offended by the exposed male body.

But it is not only the old women of village life who poured out their spirits in these quasi-shamanistic journeys. For so, too, within approved, canonical Christian forms of devotion, it was women who were seen as the preeminent specialists in mystical techniques of spiritual dislocation from their bodies. William himself acknowledges this peculiarity in his notation that women predominate "even in the case of true visions and revelations" because of their melancholic nature and more impressionable souls. The Bishop may here be seen as commenting upon a contemporary trend of some magnitude. Beginning in the twelfth century, increasing numbers of female mystics lay claim to experiences that can best be characterized as divine possession. The thirteenth-century béguine

Ida of Louvain provides a clear example. Directly after a vision in which Christ as pauper opened her chest and climbed inside her heart to enjoy her "hospitality," Ida was seized with a desire for poverty so intense she was thought to be mad. Casting aside her customary clothing to adopt a costume of rags, topped with a filthy mat as a cloak, Ida began to seek out the most crowded plazas and market places in order to display her new-found love of destitution. The incorporation of the pauper Christ provoked a total transformation of her exterior comportment as she expressed the new personality possessing her from within. Other women mystics present a contradictory model of ecstatic possession, a process both effusive and absorptive in its transgressive force. These women claim that their spirits leave their bodies in search of Christ, while simultaneously feeling his divine spirit penetrate within themselves. The mystic is inside Christ, who is inside her, in recursive, nesting fashion. Thus when, in the fourteenth century, Catherine of Siena described her vision of an exchange of hearts with Jesus, the entrance of his heart into her body is descriptively reversed and projected outward: "It seemed that her heart was entering into the Savior's side and it was made one heart with Christ's heart" (Raymond of Capua, 1865, p. 907. Hereafter cited as AASS). I shall return to the significance of these examples, particularly the prominence of the heart as the seat of divine possession, in a later section of this essay.

Finally, there are cases of involuntary possession. Contemporaneous with the rise of feminine mysticism was the perception of an increasing number of demoniacs. Again, though males occasionally became demonically possessed, the vast majority of miracle tales and iconographic representations of demoniacs involve female victims. Indeed, so intimate was the connection between women's bodies, and the possessions of demonic spirits, that it is not uncommon to find manuals of exorcism slip, seemingly unconsciously, into an exclusive use of the feminine pronoun to designate the object of the ritual.[1] As in the case of the spirit-journeys of the "good things," and the ecstacies or divine possessions of the mystics, so, too the notion of demonic possession was intimately associated with the "weaker sex."

These representations of shamanistic old ladies, of women mystics, and of female demoniacs collectively construct the surfaces of female bodies as particularly open to spiritual egressions and ingressions. The idea of the open female body is a sort of cultural "common sense,"[2] an idea often taken for granted, but occasionally expressed directly. According to the mystic and medical writer Hildegard of Bingen, for example, female physiology is pierced with "openings, windows, and wind-passages" (quoted in Pouchelle, 1990, p. 148). Similarly, Heloise noted that women's bodies are pierced with more holes, and generally more porous, than men's (Radice, 1974, p. 166). And some tales of possession explicitly identify female bodies as easier of access—as having more openings—than male. This sex distinction in regard to a literal, physical vulnerability to possession and spiritual violation is explicitly invoked in an *exemplum* tale told by the thirteenth-century Dominican preacher Jean de Mailly. In recounting a tale of exorcism, de Mailly has his saintly hero, a man, dare a demon to leave the body of the girl that it is possessing, and enter his own male body instead. The demon agrees, but then cannot accomplish the transfer. Instead, it complains, "I cannot enter into this vessel, for it is sealed and closed off in all its parts" (Jean de Mailly, 1947, p. 316). The body of the girl apparently was not so inviolate, permitting entrance to the unclean spirit. Thus the female body lacks a kind of exterior "seal" that sets the male apart from the rest of creation and enables a full measure of deictic integrity.

Moreover, the openness of the body is not only a question of how the "natural" differences between the sexes were constructed. Openness also is related to an ongoing process of molding and remolding the body through moral or immoral action. The medieval emphasis upon the interpenetration of the spiritual and the physical, or the ideal of a congruence between appearance and reality, are conceptions that may be linked to this view of the body as a material aggregate of the individual's moral qualities. Thus in Jean de Mailly's *exemplum*, the exorcist's body is sealed not only because he is male, but also because he is a saint. Conversely, the girl's body not only is elementally open because she is female, but surely also because she is a Pagan. Overlaying the "natural" propen-

sity for openness, or lack thereof, is a set of moral equivalences that in most cases reinforce the sexual differentiation. Indeed, certain moral or immoral behaviors seem to have been understood as techniques for manipulating the relative level of openness of the female body. As Caroline Bynum has noted, the achievement of a reputation for sanctity seems, for women, to have revolved around a process of sealing the body through practices such as chastity and fasting (Bynum, 1987, passim). In order to remold the female body as closed, and therefore as holy, the aspirant woman saint must refuse all physical interchange with her environment, in the form of food, excreta, and sexuality. By closing herself off to the temptations of the physical world the woman saint becomes open only to divine spiritual influences. Conversely, misuse of the body's members, in the form of physical excess or sin, was seen as opening the body even further, an invitation to demonic intrusion, while simultaneously closing it off to divine infusions. Thus for example, when Osanna Andreasi prayed Christ, in the late fifteenth century, to help reform a sinful friend by infusing his spirit into her heart, his purported response again invokes the opposition between open and closed: "I cannot find any place through which I might enter so hard a heart" (Francesco Silvestris, AASS, June 4: 624). Divine entrance into the female body is here impeded as an effect of sin, which seals off the heart.

Discerning Spirits, Discerning Bodies

Thus far, I have concentrated upon establishing that women were particularly associated with various forms of spiritual ecstasy and invasion; and I have linked this fact with a broad set of mental presuppositions about women's bodies. A discourse centering on the opposition between "open" and "sealed" anatomy presents the surface of the female body as particularly breachable by various spirits going in to or out from the individual. This situation, in turn, has quite significant implications for medieval conceptualizations of female identity and integrity. For the word "spirit" surely may be read as a way of encoding individual identity. If, as the feminist

philosopher Judith Butler asserts, identity is, "fabricated as an interior essence, [then] that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer and so institutes the 'integrity' of the subject (Butler, 1990, p. 136). Butler's language is uncannily appropriate to the problem of spirit possession and identity. "Border control" of the open body certainly is key to the maintenance of identity, which is indeed "fabricated as an interior essence: the spirit." Those who are possessed by foreign spirits take on the characteristics of their possessors, whether malign or benign; those whose spirits leave their bodies in ecstasy fall into trance, because their identity is absent. Thus it is hardly surprising that women's perceived vulnerability to such spiritual effusions and absorptions generated explicit debates over identity. How should observers construe the identity of a woman who was apparently in some state of spiritual alienation? In fact, the highly gendered debate over the discernment of spirits arose as a direct outgrowth of the perception, beginning in the twelfth century, that increasing numbers of women were entering into ecstatic trances or possession states.

The imperative to discern spirits was no idle exercise. Rather, its ramifications were both social and soteriological: one must offer proper veneration to a divinely-inspired saint, yet ostracize the demonically possessed. Yet since women were not only prominent adepts at mystical ecstasies, but also were seen as particularly vulnerable to demonic possession, confusion between the two states was common. Indeed, both states were thought to produce similar physical and intellectual effects. Demoniacs, as well as mystics, were reported to levitate, bloat, prophesy, speak in tongues, enter immobile trance states, acquire unusual bodily marks, perform miracles, and so forth. Thus the two kinds of spirit possession were outwardly indistinguishable from one another. This juxtaposition led to an epistemological conundrum for medieval people on both the local and the institutional level. When faced with a woman credited with supernatural powers, and before offering veneration, observers had to wonder: is she divinely inspired, or demonically possessed? I have written elsewhere about the widespread confu-

sion between mystics and demoniacs in the period from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries.[3] In the present context, suffice it to say that nearly all the women mystics best known to modern scholars were accused of being demonically possessed by their contemporaries, including the examples, cited above, of Ida of Louvain, Catherine of Siena, and Osanna Andreasi.[4]

In the remainder of my essay I turn my attention to the question of how medieval people theorized the discernment of spirits during the first wave of concern over the topic, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In essence, intellectuals of this time period attempted to naturalize the process of discerning spirits by elaborating a physiological model by which to distinguish the precise internal mechanisms of divine and demonic possession. According to this model, the discernment of spirits could be accomplished through a discernment of bodies. Thus my discussion will now move away from consideration of the surface of the body as a mediator of spiritual interchanges, to consider what spirits can do while inside the body. I should note that the ideas I am about to examine constitute a prologue to the later, fourteenth and fifteenth century discussion of Henry of Freimar, Pierre d'Ailly, Henry of Langenstein, and Jean Gerson on the testing of spirits. Though I will not examine this literature in the present context, I will, in conclusion, signal how I think the later debate relates to the ideas I am about to present.

If female bodies were constructed as surprisingly open to spiritual influences, so too were spirits of various kinds—divine, demonic, and human—held as more concrete or material than one might expect. It should be clear by now that dominant opinion in the Middle Ages held that spirit possession, whether by an unclean, or the Holy, spirit, involved a literal entry into the body. Although some cultures that have a concept of spirit possession are not particularly concerned to explain how a spirit can enter the human body and assume control over it, medieval Europeans were rather interested in this problem. With the rapid growth of medical treatises in the twelfth century, spurred in part by the introduction of Arab learning, which in turn drew on Classical texts,[5] a physiological model for spirit possession seemed an excellent way to explain

the somatic and perceptual changes that were characteristic of demoniacs and mystics; as well as offering a tangible basis for discerning between them.

In order to understand how the physiological model of spirit possession and discernment developed, we must first understand how medieval medicine conceived of the human spirit and its operations. The human spirit, far from being conceived as an abstract or numinous entity, actually was seen as having a concrete material existence within the human body. According to medieval medical thought, the human body in a healthy state was pervaded by its own spirit or *spiritus*, a refined liquid substance produced in the left ventricle of the heart from inspired breath.[6] Although the heart was the main seat of the spiritual system, the spirit pervaded the entire body by moving through the arteries. Medical theorists further subdivided the human spirit into three different categories according to function and placement within the body. The "vital spirit," regulated the vital signs from the heart, maintaining heartbeat, pulse, and respiration. In fact, the vital spirit was the basic principle of life itself; and the heart was the physiological seat of life, being both the first part of the fetus to develop, and the first part of the body to resurrect. After leaving the heart, the vital spirit could be transformed into either the "natural spirit," which was based in the liver and controlled a variety of involuntary activities, including digestion and sexual response; or be purified into the "animal spirit" as it ascended to the head through a sort of fine sieve at the base of the brain known as the *retus mirabilis.* Named for the soul, *anima*, the animal spirit resided in the brain, regulating the nervous system and intellectual responses to sensory stimuli.

Medically speaking, the spirit was distinct from the soul by virtue of its material nature; in fact it provided a refined intermediary between the grossness of the body and the immateriality of the soul. Indeed, the idea of the human spirit as an actual entity that moved into and out from openings in the human body provided a physiological basis for mystical or shamanistic out-of-body experiences. However, spirit and soul frequently were conflated with one another, since the soul, too, was said by many to find its seat within

the heart (Bono, 1984, pp. 98–99). This was especially true in theological discourse, which increasingly tended to obscure the difference between spirit and soul after the twelfth century. Thus the Latin vocabulary *anima, spiritus,* and, metaphorically, *cor* are best understood as a multivalent group of words that often overlap.[7] As one scholar has noted, "Latin authors wished to create a language embracing both the phenomenon of life and the experience of salvation within a unified conceptual framework" (Bono, 1984, pp. 98–99). At death the spirit or soul was exhaled with the final breath, a tradition that was represented in medieval iconography by showing a small person emanating from the corpse's mouth. This conception, of the spirit exiting materially from the mouth, also is familiar to us from a recurrent motif in witchcraft trials: namely, the spirit-journey, in which the individual's spirit exits through the mouth in the form of a small animal or insect such as a butterfly, a mouse, or a lizard.

How, then, did a possessing spirit interact with the indigenous human spirit of its host body? An apparent clue to the medieval understanding of demonic possession, at least, is provided by portrayals of exorcism. Here, too, the unclean spirit (usually in the form of a small black imp) leaps out from the mouth of the sufferer as a saint or priest performs the exorcism. Similarly, when exorcisms are described in texts, they often are considered successful only when the victim vomits forth some object from the mouth: a toad, a lump of coal, and a hairy worm are among the things mentioned in various miracle accounts.[8] Given this parallelism of exit via the mouth, we might formulate the hypothesis that demonic possession was seen as the replacement of the human spirit by an invasive unclean spirit, which then controls the behavior and personality of the individual. Unfortunately, we would be wrong. I myself adhered to this mistaken interpretation for some time before realizing that the seeming iconographic elision actually masks a complex system of difference. For the mouth was, of course, the entrance to *two* distinct physiological systems: the spiritual system, centered in the heart; and the digestive system, with all its gross impurities. Although the iconographic similarity may have expressed a basic parallel for the unlettered, in textual circles there

was consensus that divine possession by the Holy Spirit, and demonic possession by an unclean spirit, took place within very different parts of the body. To wit, demonic spirits entered the viscera while only the Holy Spirit could enter the heart, seat of the human spirit and soul. Thus Ida of Louvain's incorporation of the pauper Christ into her heart; Catherine of Siena's exchange of hearts with Jesus; and Osanna Andreasi's prayer (in vain) that Christ enter the hardened heart of a sinner are not mere metaphors, but quite sophisticated signifiers for divine possession.

The differences between divine and demonic possession were most explicitly laid forth by the thirteenth-century encyclopedist Vincent of Beauvais in his *Speculum Naturale*. His treatment is worth quoting at some length:

> God, angels and the devil are said to be in the soul, but in different ways. God is there as a [principle of] life, that is, he vivifies the soul; an angel is like a comrade, exhorting the soul. An angel, therefore [...] does not bring good things inside [the soul], but suggests them. God, however, is inside, for he is joined to [the soul] and poured into it. So, God is inside; an angel is outside. However, [an angel] is said to be inside [the soul] because it performs operations in it, such as counseling it, instructing it, warning it, and so forth. The devil is to be understood the same way. The devil is not inside the soul substantially, but it can be said to enter [the soul] on account of the operations it performs within it, seducing it through images and suggestions (Vincent of Beauvais, 1965, col. 1881).

This is a rich and fascinating passage. Although all three kinds of spirits are said to be within the soul, Vincent wishes to clarify this terminology by means of some theological hair-splitting. He argues that in the case of angels and the devil, the phrase "inside the soul" is used loosely. In actuality such spirits always remain strictly outside the soul, but since their effects may penetrate within through counsel and suggestion, it is customary to refer to them as "inside." In reality, only God can fully pour Himself into the soul and unite with it. Moreover, in so doing, God actually replaces the human

principle of life, the "vital spirit" of medieval medicine, which is based in the heart. Through divine possession, God Himself becomes the vivifying principle of the soul and, by extension, the body. The prerogative of actually replacing the human spirit with a supernatural spirit is reserved to God alone.

This series of symbolic linkages and physiological differentiations was present in a multitude of other texts, particularly preaching exempla. Through such didactic anecdotes we learn the further detail that, since demons cannot enter the soul, they often made a home for themselves in the digestive tract instead. Indeed, medieval sources occasionally add the prefix *caco-,* derived from *cacus* (excrement), to the word demon in order to better underline their connection with digestion and the impure regions of the body. A charming exemplum from an anonymous preaching manual addresses the connection between possessing demons and digestion pointedly, by relating the results of a theological experiment: "When the Eucharist was given to a certain woman in whom there was a demon, and the demon was then asked where it was, and whether it was with Christ, it answered, 'No, the Lord is in her soul and I live in her intestines.'" (Little, 1907, p. 9; Gerald of Wales, 1862, t. II. p. 54). This popular tale made its way into more than one preaching compilation. The distinction between the locations of the two spirits is an important one. On the one hand, the story asserts the inviolability of the soul to the depredations of demons: it remains intact even when the body is possessed. On the other hand, the tale asserts an equally important principle about the Eucharist and the incorporation of Christ's body. The Host does not undergo a normal digestive process, with all the impurities that this might entail, but instead miraculously enters into the heart, seat of soul and spirit. Indeed, this understanding of communion as a form of possession, in which the spirit of Christ enters into the heart and joins with the human spirit, lends depth to the widely noted phenomenon of Eucharistic devotion among religious women (Bynum, 1990, pp. 119–50; Vauchez, 1987, pp. 259–64; Rubin, 1991, pp. 120–21, 316–19). The significance of the act is more than a potent physical ingestion and absorption: it is also a means of voluntary spirit possession, since Christ thereby enters the heart.

Other authors were to concur in this basic contrast between where a divine spirit and a demon might dwell within the human body.

Caesarius of Heisterbach, for example, addressed this question directly in his *Dialogue on Miracles.* The novice prompts, "Some people assert that demons do not live inside people but outside, just as a fortification is besieged from outside." Responds the monk, "When it is said that a Devil is inside a person, we must not understand this to mean the soul, but the body, for [the devil] can live inside [the body's] open spaces and in the bowels where impurities are contained" (Caesarius of Heisterbach, 1851, t. I, 293). Thus demons enter the body, but not the soul. They remain on the loose, as it were, wherever there is room inside. This seems to be echoed in yet another exempla tradition that describes the demon as a visible bump or bulge just under the surface of the skin. When signed with the cross, the demon glides off to another part of the body. In one such tale, the confrontation devolves into an extended game of somatic tag along the surface of the possessed girl's skin until finally the demon is corralled into her mouth and out.[9] Though apparently based within "the guts where the impurities are contained," demons could also move through any "open spaces" inside the body. The twelfth-century theologian Rupert of Deutz adduced a similar theory, noting that demonic spirits can only possess from inside the "caverns of the body," while "the Holy Spirit can enter the substance of the soul substantially" (Rupert of Deutz, PL 167. coll. 1597–98). Rupert's strong image evokes an interior landscape to the body, one riddled with fleshly grottoes and concavities that may be populated by demons while the soul remains inviolate. Thus the interior physiology of the possessed victim, as well as the surface of her body, was characterized by open spaces or gaps. In sum, demonic possession was understood as concrete and localizable within the body. By contrast, the Holy Spirit was thought to dwell within the individual in a more diffuse way, entering the rarefied realm of the spirit or soul.

Finally, all these strands of thought—that only the Holy Spirit can enter into the soul; that demons can only possess the body and control the senses, thus confusing or tempting the soul—

were brought together with great clarity by Thomas Aquinas: "In regard to the soul, the devil cannot inhabit a human being substantially. [...] The Holy Spirit, indeed, can act from inside, but the devil suggests from outside. [...] [But] in regard to the body, the devil can inhabit a human being substantially, as in possessed people."[10]

Thus there existed a broad consensus, traceable throughout twelfth- and thirteenth-century theology and natural philosophy, and broadly diffused throughout the major preaching compilations of the age, that divine possession occurred when the Holy Spirit entered the heart and replaced, or joined with, the human spirit; whereas demonic possession occurred when a demon entered the physical body itself—from which vantage point it could disrupt the spiritual system in some ways. The former operation was diffuse and only "lightly" material, while the latter was concentrated and grossly physical. Moreover, this physiological model of spirit possession could, at least in theory, provide a viable basis for the discernment of spirits. If the spirit were located in the heart, then it was divine; if in the "caverns" or "open spaces" of the physical body, then it was demonic.[11]

Yet however appealing the tidiness of this theory, it remained only partially successful in explaining the similarities between mystics and demoniacs, and in providing pragmatic ways for discerning between them. Ultimately, this approach was of little pragmatic use in actual case histories. Understanding the physiology of possession was of no help to someone who had to evaluate a woman's claims to divine inspiration or supernatural gifts. How could one verify the internal disposition of a possessing spirit if one's only basis for judgement was a group of external behaviors—behaviors that were equally characteristic of both mystics and demoniacs? Short of an autopsy revealing a convenient crucifix in the heart (as in the case of Chiara da Montefalco) the elaboration of a differential physiology of possession was of limited use in actual case histories. Although the physiological model of discernment succeeded as an explanatory tool that naturalized different spiritual identities into the body, it could not be applied pragmatically. There was no clear system of correspondences between the different internal

mechanisms of divine and demonic possession, and the actual external signs of each possession. Mystics and demoniacs looked alike on the surface, even if they were different inside.

It may seem anticlimactic to conclude my analysis with a failed initiative. Yet the debate itself is significant, even if it did not lead to a definitive resolution. Indeed, this exploration of the physiology of possession has an important epilogue that I can only hint at here. For a later generation of writers such as Henry of Freimar and Henry of Langenstein, Pierre d'Ailly and Jean Gerson were to bridge the gap between the internal and external left by the physiological model of discernment. These authors elaborated complex discernment guidelines that highlighted the question of bodily comportment. Since possession by the Holy Spirit took place diffusely within the soul, while possession by demons was bound within strictly physical limits, the discipline of the body, its gestures and presentation, evolved as a paramount criterion in the discernment of spirits in the fifteenth century.[12] Saints were supposed to be calm and controlled, whereas demoniacs either displayed signs of physical upheaval, or dissociative behavior. I close with a quotation from Henry of Freimar, author of an early discernment of spirits treatise in this idiom. "Just as we see that a rose, in the presence of gentle dew and the warmth of the sun, opens itself naturally [...] in the same way the human heart expands from the sweetness of calmness and serenity, and is rendered more capable of receiving divine infusions. [...] Calmness opens the heart [...] and arranges things so that God can have free access to the soul."[13]

Notes

1 Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm. 10085 begins with both masculine and feminine endings—itself an unusual instance of gender inclusiveness in a medieval text—then switches to exclusively feminine pronouns from folio 15^{r} onward. Clm. 23325 makes the same transition on folio 12 ^{v}. Vatican City: Biblioteca Vaticana Pal. Lat. 794 consistently uses feminine pronouns after the prologue, but Vat. Lat. 10812 uses the masculine pronoun. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. Lat. 3501 begins with male and female pronouns, uses only the masculine ending on 131^{v}, then switches to feminine endings on 132^{v}.

2 In the sense used by Geertz, 1975, pp. 5–26.
3 Caciola, 2000 and Caciola, 2003.
4 See Caciola, 2000, for an in-depth discussion of this evidence and additional examples.
5 There has been a proliferation of modern works dealing with medieval medicine: Allen, 1997; Siraisi, 1981; 1990; Cadden, 1993; Pouchelle, 1990; Agrimi and Crisciani, 1994; Jacquart and Thomasset, 1988; Hewson, 1975.
6 See, in addition to the works cited in the previous note, Bono, 1984, pp. 91–130; Chenu, 1957, pp. 209–32; Verbeke, 1987; Onians, 1951; Harvey, 1975. The discussion that follows is in part a reprise of the ideas presented in Caciola, 2000 and Caciola, 2003.
7 Cohen makes the same point in a recent article, 2000, p. 50.
8 The toad: *Miracula B. Idesbaldi Abbatis*, in AASS vol. 11 (18 April), 587. Coal: *Vita S. Bernardini Senensis*, in AASS vol. 18 (20 May), 106. Red rock and Leaf: *Vita B. Placidi Eremitae*, in AASS vol. 23 (12 June), 110. Hairy worm: Thomas of Cantimpré, 1597, II: xxxvi; iiii.
9 This is the story in which the demon appears as a hairy worm: Thomas of Cantimpré, 1597, II: xxxvi; iiii.
10 Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibeta*, q. II, art. 8.
11 This consensus about the physiology of possession was also reflected in exorcists' manuals. Although these manuals date from a slightly later time period (nearly all are from the fifteenth century), they betray a similar preoccupation with the physical inhabitation of the demon within the body. Some exorcisms include extensive lists of body parts from which the demon is cast forth: these lists are repetitively invoked throughout the ritual. Another, simpler formula, exclaims to the demon, "The three-hundred seventy veins have long been filled with you! And so have all two hundred forty bones!" (Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Clm. 10085, 2^{v}). The latest examples have longer individual formulae for each important part of the body. The goal of these rituals is to reclaim the physical "territory" of the body, and then to close or seal the body against further demonic incursions. See Caciola, 2003.
12 On the increasing discipline of body language, see Schmitt, 1990; 1989.
13 Henry of Freimar, *Der Traktat Heinrichs von Freimar über die Unterscheidung der Geister,* 158. The text dates from the first quarter of the fourteenth century.

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NON SUNT NISI PHANTASIAE ET IMAGINATIONES: A MEDIEVAL ATTEMPT AT EXPLAINING DEMONS

RENATA MIKOLAJCZYK

For his master and brother, Louis from Lewenbergh, forever loyal Witelo plebanus.

You ask me to write about things difficult to grasp, about the main reason of repentance in men and about the nature of demons, according to my understanding, that is following the principles of philosophy, I apprehend. Although I have been neither a student nor an expert in the science, which deals with difficult questions and truths of theology, still, as your wish has always been an order for me and shall remain so forever, I will not refuse your request. I write what I could understand syllogistically, from the principles of science I know, however few and imperfectly I comprehend them (Witelo, 1979, p. 161).

We are in Padua, it is Easter of 1268.[1] Witelo, a famous Silesian scholar, alumnus of the Universities in Paris and Padua, addresses his friend, back in Poland, dedicating him a treatise, devoted to two intriguing questions: the predisposition of men towards goodness and the nature of demons.[2] Let me summarize the content of this interesting letter:

The first part opens with a long exposition of the vegetative, sensible and intellectual powers of the human soul. It serves to show that a properly functioning hierarchy of these *potentiae,* where the highest intellectual faculties dominate the lower ones, presupposes the recognition of what is good and wrong and therefore leads to repentance and goodness. Otherwise, that is when the senses take over the soul, a man is no longer human but becomes equal with the animals whose operations depend entirely on the

two lower faculties: vegetative and sensible. Thus the inclination towards goodness is inherent in man's soul and, although he commits sins, he is disposed to recognize his faults and do penitence.

The section dealing with demons (most relevant for our discussions here) starts with an argument of epistemological character. Witelo, again, underlines the difficulty of the problem and complains of the lack of relevant sources. Among philosophers, only Plato confronted the matter but, according to Witelo, the little he wrote is invalid, anyway.[3] Just like in the opening lines I quoted, Witelo acknowledges the distinction between two possible approaches: theological and philosophical. Insisting on his being a philosopher and not a theologian he declares to investigate the problem "*secundum viam naturalem*," that is, according to the principles of natural philosophy he masters. However, the case of demons involves a deeper contradiction. There are propositions pertaining to religion, which are unverifiable with philosophical means. Such is the belief in fallen angels, demanded by faith but incompatible with the natural order of the universe, as known by Witelo.[4] The only way to resolve this tension is by accepting the truths of faith, as present in the Bible and the Church authorities without questioning them. Thus, Witelo is compelled to accept the story of Lucifer and other fallen angels, nevertheless, trying to provide further information, concerning demons, within the reach of philosophical investigation.[5]

He first considers the etymology of the term demon and its original Greek meaning which he translates in Latin as *sciens* that is "having knowledge." People, however, usually refer to demons in the sense of *cacodaemones*, malevolent and deform apparitions. These, Witelo classifies into two groups: *apparentia et nihil agentia* (apparitions that do not act) and *agentia res alias naturales et raro apparentia* (those acting through other natural objects but appearing only rarely).[6]

The first group includes cases in which distortions of sense perception, caused by various illnesses, inspire false visions interpreted erroneously as actual demonic appearances. The very detailed discussion of these phenomena, by way of a medical approach is, to my mind, the most interesting fragment of Witelo's

treatise (Witelo, 1979, pp. 169–73). Witelo analyzes, one by one, the main diseases recognized by medieval medicine as affecting the brain and shows their impact on sense perception and hence on the appearance of phantasms. In each case, he explains the pathology of the given illness, in accordance with the current medical theory and deduces from there the process of formation of visual and auditory illusions. Frenzy (*phrenesis*) is described as caused by a swelling in the brain due to the inflammation of cholera and the ebullition of blood, rising to the brain. Alternatively, frenzy may be brought about by a putrid disease in diaphragm, stomach, uterus or other organ connected to the brain. In all these cases, however, ill fumes and humors rising to the brain confuse its function, in a way that the intellect is no longer able to operate properly to evaluate the sensations. This is when the fantasy takes over and interprets the images received by the senses in its own, distorted way. The color of blood and cholera makes the images appear red; hence patients believe that they see burning figures or red demons.

In cases of mania and melancholy the mechanism is roughly the same. The illness originates either directly in the brain or in the stomach or spleen. The ill humor is identified with the black bile and therefore the visions are said to be endowed with black color. Epilepsy and apoplexy, on the other hand, are considered to affect the anterior part of the brain and to impede all external sensation, as the body falls "*quasi mortuum*." Hence, patients experience visions coming from inside, from the repository of their fantasy. In apoplexy, however, the posterior part of the brain, containing memory, is hurt, too. Therefore, even if patients undergo analogous illusions, they are not remembered.

Witelo mentions one more disease, the acute fever and then passes to the visions occurring in healthy or slightly altered bodies. Healthy men often see demons in their dreams. According to Witelo, such cases may be taken as signs of approaching illness. If the disease threatening the body originates from black bile, the visions are colored in black, if it is accompanied by excessive heat then one feels tired as if forced by a demon to travel long distances and so forth. Also vigilant men (*homines vigilantibus*) may see marvelous forms, because of their exceptionally strong imagina-

tion. Such is the case of those suffering from *amor hereos* (lovesickness—a disease according to most medieval medical handbooks). The form of their beloved is so strongly impressed in their fantasy that they actually believe to be seeing her. When the image vanishes they think they have been deceived by a demon. Similarly, it occurs to some, especially the melancholics, to see demons in deserted, dark places. It is because they often contemplate the object of their fears and imagine dreadful forms, which are preserved in their fantasy and then projected in visions. One should, therefore, avoid such fearful thoughts and seek solace in such abandoned and obscure places. Witelo draws an interesting parallel between these demonic appearances and visions of holy and pious men. While the imagination of those who are obsessed with fear produces dreadful images mistaken for demons, so the brain of men devoted to pious contemplation imagines the angels and God to the extent that they appear as if in a vision. Hence, the two phenomena are related by the same underlying physiological process.

In all above cases, Witelo stresses the influence of traditional representations and common imagery on the form of appearances. He gives a simple example: figures distorted by the excess of phlegmatic humor and, therefore, white, may appear to us as angels, but to the people inhabiting the southern regions, the Moors they may seem to be demons. Consequently, forms blackened by the melancholic humor appear demonic to us but angelic to the Moors.[7] Tradition and knowledge shapes the forms imagined in visions. In case of demonic apparitions, Witelo acknowledges the role played by frightening stories told to children[8] whereas in saintly visions he points out their dependence on written and visual representations both ancient and modern.[9]

The last group of false apparitions is explained by visual deception related to optics. "Many forms in perception do not exist in the order of the universe"—says Witelo.[10] The visual perception can be hindered and misled by bad light as during twilight or cloudy weather. In such conditions things may appear bigger than they are in reality. A man can seem as tall as a tree or a wall, because the distance between them is concealed. Luckily, mathematics can explain these errors of sight with the help of angles and lines (that is

the use of geometry in optics) and easily demonstrate the illusions as groundless.

The remaining part of Witelo's treatise is devoted to the question of the real existence of demons and their actual place in the universe (Witelo, 1979, pp. 173–80). This section follows the standard lines of scholastic argumentation. It starts with the exposition of main authorities: the official doctrine of the Church and the ideas of Plato as reflected in "Timaeos" and in the commentaries of Chalcidius. Then follow the questions and the *dubia*, eventually resolved in eight points in which Witelo presents his final conclusions. Demons are real beings, they pertain to the class of *animalia* inhabiting the sublunary sphere of the universe and including, together with demons, men and animals. Demons are made of soul and body, their bodies being ethereal and therefore invisible. They are mortal but they live very long. Their nature is predominantly intellectual which places them between men and angels. Only very few demons decline towards the material sphere and sin. In such cases they may assume animal forms and have sex with women or enter dead bodies and move them as if they were alive. However, in most cases, these forms are only products of human fantasy, quickly vanishing away. Nevertheless, Witelo does not exclude the possibility, however extremely rare, of demons acting upon the human body. Witelo considers this question of possession by a demon in a very cautious way. Insisting on the fact that most cases can be explained in a "natural" way as seen above, he does not deny that a demon can actually enter the human brain or influence it from outside in a way the active intellect functions according to Avicenna. He even adds a few examples confirming the "real" presence of demons. He tells a story of a German woman who spoke with a certain *Henricus plebanus* of the church of St. Peter in Legnitz (hometown of Witelo) in all sorts of languages she neither heard nor wrote before.[11] He also recalls a testimony from Salzburg who reported several *incubi et incubae* seen and touched by many witnesses simultaneously.[12] Witelo believes that such phenomena cannot be explained by mere fantasy since various individuals would imagine different forms. The fact that more men experience the same vision independently proves its reality.

As we saw, Witelo's argument on demons is two-folded from the very start. The two possible ways of approach: theological and philosophical find their reflection in the way Witelo defines his object of investigation pointing out its double character. On the one hand he employs the cosmological perspective, examining the possibility of existence of demons as a species of beings inhabiting the universe, but, on the other hand, he considers the question from a human perspective, too, interpreting demonic visions as a subjective phenomenon, an unmistakably human experience.

However interesting it may sound to a modern reader, Witelo's "naturalistic" account of the nature of demons is neither isolated nor very original. It can be well located within a large tradition of scientific endeavors at explaining marvels within the domain of natural science. Its origins go back to Antiquity but most scholars consider the "Renaissance of the twelfth century" to be that crucial moment in which the study of nature was transformed and reinvigorated for the Middle Ages. "Criticism of the preternatural [*la critique du miracle*] whether in nature or in everyday life, continued to grow from this point on despite the permanent attraction that the marvelous held for men"—wrote father Chenu (Chenu, 1968, p. 14).

Even before the formulation (and condemnation) of the doctrine of "double truth" (usually ascribed to Siger of Brabant) philosophers, especially those interested in nature, insisted that things could be explained without recurrence to the principles of faith. A rational process of assigning natural causes, remaining within the domain of philosophy and its apparatus could explain many phenomena hitherto considered supernatural or marvelous. A very popular thirteenth-century handbook *Liber de mirabilibus mundi* often appended to the popular *Liber secretorum* (in the Middle Ages, both ascribed to Albertus Magnus) says: *A great part of philosophers and physicians has believed that all marvelousness of experiences and marvels* (tota mirabilitas experimentorum et mirabilium) *arises from natural things when they are brought to light, by hot and cold, dry and moist* (Best and Brightman, 1973). However, *ratio* was not intended to contradict faith, quite the con-

trary, it was only an alternative way of arriving at truth, a way accessible to philosophers who disposed of certain knowledge and specific methodology. Two famous twelfth-century thinkers: Adelard of Bath, and William of Conches have been often quoted for their statements of naturalistic position. The following assertion of William of Conches, in his *Philosophia*, well illustrates the position of the natural philosopher practicing his own science but recognizing the principles of religion: *Therefore we tell that we seek the rational principle in everything, if possible. But if it is insufficient, then only what is affirmed by the Holy Scripture through the Holy Ghost and the faith is valid.*[13] We saw the same attitude followed by Witelo in his accepting the doctrine of the fallen angels on the premise of faith, exclusively, even though he considered it unacceptable in the light of his philosophical knowledge.

In spite of its letter form, Witelo's discourse can best be related to the rich tradition of books of problems (*problemata*) usually consisting of numerous questions each followed by some discussion and solution. The genre comprises works as various as Aristotle's *Problems*, Seneca's *Natural Questions*, the Salernitan medical questions and the university-based scholastic disputations of the thirteenth century (Lawn, 1963). Within this literature of problems we can discern two major clusters of subjects: on one hand psychological and anthropological, and on the other, geographical and meteorological. Witelo's treatise clearly belongs to the former. Such topics were very often treated by physicians, a famous example being Peter of Abano's *Conciliator* and his commentary on Aristotle's *Problems*. Physicians were among the first to try to demonstrate that phenomena considered supernatural and mysterious could be shown to have natural causes, comprehensible within the principles of the current medical paradigm. One of the earliest sources of Western medicine, the famous Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* starts with the following declaration: *I am about to discuss the disease called "sacred." It is not, in my opinion, any more divine or more sacred than other diseases, but has a natural cause, and its supposed divine origin is due to men's inexperience, and to their wonder and its peculiar character* (Hippocrates, 1923, 2. p. 139).

It is precisely the medieval medical theory that Witelo employs in order to explain the occurrence of demonic visions. He draws upon a rich tradition of medical thought especially regarding the functioning of the sense perception and intellectual faculties located in the brain. Medical authors insisted on keeping mental disorder within the framework of a rational pathology, excluding demonic intervention which, indeed, does not feature in main medical textbooks, unless used as a "negative" example of a "popular" opinion of the "ignorant." Psychiatry or psychology was not regarded as a separate discipline in ancient and medieval medicine. Illnesses of the soul were interpreted within the same scheme of humoral pathology as any other sickness. Nevertheless, most symptoms were clearly described as affecting first of all the intellectual and sensory abilities of the patient, and the etiology usually pointed to the brain as the site of the illness. Medieval medical handbooks customarily listed all diseases, one following the other, in a descending order according to their location "from head to toes." It is among the illnesses of the head that we find distortions of sense perception and conditions such as frenzy, mania, melancholy, epilepsy and apoplexy that are mentioned by Witelo. The basic theory that became fundamental in medieval discussions of mental disorder was the "three- or four-ventricle" theory. Deriving from Galenic pathology this doctrine of localizing mental processes in the cells or ventricles of the brain received approval of such Christian scholars as Augustine or Nemesius of Emesa. According to the standard view, the first cell, in the anterior part of the brain, contains the *sensus communis,* receiving information from the senses. The second, middle ventricle is the seat of the fantasy and imagination, receptacle of various forms imprinted by the five senses. The third one is occupied by the estimative or cogitative faculties that are responsible for the appropriate interpretation of signals perceived by the senses. Finally, the rear part of the brain is considered to contain the memory. It was popular to point out the differences between the cell-functions to attribute particular cases of derangement to one or more of the ventricles. It became a sort of classificatory device. Witelo clearly uses some variant of this theory in his elaboration

of the errors of sense perception. He makes a difference between cases in which the sense perception works but the estimative faculty is hindered and those in which the anterior cell is damaged and the fantasy supplies the images instead of the senses, or, finally, cases in which the posterior part, containing memory is hurt, hence, visions, even if occurring, are not remembered, at all. It has been demonstrated, on the basis of philological comparisons, that the main source of Witelo's description of various illnesses is the popular *Viaticus* translated by (and in the Middle Ages ascribed to) Constantine the African (Witelo, 1979, pp. 143–45). We may presume, however, that Witelo's knowledge of medicine included other standard medical textbooks as well, such as the *Isagoge* of Johannitius or the Hippocratic *Aphorisms*. At any rate, medieval medical theory shared a rather coherent set of concepts so that the question of direct influences is not the most crucial one. And indeed, Witelo was not original in his medical opinions, he merely employed the large body of already existing concepts to a specific question. Still, his text is quite unique among other medical works in dedicating an entire treatise to solving the question of the existence and nature of demons from a predominantly medical point of view.

Conclusion

Witelo, a thirteenth-century Silesian scientist presents an interesting, naturalistic account of the phenomenon of demonic visions in his epistle *De causa primaria penitentiae in hominibus et de natura daemonum*. Witelo's theory of the nature of demonic visions is an interesting example of a rational attitude in medieval science. Seeking to explain supernatural phenomena in terms of natural causes, medieval scientists never deny the existence of the supernatural, nevertheless, they try to separate the domain of science from that of religion and make attempts at understanding the world through rational principles and logical inference. Thus they represent an alternative to the Christian demonology and popular mythology present in the title of our conference.

Witelo does not deny the existence of demons and devils. He assigns them an important place in his cosmology but at the same time he disagrees with most widespread conceptions on the nature of demons. Witelo claims that they are not immortal but merely long-lived. They do not deceive men in order to make them sin but are more perfect and intelligent than men. Finally, according to Witelo, demons are made of souls and ethereal bodies and therefore cannot be perceived by ordinary men.

In fact, whenever men claim to be seeing demons, it is not the real ones but merely the imagined, commonplace representations of what people believe them to be. These visions are usually due to some natural cause that can be well explained in the light of the current medical and psychological theories based on Galen, Algazel and Avicenna. According to medieval humoral medicine, most diseases are due to an excess of ill humors in the body. These humors may reach the brain and thus distort things seen or imagined by its sensory and intellectual faculties. The black bile of the melancholics causes black visions; the excessive blood of the frenetics makes everything appear in red, whereas the yellow bile of the epileptics inspires the appearance of white and yellow phantasms. The intensive movements of these ill humors prevent the brain from its regular functioning and make it lose control of the senses. This is when fantasy takes over and interprets things seen and imagined in their distorted forms as black or red demons.

A number of important issues could be investigated further in connection to Witelo's treatise. The limits of time and the conference convention allowed me to outline only a few. The epistemological discourse on the possibility of rational (natural) way to knowledge and the related problem of the "double truth" represent an important aspect of Witelo's argumentation. His employment of medical theory as well as the more general question of the ambiguous, that is: sacred, demonic and medical character of mental illnesses in medieval thought would also deserve a further insight. And, last but not least, the issue most relevant to the theme of our conference: Witelo's treatise yields an alternative, third way of looking at the problem of demons in the Middle Ages. We saw his handling of the popular beliefs in demons and the official Church de-

monology. He rejected the former on rational, scientific ground but was forced to accept the latter on the authority of Christian faith. Both, however, played an important role in his investigations. It would be interesting to reverse the question and see how much (if at all) did the "naturalistic," scientific explanation influence the popular perception of demons and the learned opinion of the theological authorities.

Notes

1 The date of this letter was established by prof. Birkenmajer, 1972, p. 412.
2 For biographical references as well as the manuscript tradition of Witelo's treatise, see: Burchardt, 1979, pp. 26–33 (Witelo's biography), pp. 33–53 (manuscripts).
3 *Quaestio de substantia daemonum et natura difficilis est, cuius signum est, quod numquam aliquis philosophorum, quem viderim, de ipsa scripsit aliquid, nisi solus Plato, qui modicum quid de ipsa scripsit et invalidum* (Burchardt, 1979, p. 167).
4 *Scribo itaque secundum viam naturalem et possibilem natura daemo-nes, quos sancta religio secundum viam non naturalem, immo divinam, divinitus revelatam, quosdam caelestes angelos de hierarchia caelesti propter radicem peccati, quae est superbia, praedicat cecidisse. Sed si casus angelorum per fidem, quae omnium rationem et sensus exsuperat, sit necessarius, tamen per rationem naturalem et ordinem universi non est possibilis* [...] (Burchardt, 1979, p. 167).
5 *Credamus ergo casum angelorum per fidem et hos angelos esse daemones. Sed tamen, quia quaestio est a me naturaliter quaesita, ad ipsam naturaliter respondebo* (Burchardt, 1979, p. 168).
6 *Dico ergo quod licet daemon graece latine sonet sciens, homines tamen daemonem pro cacodaemone accipiunt et tunc appellant daemonem esse maleficum et deforme apparens eis praeter formas sensatas et notas. Sed cum talia sint multa, quaedam enim sunt apparentia et nihil agentia, nisi forte sermonem, quaedam vero sunt agentia res alias naturales et raro apparentia* (Burchardt, 1979, p. 168).
7 *ut si fuerit passio de phlegmate dealbante cerebrum et phantasmata, iudicat in homine septentrionali albo angelos caelestes, in meridionali Mauro daemones secundum consuetudinem picturarum suarum; si vero sit passio ex cholera nigra, iudicat apud nos daemones nobis dispares, apud Mauros angelos sibi similes* (Burchardt, 1979, p. 169).
8 *Et istos daemones incitant in hominibus, et nec melancholicis nec multum timidis, malae fabulae pueriles, in quibus homines de daemonibus, quod tamen valde commune est memoriter audiverunt, quia formas illas relatas ad verba ipsarum relata pueri faciliter observant et nihilominus ea in secretis locis et obscuris cogitant. Et occurrunt eis saepe secundum fabulam relatam, unde a talibus fabulis sint homines fatui compescendi* (Burchardt, 1979, pp. 171–72).
9 *Et videntur etiam sub formis relatis et scriptis per antiquos et sub formis pictis per modernos...* (Burchardt, 1979, p. 172).

10 *Multae itaque formae fiunt in visu quae non sunt in ordine mundi* (Burchardt, 1979, p. 173).
11 *quondam fuit in Polonia quedam mulier Teutonica, cum qua Henricus plebanus sancti Petri in Ligniz plurima idiomata loquebatur, quae sana neque audiverat neque scriverat* (Burchardt, 1979, p. 178).
12 *Et etiam visi sunt incubi et incubae tactu delectabiles* [...] *or: quod in aliquo loco eadem forma pluribus simul apparuit et se omnibus prostituerit, qui habitaculum suum temporibus opportunis intraverunt ut dictum fuit mihi per bonum testimonum de quodam castro dicto Salezpurgum,* [...] (Burchardt, 1979, pp. 173–74).
13 William of Conches, Philosophia, PL. 90, 1138: *Nos autem dicimus in omnibus rationem quaerendam, si potest inveniri. Si enim alicui [ratio] deficiat, quod divina pagina affirmat Spiritui sancto et fidei est mandandum.*

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DISCERNING SPIRITS IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

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Its religious essence notwithstanding, the discernment of spirits has never been merely a theological issue. Rather, it has always been a social practice, characterized by interwoven processes of examinations and self-examination, negotiations and ambiguity, chaos and incoherence. There has always been an unbridgeable gap between what exorcists' guides and theological treatises argued and what took place when specific cases of supernatural behavior were to be discerned. This self-evident observation often gets lost in historical discussion of the discernment of spirits. This paper is meant as a contribution to the on-going process of remedying this oversight.

In 1575, the Spanish *beata* Francisca de los Apóstoles was called before the Inquisition to answer accusations of blasphemy that resulted from her claim that divine visions instructed her to reform the religious community which she had established. When asked what made her assume that her visions had divine, rather than diabolic origins, the *beata* replied (and the scribe recorded):

> It was clear that this was from God and not the devil, first, because her spirit was enraptured with great sweetness and in this time she felt no bodily thing with her senses nor was her soul in any way disturbed, but everything was great sweetness, and within her soul there was great light and a deep recognition of her own lowliness.[1]

Other mystics were less certain of the identity of their possessing spirits: "Because of my frailness and the devil's cunning I am

always afraid, thinking that I may be deceived," lamented Catherine of Siena.[2] Drawing on her own mystical experiences, Teresa of Avila lamented how difficult it is to discern spirits:

> The devil makes good use of the imagination in practicing his surprises and deceptions, and there are many such which he can practice on women, or on unlettered persons, because we do not understand the difference between the faculties and the imagination, and thousands of other things belonging to the interior life.[3]

And in her *Life* she wrote:

> It is always good that we walk with fear and caution, for, although the work may be from God, the devil at times can transform himself into an angel of light; and if the soul has not a great deal of experience, it will not discern the devil's work.[4]

The English mystic Margery Kempe experienced the love of God in "such remarkable faces and gestures, with vehement sobbing and great abundance of tears, so that many people slandered her, not believing that it was the work of God, but that some evil spirit tormented her body" (Margery Kempe, 1985, p. 77). Nicole Tavernier, a Parisian self-proclaimed mystic and visionary, prophesized during the troubled years of the League. Ordinary Parisians consulted her, the powerful people of the kingdom asked her to recommend them in her prayers, and the clerical establishment regarded her with the highest estimation (Boucher, 1873, pp. 187–89). A third type of discernment necessitated clerical intervention. In the late sixteenth century, Nicole Obry, a young girl from the North of France, claimed to be possessed by the spirit of her deceased grandfather, and later changed her mind and attributed the possession to an angel. An expert exorcist, who was called to discern what possessed the young woman, determined, however, that the source of her visions was demonic and she was promptly exorcised (Boulaese, 1578). In 1620, the Italian nun Benedetta Carlini also claimed an angel as the inspiration of her divine revelations,

and in her case, too, the Inquisition found that she was possessed by the devil and not by a divine agency (Brown, 1986).

These three types of discernment of spirits, taken as they are from different centuries and different countries, present three different discerning agencies or authorities: auto-discernment by the individual visionary (or energumen) herself; community-discernment by her neighbors and followers; and official discernment by church authorities. These cases remind us that the process of distinguishing between divine and evil spirits was a complex one, involving living human beings, with their agendas and beliefs, fears and hopes, egos and self-doubts. Also involved were the visionaries' social networks of friends and supporters, as well as their clusters of enemies.

The discernment of spirits was a major concern throughout the Renaissance and early modern period, just as it had been in the Middle Ages. Drawing upon the manifested external morphological resemblance between divine and demonic possessions, theologians admitted that the discernment of spirits is a uniquely arduous task. Recently, historians have even suggested that both types of possessions were expressions of the same quest for self-transformation, which makes (and has always made) the discernment of spirits not merely a difficult but practically an impossible endeavor. Nevertheless, numerous attempts to develop systematic theology and mechanisms of discernment were carried out in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. In fact, during the Renaissance discernment got even more confused than in the Middle Ages. Medical causes of affliction, simulation of sanctity and of possession, and maleficium were added to the issues needed to be discerned. These concerns added to an already laborious enterprise. The theologians' tautological failure, and the Catholic Church's inability to develop an unambiguous theory of discernment, maintained the role of the demoniac or mystic herself and that of her community in the process. The individual's social standing and her relations, her patronage networks, reputation, local politics, and other social, moral, and political non-theological variables continued to play a major role in the discernment of spirits. These predicaments of the discernment of spirits, and the confusion that was an inevitable part

of it, warn us against trying to read too much order into early modern theology and demonology. A chronological model of progress (à la Mandrou or Thomas), or an attempt to discover the logic and coherence of the early modern epistemological system (à la Stuart Clark) are tempting, but necessarily oversimplifying (Mandrou, 1970; Thomas, 1973; Clark, 1997).

In her 1994 Ph.D. dissertation, Nancy Caciola documented meticulously the history of discernment of spirits in the Middle Ages (Caciola, 1994). As Caciola has shown, the later Middle Ages were a time of increased attempts to develop a systematic theology of discernment, due in part to growing concerns about female mystics and the physicality of their experiences. With Jean Gerson in the fifteenth century this theology of discernment reached its maturity, and resulted in growing restrictions on divine possession in Catholicism (Boland, 1959). But Gerson and his contemporaries did not succeed in establishing any clear and straightforward criteria with which one could tell the divinely-possessed from the energumen. Divine gift—a charismatic power—remained the only safe way to tell divine from diabolic possessions. This failure to come up with "objective" marks notwithstanding, many mystics, most of them women, who had benefitted in the past from clerical support for their ecstatic forms of spirituality, were by the fifteenth century more likely to be silenced and exorcised than to be recognized as divine mediums. Divine possession as a form of affective self-transformation lost much of its legitimacy.[5]

But what happened to the discernment of spirits following the fifteenth century? Can we argue, with Gabriella Zarri, Nancy Caciola and others, that by the fifteenth century a "strict separation of physicality and possession from spirituality and sanctity" was finally achieved? Was the early modern period a time of transition from a theological confusion to an Inquisitorial order? As will be shown, the theology of discernment in the early modern period continued to reveal an inability to create and maintain clear boundaries between divine and diabolic sources of supernatural experiences, never capable of advancing clearer methods.

More treatises and books concerning the discernment of spirits were written in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century than in

any time before or after. I have chosen a few examples from a body of works that includes more than fifty long treatises and numerous shorter discussions that are to be found in early modern theological writings and in guides for exorcists. While the discussion of discernment was a catholic discourse, in the catholic—that is universal—sense of the word, the following discussion follows the developments in specific catholic countries: Spain, Italy, and France, because of my conviction that specific local concerns shaped and determined theological developments.

As is well known, the early years of the sixteenth century witnessed the growing popularity of the *Alumbrados*, or the Illuminism phenomenon in the Iberian Peninsula, especially in Castile. Due in part to the inability of converts from Judaism to find their place within the established catholic church, as well as to Rhino-Flemish mystical traditions and to Erasmian (and maybe Lutheran) influence, in the late Middle Ages and during the first half of the sixteenth century many spiritually-inclined believers developed new forms of religiosity that emphasized personal interior experiences and raptures. In 1525 the Inquisition published its first edict against the movement (Guilhem, 1979, pp. 197–240; Pérez de Valdivia, 1985, pp. 43–55; Stoichita, 1995, pp. 8–24). The Inquisitional effort was judicial, rather than theological, but two leading Spanish theologians attempted to supplement the Inquisitorial effort with theological discussions of the discernment of spirits. Alas, the *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías* (A Treatise of Superstitions and Witchcraft) by the Franciscan friar Martín de Castañega (1529), was not more successful than late medieval attempts. Like Gerson, Castañega warned that what looks like spiritually-induced possession could be caused by natural forces, and argued that some natural diseases (especially mental illness) could be misdiagnosed as demonic possession. Women, who are mentally weaker than men, are more likely to confuse demonic possession with natural illnesses, he argued (Castañega, 1946, pp. 37–39, 146–49). Women are also more likely to simulate divine or diabolic possessions when they collaborate with conjurers who sign pacts with the devil (Castañega, 1946, pp. 123–44). In addition to discerning good and evil spirits, he therefore summarized, there is a need to develop

means to discern natural and demonic affliction. A need there is, but Castañega stops short of actually offering one.

Writing only a year later, Pedro Ciruelo, a professor at the universities of Alcalá and Salamanca, came up with his own *Reprovación de las supersticiones y hechizerías* (A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Witchcraft) (Ciruleo, 1978, pp. 108–117). Ciruelo's main concern is the discernment of exorcists and an attack on pseudo-exorcists, both lay and clerics, who use public exorcism to advance their own claims to fame. By giving the devil a platform to show his strength, these exorcists deceive and exploit illiterate believers. What's worse, they encourage Satan to pursue his deceit. Once false exorcists are expelled—and it is especially important to expel itinerant mendicant exorcists—most diabolic possessions will also disappear, since the devil will find little support for his fakery. Alas, a few cases of genuine possession will still remain, and as for discerning them, Ciruelo can only summarize what had already been said before: "Sometimes, what appears to be a case of possession really is not; in order to be certain, a wise physician should be consulted." Once it was determined that the cause of the affliction is spiritual rather than physical, the bishop should proceed slowly and look for signs that may help the diagnosis. A knowledge of foreign language is a clear sign of demonic possession, as is a claim by the spirit to be the soul of a dead person. These signs, however, had characterized mystics and *beatas* no less than demoniacs, and, as such, offer no breakthrough in the enterprise. The lack of an unambiguous theology of discernment did not prevent the growing suspicion of all forms of female spirituality that had been approved and even encouraged prior to 1520, especially during the Cardinalship of Ximénez Cisneros. *Beatas*, who, in the past, had been regarded as charismatic teachers, prophetesses, and mystics, were now more likely to be reviled as dangerous, suspicious, heretics, witches, and, often, diabolically possessed.[6] In his 700-page long guide to *beatas*, Teresa of Avila's contemporary, Diego Pérez de Valdivia, summarized the Spanish position concerning discernment with the admission that "no vision can be absolutely certain" (Pérez de Valdivia, 1977, p. 334; cf. Weber, 1993, pp. 221–34).

In Italy, too, early modern attempts to develop clear and "objective" means to discern spirits ran into difficulties. Following the popularity of female "Living Saints" in the fifteenth century, and the dangerous challenge to church authority presented by Savonarola, the time had arrived for a methodic reconstruction of church teaching concerning sainthood, prophecies, visionary activity, love-induced ecstasy, mystical experiences, and the role of the laity in the church. Italian spiritual directors of female "Living Saints" and the church authorities had to devise techniques to discern spirits and to analyze mystical phenomena. Like their predecessors in the late Middle Ages, their safest guarantee against simulation or demonic delusions was the narrowing down of possibilities by doubting all female mystical experiences and restraining prophetic divination. In 1516, the Fifth Lateran Council ordered bishops to investigate all claims for prophetic knowledge (Mansi, 1902, cc. 884–947; Minnich, 1997, pp. 63–87). Canonists, addressing the issue of prophecy, legitimized some true prophets and visionaries, but mandated careful scrutiny of prophecies by the church authorities. But the Lateran decree did not confront the question of how to identify a true prophet, and only ruled that this task was the responsibility of the Holy See or of the local bishop and his advisers.

By the end of the sixteenth century, two leading Italian theologians tried to regularize the theology of discernment. In a series of immensely popular books (later to be incorporated into the *Thesaurus Exorcismorum* (1608), the most important manual for exorcists in the early modern period), the Franciscan Girolamo Menghi (Hieronymus Mengus, 1529–1609) instructed exorcists on how to diagnose true diabolic possession, confront the demons, and cast out evil spirits. Following the Dominican Inquisitors Krämer and Sprenger, whose *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) was the most important demonological Renaissance treatise,[7] Menghi's writings were manuals for the practicing exorcists, printed in small-size editions, and were probably carried in the exorcist's pocket, to be consulted on site. Menghi participated in the post-Tridentine attack on superstitions and local traditions (including exorcismal traditions), and his books delineated clear boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate forms of exorcism. At the same time, he was arguing

against new voices, the voices of Reformers, physicians, and skeptics, who denied the reality of demonic possession, of witches and witchcraft, and who attributed all diseases to natural causes (Menghi, 1579, pp. 114–16). His systematization of exorcism also included attempts to distinguish between natural and supernatural etiologies of disease, to explain the relations between demonic possession and witchcraft, and to develop a method to discern between diabolic and divine possessions (Menghi, 1579, pp. 353–57, 449-52; O'Neil, 1984, pp. 53–83; Gentilcore, 1993, pp. 134–55).

Menghi required exorcists to be able to distinguish natural from maleficent symptoms of possession, and warned them against practicing medicine.

> Instead of the exorcists they should be, they turn themselves into herbalists, physicians, or charlatans. This they do by searching for this or that herb against demons. And they give syrups and medicines, powders, pills and other similar things to the possessed and the bewitched [...] With these things they occasionally chase the very souls out of the bodies with the [evil] spirits (Menghi, 1601, p. 635; translations from Gentilcore, 1998, p. 16).

But, like Gerson before him, Menghi admitted that the discernment of the etiology of disease is a difficult task, and that the same illness can arise from both natural and unnatural causes. The matter is further complicated, he explained, because of the similarities between divine and demonic possessions. From a historical–theological perspective, the parallels between morphological signs of both forms of possession are not surprising, he reminded his readers. Demons, after all, are fallen angels, and as such possess all the powers and attributes of good angels.[8] Like angels, possessing demons can prophesize the future, reveal secrets, and understand and speak foreign languages.[9] But unlike angels of light, who penetrate the soul, evil spirits possess only the body and not the soul of their victims. Another distinction between the two types of angels is the undeniable fact that demons are repugnant and angels are not, and that demons lack the power to perform real miracles but

only to simulate miracles. Finally, while good angels possess people for the glory of God, and induce good feelings, fallen angels harm and cause pain (Menghi, 1593b, pp. 8, 27–29, 39–45). Given the abstract and spiritual nature of these distinctions, it is not surprising that the only practical advice the Italian exorcist had for his disciples was to examine the bodies, as well as the souls of the possessed, and to look for clear signs of physical pain, such as stomach aches. Confession is a known remedy for possession-related pains, he stated. Therefore, if a confession reduces the aches, the patient is, indeed, possessed by evil spirits, and the exorcist can set himself to work (Menghi, 1593b, pp. 50–60). Thus, bodily pain becomes the key for discernment of spirits, in complete contradiction to Menghi's own warning that bodily afflictions is just as likely to derive from natural causes, and should therefore not be trusted as a mark of genuine possession.

Writing a few years later, the Milanese Ambrosian Brother Francesco Maria Guazzo (1608) summarized the Italian discourse of discernment on the eve of the publication of the *Thesaurus Exorcismorum* and of the official and authorized papal *Rituale Romanum* of 1614. Guazzo's suggestions for discernment of spirits offered nothing new. It must first be determined whether the visionary or demoniac is a good Catholic, and "whether the person's honesty and virtues point to the sincerity of his faith." Then the exorcist should examine whether he does not suffer from poor health, black bile, excessive fasting or wild imagination, or whether the person manifests pride, ambition, impatience, carnality, anger, or hypocrisy. The age and sex of the person are also crucial. The old are known to be delirious, the young stupid, and "as for the female sex, it is agreed that they must be regarded with greater suspicion." People who practice a spiritual regimen are especially suspect, and it is important to note that when Guazzo talks about such people, he slips from the neutral masculine to the feminine. "If the person is an old practitioner of spiritual exercises, or whether she is only a novice [...] there must be suspicion of fraud." Again, there is nothing new here, and Guazzo gives full credit to Gerson and Johannes Nider, from whom he compiled his list of discerning characteristics (Guazzo, 1974, pp. 136–37, 142). Discernment is difficult, women

are more untrustworthy than men, the personality of the visionary is more important than the content of the vision—all of Guazzo's conclusions had, by the early seventeenth century, become familiar motifs in the discussion of discernment. Due to the complexity of the discernment of spirits, Guazzo summarized his discussion, "nothing is safer for a man than to mistrust his own judgement, and to preserve his obedience to his superior even in the face of a visions which compels his belief."

While Menghi recommended trusting the body rather than the spirits, Guazzo emphasized the spiritual qualities and the character of the person and ignored bodily external manifestation. Both, however, failed in their attempt to create clear-cut definitions and objective standards for discernment, and both fell back to reliance upon personal character and communal approval as the safest means for discerning spirits and evaluating the possessed person's reliability and trustworthiness. Thus, the issue of the morphological similarity between divine and diabolic possession and the need for discernment remained unresolved. It was still a personal and local practice, determined less by the content of the visions than by the personality of the visionary, her social class and relations, her religious affiliations, and local politics. The reliance on the mystic's reputation as a criteria maintained and even reinforced the communal aspect of discernment, as neighbors' opinion of an individual person could determine the results of her discernment.

My last examples for the failure of a theology of discernment in early modern Catholicism derive from France. There, too, as in Spain and Italy, the growing suspicion of female expressions of affective spirituality led attempts to redraw the boundaries between demonic and divinely-inspired possession. Interestingly, the process started in France a hundred years later than in Spain and Italy. In 1598, a major debate erupted in Paris between physicians and theologians concerning the false demoniac Marthe Brossier. Exorcism of this young women became a theatrical performance that drew large crowds and threatened the shaky peace between the Catholics and the Huguenots. Brossier was arrested and was examined by theologians and doctors, who debated whether she was possessed, ill, or simulating her possession. Responding to a

physician's claim that the young Brossier was ill, rather than possessed by the devil, the French theologian Pierre de Bérulle, the founder of the Order of the Oratory (1575–1629), came to the defense of possession and exorcism (Marescot, 1599; Congnard, 1652; Dagens, 1952, pp. 153–60; Mandrou, 1970, pp. 163–79; Ferber, 1991, pp. 59–83). Writing in 1599 under the pseudonym Léon d'Alexis, Bérulle described the long history of demonic possession. Comparing demonic possession to the Incarnation, he explained that the mystery of the Incarnation served Satan as the model for diabolic possession, and hence the similarity between these events: "In one it is God, in the other it is a demon" (D'Alexis, 1599, fol. 39, cf. 14). Like other theologians who preceded him in attempts to discern spirits, he warned that possessing demons often disguise themselves in the form of natural or "ordinary" illnesses such as epilepsy and lunacy (D'Alexis, 1599, fol. 39, cf. 82). But he, too, admitted that "the devil's essence is spiritual and its residence invisible." Therefore, the devil's comings and goings, or the reasons he chose to attack a specific person, cannot be explained (D'Alexis, 1599, fol. 39, cf. 81). The exorcist still could not, in fact, discern the nature of the possessing agency, nor could he discover the etiology of the demoniac's behavior.

Jean Bodin (1587) reached the same impasse. The diagnosis of good or evil spirits could not be based on observable actions but requires the assessment of the intentions behind them.

> To say that the sign of good or evil spirits must be determined by good or bad works is certainly true. But the difficulty is, what are good works? For although fasting, prayers, chastity and modesty, solitude, contemplation, and curing the sick are good works in themselves, however, if they are done to honor Satan, or an idol [...] far be it that these works are good, rather they are despicable, diabolic, and damnable (Bodin, 1995, book 1, ch. 3, pp. 66–67).

This was also the conclusion of the Minime brother (and soon to become a Protestant Professor of Philosophy) Claude Pythois (1596–1676), who advised exorcists to consult with physicians,

with people who know the energumen and her reputation, and to warn the patient against simulation. Pythois distinguished between sufficient and insufficient signs of diabolic possession. Ambivalent physical behaviors such as convulsions, rigidity, extraordinary facial or bodily contortions, meaningless babbling, and prolonged silences, which had previously been signs of possession by either divine or diabolic entities, were now viewed as clear, but in and of themselves insufficient signs of demonic possession. Mental states such as rage, blasphemous utterances, and repulsion from sacred symbols—signs that some theologians had previously deemed sufficient—were also viewed by the French theologian as insufficient. Only the ability to speak unfamiliar languages (xenolalia), to exhibit knowledge above one's learning, to unveil secrets, and to exhibit supernatural corporeal strength were, according to Pythois, uncontested signs of demonic possession.[10] These marks, alas, still overlapped to a large degree with the clear tokens of affective mysticism (cf. Acts of the Apostles 2:13). They were also signs of melancholy, the mental illness that so intrigued Renaissance scholars and physicians, and that could or could not be in and of itself a manifestation of demonic affliction (Burton, 1941, p. 328. part 1, sec. 3, memb. 1, subsec. 3). Pythois concluded, therefore, by conceding that the ability to discern spirits is a *grace gratuite* that God gives to some exorcists and not to others (Pythois, 1621, pp. 16–20). This, as we remember, was also Jean Gerson's conclusion two hundred years earlier. In fact, this had been St. Augustine's rule a thousand years before.

But while theologians did not succeed in their attempt to develop clear and objective means of discerning spirits, procedural, institutional, and judicial decisions during the sixteenth century did reshape the discourse of possession. By the time Bérulle, Pythois, and their seventeenth-century contemporaries were writing, visions were regarded with universal suspicion. The strange new category of "simulated" possession was gaining popularity, further discrediting and dismissing the possibility of genuine divine possession. Simulated sanctity characterized women. Thus, the late medieval process of gendering and sexualization of sensory mystical experiences continued, delegitimizing female visionaries more

than it raised doubts concerning male mystics. By 1637, the French word *visionnaire* became virtually synonymous with "crazy," while in Spain a new saying was gaining popularity: "A prostitute in the spring, a procuress in the autumn, and beata in the winter" ("Puta primaveral, alcahueta otoñal y beata invernal").[11]

The Catholic Church also tried in the early seventeenth century to restrict and even abolish local initiatives and traditions concerning the discernment of spirits. The semi-official *Thesaurus Exorcismorum* of 1608 limited the exorcist's ability to maneuver and to approve ecstatic forms of possession, while the new rules for canonization of saints, which were put into effect between the establishment of the Congregation of Sacred Rites and Ceremonies in 1588 and the papal bull *Coelestis Hierusalem cives* of 1634, consolidated the papal authority to canonize saints. These publications systematized new diagnostic procedures, regulations, and Inquisitorial methods for the discernment of both possession and sainthood. But the new rules still failed in their attempt to create a clear theological difference between divine and diabolic possessions. It was these procedural and institutional changes, rather than a theological solution, that made the approval of divine possession by means of ecstatic and sensory techniques all but impossible. The signs of possessions—both divine and diabolic—remained the same, but the church now claimed an exclusive control over the ability to decipher them. "Virtuous Heroism" was now emphasized as a precondition for sainthood. It could be achieved in missionary activity across the oceans, but also closer to home, by martyrdom in Protestant territory, or by resistance to excessive spiritual behavior (De Maio, 1973, pp. 265–67; Dalla Torre, 1991, pp. 231–63; Schutte, 1994, pp. 280–81). The latter restricted and opposed any reliance on one's own judgement. Only the church could prevent pride, fantasy, hypocrisy and fraudulent claims to sanctity from occurring. Spiritual directors, well-tempered behavior, obedience and humility were the only guarantees against delusions. Resistance to visions, rather than susceptibility to them, became a mark of true divine grace.

But the administrative solution, namely the transfer of the sole authority to discern spirits from the individual and the community

to the church was successful only on paper. The authorities in charge still had to rely upon the visionaries' acquaintances, colleagues, and patrons when they sought to determine her reputation, reliability, and virtuous heroism. The authorities could claim a monopoly on discernment, but they could not enact it. One thousand years after St. Augustine, and three hundred years after Jean Gerson attacked the reliability of (mostly female) mystics, early modern theologians still had to entertain the possibility of divine possession, even by ecstatic women. Restricted by its inability to discredit all forms of divine possession, a theology of discernment was doomed to remain inconsistent and problematic, and discernment continued to be based upon local, communal, and political concerns.

Notes

1 Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid), Inq, leg. 113, fol. 188r-v; quoted in Ahlgren 125.
2 Catherine of Sienna, *Epistolario di Santa Caterina*, letter 97; quoted in Bell, 1985, p. 22. Similar fears were recounted in the biographies of Bridget of Sweden and Joan of Arc, and in biographies of fellow female mystics: Brigitta of Sweden, 1990, pp. 77–78, 85–87, 94. cf. additional examples in Christian, 1981, pp. 188–203; Kieckhefer, 1984, pp. 174–77; Warner, 1981, pp. 90–106; Barstow, 1986, pp. 21–34; Vauchez, 1987, pp. 277–86.
3 St. Teresa, "The Interior Castle", p. 5.
4 St. Teresa, "Life", ch. 14; cf. 25, 31, 33.
5 As Caciola and other scholars have pointed out, the restriction on divine possession in this period was a gendered development. The ascendancy and popularity of female mystics between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries compelled the Church to determine who could become a "medium" for divine knowledge, and whether women should or could enjoy this privilege. It would be a mistake, however, to reduce these theological developments to a misogynist attack by male clerics on female mystics. Male mystics were also suspect, while female mystics themselves, among then such major figures as Bridget of Sweden, Teresa of Avila and Joan of Arc also expressed doubts concerning their own experiences.
6 For individual cases see Imirizaldu, 1977; Christian, 1981, pp. 188–91; Bilinkoff, 1989, pp. 55–66; Kagan, 1990, 1991, pp. 105–124; McKendrick and MacKay, 1991, pp. 93–104; Weber, 1993, pp. 221–34; Stoichita, 1995, pp. 122–62.
7 Kramer and Sprenger, 1971. See especially Book II, Second Question, Chapter 6.
8 Menghi, 1579, p. 1; 1593a, pp. 5–6; Menghi repeats St. Bernard's teachings on the issues. See Bernard of Clairvaux, 1854, p. 602.
9 Menghi, 1579, pp. 19–39, 146–47. On the devil's ability to foreknow the future see St. Augustine, 1955, pp. 415–40.

10 Pythois, 1621, pp. 16–20. His list overlapped to a large degree with the marks of demonic possession offered by the Italian theologians Thyraeus, 1598, p. 60; Polidoro, 1587, p. 7; and Menghi, 1593a, pp. 17–20.

11 In 1640, a comedy titled "Les Visionnaires" was shown in Paris, presenting characters that, according to the advertisment, "are all imbalanced (*chimériques*) or visionaries, who suffer from different insanities." Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, *Les Visionnaires*, quoted in Caillet, 1935, p. 20. I thank Cynthia Cupples for this reference. For Spain: Martinéz Kleiser, 1953, p. 618.

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MYSTICS OR VISIONARIES? DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS IN THE FIRST PART OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY IN FRANCE

SOPHIE HOUDARD

We are indebted to Henri Bremond for having rediscovered French spiritual texts of the first half of the seventeenth century and for having enlightened the activity, indeed even the activism of spiritualists within the movement of the Catholic Counter-reformation (Bremond, 1967). Indeed, this "century of saints" is marked by the rapid expansion of French mysticism, a sheer mystical invasion (to use Bremond's terms) which particularly flourished in Gallican France until the increasingly determined hunt against quietism, during the absolute monarchy, provoked its progressive and definite dispersion.

In France as in many other countries, the Catholic Counter-reformation demands a new kind of professionalism on the part of clergymen (such as the creation of new religious orders and seminaries) and, on the part of the laity, what we may call for lack of a better word, a sacralisation of the lay-state and of its social organization. In the straight and narrow path of Borromean ethics, spiritual associations and non-religious brotherhoods undertake the promotion of a civil religion where the spirit of reform must be on the level of interiority but also of social mutation (Prodi, 1985).

Two examples will serve to delimit the topic of this article: on one hand, the elaboration of a new Christian city and the place it allots to good and bad angels and, on the other, the relationship between what is social, political and supernatural.

The first example stems from a chronicle of Charles Borromeo's solemn entry in Milan on September 23, 1565:

> He finally arrived in Milan where all his people awaited him with incredible eagerness; the city streets which he had to use had been prepared with a pomp of great solemnity; one could see triumphal arches in many places and doors decorated with symbols and eulogies of great lavishness [...] He was accompanied to the Church by the Duke of Albuqerque, Governor of Milan, a number of prelates, the Senate, Magistrates, the Nobility, and an infinite number of people [...] all showing a face and saying words which expressed unequalled joy and happiness; out of the enormous crowd thundered applauds [...] One could also hear, on another side, an appalling roar, cries from people tortured by spirits, bellowing like beasts, screaming and crying desperately as if the presence of the saintly archbishop were causing them some horrendous torment; this was noted by many as a cause for great marvel (Giussani, *Vita,* L.1, chap. 1, quoted by Paolo Prodi).

This excerpt from the description of the triumphal entry of the archbishop of Milan shows two cities: on one side, a city which unites all the orders with equal enthusiasm and, on the other, the one which refuses this new social body, the city of howling beasts prey to spirits. Prey to good or to bad angels? Although the text doesn't specify, the terms seem to suggest Satan's rebellion against the new Borromean political triumph. Although the explicit goal of the written account of the archbishop of Milan's entrance is undoubtedly to show his absolute victory over the devil's authority, it seems more interesting to me to read it as the narrative of the split between the new Christian city, geographically and symbolically unified by social and spiritual links weaved by the pastoral, and the city of the possessed, of those who are the prey of extraordinary states gradually exiled by the new civility.

The second example is an extract borrowed from the *Life* of Madame Acarie, this mystical league member (these terms are borrowed from Dagens, 1952, p. 120), stigmatized, visionary and extatic who, during the reign of Henri IV, organizes in her home one of those groups where both laymen and important members of the Church and the State endeavour to organize social discipline and

internal spirituality. Father André Du Val reports an episode about her which, to me, signifies the complex links between the civil world and the supernatural:

> At that time, there was a lady in Paris who came to see me and said to me, My Father, people say things about Madame Acarie, all they do is talk about her all around the city; is everything they say about her true? And since I had asked her what people were saying, she answered, People say she has great revelations, that her life is miraculous, that she is so knowledgeable that her house is jammed with people who want advice: preachers, doctors come and ask her opinion about anything. Everything this good woman said was true and there was even more that she wouldn't say. Upon his return to Fontainebleau, even the King, who was well advised of the esteem the City of Paris was showing her, about a bad rumor which was spreading, sent the R. P. Coton to tell her that it was pure slander and that he gave her his assurance of it (Du Val, 1622, p. 211).

If we are to believe the Lady speaking to Father Du Val, the entire city is at the home of Barbe Acarie to consult her; all types of circles mention nothing but her: doctors of the Sorbonne, famous preachers (we know that the Acarie Salon was assiduously attended by Father Coton, the King's confessor, Pierre de Bérulle) as well as quartermasters and simple devout women. Everyone comes to ask Barbe Acarie to illuminate them since, according to what they hear, her inspiration is supernatural. Here again, the woman speaking to Father Du Val shows that despite all of Paris rushing to her home, another part of the city is mocking at her and spreading doubts regarding her supernatural gifts. "Is everything they say true?" asks the lady from the biographer-hagiographer who resorts to the King in person in order to put an end to the ambiguity—just as Molière summons Louis XIV, not without humor, during the fifth act of *Tartuffe* in order to help stop impostures and to distinguish truth from falsehood. Only King Henri IV, the recently converted heretic, is in the position to decide whether or not this is a case of slander, and assert that Barbe Acarie is truly a saint, that her visions, her

ecstasies and her gift for prophecy indeed come from good Angels and not from Satan or some forgery.

These two passages seem very important to me because they summarize the representational system at work when the question of the supernatural arises at the end of the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth centuries: the first passage shows a Christian civility which marginalizes the most spectacular signs of the supernatural (one only needs to remember what will happen at Loudun where bestiality and savagery will symbolically express the now inaudible language of the Christian supernatural); the second passage allows one to measure the doubt cast upon all signs, all forms of appearance and the absence of reliable criteria in order to formulate a judgement (here the King symbolizes a principle of absolute yet arbitrary authority).

But I am less interested in discussing the fact that the royalty confiscates for its own benefit the sacredness which it transfers to the State than the place allotted to the notion of discernment of spirits and spiritual direction (regarding the former complex question, which is currently the object of much research among seventeenth-century historians, I refer you to the ongoing discussion between Gauchet and Jouhaud, 1988). Indeed, I wish to consider how, in the biographies of the most famous and recognized mystical women of the early seventeenth century whom Pierre Coton or Pierre de Bérulle consult, the authors waver between narrating the extraordinary and its progressive internalization. The role played by Ignatian *Exercises* on one side, the persistance of the Rhino-Flemish mystical currents on the other, and finally the birth of a strong rationalist currant produce, at the beginning of this century, a series of questions: can one have any contact with God? Can one be united? Is there a place within human body which the Other can occupy? The most famous cases of possession will also be the stage for these questions. Thus we know that the mystic Jean-Joseph Surin, exorcist in Loudun (Surin, 1990; see Houdard, 1995, pp. 187–99; Houdard, 2000, pp. 331–47), considers possession to be a mystical experience. In the case of the possessed Jeanne des Anges, Father Surin replaces the direct and spectacular road of exorcism with what he calls the "indirect path," the spiritual interview des-

tined to liberate the soul from the secret inclinations which allowed the intrusion of the devil. Surin thus carries out a veritable mystical reinterpretation of possession since the devil is no longer in the body, as the Thomistic tradition would have it, but at the bottom of the soul where he acts by imprint (*impression*). With the prioress of Loudun, Surin is engaged in spiritual direction "in the ear of the possessed" (*à l'oreille de la possédée*) rather than exorcism which functions as a theatrical hand-to-hand. Indeed, this will liberate the soul from its hidden secrets and desires in order to turn it into God's residence. With this spiritual revolution, Father Surin places possession within the history of interiority, of the subject's secret life, so that it ceases to be the visible and spectacular expression of a body without reason, deformed by the devil.

We know that discerning within one's self, within one's soul, the good angels from the bad ones which are at work constitutes one of the most important spiritual exercises. Gradually, however, it is no longer the angels which the disciple (*l'exercitant*) or the director (*le directeur*) drive out during the soul's dissection, but the will's contrivances, the "states of illusion" (*les états d'illusion*) as Pierre Nicole will name them, the traps of self-pride. Thus, the demons gradually leave room for the subject's secret consent, for the infinite withdrawals of a soul no longer inhabited by the supernatural. The history of the expulsion of the angels inspired a voluminous chapter in our cultural history; it should take into account the role of Jansenism and of an Augustinianism which was radical in its way of representing the space assigned to the soul (Papasogli, 1991). I shall merely outline one of its chapters by analyzing how the biographies of extatic mystics of the beginning of the seventeenth century handle the notion of Otherness and represent it within a subject's heart.

The Mystical Presence of the Other

Among those whom we qualify as devoutly pious (*les dévots*) in seventeenth-century France, no one doubts the reality of Madame Acarie's extraordinary states. The King's confessor from 1608, Fa-

ther Coton, a Jesuit, recognizes them in Madame Acarie, but also in Marie de Valence and Marie des Vallées, to name only the most famous. Barbe Acarie, the wife of a famous league member, is a witty and well-read Parisian woman who organizes, in her home, a kind of spiritual and political salon. The two others, however, are uneducated peasant girls whom people come to consult for their extraordinary visions. All three are said to be "inspirited" (*inspiritées*): Madame Acarie has interior stigmata, she treats a patient with her saliva, has visions of Saint Teresa and such ecstasies that Father Bérulle, "superior of the congregation of the Oratory, had once seen her ravished so powerfully that her body was elevated from the ground two or three feet, remaining suspended a long while in the air" (Du Val, 1622, p. 681).

Marie Tessonnière, better known by the name of Marie de Valence, is a Huguenot soon fallen prey to demons and then rescued by good angels who lead her to the road of grace and Catholicism. Originally illiterate, in an extraordinary manner she suddenly learns to read, makes contact with angels and particularly with those who, according to her, provide benediction to princes and monarchies. All of this earns her the honor of being frequently consulted and admired by the King's confessor who is very impressed by her revelations and ecstasies (La Rivière, 1650). This text begins by two letters from Anne of Austria commissioning this biography to Father La Rivière.

Marie des Vallées is a village girl possessed during six years, from 1609 to 1614, and exorcised before being admired as a mystic. Indeed, as her biographer Father Eudes writes, her possession is recognized as the disguise of divine providence which thus hides its intentions in a trail of suffering and humiliation; thus, like a new national Messiah, the girl takes on the sins of France.

Each biography brings to the fore different *topoi* like that of the converted heretic, of the healed saint who had been tortured by the devils, etc. The purpose of these texts is always to narrate the extraordinary and to develop an orthodox interpretation of it. Because the "era of suspicion" (Houdard, 1998, pp. 417–32) concerning extraordinary states has not ceased since the fourteenth century, time at which, as the works of André Vauchez and Peter Din-

zelbacher or Gábor Klaniczay have shown, the ambivalent evaluation of ecstasy and trance never cease to mark discourses on sanctity. We know that as the church attempted to regulate the procedures of legitimization of sanctity, those to whom we refer as "living saints" are always more or less suspected by authorities; the signs they show (stigmata, levitations, ecstasies) are always liable to be interpreted as feigned, simulated or pathological states. This generalized suspicion, according to A. Vauchez, aroused the proliferation of treatises which attempt to classify, according to a typology and a veritable nosography, the signs which the discernment of spirits (*discretio spirituum*) is responsible for noticing and interpreting. However, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, this air of doubt surrounds not only extraordinary states, like the states of mystical union—often assimilated to the heretical behavior of Spanish Alumbrados and the 'Erasmians'—but, more generally, any sign which relates to the world of essence, of the supernatural and reveals something about it. The texts insist that nothing can guarantee the truthfulness of appearances, as if visible signs no longer referred to any essence.

Is all of this true? the woman asked Madame Acarie's biographer; this question indeed haunts devotion manuals and the abundant literature surrounding spiritual direction (letters of direction, methods, treatises, manuals, biographies, accounts...). To know how to distinguish true from false within one's self, to differentiate between divine voices and those which only self-pride keeps alive, to separate real devotion from its multiple forgeries, these instructions invade spirituality and demonstrate the doubt which spreads over religious practices as well as the truthfulness (of faith) which legitimizes them and gives them meaning. Not only spectacular states are suspected of being all too extraordinary, extravagant and excessive, but also forms which are more discreet, less luminary shall we say, of mental prayer get questioned and become objects of polemics. It is devotion in general which becomes suspect and likely to feign. For that purpose, texts of direction and biographies invite the deeply religious to explore within themselves and within others the spaces of interiority. Upon reading these texts, one is struck by their dual textual organization which wavers between the

abrupt and violent representation of the supernatural (visions or ecstasies) and the more complex system of interior discernment.

Of the two examples to be used, I shall first consider Barbe Acarie's stigmata. Her biographer carefully specifies that they are internal and invisible stigmata "consisting only in extreme pains, which she felt on certain days, in her feet, in her hands, in her sides." Father Coton asserts that it is a "secret" he has never revealed before (Du Val, 1622, pp. 134–35). I shall not linger on the historiography concerning the stigmata; what is important here is that the visibility of the phenomenon, the testimony of sanctity, is described as hidden and secret, so that, according to the biographers, it belongs to the realm of mystical knowledge (De Certeau, 1964), which is structured around extraordinary facts as the secrets of spiritual life. Let us take another example: Barbe Acarie has ecstasies against which she struggles by working on her soul so that "she refrains the peak of her attraction" (*émousse la pointe de son attraction*) and prevents herself from falling into a state of ecstasy. Thus, she accomplishes a real labor of internal division so that: "[...] the raptures would not swoop down on the inside, but remained at the bottom of the soul, allowing the body's feelings and all other faculties to accomplish their ordinary functions" (Du Val, p. 688).

Through the work of internal direction, Madame Acarie offers the public a normal body, one attentive to social rules, while the "peak of her soul" (*la pointe de son âme*) secretly devotes itself to divine union. A part of her indulges in the dealings of the soul's ordinary functions, meaning the work of the will and the intellect, while at the bottom of her soul, in its most noble and secret part, she abandons herself to extraordinary states of ecstasy. The biographies especially insist on this mystical dimension, on the capacity to accomodate within one's self the divine Other, and on the respect of this space within the soul which escapes perception and any form of rationality.

The mystics whom Coton and the others consult are indeed prophetesses. But here again, one must note that the warnings and threats they utter (which belong to the *topos* of the hagiographic genre) don't make them as exceptional as their capacity to see within themselves and within others. Barbe Acarie knows how to

discern the soul's movements; she sees "inside people's deepest depths" and knows when grace is present and when it isn't. This capacity not only allows her to expose a fake saint named Nicole Tavernier, but also to see within Father Coton (Houdard, 2001). Isn't this like "having the eyes of a lynx," writes the biographer of Marie Valence who prefers to correct this expression by adding, "or better yet the eyes of an angel, to thus penetrate hearts; to know what takes place in guilty consciences, to discover the miserable demons in their obscure lairs and to discern the image of Hell" and to penetrate "all the way to the most secret of thoughts" (La Rivière, 1650, p. 71).

Abandoned to the extraordinary states of spiritual life and ready to be united with God in this space of the soul, then referred to as "the peak or the tip of the soul" (*la pointe ou la cîme de l'âme*), or as its depths (*le fond*), these ecstatic maidens see this space as one escaping the subject's will and intellect. They just observe how God's essence emerges in them or suffer from his absence. They denounce false saints whose appearance is saintly but who are basically devoid of grace. The devout circles of the early seventeenth century are still impregnated with the mystical and speculative Rhino-Flemish texts and argue for a topology of the soul (and therefore an anthropology) which welcomes eventual appearances of the Absolute outside of the processes of will and knowledge (Bergamo, Mino, 1994). Thus, Madame Acarie, "invaded" by divine forces, is also manifesting the same kind of authority in relation to others, she is able "in an entirely divine manner" to look into the soul of the false saint Nicole Tavernier whom she finds to be "entirely devoid of God." Madame Acarie does not draw her opinions from "the petty reasonings of human soul," nor from outside experience, but from the luminosity (*lumière*) "she received from God which allowed her to evaluate luminosity by luminosity itself" (Du Val, 1622, p. 202).

What these "irradiating" looks detect is forgery, hypocrisy and duplicity. The truth of the being lurks in the depths of interiority, which she observes as if through a transparent glass. The biographers of seventeenth century mystics all insist on the visibility by the transparency of the subject, on the mystical radiography of the

self and of its secrets. Thus, in the Vie du Père Charles de Condren (1643) we may read that "no one ever noticed extraordinary movements within him," but an absolute transparence, passionless, without excess, and a gift of discernment without equal. Spiritual direction strives precisely to guide the devoutly pious on the path of this soul analysis, following the rules of a complex anatomy, which recognizes deep down the immense and void space which God may occupy (regarding mystical topology and its transformation by Salesian mysticism, see Bergamo, 1994).

God or demons. For what matters here is to recognize that mysticism allots a space for the supernatural since there is, within Man, a space beyond reason, an intimate location where the Absolute may triumph. A part of the soul is offered to the divine essence which occupies its place there without the subject having acted to allow this divine possession. When Surin believes himself to be possessed by demons, when, with Jeanne des Anges in Loudun, he indulges in spiritual direction rather than exorcism, it is because he is convinced that there is a secret place in the most intimate part of the Self capable for achieving the union with the essence of the Other.

The Disquieting Strangeness of the Subject

This introspection thus allows the distinction between truthfulness and falsehood, divine essence and crude forgeries. But gradually, with the most determined of anti-mystics, as with mystics—and this is the most interesting part—the very idea that there can be a place in the soul which escapes the will and the intellect's powerful control is no longer acceptable, no longer thinkable. This is true to such an extent that those who believe it are suspected of pride and vainglory. Those who pretend to be united passively to God's essence or substance are filled with "the presumptuous idea of an imaginary sanctity" as Pierre Nicole shall say. The depth of the soul which greets the essence and the absolute gradually becomes, for moralists but also for Pascal, the obscure place for confusion, depraved imagination, insanity or deceit. When the unknowable inte-

rior, the depth covers itself in total darkness, those capable of discerning spirits begin to doubt.

In the *Letter to a doctor of the Sorbonne*, one may read the following regarding Father Eudes, the biographer of Marie des Vallées:

> It is not new that this Father attracts to himself all the visionaries and all those who believe or who pretend to believe that God has conducted them through singular and uncommon paths. His extreme gullibility allows this kind of insane person, or impostors, to address themselves to him rather than to someone else. For the past forty years, he has repeatedly had under his supervision some girl or woman subject to visions and revelations. Sister Mary was the most famous but not the only one to have deceived Father Eudes after having deceived herself: there is one in Caen named Marie Mauger, who made him believe that she survived merely on the Holy Host [...] People also talked about a certain other visionary, named Marie Cleriot, whom he listened to as a strongly internal person and with whom he communicated in the most extraordinary manner [...] It is this creature who makes Father Eudes believe that God reveals to her the state of several people and especially ecclesiastics in this world as in the other [...] I don't wish to say anything about the direction he had over several visionary men, including one named Brother Pierre, so called the saintly shepherd [...] (*Lettre à un docteur de Sorbonne*).

The anonymous author of the letter hesitates between two interpretations: the visionaries are either impostors who deceive Father Eudes and mock his credulity, or insane people who deceive themselves. In any case, mystics are visionaries who simulate their sanctity and dissimulate their true nature, except if they are the victims of this game of appearances and if their illness is imaginary. Either their real nature is hypocrisy (moral turning point), or it is imposture (which is the social version of hypocrisy) or entirely imaginary (the psycho-medical version). We see that the debate over the extraordinary henceforth centers itself within the tenuous and complex space which differentiates between simulation and

dissimulation. Texts multiply describing the imposture, the insanity or the trickery of these simple minds who say they are full of the Holy Spirit. Insanity or fraud, hypocritical perfection or imaginary perfection: the debate about visionaries (the semantic evolution of the term during the seventeenth century testifies to this hesitation between insanity and social perversion) leaves little space for the devil, except to turn him into the external agent who allows one, *in fine*, to grasp a truth henceforth opaque, always troubled by muddled appearances.

In his *Descouverture des Faux Possedez*, Father Claude Pithois (1621) claims, as the title of his book indicates, to distinguish between the truly and falsely possessed. However, if the first chapter asserts the existence of devils and the strength of their power, his demonstration especially shows people's infinite capacity to put on an act, to dissimulate and to feign. With this Father, everything happens as if the devil were merely an external agent, and in the end rather useless for these theatrical exercices.

Held by a long mystical tradition as the secret and passive space offered to divine essence, to its sudden appearances outside the realm of reason's activities, interiority gets gradually confused with that of a moral and already psychological subject. Only the devoutly pious, the spirituals, still believe that there exists a space within a subject for the "uncreated" (*l'increé*), the essence, and which the look of the saints can penetrate in order to denounce impostors; only the devoutly pious believe that there exists a space offered to an Absolute which can coexist with that of monarchy and reason. But spiritual direction, techniques for discernment, and the anatomy of the soul lead us gradually, and almost despite themselves, to the traces of a Self which God and the devil have both deserted.

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POSSESSION PHENOMENA, POSSESSION-SYSTEMS. SOME EAST-CENTRAL EUROPEAN EXAMPLES

ÉVA PÓCS

This paper will provide an overview of possession phenomena in Central and South Eastern Europe, followed by suggestions for their broad interpretation.

Possession is one of the basic forms of communication with the supernatural. Theoretically it has close ties to the psycho-biological state of trance or—to use a term fashionable in ethno-psychiatry—to some forms of *altered states of consciousness* (ASC). In this perspective trance is a precondition or "psycho/biological condition" of the coming about of the experience of possession (Crapanzano, 1987, p. 14). According to narrower definitions, possession is an altered state of consciousness, which is accompanied by an experience or explanation according to which the individual can come under the influence of an alien spirit or entity. The latter can enter his body and reside in it and change his personality or is "embodied" by the host whom it controls (Bourguignon, 1973, pp. 7–8; Holm, 1982, pp. 8–15; Siikala, 1982). Many researchers—especially those who approach the question from the point of view of psychology or psychiatry—emphasize the presence of an alien spirit (psychologically the coming about of *multiple personality*) and use it to refer to the phenomenon as such instead of talking about altered states of consciousness (Oesterreich, 1921, Chapter 1; Danforth, 1985; Arbman, 1963, 3. pp. 211, 239; Crapanzano, 1987, p. 14; Goodman, 1998).

The other possibility is that the spirit does not enter the body of the possessed person, rather it is only near the individual, controlling, attacking the person from the outside, this is what is called

circumpossessio or obsessio (German *Umsessen* [Benz, 1972, pp. 137–39]) or *essence possession* in the English terminology, or *general possession.* This type of possession is not concrete and personal. Its essence is well demonstrated by Hungarian terminology (relating to devil, or evil spirits) surrounds, tempts, encircles, escorts (*körülvesz, kísért, kerülget, kísér*), or in Benz's fortress metaphor: possessio is the occupied fortress while obsession is the besieged fortress being attacked from "outside."[1]

One of these two kinds of relationships serves as the basis of all possession phenomena. It is usual to categorise them according to the nature of the spirits and the direction of the human–spirit relationship:

a) the combative penetration and aggressive reign of spirits (these are by nature "evil" demons);

b) divine possession, when a deity enters the body as if it were a holy vessel, or protects the human being or controls him. This type of possession is often at the same time a mystic union, *unio mystica* (the two are partially overlapping categories), which is underscored by the representation of the deity by masks, dances, or the "imitation" of the deity in the course of collective rites;[2]

c) *mediumship, mediumism,* when the human being—as if s/he were a mediating vessel—transmits the will or message of the deity or the spirits to another individual or community; in the case of divination this takes place in response to people's questions.[3] For the most part in these cases there is no mention of that otherwise important characteristic of possession: controlling the possessed person.

According to the technique of establishing the connection—its bio-psychological specificity—possession can be a) spontaneous or b) ritual. Collective ritual trance—where the spirit/deity is ritually invited to enter the body—belongs here as do possession cults and various forms of mediumship such as the possession-techniques of seers, diviners, priests, healers—i.e. of various religious specialists—who needed to reach the state of possession at will in order to fulfil their duties in their vocation.

These categories are defined psycho-biologically, including ritually induced ASC. A psycho-biological definition, however, is not a

sufficient explanation for possession because, as I mentioned before, from a social psychological and cultural point of view possession is a religious/cultural phenomenon which goes beyond the use of trance techniques. Many recent summaries—for example the essays of Siikala and Holm (Siikala, 1982, p. 103; Holm, 1982, p. 3)—discuss the question accordingly: besides categories of ASC they treat it separately as a special, partly overlapping category which requires specific cultural interpretations. Firth (1967), placing the emphasis on local social psychological and cultural interpretations, for example, writes about possession that it is a "phenomenon of abnormal behaviour which is interpreted by other members of the society as evidence that a spirit is controlling the person's actions and probably inhabiting his body."[4]

The psycho-biological experiences of the possessed, their interpretation of these and the explanations of outside observers alike may go well beyond the actual fact of the trance state. Erica Bourguignon speaks of possession belief and non-trance behaviour, for example in connection with explanations for the symptoms of certain illnesses (Bourguignon, 1973, p. 11). We can consider to be possession any cultural form that can be regarded as such, in the words of Lewis: "If someone is, in his own cultural milieu, generally considered to be in a state of spirit possession, then he or she is possessed" (Lewis, 1978, p. 46).

Naturally, beliefs associated with trance behaviour are not always related to possession but for example could belong to shamanism. From the point of view of the discussion that follows it will also be of importance to define and distinguish from each other the categories of shamanism and possession. In this respect, earlier research was characterized by a juxtaposition and rigid separation: possession was seen to be characterized by a relationship of subordination to controlling spirits, while shamanism was seen to be characterized by *mastering spirits* or *spirit mastery*. Overgeneralization of shamanism and possession alike went hand-in-hand with the absolutisation of the differences. The view that all trance phenomena or all examples of the separation of the free soul from the body, all "out of body experiences" are examples of shamanism is haunting us to this day, not so much in the ethnology

of religion, but in European folkloristics (cf. for example Lixfeld, 1972). However, the belief in the loss or voyage of the soul used to be one of the cornerstones of the distinction between shamanism and possession in ethnological research too. The two were distinguished precisely based on this rigid differentiation, where this belief became the par excellence criterion[5] of shamanism (it is present in all definitions known to me, even in those which, like Hultkranz's, do not pick one defining feature, but describe shamanism as a cultural complex.)[6]

Lewis was the first to call attention to the fact that cultural interpretations can be very different even in the case of very similar phenomena, thus it is unwise to single out a stable unchanging cosmological system as characteristic of shamanism; he demonstrated this through the example of Tungus shamanism (Lewis, 1978, p. 56). The above difference in itself does not constitute enough proof: "Those who practise controlled possession, 'mastering' spirits, are in the Arctic known as 'shamans'" (Lewis, 1978, p. 64). Furthermore, according to Bourguignon—and we have European examples for this too—the two systems may be concurrently present as alternative, complementary explanatory systems in the same society (Bourguignon, 1968, p. 9). The above-mentioned Tungus example is not unique—the possession of the shaman—or of another religious specialist—by a helping spirit, just as spirit marriage, is a common feature of both shamanistic and non-shamanistic systems (for example it does not necessarily differ from ritually induced forms of divine possession), and the loss or voyage of the soul also appears in possession beliefs. To bring a concrete example: in his study of Tibetan shamanism Helmut Hoffmann considers the voyage of the soul (when the soul of the shaman leaves his body and travels to the underworld on his drum-horse) and possession to be the two most important characteristics of shamanism in Tibet ("Eindringen von Göttern und Geistern in den Schamanen, der zu ihrem 'Mund' wird"); the latter plays an especially important role in the shaman's divination (Hoffmann, 1972, p. 95.)

Firth (1967, p. 296) distinguishes possession and mediumship from shamanism on the basis of the human–spirit relationship, which is fine, but we should not forget that the same "host"–spirit

relationship can have very different meanings in different socio-cultural contexts. We have to agree with Lewis whose starting point is neither the trance-state, nor the spirit–human relationship but rather people who believe in Gods, spirits and explain ASC as related to their own spirit world, while also defining its role in their own society.[7]

Just as shamanism, possession cannot be defined and distinguished based on isolated phenomena. Paradoxically, the par excellence "possession" of the body cannot define possession as a system. Elements of possession may equally occur in shamanistic systems, just as out of body experiences, spirit journeys can appear in systems of possession. The special relationship to the spirits in itself only defines possession as a phenomenon, but I think that instead of talking about phenomena we should be talking about systems based on possession, when a certain form of possession is the functional basis of the system and not merely one of its elements.

In the following—focusing only on the main theme of the paper—I will discuss certain European manifestations and—in as much as my material and the current state of my knowledge allow it—I will discuss systems of possession, primarily the kinds of possession-formations we have knowledge of in the folk belief systems and ritual practices of Hungarians and neighbouring East-Central European peoples. I am cognizant of the fact that this is not enough, it would be advisable to write an overview of all East-Central European manifestations of possession, paying equal attention to folk and elite cultures, as well as to different religious backgrounds. However, this would be premature, we do not have enough ethnographic material to do this.

I myself became aware of the prominence of possession systems and conceptions in the folk beliefs and ritual practices of Central and South-Eastern Europe while studying other topics and I also had to realize that there are many phenomena, which should be interpreted as possession although up to now they have not been seen in this light.

Debates about defining shamanism and possession and distinguishing them from each other in ethnological, ethnopsychological

circles and in the ethnology of religion, and especially a conference in France[8]—which dealt with this question at great length—led me to gather together my data, no matter how incomplete, concerning folk ideas and practices relating to possession in East Central Europe, and with their help and in their light to try to think through various forms of possession. The other source of inspiration was the Italian anthropologist Giovanni Pizza, who at the same conference raised questions similar to mine in connection with some possession phenomena, and made some suggestions relating to the phenomena that Carlo Ginzburg has characterized as "European shamanism."

My data are incomplete, I collected them with a different purpose in mind. Comparative data will also be somewhat haphazard because—besides the Hungarian material, which is more thoroughly mapped—they cover the neighboring Central and Eastern European areas only unevenly. I think that despite these shortcomings and with these provisos it is useful to prepare such a—preliminary—overview in order to see what should be studied further and to place some well-known phenomena in a new light. I have only begun to examine the question systematically since the above-mentioned Paris conference when surveying the folk beliefs of two Hungarian villages in Transylvania.[9] The outcome was rather surprising: in the Roman Catholic villages under study we found a variety of quite lively notions relating to possession, as well as a living practice of purificatory rites with the exorcism ceremonies of Romanian priests and monks, and narratives about people who had been possessed, or actually told by people who had personally experienced possession. What was even more surprising was that in addition to possession by the devil, possession by the dead also played a fundamental role (for which we mostly have data from outside Europe), I only suspected this earlier,[10] but could not prove with concrete data. My field results are to a great extent complemented and several of my suppositions substantiated by the excellent book recently published by Vilmos Keszeg about the folk beliefs of Mezőség, another area of Transylvania. Data about possession by the devil and the dead (as well as by the *lidérc*) are also present here (Keszeg, 1999).

Looking at the question broadly we find such a variety of ritual forms, and such a wide-ranging set of ideas, that the question arises whether—in East-Central Europe—the various possession phenomena are only united by the psycho-biological concept which researchers impose upon them or whether we can talk about a fundamentally common system of ideas where the diversity and local specificity of possession systems is given by the various local cultural contexts. The answer is not easy, and in this essay I cannot answer all aspects of the question. This is all the more so because we have so little information that I cannot include all the possession systems that I would regard as such. Thus I will call attention to a number of "suspicious" phenomena, but will only discuss a few of them in detail. Studying folk possession systems in modern Europe is hampered by the fact that the social determinants of these beliefs are difficult to capture today: we only encounter rites of possession and people who are possessed rarely, and we are much more likely to find narrated memories of these phenomena. Thus we can only reconstruct these symbolic systems from their narrative metaphors, from fragmentary memories of the total system. Given the secondary nature of the modern European data to be presented below and the fact that they are often in the form of folklore/narration, it is necessary to modify the definition cited above from Lewis thus: whatever is spoken of in the culturally defined metaphorical idiom of possession can be considered to be possession.

The Common Bases

First we need to talk about the commonalities of the many different culturally defined possession phenomena and systems, especially with respect to the relationship of the living and the dead, and of the soul/spirit and the body. These concepts may be seen as the archaic medium and tool-kit which serve—as it were—as a basis for communication between the worlds of humans and spirits. These features are present in all possession-formations—they constitute possession's mythic foundation—just as trance constitutes its psy-

cho-biological basis. We need to stress once again that this is not only characteristic of possession. These concepts relating to body and soul, life and death may have differing cultural interpretations, just as trance itself can.

This tool-kit is rooted in the archaic-universal attributes of beliefs in the soul and of cults of the dead, and it is concerned with the relationship of body and soul as well as of the dead and the living, and their communications network in which connections are made by means of possession based on certain cultural interpretations. Thus the distinctive metaphors[11] of possession refer to the relationship of possessor and possessed in such a way that the latter is not merely a human being, but rather this relationship exists in the complex network of relationships of the living and the dead, the bodily and the spiritual, physical and psychic in such a way that any of the components of a human being—bodily, spiritual, living, dead—may enter on either side into the *possessor–possessed* relationship.

What are these components? On the whole, it can be stated that humans—according to the beliefs (religion) of all European peoples have a *life soul* which may be located in a particular part or organ of the body (e.g. heart), or is embodied by blood or breath and they also believe that humans have a free-, external or *shadow soul* (*alter ego*) which can become independent of the body. This free soul can also take on an animal form—in different belief systems in different ways and with different goals—furthermore it has bodily/physical and soul-like/spiritual versions, or manifestations that serve as "escorting soul," "fate soul," and guardian spirit. There is also the concept of a soul that lives on after death, which may or may not be the same as the previously mentioned ones.[12] All these—for example the soul of the living or of the dead—can equally be possessed and possessor. Living people can also possess living people either through their spiritual or through their bodily alter ego (Hungarian witches of the eighteenth century did this regularly), and we can also include among the list of the potentially possessed the bodies of dead people: a person can also be possessed by his own soul. (And we have not even mentioned the possession of animals or objects.)

Each of these varied constellations of bodies–souls–alter egos–spirits can be interpreted in several different ways: they need not necessarily be interpreted as belonging exclusively to possession phenomena although they appear in all possession systems. For example spirits can be embodied without possession as an explanation, the alter ego of the living, the spirit of the dead may take on the shape of animals, which in some systems means that they are possessed, elsewhere, in other systems, not. (No wonder that the scholarly interpretations vary even more widely!) A possessor entering into the empty body can also be found in shamanistic systems, for example in the case of illnesses accompanied by the "loss" of the soul. In North Asia it is commonly thought that before the shaman can bring back the original soul, he needs to remove the alien spirit which had entered the body of the patient, elsewhere the shaman who is in a trance state has to be guarded lest a harmful demon should enter his body while his soul is in the other world (Findeisen, 1957, pp. 127–31). (It should be clear from this that possession and spirit journey, or being possessed and shamanism are not in absolute opposition.)

In addition, the boundaries of the worlds of the living and the dead are flexible, humans can easily go between them, both in their bodily and spiritual forms and spirits get "embodied" quite easily by means of possessing a living being, in the "image" of whom they appear. Possession is an alternative form of traversing boundaries (another one is the "voyage" of the spirit leaving the body). It is an important fact that the possessed person not only accepts the possessing spiritual being and accepts it as his guide, but his bodily condition is also transfigured into a spiritual one.

This is (likely to be) one of the explanations for the phenomenon of the physical alter-ego which is common in European folk belief systems and also occurs in the South-Eastern–Central European region under scrutiny here. This is a body which has spirit characteristics, both the living and the dead may have these; in this sense it is a possessed (either living or dead) body. The simplest example for this is that the possessed person's body becomes light, as if he were a spirit, he can rise, floats above water, does not sink, "physically" walks above the trees. This is the basis for the "carrying

away" of the living by the dead, which can take place both in their bodily or spiritual form (through their soul being separated from their body or through their alter-ego). One of the most common metaphors of this archaic tool-kit is precisely that of "being carried off," which appears in almost every possession system. "Bodily carrying off," the body behaving as a spirit seems to be primarily the characteristic of possession, which in this instance can be contrasted with the shamanistic spirit journey.

Possession in its local cultural manifestations shows a very diverse picture, a much more diverse one than we would suppose based on familiar cases of possession by the devil. This is the substratum which is most likely to be found beneath the distinctive possession-manifestations of more or less the whole of Europe, but at any rate beneath those of East-Central Europe best known to me, and especially most clearly in systems of possession by the dead to which it seems to belong primarily. The systems employing special mental techniques of possession are very complex, none of the systems in any of the categories mentioned above can be characterized exclusively. All of them can have distinctive ensembles of different levels of cultural interpretation, but it seems that possession by the dead—closely related to notions of the body and soul described here—was the archaic deep structure of all other systems. The dual time–space structure of the archaic worldview is part of this archaic deep structure too. It is an important organizational principle of the communicational forms of the living and dead, and through this it may play a role in all forms of possession in which the "possessors" have some kind of relationship to the dead.

According to this archaic worldview, many traces of which can be found in European folklore, the universe is divided into the world of the living and of the dead: a segment of space or a time period either belongs to one or the other. Human spaces are contrasted with the spaces of the dead, the time of the living alternates with that of the dead. At certain times—for example during the period of the dead in the Christian calendar—the dead possess their own space as it were: they take over the space, which at such times is surrounded by taboos and is off limits to the living. We may think of Eastern Slavic or Northern European beliefs about the dead visit-

ing the house or the family between Christmas and Epiphany and the rites relating to receiving and chasing away the dead, or during the Orthodox festivals of the dead on the Balkans the taboos surrounding the space and times of the dead.[13]

Possession by the Dead

According to Goodman's survey (Goodman, 1998, pp. 95–99)—which attempts to give a cross-cultural overview—the classic territories of possession by the dead (by "ghosts") are Africa and the Near East (from Babylon to contemporary Jews and Arabs[14]), while Eurasia (India, China, Christian Europe) is characterized by demonic possession, or rather we can differentiate between Eurasian and African types of demonic possession. In my opinion such a separation of Africa from Europe is not wholly warranted.

The various types of possession by the dead are also present in Europe—according to my data it seems so far that this is mostly true for Eastern Europe, however, possessing demons in Europe are not restricted to the Christian devil, but rather there is also a rich non-Christian "folk" demonology many of the "possessors" of which have links to the dead (but naturally also to the Christian devil). In Europe we have to talk about a more archaic form of possession by the *dead/demons* and a culturally better organized Christian possession by the devil, however, these two layers are related in many ways.

Attacking dead

When we talk about the aggression of the dead against humans naturally we are talking about the "evil" dead: the main form of this aggression is that the dead occupy a part of the human world and bring it under their evil influence. In Medieval Europe folk mythologies were still familiar with the dual nature of the dead: good and evil dead protecting (functioning as guardian spirits) and attacking humans, their own family and community (see for example

Lecouteux, 1987a). According to modern data, in areas where the duality of good/evil house spirits is known, as for example among Eastern Slavs, Romanians (very rarely among Hungarians,) these evil spirits frequently possess the living, in the *obsessio*—essence possession—form. In keeping with the above mentioned dual spatial and temporal structure, the dead occupy human settlements, and in this context people also become possessed as it were, which means a close relationship, direct contact, with the world of the dead: they themselves become dead, or are in close contact with them. The appearance of "evil dead" or of hostile ghosts as poltergeists, the abduction of the living during the time of the dead to earthly quasi-other-worlds are phenomena present in a rich cultural variety in contemporary Europe too.[15] Possessing evil house-spirits may be for example the *domovoi* and *kikimora* known from modern Russian folk beliefs, and the Romanian *moroi* (we have similar data on the German *goblin*): these may appear as noisy ghosts, throwing about things or breaking objects, while the hordes of *moroi* may appear as havoc causing animals or as fighting cats (Stenin, 1890, p. 268; Mansikka, 1911; Candrea, 1944, pp. 152–56). In general, however, the category of evil dead is a much broader one than that of the attacking house-spirit/ghost: since the Middle Ages all over Europe in the belief systems of most European peoples, the evil dead are repenting souls who have no status (are not baptized) or could not enter the other world or the purgatory.[16] Such beings are the Hungarian *gonoszak, rosszak* (evil ones), the Eastern Hungarian and Romanian *tisztátalanok* (impure ones). According to belief legends, they visit the living especially between Christmas and Epiphany. Besides suspicious noises, clinking, other manifestations of the deathly condition replacing the earthly one can be observed when they appear: the force of gravitation is defied, furniture rises, objects fly, head-scarves unfold. Furthermore the spirits cause the illness and death of humans and animals, bother new mothers and steal newborn babies. They can appear as dead but in the form of living people (who bodily possess humans) as well as in animal shape.[17] The archaic features of "occupying space" are especially clear from our data relating to the *tisztátalan* (impure one). As Vilmos Keszeg writes, "...the *tisztátalan* begins to

dominate a part of human space. A house or an area may irrevocably come under its influence"; there are areas which are permanently under its influence, as for example the mill or the cemetery (Keszeg, 1999, pp. 91–95; Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, pp. 163–70). According to the archaic conception of space in folk beliefs (independently of the time of the dead), there are spaces of the dead, impure places (for example according to Hungarian and Romanian data), which are under taboo for the living—especially at night[18]—thus this may be one aspect of possession by the dead. A Hungarian example from Kalotaszeg: the dwelling place of the evil ones—e.g. on rocks—must be avoided, if somebody lies down here he will have nightmares or fall ill (Jankó, 1891, p. 278).

Closely connected to the "occupation of space" by evil dead is the night time "calling out," carrying off, abduction of the living. In other words the dead transform the living into dead on their "occupied" territories, carrying off is, as it were, temporary death. Most of our recent data from Csík clearly refer to "bodily" carrying off: for example according to a Transylvanian Hungarian informant, somebody was "called out" of his bed at night by a group of music-making dead, they took him very far away and put him down in the middle of a forest.[19] The person who is taken away bodily acquires a "soul-like condition": he is lifted up, he levitates, flies—his body is freed of the time–space dimensions; he gets lost, finds himself somewhere else: he reaches symbolic chaos i.e., death. At the same time, however, we can also talk of "spiritual" carrying off, the notion of the soul becoming detached from the body, about forms that are experienced as "journeys to the other world"; the two interpretations cannot be sharply distinguished.

The Romanian and Hungarian data relating to the *tisztátalanok*, personal possession or *possessio/obsessio* is also a well-documented form. According to Vilmos Keszeg's Hungarian data from the Mezőség, the person possessed by an evil spirit or *tisztátalan* is depressed, sad, afraid to be alone, excited, is unconscious, sings, rips off his/her clothes, becomes very strong, turns and turns around, then falls down and does not speak—when the *tisztátalan* abandons him, he is exhausted, limp, he cannot stand on his feet (Keszeg, 1999, pp. 93, 316)—in other words, he produces most of

the "classic" symptoms of possession. This concrete form of possession by the dead is also present in Romanian folk beliefs. On the one hand they think that the "*tisztátalan* enters the body of people and animals"; on the other hand they also believe that through possession the person acquires "more than one soul": besides his own divine soul he also receives an evil one (Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, p. 171).

Wind souls constitute a distinctive group of evil dead who are also capable of possession. These are storm demons who run about in the clouds and are well-known from all over Europe: the German *wütendes Heer, wilde Jagd,* the Hungarian *karácsonyi rosszak* (Christmas evil ones), Hungarian and Southern Slav *unbaptized* ones (their crowds often appear in the times of the dead, for example between Christmas and Epiphany belong here). These usually have a statusless "evil dead" aspect, and they are found in a distinctive other world near the earth, they run about in the clouds in storms (they also have storm demon-like characteristics (for example the *unbaptized* ones of Kalotaszeg also bring bad weather),[20] and they also cause illness, attack people. Two distinctive metaphors of possession characterize them. One of these is *carrying off*, they lift "up" the living into the wind, the whirlwind or the clouds, the other is the "stroke," which is an explanation connecting sudden paralysis or other locomotor disorders to wind demons known from several places in Europe.[21] Unlike carrying off, which also has "divine" versions, the "stroke" always carries negative connotations. It is also clear in the case of wind demons that at times—in different parts of Europe—we can (also) talk of concrete personal bodily occupation, *possessio*. According to Manninen's Lapp, Estonian data, the evil spirits flying in the whirlwind must be chased away because they enter humans with the wind (Manninen, 1922, p. 108). There are similar Transylvanian Hungarian data as well.[22]

Ritual/individual: mediumism

One of the forms of mediumism known in numerous versions all over Europe is possession by the dead: the medium-necromancer is well-known worldwide. Ritually induced forms of mediumism (in

Zuesse's terminology *invited spirit mediumship*, or *mediumistic divinatory trance* [Zuesse, 1987, p. 376], from the point of view of psychiatry: *secondary personality, split personality*) are characterised by seeking out a positive relationship with the dead; as mentioned above usually for the purpose of obtaining information.

The various forms of occult mediumism, which have been gradually spreading since the nineteenth century, do not belong to the subject matter of this paper (cf. for example Parker, 1975, pp. 57–62). (In any case although their influence on the traditional forms can be demonstrated, the latter cannot be originated from them. According to my experiences in the field, twentieth century Hungarian peasantry is by and large familiar with the methods of modern spiritualism practiced by middle class people, but clearly distinguishes them from local traditions of necromancy.) Most of my data come from the ritual practices of the Hungarian peasantry, but we also have data from several places elsewhere in Europe. Probably these do not represent the true spread or the past weight of the phenomenon in the traditional cultures of Europe: researchers have not paid much attention to this form of possession by the dead.

Hungarian data refer to communal specialist *necromancers* who—it seems—rarely played the role of medium, rather they passed on the messages of the dead to living relatives by invoking the dead. Most likely this was the more common form, but it also happened that the necromancer—or rather the living through him—communicated with the spirit world as a medium. In such cases the dead speak "through the necromancer," that is to say possessing his/her body.[23] (Let us note, however, that invoking the dead does not preclude possession, that is to say the possibility that at times the necromancer may also be a medium.) We have no data about the Hungarian necromancer inducing possession by rites or preparation of. According to narratives about her activities as a medium, she fell into trance (the wise woman of Csíkszentdomokos "hid") and "the spirits entered into her and prevailed upon her to tell what they had told her" (collected by Éva Pócs). According to Eastern Hungarian data, dead relatives may occasionally possess the living accidentally as it were, for example according to a Hungarian *memorate*

from Csíkkarcfalva the spirit of a man's grandfather spoke through him at night and gave directions to the family. Among the scattered European, German, Celtic, Slav data the geographically close Romanian, Bulgarian and Austrian parallels are the closest to the Hungarian necromancer.[24] These refer to a specialist with multiple functions whose circle of activities is wider than that of the Hungarian necromancer: seers, diviners, healers for whom necromancy is only one of several possible roles. This more complex phenomenon is well-documented from Karelia. Matt Salo's description also throws light upon the ritual techniques employed by Carelian seers/diviners/healers. The seer (male or female) and the patient go to the cemetery together, she invokes the dead in a magic circle, they possess both the healer and the patient and in the course of the trance they receive the requested information regarding recovery (Salo, 1974, pp. 141–60).

It would be good to know what kind of a relationship these forms of mediumism have to the above versions of possession by the dead, but at the present state of my knowledge I cannot answer this question. At the moment I see more of a connection to the mediumism versions of divine possession: to mediums possessed by a deity or by saints, or even to the ritual forms of possession by fairies, about which I will say more below. (There is also a certain degree of overlap here: in collective possession cults involving fairies, possession by a deity or the dead occur together, for example the divinely possessed of *rusalia* often transmit the predictions of the dead as mediums.)

We can speak of phenomena similar to possession by the dead in connection with the various demonic beings of European folk belief systems. Best known among these creatures, which may appear as "possessors" are fairies and illness demons: both have an inherent relationship to the dead, therefore the forms and metaphors of possession may also be similar.

Possession by Fairies

Possession by fairies is a very dominant cultural variant of possession by the dead in South-Eastern Europe. Central and South-Eastern European fairies are related to dead ancestors; they are typical syncretistic belief figures, one of whose "roots"—at least in the case of Slavic beliefs—are the dead. Among the non-Slavic peoples of the Balkans the situation is somewhat different, here I would only mention that Greek and Albanian fairies also have some dead-like characteristics.[25] I don't have a very clear idea of this problem with regard to the fairy beliefs of the German language territory, but let me refer to the research of Lecouteux, who came to the same conclusions in several of his works. The fairy beliefs of the Celtic language area are likely to be similar (Lecouteux 1992; as well as Hartman, 1936; Hartmann, 1942; Evans-Wentz, 1966).

It is clear from the Eastern, South-Eastern and Central European (Eastern Slav, Southern Slav, Greek, Albanian, Romanian and Hungarian) data on beliefs in and cults of fairies, that the phenomenon of possession by fairies is present with more or less intensity (among Romanians to a very great extent) and in a variety of forms. The most basic variant is similar to certain forms of possession by the dead; this is *obsessio* or essence possession functioning in the archaic time–space structure we are familiar with from possession by the dead. One of its forms is that the fairies punish with illness those who transgress against the taboos protecting their time/space—in other words those who venture in their time into their spaces: sources, paths, their dance grounds in meadows. The consequences of venturing into the space (time) of the dead are the characteristic fairy illnesses "brought" from there: headache, symptoms of epilepsy, aches in the limbs. According to a Romanian example, if at night "they fly over" a person sleeping outside s/he will be paralysed, will become "mute or have a stroke" (Candrea, 1944, p. 160). Greek data also show that if someone sleeps outdoors at night, s/he will be bothered by the nereids; for example a girl spent the night outside under a (fairy)tree and the next morning she had a terrible headache (Blum–Blum, 1970, p. 50). *Carrying off* is a characteristic punishment of those who breach the taboos sur-

rounding the dead in the context of fairies too. According to many memorates known from the region this abduction can be a quasi-death experienced in a trance state: a temporary existence in the earthly otherworld of fairies (or even in a celestial otherworld similar to the Christian heaven filled with brightness and music).[26]

Carrying off may equally be "bodily" or "spiritual," it may happen either awake or in a dream—perhaps no other possession system blends so completely the varied configurations of body and soul as that of fairies. According to Eastern Hungarian accounts collected in recent years, *szépasszonyok* (fair ladies) "abduct," "carry off" people who ventured into the wrong place. An example of bodily carrying off: "In a dream he was lifted from his bed and taken away, and then I don't know where he woke up. When he got home, who would have dared to ask where have you been?"[27] "Calling out at night," mentioned in connection with the dead, is also common in the context of fairies in Hungarian and Romanian memorates: the *iele* calls the sleeping three times in the night: whoever answers him (or "goes out") will be crippled, loose his mind, or become disfigured.[28] Those carried off in their dream come "under the control" of the dead/fairies due to doubly deadly conditions: it is night time, the time of the dead and what is more one is asleep, experiences "small death," when the soul is in any case likely to roam far away from the body. As for "spiritual carrying off," we have (Serbian) data which explicitly state that the soul leaves the body during sleep and the fairy—as an "evil soul"—enters into it and dances the person to death. The same happens to the person who gets a glimpse of their dance (Zechevich, 1978, p. 38). The Greek material published by the Blums describes precisely the bodily/spiritual conditions of possession, the many possibilities for the relationship of body and soul are clear from this (for instance the combination of out of body experience and possession as concrete entering into the body). For example: the *light shadowed one* (whose [free] soul easily leaves his/her body) is often possessed, bothered by the "soul" (*genius*), "the evil ones jump on him," or he has visions. Carrying off by fairies is also characterised by the experience (metaphor) of being *lifted up, rising up*. According to a recently collected Eastern Hungarian memorate "something lifted

him [...] they carried him, they put him down somewhere and that's where he came to [...] and when he recovered he found himself at a large industrial plant. The old woman told me many times that they were looking for her father in the morning, he is nowhere to be found, and then he is ambling home."[29] The metaphor of the *stroke*—known from possession by the dead—is also very common in the context of possession by fairies,[30] which most likely is related to the wind demon nature of fairies known from Western and Central–South-Eastern Europe alike. A Greek example: it is extremely dangerous to go out into the open at night—especially on the night of the new moon—because one can easily be struck by the nereids at such a time (Blum–Blum, 1970, p. 53).

Possession by fairies as the concrete possession of the body—*possessio*—is primarily known from Romanian beliefs. When fairies enter the body—just as all demons entering the body—they transform humans both bodily and spiritually. A very characteristic metaphor for the "bodily control" of fairies is the "taking away" of body parts or of the face, which also means a disfigured external appearance: "they take away his hands and feet, or deform his face."[31] The same source also puts it this way: the person who has been "surprised" by "falconets [=fairies imagined in the shape of falcons] became falcons" (Candrea, 1944, p. 160) that is to say s/he took on the physical/spiritual characteristics of the possessor.

The archaic ambivalence of fairies makes it difficult to separate the characteristics of possession by the dead from the other aspect: *divine possession*. Trance and possession induced by music and dance are fundamental constituents of the collective possession cults of the Balkans but they are at the same time also a product of beliefs and rites relating to fairies as goddesses (as we shall see below the most important aspect of collective rites is the divine possession of healers). In accordance with the dual (deadly/divine) nature of fairies, however, these beliefs also appear in the context of "individual" possession throughout the entire Central–South-Eastern European region. In my opinion, however—unlike the genuine (lived) possession experiences of collective rites—in this case we can only speak of a narrative tradition, the rich Central–South-Eastern European folklore motifs of men being abducted to fairy

heaven which is filled with music and dance and carnal pleasure—reflecting male desire as well as the erotic aspects of divine possession.[32] We also know of Romanian, Bulgarian, Hungarian narratives about people having been carried off with music and dance, and about fairies who *abduct* people to join the divine fairy queen's dancers, up in the sky, to fairy heaven (a common motif of the memorates and legends is for example that the fairy crowds dancing in the wind carry off shepherd boys to accompany their dance with music). These texts attribute the trance inducing role of music and dance (familiar from rituals) to fairies, for example according to Romanian data, fairies "charm" men "with their song, lull them to sleep."[33] Let us quote from a lively Hungarian memorate from Gyimes about a young man who fell into trance under the influence of the singing and dancing of fairies: "...a whooshing wind came and three women [...] they were as beautiful as the ray of sunshine ...oh happy world!—and they made him dance, and dance and dance and dance forever [...] the lad collapsed. He collapsed then. But he could not speak. [...] He was ill, ill, he barely breathed, he could do nothing else. He was beyond reason, come to think of it. His reason had left him..." (Salamon, 1975, pp. 109–10). This is the nympholeptos state, reminiscent of the Dionysian ecstasy that Eliade writes about in connection with Romanian beliefs in fairies. From another point view this possession by nymphs is *unio mystica*—"deification"—which was very characteristic of Dionysian cults that survived until late Antiquity in Thrace. (With regard to the beliefs in and cults of fairies on the Balkans, Eliade and others see some connections leading back to Antiquity, for example to the cult of Artemis or Diana. However, our task here is not the tracing of possible historical connections—in any case the "divine," "goddess-like" characteristics of fairies on the Balkans—no matter where they originate from—can be found to this day).[34] On the other hand this kind of possession—according to present-day belief legends—is a *circumsessio*-like state: the goddess draws the human under her sphere of influence, controls him/her, without possessing it bodily. Furthermore we also have data about out of body experiences, "heavenly" journeys of the soul, which, it seems, can form part of any possession formation.

I will return briefly to the divine aspects of possession by fairies in connection with collective rites. In some respects it is hard to distinguish this system from possession by the dead, and in some respects—as we shall see below—from diabolic possession, nonetheless, it seems that there is also a distinctive (associated with the Balkans? or with one ethnic group only?) system of "possession by fairies," which by and large—with some regional/ethnic differences—can be regarded as a par excellence possession system. This gives a kind of unified framework to the cult/mythology/beliefs surrounding fairies, even if it is a syncretistic system, which has very varied roots and is exposed to a variety of influences.

Demonic Possession: Illness Demons

The notion of a harmful spirit entering the body, as a cause of illness, is very widespread (Honko, 1968, pp. 31–32). From the point of view of this paper those illness demons which are of interest are those that actually possess the body, i.e. enter the body—and to achieve a cure they must be chased away from there. As possessors—in contrast for example to the Christian devil—they do not completely control the possessed, it could be said that they have a special "task": to trigger a particular illness. Accordingly, they may have a special place in the body, in order to make the person ill. Illness demons possessing the body are known even in the modern era, especially in Eastern–South-Eastern Europe—even if not necessarily as independent belief figures, but as demonic illness causing agents named-preserved in incantation texts, who were important "precursors" of the Christian devil-figure as the possessor of the body.[35] The latter is clear from Medieval exorcism and benediction texts, which incorporate many aspects of Hellenistic demon beliefs and from the exorcism rites themselves, which also took elements of Ancient Eastern (Babylonian, Hebrew, Greek and early Christian, Coptic, etc.) practices of exorcising (illness) demons.[36] Church benedictions have influenced the body of folk incantations greatly. As a result the illness causing possessing agents of the body known from European peasant incantation texts and practices (which

were also used by the clergy and monks during the Middle Ages and in Eastern Europe even in the modern era) can be regarded as deriving from church benedictions or from ecclesiastic rites of exorcism and healing, even if they retain certain pre-Christian elements of a spirit world which had originally been transmitted by them.[37] Incantations originally meant to chase out illness demons are known from all over modern Europe. Their formal characteristics and distinctive formulae point to links to past demon beliefs; the origin of these motifs often demonstrably go back to Assyrian-Babylonian or Hebrew and Greek texts. Among some Eastern Slavic and Southern Slav peoples, as well as in the folk beliefs of Romanians—i.e. in Orthodox Eastern Europe—beliefs in certain illness demons are still alive (Russian fever demons, Romanian, Serbian cholera demons, spells as demons possessing the head, etc.).[38] Here the texts (which otherwise can be found all over Europe) are associated with still functioning beliefs in demons. The formulae for exorcising demons, which vary according to type, name the illness demons concretely, list their names, characteristics and numbers, the harm caused by them, call upon them to leave the body and often mention the route to be taken by the demon to leave the body (from head to toe). A Hungarian example:

Go home, go home
Seventy-seven kinds of illness
from his head
from his ear
from his back
from his chest,
from his heart,
from his waist,
from his stomach,
from his toes ...
(Lábnik, Moldova, Pócs, 1985–1986, 2. p. 483)

Similar Egyptian, Greek and Latin texts enumerating the parts of the body to indicate the route to be taken by the illness demon are

also known, but we could also quote from the Atharvaveda: "from your eyes, from your nose, from your ears ... I expel the faintness from you." The church exorcism texts of the ninth–thirteenth century also contain the same exorcism formulae (in order to cast out the devil or illness demons).[39]

Let us quote a Hungarian text from Moldova, in which the "demon of *erysipelas* [St. Anthony's fire]" itself[40] recounts how it goes about possessing the attacked person:

I go, to go in front of his head,
to come out on his heel
to spoil his colour
(Jugán, Moldova, Pócs, 1985–1986, 2. p. 466)

We can also see in these texts the characteristic terminology of illness demons-possession, and the location of certain illnesses within the body. For example St. Anthony's fire [*erysipelas*] enters the bones and joints:

into that bone
into those joints
that you entered ...
(Gyimesbükk, Csík, Pócs, 1985–1986, 2. p. 511)

The spell goes to the head:
The spell sets out
to go into /Rózsika's/ head ...
(Bukovina, Pócs, 1985–1986, 2. p. 467)

The mádra [an illness of the womb] goes to the stomach/the lower body:

Holy Mary said to him
Where are you going mádra?
I am going to /Mariska's/ stomach...
(Abaújdevecser, Pócs, 1985–1986, 2. p. 469)

I do not have sufficient space here to discuss in detail the rich material of these incantation texts I only wished to call attention to the existence of the phenomenon through a few examples.

Possession by illness demons is only one distinctive possession phenomenon, which, however, having been integrated into the Christian system of possession by the devil, prevalent in Medieval Europe, became one of its important constituent elements.

Demonic possession: mora/moroi/lidérc *oppressing and incubus demons*

The primary and most clear role of the above-mentioned archaic notions of the soul, alter egos, etc., can be found in the possession phenomena associated with *mora*-type beings. These are night demons attacking people (or people attacking in the shape of demons); European belief systems know of several types, ranging from the *ephialtes* already known from Greek sources to the Hungarian *lidérc* or the demonic witch who causes nightmares. The *Mahr/mora/zmora/moroi* figures known from the German, Slavic and Romanian regions of Eastern and South Eastern Europe also belong here. These demonic beings, who are related in name show many similarities to the creature known as *Alp* in German-speaking areas and the *Schrat, Schrattel, skrat* known from Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia.[41] They have links to belief systems concerning both the possessing dead and witches and they also contributed to the possessing devil figure of folk belief systems. Basically all these demons are connected to the figure of the *werewolf*.[42] However, I discuss them independently of the *werewolf* because I have many unanswered questions regarding *werewolf* beliefs, especially as a possibly independent belief system, of equivalent value with possession and shamanism systems.

The archaic characteristics of *mora* beings show many similarities in the beliefs of many European peoples. They are typically tripartite figures, this is more or less characteristic of all of Central and South-Eastern Europe:

1. A living human being who can send its free soul, alter ego, which detaches from the body: this alter ego having become independent of the body attacks and causes nightmares as a night demon.

2. The dead who attack humans in the form of demons. (This is basically the same as the "evil" dead discussed above, it can be a statusless living being or an evil demon that came into being from a "living" *mora*.) Both the living alter ego and the dead version appear as a possessing demon attacking humans. Its distinctive characteristics are causing nightmares, attacking women who have recently given birth, the sexual aggression of incubus or succubus demons against a person of the opposite sex (in the shape of an invisible spirit being, or of an animal—for example in the form of a hen, turkey, cat), or mounting, turning humans "into its horse," the latter usually also has a sexual aspect. An important variant of these two types of demons is the *flying fiery being, fiery dragon*, which, when it alights, appears as a sexual partner in the shape of a living person (for example absent lover or deceased husband, lover) to the person of the opposite sex. As a regularly visiting sexual partner it makes its victim fall ill, wither away. Both the phenomena of causing nightmares and of sexual partners can be interpreted as a form of demonic possession. In Transylvanian Hungarian or Romanian folk beliefs we often find symptoms and explanations typical of possession.

3. Helping spirits, humorous figures of modern narratives (*lidérccsirke* and similar beings, known among all the neighbouring peoples) are likely to be related to the "genuine" (shamanistic) helping spirits of certain types of wizards.[43] In this context what is important is that this helping spirit, which takes the shape of various animals (hen/cockerel, lizard, snake, frog) also performs the kind of *possessio* practiced by its owner. This is a fundamentally erotic type of possession. Its most important attribute—just as of fiery flying demons—is sexual aggression. We also know of—albeit scattered—Eastern Hungarian and Romanian beliefs regarding snakes, lizards, frogs which enter women from "below" via, for example, their sexual organs and then reside in their womb or stomach. For example according to Romanian data the small helping

spirit-snake called *spiritus* may be the lover of its female host (Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, p. 14). Giovanni Pizza called attention to the interconnections between these motifs and drew interesting conclusions from them regarding European possession phenomena.[44]

The idea of the soul living beyond death may have similar variants. *Mora* beings—along with their characteristic triple versions and conceptions of the soul—constituted the most important foundation of witch beliefs in this region. All their characteristics were inherited by the witch, who, however, as we shall see below, plays a prominent role both as possessor and possessed in diabolic possession systems. On the other hand, they also constituted the basis of wizard systems, which I don't discuss here. As far as the relationship to precedents and helping spirits of wizards is concerned, *mora* beings lent possession phenomena to the systems of wizards and witches, partly due to the increasingly significant role of diabolic possession from the fourth century on.[45] (The *werewolf*, not being discussed here, played a similar role in these processes.) As for the question whether the *mora/lidérc* complex could be regarded as a system of possession my answer is *no*. For the time being—along with *werewolf* systems—it seems to be an independent system of communication, the essence of which (as opposed to for example demonic or divine possession) is supernatural communication between humans, through the demonic alter egos of man, and their spirits which survive beyond death. The distinctive forms of this kind of communication may possibly be regarded as possession when they become integrated into Christian systems of diabolic possession.

Demonic possession: the Christian devil

Folk conceptions and rituals of possession by the devil (what is more: partly even the ideas of the religious elite) in many regards are closely related to non-Christian forms of possession by demons or the dead and there continues to be an interplay between them to this day. In many respects the seemingly better organized Christian techniques of diabolic possession and exorcism replaced archaic

phenomena of possession by the dead, there are many intermediate cases to show the relatively secondary nature of the former. Nonetheless, this is a genuine possession system where the basic characteristic and main goal of possession is communication. As it should be clear from the preceding examples this Christian complex also extended its sphere of influence to phenomena which originally had nothing to do with possession, but in this system are alternatively also interpreted as possession.

I do not have sufficient space here to discuss the Church's demonological teachings, or the roots and transformations of ideas relating to the devil and the official ideas and liturgical practices concerning possession by the devil and exorcism (see Pócs, 2001b, pp. 140–50). Nonetheless, by way of introducing what follows I must mention briefly some of their characteristics. An important tenet of both Medieval and modern theology is that Satan has the power to enter man's body and thereby control him and harm him physically, that is to say make him ill. Entering the body was distinguished from external attacks, in other words besides *possessio* they also recognized *obsessio*.[46] They meant a concrete demon (at times even several demons) which could actually enter the body, causing physical symptoms and illness. Typical demonic diseases were psychological ailments: epilepsy, madness, depression, somnambulism, hysteria. (The idea, well-known from Central and Eastern European folk notions of demons, that the possessing devil establishes sexual relations with its victim and deflowers women can be traced from the thirteenth century.) Given that it was thought that a deity or divine spirit as well as the devil could enter the body, the dividing line between holy and evil spirits was not sharp. Besides drawing the physiological model, medical tracts and demonological manuals deemed it essential to determine the nature of the spirit, to establish criteria for identifying and distinguishing demonic or divine possession.[47] Exorcist manuals, tracts, pamphlets, (later religious broadsides, pamphlets, chap-books, "wonder-books," market pictures, for example the Russian *lubki*) and the sermons which transmitted their ideas had a significant impact on the evolution of folk notions of the devil and on lay exorcist practices in Central and South-Eastern Europe too (Midelfort,

1992, pp. 118–19). A wealth of materials can be found in some Eastern European Orthodox monasteries in the form of manuscript and printed magic books, recipe books, exorcist books; similar documents are available and disseminated as pious reading even today. The devil iconography of monasteries was also important in the Orthodox areas of Europe.

In connection with the impact of official Christian possession concepts on folk mentality we also have to pay attention to the evolution of the Christian devil concept: to the Assyrian-Babylonian demon world which shaped the Jewish devil figure, as well as the Jewish "angel of death" derived from the Old Testament, and the early demons of the Western and Eastern Church.[48] Valerie Flint describes the slow process of the transformation of late Antique demons (who occupy the lower strata of the air and there fly about horizontally) into Christian angels and devils (Flint, 1991, pp. 146–57), a process which continues to this day. In Western Europe until the early modern era, until even later in the East, in addition to the already mentioned dead, illness demons, fairies and *mora/lidérc* (*werewolf*) beings, the devil also absorbed and moulded itself to various folk belief figures which had negative connotations.[49] The Christian devil did not take over all possible positions connected to possession, as we know, beliefs in other mythical "possessing" beings also survived in several places in Europe. Among these the most important are the dead. The Eastern European figures of the evil dead, called *unclean ones (tisztátalanok)* or *evil ones (rosszak)*, are often similar to or merge with the Christian devil figure: this is well-documented by Hungarian, Estonian, Russian, Romanian data (Keszeg, 1999, p. 93; Loorits, 1949, 1. p. 375; Maksimov, 1994, pp. 5–27; Ivanits, 1989, pp. 40–45). The influence of Christian notions of the devil and of possession was, however, so significant that by the modern era it has become impossible to describe folk demons and possession concepts independently of Christian notions and church exorcism practices.

The majority of the Hungarian material relating to possession by the devil comes from recently collected or published Transylvanian data.[50] The preponderance of data from the Eastern part of the Hungarian language territory is most likely due to the influence of

Romanian and other Eastern European folk possession concepts as well as of Orthodox exorcism practices which are quite lively to this day. The fact that Transylvanian Hungarians, when they made use of such services, turned—at least in the twentieth century—to Romanian rather than Hungarian priests or monks for the purposes of exorcising the devil or to cleanse themselves and their belongings from the devil contributed to preserving here a more archaic practice (which in earlier times is likely to have been much more widespread in Europe).

Both main types of possession interpretation can be discerned from my folk belief material regarding the devil: the possessor either enters the body of the person, as a result of which the latter becomes "devilish," or it is merely in touch with him, keeping him permanently under its influence from "outside." Eastern Hungarian (and similar Romanian) data speak of the temptations of the devil: the devil "teases," he "encircles" the person, "has power" over him, "tempts him." A rich variety of demonic apparitions is known from Transylvanian and Moldavian Hungarians as well as from Romanian folk beliefs. These data represent both the personal and territorial versions of essence possession,[51] such as abduction, nightmares, noisemaking, sexual aggression, or that a certain area is temporarily under the influence of the devil (in other words it is under a curse). The characteristics of possession by the dead appear here too: "spirit" influences are felt, there are poltergeist phenomena at the possessed home, or in a wider area; the devil manifesting itself as a poltergeist at the house is often in fact a vision of the revenant soul. This statement reinforces the findings of Jean-Claude Schmitt with regard to conceptions of hordes of condemned souls appearing among the living and their diabolization in late Medieval times (Schmitt, 1994, pp. 15–145) and also supports my supposition that the occasional appearance of evil dead "behind" the devil is a rather general European phenomenon. On the other hand, *mora-* and *lidérc*-beings also appear in the background: in connection with nightmares and the sexual temptations and torture of incubus-devils we can also refer to the related phenomenon of the *lidérc*-lover and the genetically related demonic figure of the devil-lover and to the coincidence of folk concepts of the devil and *lidérc* in

the Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian and other Eastern European contexts.[52]

We find manifestations of *circumpossessio*—pointing to archaic space-structures—in a distinctive set of phenomena among many of our newly collected data. According to these, a person who goes to diabolic places, that is to say to a house or plot possessed by the devil (for example where someone had committed suicide) will have visions of the devil. A telling Eastern Hungarian example: according to a recent narrative from Csík, the devil has taken the soul of the suicide victim, but he himself "stays in the courtyard [...] when I enter the courtyard I must leave. I become so nervous when I enter and I am disgusted [...] I felt the danger" (collected by Éva Pócs at Csíkkarcfalva).

The metaphor of *abduction* pointing to archaic space structures is also of importance in the context of the devil. The narrative motif of "abduction" is not only common in the case of divine possession—where it seems natural—but also at the opposite, diabolic, pole of possession, as is even the experience of rising up since late Antiquity demons who possess, abduct humans run about in a layer of air in the vicinity of the earth and it is here that they take their victims. A woman from Csíkjenőfalva recounted: "...devil's temptation. Such people are encircled [...] he lifted up the man [...] and thus took him away, to the middle of some mountain, put him down in a clearing" (collected by Éva Pócs). Our examples usually refer to bodily carrying off, but not exclusively: for example a woman from Csíkszenttamás remembers Satan's attempt to abduct her and that in her fright she called out to her mother: "oh! my mother, they are taking away my soul, my mother, they are taking away my soul" (collected by Éva Pócs).

The notion of *possessio*, of the devil entering, residing in the body, is also part of folk conceptions: they are more frequently found in the Orthodox areas of Eastern Europe than in Central Europe (among Hungarians they can be primarily documented from Transylvania). We can infer the existence of this type of possession from narratives according to which the devil enters the body of people or animals and tortures them and whomever he enters "the devil was inside that man," "the devil is in him," "he be-

came devilish."[53] During our recent fieldtrip in Csík the majority of informants spoke only about problems caused by possession: general malaise, headache, and especially the symptoms of depression, such as deep lethargy, the feeling of "darkness," death wish, suicidal tendencies (according to Romanians epilepsy is also caused by the possessing devil). Symptoms of anxiety and depression could also be spoken of as personal experiences: "...she is so scared she does not dare to stay alone ..."; "...Yes because the evil spirit inside me, controlled me inside."[54]

The depression–possession relationship is accompanied by another motif, that of suicidal tendencies. For example the commadre of a Csíkkarcfalva woman was encouraged by the devils to commit suicide, "they prodded her eyes with scythes, pitchforks and called her into the stable to commit suicide... God always ordered someone to stop her from doing it" (eventually she was freed by the priest).[55] This episode corresponds to sixteenth century ecclesiastic views and a legend type, which is widespread all over Europe.[56] The idea that the *unbaptized* child is possessed by the devil also originates in official views of possession (cf. baptism as a rite of exorcism); at Csíkkarcfalva they say that "Satan encircles the newborn in order to carry him off," until the mother goes through the rite of women's initiation which takes place six weeks after birth the baby is "possessed by an evil spirit" (collected by Éva Pócs and Nóra Muzsai).

Leander Petzoldt provided a summary of the folklore motifs of diabolic possession for Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present (Petzoldt, 1964–1965). He compiled a diverse list of symptoms from the narratives: the person possessed by the devil trembles, his eyes roll, he howls like a dog, he dreads holy objects, or the name of Jesus, and even feels that there are two souls in him (op. cit. 84–86). Some of these symptoms coincide with those known from Hungarian and Eastern European folk beliefs, such is for example the fear of holy objects which was probably transmitted from demonological tracts to the folk practices and beliefs of the Central–Eastern European region. However, it seems that the ideas concerning possession transmitted through objects or coming about due to a curse (op. cit. 79) originate in folk witchcraft beliefs

and are only associated with the Christian devil secondarily: both have a wider sphere of influence than possession by the devil and are primary constituents of folk witchcraft belief systems.[57] (Both Roman Catholic and Orthodox notions of possession include this role of the curse).[58]

Demonic possession: the witch

The witch as the institutionalized scapegoat of traditional societies and the person who causes and resolves tension and as a figure of folk beliefs has multiple links to systems of (demonic) possession, most likely the closest is to the above-discussed diabolic possession. In my above cited summary essay on possession I wrote in detail about possession cases intertwined with early modern witch persecution as well as about the demonological fiction of the possession of the witch by the devil (and along with it about cases of the merging of the witch possessed by the devil and the pact with the devil).[59] In as much as we can judge from the few studies dealing with this question, folk systems of witchcraft[60] were also influenced by the fact that from the end of the fifteenth century the church's charges of possession became part of the persecution of witches.[61] It seems that the witch of folk belief systems owes its characteristics of possessor and possessed to its demonic and wizard "ancestors"[62] and to church demonology and exorcism in equal measure.

From the time of the witch trials to this day, in Central and Eastern Europe we can find traces of both ordinary people being accused of witchcraft and specialists of village magic and divination being considered to be "possessed" or directly accused of being possessed by the devil. There are several "wise" figures in the folk beliefs of this region whose function and assessment are ambivalent: the Russian *klikiushi, iurodivyie*—holy fools—*ikotnitsi*, or the possessed wizards called *volchv* or *kudeshnik* who survive from the pagan past.[63] In a Christian context the possession of these kinds of persons was characteristically polarized into either divine or diabolic (knowledge began to be seen to derive from the devil,

acquiring it brought damnation, cf. the Faust legend). The motif of ambivalence towards the positive abilities of seers or wise people is already present in Medieval sources and exorcist practices. The difficulties of interpretation due to the similarities between the symptoms of possession by evil or benevolent spirits are well-known.[64] However—at least in this region—this is not so much due to the influence of the persecution of witches, rather the idea comes "from below," from folk beliefs concerning wizards, wise men and women, and witches who acquired surplus knowledge through possession and thus were "initiated." Their ambivalence may also come from beliefs in the helping spirits of the *mora*, *werewolf*, or the dead and fairies.[65] In modern Europe these beings mostly became the helping devils of the wizards and wise men of folk beliefs. We can deduce for instance that the Hungarian *táltos* or the Bulgarian/Serbian/Macedonian *zmeí/zmaí/zmiía* wizards also had such "possessing" helping spirits.[66] We could also cite here the figure of the Finnish "wise man," *tietäjä,* whose shamanistic spirit journeys, according to the description of Anna-Leena Siikala, were made possible by a possessing helping spirit (Siikala, 1990). Leaving aside such possessed folk belief figures as wise men and wizards, who would deserve a separate study, I will concentrate on this aspect of (Hungarian and Central–Eastern European) witches (which is in many respects the negative version of systems of "wizards" and "helping spirits").

In this region, but especially in the Eastern part of the Hungarian language territory and on the Orthodox Balkans, a common—but not general—characteristic of the witch is that she is possessed, usually by the help of the devil. Behind notions of the diabolic possession of the witch we can glimpse aspects of the witch being possessed by the dead and by *mora*-type demons. In connection with the witch both main types of possession can be found: the devil may constantly influence her from outside: "surrounds her," "encircles her," or enters her body. With regard to the latter, some types of Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian and Kashub witches are possessed par excellence that is to say as the belief statements recount the "evil spirit," "devilish soul" or the devil moves into the person.[67] Data from Hungarian witch trials partly echo the demonological

teachings of the church. (For example according to a 1745 trial from Sopron county a woman trembles, is dumbstruck and it is said that "she seemed like she was possessed by the evil ones.")[68] However, folk views of personal possession emerge in this context too. According to these, the possessed witch is identified with the devil and/or the dead who possess her, the common Eastern Hungarian terminology which refers to the witch herself as *devil, evil one* supports this view. This witch who had become identical to the devil has its parallels throughout the entire region of Orthodox South-Eastern Europe, among Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian and Serbian witches.[69] Folk ideas regarding the "pact with the devil" known in the region are connected to this form of the witch: the human being becomes the same as the devil, and acts not merely with the help of the devil, but as it were as an embodied devil. These folk views of the "pact with the devil" growing out of "essence possession" are parallel to and independent of the expectations of the demonology of the persecution of witches (in Orthodox South Eastern Europe there was no persecution of witches).[70]

In many respects the figure of the witch possessed by the devil in the Central–South-Eastern European region under scrutiny here can be explained by its *mora*-being-like features: the possessing demon, devil is the same "soul" as the one which may temporarily leave the body (as it is believed in a dream, in a trance state) and go to perform maleficium in the shape of a fly, butterfly, goose or turkey. For example at night it enters the houses of those who are asleep and possesses others causing nightmares or as a diabolical incubus. The same possessing soul can also be found in beliefs concerning the "initiation of the witch" and the "death of the witch" flying in or out of the witch's nose or mouth in the shape of a fly or other insect, butterfly, etc. (The positive magical context of the latter beliefs is also known: upon acquiring her helping spirit the Bulgarian or Romanian witch obtains extraordinary abilities /seer, wise man/, while at the same time becomes the "devil's.") (Marinov, 1914, p. 214; Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, pp. 173–74).

Other (Central and Eastern European) variants of the possessed witch point to possession by the dead. The Romanian "living"

strigoi acquires his knowledge with the help of the possessing *impure one* (=evil dead) (Lackovits, 1995, p. 125). The phenomenon of the possession of alter egos—both dead and alive—is connected to the relationship of witches to the dead and/or the *mora*—and through these to the above-mentioned archaic notions of the soul. This in turn is also related to the distinctive Eastern–South-Eastern European dual—living and dead—witch figures, which are closely related to the similar *mora* (and *werewolf*) figures constituting their archaic substratum.[71] In keeping with this, one of the distinctive names of the Russian and Ukrainian witch (and wizard) is "dual souled": one soul goes to the other world after his/her death, the other comes back as a revenant or is active as a dead witch.[72]

In the witch beliefs of the South-Eastern European peoples all this appears in variegated local cultural manifestations associated with various types of alter egos of the living and the dead, or with their complex systems of possession.[73] In the narratives of Hungarian witch trials for example a common metaphor of the possession of the witch (and also of possession by the witch) is to appear "in the shape of" "in the person of" "in the image of" humans. This may be interpreted as a bodily or spiritual alter ego, that is to say the devil possesses the alter ego and not the person.[74] The devil (or the evil dead that can be discerned "behind" the devil) can not only possess the alter ego of the living, but also of the dead and this is how the characteristic types of Eastern–South-Eastern European "dead" witches "come about," or at least an alternative explanation for their existence. The Romanian *strigoi* (witch), who has both living and dead variants, according to several data, is "the devil in the skin of the dead person." The idea of the "witch as a possessed dead person" in the twentieth century seems to be limited to Orthodox Eastern Europe. However, the terminology relating to witches in the late Middle Ages associated with the mask (*masco, masca, larva*), death-mask (*thalamasca*) reminds us that in the past the concept may have been more widespread in Europe. Most probably certain aspects of archaic notions of the soul and of *mora* (in our case *mara/mar/mare-*) beings were also present in the hinterland of Western European witch beliefs; this supposition is also supported by the findings of Claude Lecouteux.[75]

The helping animals of the witch in the same Central–Eastern European region appear in the above mentioned tripartite system of *mora* beings: 1) as the alter egos of the witch (spirit animals), 2) as her helpers and as 3) the form she takes after death. This possessed witch who has links to *mora* beliefs may equally be a human being possessed by the devil and—seemingly paradoxically—a being possessed by its own helping spirit (~spirit figure) which is a logical consequence of the above-mentioned characteristics of *mora* beings. However, possession by helping spirits/helping animals is only an alternative explanation for these phenomena, which is not found everywhere. (We find similarly ambivalent assessment in connection with the Western European counterparts of these phenomena, although there are some scholars—for example I. M. Lewis—who as a matter of course interpret the witch's relationships to its own spirit familiars and altogether to incubus and succubus demons as possession.)[76]

A unique characteristic of the witch is that she can pass on her possession by the devil as it were naturally due to her dual (human-spirit) nature, she can be both *possessed* and *possessor*. That is to say the supposed maleficium of the witch was also associated with symptoms of possession: it was believed that the witch sent the evil spirit that entered the body or the witch herself was regarded as the possessor. The Hungarian, Croatian, Serbian, Romanian data referring to "evil places" need to be understood in this context, they refer to the aggression of these "possessors" against certain spaces. Such places are dangerous to humans, cause illness because dead, demonic witches (and/or devils) sojourn or appear there. The poltergeist-like witch apparitions of night imaginings, visions, dreams bear the characteristics of possession by the dead, in these demonic witches threaten and torture the living. Characteristic metaphors of this kind of possession are the expressions: *goes onto him, calling out, taking away, abduction* as well as *carrying*: just as the devil abducts the witch to the witches' Sabbath, the witch carries off ordinary people. A metaphor of possession accompanied by abduction distinctively associated with the witch[77] is when the abducting witch *turns her victims into horses*. Besides these, several other versions of *possessio*, that is to say entering the body, are

present in Central and Eastern European witch beliefs. (Witches eating their victims from within, or eating their hearts etc.)[78]

In the case of *sending* a possessing demon the reverse is the case, it is not the witch who is controlled by a possessing force, but rather she controls her devil almost as the shaman controls his helping spirit, but with the crucial difference that the witch uses him to carry out maleficium. There are data for this concept both from East–Central and Western Europe. The witch has power over an evil spirit and with its help she can harm her fellow humans by "sending" it, for example she can thus cause "possession" or other illness (*sent* dead person), poltergeist can also appear in the same context). Although, according to Walker, the notion of sending a possessing spirit is spread by exorcism manuals (Walker, 1981, pp. 7–10), in my opinion only certain special forms originate in Christian teachings on possession. They also appear in the demonological context of witch persecutions: here accusations of possession also included the charge of maleficium, that is to say the witch was thought to have sent the evil spirit that entered the body.[79] I do not have all the variants of the rather diverse body of European data, but I think it likely that in the majority of cases we may be dealing with helping spirits who are of different origin from the figure of the possessing Christian devil; most probably these are the helping spirits of wizards mentioned at the beginning of this section (cf. the wizard "ancestors" of the witch). Such are for example the helping spirit versions of the *mora/ lidérc* (and *werewolf*-)-type alter egos (in Hungarian folk beliefs: *lidérc*-chick, *lidérc*-snake, frog—which can also be "sent"); but the various "sent" witch animals, familiars of many European peoples (performing maleficium, possessing) also belong here.[80] Although the circle of these goes beyond possession, there are forms, which can be unequivocally classified as possession. This phenomenon should most likely also be classified among the fundamental notions of folk witchcraft, which contributed "from below" to demonological conceptions of possession and the "expectations" of persecutors. The same should be said about the concept of possession caused by curses. It is likely that the possibility of the "sending" of the possessing devil through a curse was a widespread idea both on the level of church demonology and folk beliefs in Medieval and modern Europe.[81]

The interpretation of the result of maleficium as possession is a frequent but not universal phenomenon. There are many variants, from bodily transformation to objects found in the body after death or objects thrown up which are interpreted as proof of possession, just as in the case of church exorcism.[82] Here again we are dealing with only one possible interpretation of a broader concept. The various techniques of causing harm (maleficium)—more precisely of black magic—by touching, getting objects into the other's sphere of influence—exist just as the curse does for the most part independently of this interpretation, although the intertwining of the two types of systems had also taken place on an official level too.[83]

Nevertheless the witch is not necessarily a "possessing agent." The essence of witchcraft—"the attribution of misfortune to occult human agency" (Thomas, 1971, p. 436)—is more widespread than possession phenomena, which even within the cultural context under scrutiny here do not appear uniformly. Seeing the guardian and helping spirits of the witch and of certain symptoms and acts of maleficium as possession is always only one possible alternative. Witchcraft is essentially a system to explain and avert misfortune caused by humans, thus when talking about witchcraft we are primarily dealing with communication between humans. This communication—due to the integration of *mora-* (*werewolf-*) type beings into the system—has a human–spirit communication aspect too, and—as I have repeatedly stressed above—possession is only one possible explanation for this. As the witch and her helping spirit came under the influence of ecclesiastic notions of possession and exorcism rites the persecution of witches must have played a significant role in the absorption of "possessing" and "possessor" features which then became intertwined with similar features of the witch's mythical ancestors, or features that could be interpreted as such.

Exorcism

With regard to contemporary Central–Eastern European rites of exorcism, modern ethnographic data point to practices aimed at exorcising the devil partly by priests and monks and partly by

village specialists, healers, wizards, holy men. The relationship between the priestly practice and that of the wizard was close and reciprocal;[84] the duality of the church and lay practice was officially acknowledged and regulated by the church itself. In essence this duality is represented by the distinction between *grand exorcism* applied in the case of *possessio* and the *minor exorcism* performed in the case of *obsessio/circumpossessio*, which could be carried out by lay people without permission (Rodewyk, 1963, p. 67).

The importance of Christian exorcism from the point of view of this study is that it must have had a serious unifying influence on folk conceptions of demonic possession, because it offered priests, wizards, healers and ordinary people alike an effective remedy against all the demons and witches discussed here. The Christian versions of purificatory rites against demons extended to all forms of demonic possession. The rites practiced by village healers and wizards were to a great extent the folk imitations of church rites or their lay versions also permitted by official rites.

About the history and transformations of the rituals of exorcism practiced by the Christian church (Pócs, 2001b) I will only say that the first exorcist ceremony (baptism in the third century) already had links to a rich—Babylonian, Hebrew and Greco-Roman—tradition of the exorcism of demons,[85] and this too played a role in the subsequent spread of these practices. The most important elements of Eastern and Western formulae have been identical (ever since): the formula of the *dialogue with the demon, exorcism in the name of Jesus; reference to events in the life of Jesus Christ, laying on hands;* the *sign of the cross, insufflatio, smearing with oil* and the prescription of a *fast* before and after the act.[86] Official *exorcism* went beyond casting out Satan from the possessed person. It included all ceremonies aimed at expelling demons: it could mean the ritual cleansing of living beings, objects, areas, the air and was closely linked to the *benediction*: the blessing of the cleansed object. This more broadly viewed concept of exorcism and benediction is connected to a more encompassing understanding of possession, to circumcessio or essence possession, which is related to an archaic conception of space.

In today's Central and Western Europe only in some peripheral areas is exorcism a regular service provided by priests or monks,[87] but at the pilgrimage sites of the late Middle Ages exorcism of possessed persons who went there or were taken there was a general practice.[88] The priests who exorcised the devil at such shrines provided other services as well: they healed with herbs, averted the maleficium of the witch, and provided patients with amulets, talismans or texts of blessings in order to prevent possession or maleficium, or to cure milder cases.[89] In the modern era in Central and Western Europe we mostly know of the latter practices.[90] In contrast to the very circumscribed practice of direct exorcism in these areas,[91] in the Orthodox East, these services at sacred places continue to be an important part of the spiritual life of village communities.[92] Transylvanian data indicate that Roman Catholic Hungarians also availed themselves of the services of Orthodox monks—besides healing, maleficium and divination—they also used them as exorcists, although the degree to which this happened—no doubt depending on local circumstances—is impossible to gauge precisely. In serious cases the priest or monk (in most cases an Orthodox priest among Hungarians too) performs an exorcism, or a smaller cleansing ceremony by means of blowing, fumigation, prayer, or gives medication, prescribes the wearing of blessed or holy objects as amulets or prescribes a fast. According to my Hungarian data from Csík, for example the patient has to drink holy water at certain prescribed times, has to carry blessed objects (bread, pepper, salt) in his neck, or an image of Jesus on her head, tied up in her kerchief. A Csíkszenttamás woman, who had been possessed earlier, recounted that the Romanian priest gave her holy water to exorcise her devil and "I drank the water that the holy fathers sent, I drank it, and all of a sudden a big black snake went out of me" (collected by Éva Pócs).

Our examples indicate that the healing and exorcism performed by monks and priests at shrines served as models for all areas of the lay practice of averting the devil. A frequent variant of rituals aimed at chasing away the devil in Eastern Hungarian areas is the purification of houses, plots, stables not so much through priestly exorcism, but rather by means of home remedies: making use of holy or

blessed objects received from monks or brought home from monasteries. A Csíkkarcfalva woman recounted that she was obliged to keep holy water at home constantly in order to sprinkle the area and its surroundings with it whenever she had to pass there (Csíkkarcfalva, collected by Éva Pócs). We know of similar folk exorcism practices aimed at cleansing places from the devil or the witch from several places in Europe, for example the fumigation of the stable with incense or its purification with holy water when the animals are diseased.[93] The same rites served to cleanse haunted houses (i.e. possessed by the dead) too.[94] Protection against various *mora/lidérc*-type demons or demonic witches follows the pattern established by purificatory rites against the devil: when for example in order to prevent nightmares they sprinkle the room, the bed, or the cradle of the newborn with holy water or fumigate it with incense.[95] Let us recall the practice of using incantations to exorcise illness demons briefly discussed above. In the case of some types of incantations we are dealing with par excellence exorcism, especially if monks are the healers such as it is practiced in Orthodox Eastern Europe to this day. Besides the texts of village healers, the gestures of rituals also contain elements of exorcism: the abjuration of the (illness) demon, the sign of the cross, touching, blowing on the parts of the body of the patient (where the demon resides), and so on.

Divine possession

All forms of possession are collectively called divine possession when a human comes under the control of a God or superior spirit[96] and this control in contrast to the negative intent of demonic possession is positive in character: from the possessor's point of view it is protective, instructive, teaching or revelatory. Let us note immediately that this is only so in theory; in practice—at times due to the ambivalence of the possessing spirit, at times because of the uncertainty of the positive or negative attitude—it can often be difficult to categorise possession as either divine or demonic. The various forms of divine possession seem rather widespread; they permeate European Antiquity, Medieval times and the

modern era, elite and folk culture, Christianity and pre-Christian religions and belief systems equally, just as possession by the dead/demons does. Unlike the rather strongly syncretic nature of demonic possession, divine possession in modern Europe is almost purely Christian. (The most important exception is constituted by the above-mentioned characteristics of fairies.)

One kind of divine possession, similar to *circumpossessio*, is associated with sacred places. A sacred place is one where the divinity/God appears (Eliade, 1958, pp. 367–79), descends to earth, "lives" there, "settles down" and manifests himself to humans. At Hungarian or other Central European and Orthodox Eastern European pilgrimage sites alike lay saints, "living saints," "holy healers" and priests performing healing divination were active even in the twentieth century.[97] Such persons transmit the influence emanating from the deity possessing the holy site (through their inspired texts, healing gestures, laying on hands, blowing) just as did the prophetesses of Antiquity, the Pythia of Delphi and the prophetic possessed of other Apollo-oracles or the madmen of Medieval sacred sites who were either possessed by God or by a saint (Finucane, 1977, p. 108). We have few data about concrete possessio, but in all likelihood these charismatic personalities contribute to essence possession—to the "sacredness" of the place. Judging by what we know of the divinational practices of Romanian monks in monasteries (see Pócs, 2001c) we may be dealing with mediumism here. However, at sacred places the believers may receive the blessings of the possessing deity without the intervention of a medium, let us think here of those who go to church as an expression of personal faith, or of those who make a pilgrimage to a shrine to seek a cure: those who heal themselves at holy sources. In the Middle Ages possessed patients went to pilgrimage sites to be exorcised, and having been cleansed of the devil they were to be "possessed" as it were by the Holy Spirit (Brown, 1993, p. 140). Medieval data relating to the incubatio of those seeking a cure can often be interpreted as ritually induced possession, or as its circumcessio version associated with certain places.[98]

Divine possession is usually a sign and result of being chosen, of being initiated. The data mentioned in connection with holy places

can be supplemented with medieval and early modern examples of living saints, Protestant prophets, and even lay wizards who merged with Christian guardian spirits (God, Christ, saints, angels).[99] The majority of these are the lay spiritual leaders of the community, charismatic people who already showed signs of sanctity and acquired the reputation of a saint during their lifetime (which could then be followed—after their death—by actual canonization; Kieckhefer, 1988, p. 12). We could also mention here the Old Testament precedents of Christianity: it is written about the prophets "that the spirit of the Lord descended" upon them, and this is how they acquired their capabilities (Zuesse, 1987, p. 379; Benz, 1972, p. 132). We need to emphasize, however, that in general possession is not an absolute criterion of the connection of the elect to God, often it would perhaps be more apt to use the wider category of *unio mystica*, however, we have too little information to interpret the data unequivocally.

Divine possession and the knowledge gained through it, by initiation as it were, as well as symptoms of possession, which can be classified as *circumpossessio* or at times even as bodily possession often crop up in connection with historical data on communal *lay healers* too. For example the seventeenth-eighteenth century Lotharingian healers studied by Delcambre often acquired their knowledge through divine possession.[100] Medieval data on Russian holy fools, the *iurodivyie*, indicate that they acquired the capabilities of wizards and seers through divine possession (holy illness: epilepsy);[101] the usual ambivalent evaluation also appears in connection with them: in the modern era they too are thought to be possessed by the devil, just as the Slav wizards called *kudeshnik* and *volchv* who had originally been held to be possessed by some pagan deity.[102]

We know about people acquiring their knowledge concretely through possession by a deity primarily from Greek data on wizards and holy healers. These people—according to the Blums—may have an initiatory vision "to which" a saint—for example St. Elijah—takes them (in a trance, in a dream) or the saint, or the "spirit" possesses them as a result of which they "converse with the saints" in a trance state (Blum–Blum, 1970, pp. 52–54). Data about Hungarian

saints, seers from Csík county also show traces of the idea that they are chosen when God or the Holy Spirit spontaneously possesses them. The information about sermons inspired by God also point to possession: according to József Gagyi the holy woman of Máréfalva is in a "state of grace," at such times she is in a trance, afterwards she sings, prays and preaches (Gagyi, 2001).

Examining Medieval and early modern mystics and living saints we find that divine possession is an all-purpose category as it were for various forms of union with or mediation with the deity. No wonder that some researchers studying the Christian Middle Ages regard the two as one category—for example most recently Moshe Sluhovsky—treats it as "union/identification with God" which is opposed to demonic possession and all other related phenomena (diabolical deception: illusion).[103] Accordingly, researchers have only dealt with the concrete fact of possession occasionally, or rather they only looked at it from the point of view of demonic possession and exorcism, however, as mentioned above, divine and diabolical possession are often the two sides of the same coin. The "abnormal" behavior of medieval and early modern mystics could equally be the sign of divine or diabolic possession; charismatic individuals behaving like saints could prove to be "false" saints, who were not possessed by God or the Holy Spirit but by Satan, that is to say they were heretics and even witches (Dinzelbacher, 1995, pp. 32–36, 56–96, 159–66; Sluhovsky, 1999). This is why it was important to evaluate the symptoms. The symptoms—cramps, the contortion of the body, speaking in tongues, the knowledge of secrets—as Sluhovsky points out (Sluhovsky, 1999), could be identical in the case of the divine or the demonic possession of living saints (the difference is merely that those possessed by the devil cannot perform miracles). Those concerned may also have had doubts as to whether they were controlled by a good or evil spirit. We can also observe this duality with regard to the South-Eastern European holy men of today, in as much as on the Balkans according to Greek and Bulgarian data, the "holy illness" of epilepsy and the loss of consciousness accompanying it was identified with trance and—depending on the context—interpreted as either diabolic or divine possession.[104]

Similarly, *rising up in the air, flying, levitation* were also symptoms of possession and their evaluation was ambivalent. This could be part of any kind of supernatural communication, of unio mystica, since for the Late Antique theurgists it was a proof of the deification of man, the manifestation of very holy men.[105] Often it is explicitly a symptom of possession (Dinzelbacher, 1997, pp. 111–38): the divine spirit entering the body strives to rise up, and lifts the body too (and the possessed flies "bodily," is "carried off"). Flying, however, may equally be part of the carrying away of *circumpossessio* and of the shamanistic spirit journey as an ASC experience, or it may be an out of body experience, and it may even happen that the guardian spirit, guardian angel, celestial saint or Christ would take someone "up" to the divine region of Heaven.

Nonetheless, we also know of non-divine rising up: as discussed above, swarms of demons hurtling along above the earth, above trees also "carried away" those they possessed (as is well-known all demonological treatises of witch persecution contain emphatically the charge of flying with the aid of the devil). According to the account of the above quoted formerly possessed Csíkszenttamás woman, she rose up with the help of her possessing devil. She also experienced the divine pole "I was up there with Mary, and since I was with her [...] it was such a good feeling. Good lightness, it was a good feeling. I was not afraid then..." (collected by Éva Pócs). Besides the similarities between the two types of "carrying away," in this case the differences between them are also clear: divine possession is positive, unlike the depressing blackness of demonic possession it is a "light" experience.

Most of our data about contemporary manifestations of divine possession come from the rituals of holy healers. The healers possessed by the deity—in the framework of dualistic systems—take up the fight against possessing devils, illness demons, "evil" dead. It seems that their most common method of healing is to fall into a trance and thereby identify with the patient and assume the evil spirit from them.[106] Eliade describes these kinds of healing rites as rather widespread phenomena which go beyond the opposition of divine–diabolic possession of Christian Europe (Hanna, 1987, pp. 209–10). From a medical point of view, József Vass Hungarian psy-

cho-therapist, sees it as the joint trance of the physician and the patient where ego-identical and ego-alien spirits are fighting for the soul (Vas, 1998). If we add to this the healing practices of collective rites based on similar principles associated with possession by fairies (in the collective possession rites of the *rusalia*) and Felicitas Goodman's cross-cultural overview (Goodman, 1998, pp. 23–25), we have to conclude that the practices of Christian exorcists and healers are the Christianized adaptation of a world-wide phenomenon. The same is likely to be the case with another version of the God–Satan battle: with the help of his guardian spirit the healer goes to battle to expel the demon. In the "battle" of healers who chase away illness demons by means of incantations the healer may be effectively possessed, we also know of—albeit rare—cases of incantations being sung, recited in an ecstatic state, where the healer, becoming one with his divine guardian spirit, chases away the demon.[107] We are dealing with "spirit battles" waged in a trance or in a dream. Detailed descriptions of these battles between the witch and the person who diagnoses, heals the maleficium, can be found for example in the transcripts of witch trials, but we also have data concerning German healers or medieval German witchcraft whose roots go back to pre-Christian Germanic notions of the soul (alter ego, "escorting soul," or to *mora* (Germanic *mara-*) characteristics.[108]

Lauri Honko also sees a connection between this type of healing and possession (Honko, 1968, p. 31), but spirit battles need not necessarily and always be interpreted as (divine–demonic) possession. Visions of spirit battles between good–evil helping spirits may also appear in shamanistic systems not based on possession,[109] just as they can be associated with the non-Christian helping spirits of European healers, wizards (however, through the *mora/lidérc*-beings there is a common thread).

Ritual trance, possession cults

The subject of the Orthodox possession cults of the Balkans (Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Macedonian, Greek *căluşarii*, *rusalia*, *nestinars* and their relatives) would deserve a separate essay,

especially in the context of divine possession, some form of which appears in all of them. These rites which in some places are practiced even today are documented by a rich literature,[110] however, researchers paid less attention to the possession phenomena related to them,[111] rather, they tended to discuss them under the category of shamanism.[112]

I do not have sufficient space to analyse them in detail here but as par excellence possession systems these rites need to be mentioned (Pócs, 1998 and 2001b). In rituals based on ecstasy induced by music and dance, the holy healers who are possessed by the deity take up the battle in a joint trance with the patients against the possessing devil, illness demons, evil dead (evil fairies)—the notion of spirit battle appears in all of them as a central feature of the healing rites. They drive out the evil spirit from the patient with the strength gained from the possessing deity, benevolent spirit. The presence of the deity and the spirit battle may also be ritually enacted.

On the divine side non-Christian mythical creatures also appear such as the Southern Slav, Romanian fairy queen. In many respects the rituals of *rusalia* and the *căluşarii* are the ritual enactments of the mythical model of musical-dancing ecstasy associated with the mythology of fairies (those carried away to fairy heaven discussed briefly above). The clearest case of a Christian possessor is found in the healing societies of the *nestinars,* in the person of St. Constantin, but the fairy queen of the *rusalia* rites may also be "replaced" by the Holy Spirit. Possessing dead and evil fairies may also be found among the demonic adversaries: the rites of *rusalia* and *căluşarii* are practiced between Easter and Whitsun when the dead appear among the living. However, the role of the dead is not unequivocally negative. Their guardian spirit aspect comes to the fore when the possessed *rusalias,* acting as the mediums of the ancestors of the community, awakening from their trance transmit information about the fate of the village in the coming year.

*

With these few examples I have not given a full picture by far of the phenomena that may be interpreted as possession in the region

under scrutiny. I wished to call attention to the fact that these phenomena are present in much greater numbers and variety in the belief systems or on the periphery of religious life of Central–Eastern Europe than we have hitherto thought. Possession as a trance phenomenon—seen from a psycho-biological point of view—is a very common, one could say omnipresent, channel of supernatural communication. As we have seen the phenomenon in itself is not what matters, the same psychobiological process or its cultural reflection may be part of a possession system or another system depending on the cultural context. As for different kinds of mental techniques used within any given category of possession, the different types of possession (*possessio*, *circumpossessio*, etc.) employed, it seems from our overview that we should not draw overly rigid boundaries between them; it is perhaps more advisable to treat them as variants of the same phenomenon which came into being in different ideological contexts.

In what sense can we talk about possession as a discrete system based on a distinctive communication technique? The close connections between the fluid categories of *possession by the dead,* by *fairies* and by the *devil* indicate that here we are dealing with variations of a single common system of ideas. However, the internal consistency of the systems is weakened by interconnections and overlaps: the fading of the supposed *mora/werewolf* systems into possession, the concept of *unio mystica* which in part subsumes divine possession in part goes beyond it. *Mediumism* is not purely a system of possession either: we find a functional core here, which is slightly different from the basic systems. The fluidity of internal and external boundaries makes answering the question more difficult, nonetheless, I think that the material presented here indicates the existence of independent systems. Despite their similarities and interconnections we were able to delineate as independent systems of possession those by the dead, by fairies and by the devil; as well as divine possession and bipolar divine–diabolical systems. Despite all the difficulties of delineating them it is possible to distinguish distinct symbolic systems through the mythology of the possessing spirit beings, the symbolism of cultural interpretations and narrative metaphors.

As mentioned above, the problem of flexible boundaries also appears when looking outward, most acutely in connection with *shamanism*. Let us think for example of the related phenomena of possessing helping spirits or spirit battles in Eurasian shamanism, or of the possibilities of alternative interpretations of possession phenomena associated with *mora/lidérc* (*werewolf*) beings. Giovanni Pizza, following Grottanelli's proposal, suggested that—least as far as Europe is concerned—perhaps it would be more advisable to speak of *trance phenomena* rather than of *shamanism* and/or *possession* (Pizza, 1996). I do not agree with the suggestion. I think that regardless of the usefulness of keeping the category of European shamanism alive, in Europe too there is a form of communication with the supernatural based on shamanistic phenomena, which is clearly different from systems of possession. What is more, most likely a third system also exists, that of *mora/lidérc* (*werewolf*) beings which is a distinctive form of human–human, human–demon communication characteristic of dual beings.

If these systems are separate let us not wash them together through the single common denominator of the trance which as we know is a very common, but not a necessary technical condition of communication with the supernatural. It would be better to simply choose *supernatural communication*, which is an essential component of these systems, as the common denominator. Beyond this, however, it is not only possible to distinguish between the two or three cultural systems: *possession, shamanism, mora/werewolf* systems—and possibly *mediumism* as a fourth one—but it is also necessary. However, I will only be able to prove this necessity after further examination of the systems of *mora/werewolf*-beings and wizards.

Notes

1 Benz, 1972, p. 141. Lauri Honko for example considers it to be the basic category and treats entering of the body as a narrower subcategory within this (Honko, 1968, p. 29).

2 Several of the authors of the 1972 volume edited from the papers of a conference on the ethnology/history of religion refer to divine possession as *Ergriffen-*

heit (being carried away/rapture) and only use Besessenheit to refer to demonic possession (Benz, 1972). On the category of mysticism in this context see Holm, 1982, p. 8.

3 Eliade, 1987, p. 376: "the oracular medium [...] loses all awareness [...] and therefore often remains ignorant of the message that is communicated..." (according to Oesterreich's distinction).

4 Firth, 1967, p. 296. quoted by Crapanzano, 1987, p. 12. when he delineates the three categories of possession, mediumism and shamanism.

5 According to Findesien (1957, pp. 121–39), and later Luc de Heusch (1971, p. 228) for example the most important characteristic of the shaman is voyage of the soul, where the soul leaves the body to go to the spirit world along the *axis mundi*. According to Hultkranz (1967; 1984) and Eliade (1987) too, the spirit journey is the most significant or at least the most important attribute of shamanism.

6 Hultkranz's criteria include the celestial supreme being and the shaman's mystical flight along the axis mundi/cosmic tree emphasized by Eliade (Hultkranz, 1967, p. 43).

7 The social role of these mostly secondary formations in Europe is naturally very different from the fully functioning possession cults examined by Lewis and others. Their categories of peripheral and central (Lewis, 1970; 1978; or Janice Boddy, 1994 who studied the North African *zar*-cult etc.) are not really applicable to modern Europe, although we could draw some kind of parallel between these categories and the binary pairs of divine/demonic possession as holy man/wizard –witch/ illness demon/evil fairy etc.

8 The 1997 conference in Chantilly entitled "Le Chamanisme: perspectives religieuses et politiques."

9 I spent three weeks at Csíkkarcfalva and Csíkjenőfalva in Romania with the students of the University of Pécs, they continued the fieldwork for another 2–3 weeks. I wish to express my thanks to my students for allowing me to use their materials besides my own.

10 I based this suspicion on my examination of the belief material of Hungarian witch trials. A "side product" of my book written on this (Pócs, 1999) a rich body of materials of sixteenth–eighteenth century beliefs that can at least partially be interpreted in light of possession by the dead which were still very much alive in those centuries.

11 Naturally, this metaphorical system is related to the body, to its physiological and physical state cf. Boddy, 1994, p. 411. In Crapanzano's enumeration these are for example: "The spirit is said to mount the host (who is likened to a horse or some other beast of burden), to enter, to take possession of, to have a proprietary interest of to haunt, to inhabit, to besiege, to be a guest of, to strike or slap, to seduce, to marry, or to have sexual relations with the host" (Crapanzano, 1987). We could continue the list, for example *carries away, oppresses, turns into a horse, embodies, appears in its image (elragad, megnyom, lóvá tesz, megtestesül, a képében megjelenik*), etc. as we shall see below.

12 This enumeration only gives a very sketchy, simplified picture of the reality, which has only been sufficiently explored in some parts of Europe, however, this topic is also one of those areas of European folk belief systems which has barely been studied. The only good comprehensive studies have been written about the Greco-Roman material from Antiquity and about Medieval Celtic, German materi-

als, cf. Pócs, 1999 in a little more detail and with some literature. Some important European studies dealing with this question to a greater or lesser extent: Rohde, 1925; Bargheer, 1931, pp. 28–29; Peuckert, 1960; Buchholz, 1968; Meyer-Matheis, 1974; Strömbäck, 1975; Boyer, 1986; Lecouteux, 1992.

13 See e.g. Ränk, 1949. On the fairy versions of these taboos in Hungary and the Balkans, see Pócs, 1989.

14 On Babylonian, Hebrew (Old Testament and Medieval), Arab data on the occupation of the living space of the living by the dead see for example Jirku, 1912, pp. 11–18, 42–45.

15 I will only note here that occult manuals which often deal with haunted houses also talk of the house and those living in it being "occupied"; cf. for example Gauld–Cornell, 1979.

16 See in more detail on this question Pócs, 1999, pp. 30–31; Pócs, 2000. Some of the most important literature on the question, Pentikäinen, 1968; Lecouteux, 1987a, pp. 233–48; Schmitt, 1994.

17 See the category of "Evil ones" in the Hungarian Folk Belief Archives at the Ethnological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

18 On the taboos of spaces of the dead, Pócs, 1983; Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, pp. 163–70.

19 Cf. *Nachtschar* beliefs: Beitl, 1965.

20 Jankó, 1891, p. 278.

21 Evil spirits who carry off people in the air, wind, see for example Manninen, 1922, pp. 107–117 (Finnish, Lapp, Ingrian, Estonian, German, Russian, etc.); Moszyński, 1939, pp. 651–53; Meisen, 1935; Kuret, 1975; Zechevich, 1981, pp. 123–25; Jankó, 1891, p. 277.

22 The person whom the spirit appearing in the whirlwind enters becomes impure and falls ill (Keszeg, 1999, pp. 331–32).

23 For overviews on the Hungarian necromancer, or its two types Diószegi, 1958, pp. 297–302; Barna, 1981b; Czövek, 1987. See in more detail about the data, Pócs, 2001a.

24 See for more detail Pócs, 1996.

25 See for more detail my Central South-Eastern European overview (Pócs, 1989).

26 Although there are conceptions of fairy-heaven too and fairies carry off humans to it, these are more likely to be connected to divine possession. See on this question Pócs, 1989. On similar motifs in Irish fairy beliefs, Hartmann, 1942, pp. 131–34.

27 Collected by Anita Derjanecz, Ágnes Hesz, Kinga Jankus.

28 Candrea, 1944, p. 160; also collected by Éva Pócs in Csík.

29 Collected by Kinga Jankus, Csíkkarcfalva.

30 This is the Western European *fairy-stroke*. According to Evans-Wentz Irish data (1966, pp. 266–73) for example humans, houses, cows, milking vessels may equally become possessed as a result of "fairy-stroke."

31 Regarding the "taking away" of the face, according to Irish examples, it is unequivocally the metaphor of the carrying off of the soul, according to Hartmann (1942, p. 118) it is dangerous for the soul to leave the body; it means illness, or rather that fairies had taken away the person's face (=carried off his soul).

32 For more detail on this question, see Pócs, 1989.

33 Candrea, 1944, p. 160. Similar data on Serb *rusalkas,* Zechevich, 1978, p. 38. For

Hungarian data and further parallels from the Balkans, see Pócs, 1989. On data from Csík, Pócs, 2001a, pp. 130–31.

34 Eliade, 1980; Rouget, 1980; Portefaix, 1982. See on this question and possible historical connections, Pócs, 1989, with further literature.

35 In Hungarian incantations it occurs in the following "exorcist" contexts: *scurvy, spell, St. Anthony's fire, ill wind*. See Pócs, 1985–1986, II. "The meeting of Saint and evil" type. Evil wind, Erdélyi, 1976, p. 104.

36 See on this question Pócs, 1984; 1986; 1988a; 1990. Adolph Franz examines this material in detail in his overview of the benedictions of the Western Church (1909). I have no space to cite even the most important works from the enormous literature on the demons of the Ancient East; see for example Alfred Jeremias (1913). A good summary of Hellenistic demon beliefs for example Stemplinger, 1922 (he traces the precursors of the Christian concepts of the devil in the Late Antique demon beliefs).

37 Naturally this statement is a simplification of multifaceted, complex processes: in the "history" of individual types of incantations we often have to suppose interconnections between elite literacy and folklore, although some of the "folk" illness demons known from Eastern European belief systems in the twentieth century seem to have been transmitted precisely in incantation texts by church and lay healers via Byzantium.

38 There is no good summary of the data on Eastern European illness demons. The question of illness demons is touched upon in Pócs, 1985–1986, II. "The meeting of Saint and evil" type; Pócs, 1990; Ryan, 1999, pp. 172–74, 244–50, 442.

39 On Hungarian text types belonging here and their European, Medieval-Ancient parallels, see Pócs, 1985—1986; 1988a.

40 Demons do not play any role in folk beliefs, they must be regarded as "text beings" who only appear in this context (and we can talk about their one time "genuine"—Near Eastern—demon-ancestors).

41 For a more detailed discussion, Pócs, 2001b. For a broader overview of *mora/lidérc*-beings, see Pócs, 1988; 1994, pp. 89–102; 1999, Chapters 2–3. with bibliography. Some important works from this Ranke, 1933; Peuckert, 1960; Tillhagen, 1960; Strömbäck, 1976–1977; Lecouteux, 1985b; 1987b; 1992; Lixfeld, 1971; Szendrey, 1955. In this context the recently collected *lidérc*-data of Vilmos Keszeg, and Enikő Csőgör in Mezőség and Torda respectively (Keszeg, 1999, pp. 81–85, 291–306; Csőgör, 1998, pp. 90–101).

42 On some aspects of this question see Pócs, 1999, Chapters 2 and 7.

43 However, as I indicated above, I have no space to discuss this question here. See Pócs, 1988b; 1994.

44 Pizza (1998) writes about frog, snake demons who possess women "from below" based on material he collected in Southern Italy; he regards the possession caused by the tarantella spider as a related phenomenon. His most important conclusion is that we should not regard European wizard systems as (quasi)-shamanistic systems, but rather as possession systems. As far as I am concerned, this is going too far to the other extreme.

45 Cf. Brown, 1980, Chapter 6. Elsewhere Brown (1970, pp. 31–34) writes about how by the fourth century the devil became the root cause of all misfortune, the natural enemy of man (instead of the sorcerer or the witch), demons became the helpers of sorcerers in "battles."

46 Franz, 1909, pp. 514–27; Thomas, 1973, pp. 569–70. According to a twentieth century Roman Catholic theological definition: "...der Teufel vom Körper eines Menschen Besitz ergreift und so über ihn verfügt, als sei es sein eigener" (Rodewyk, 1963, p. 22; Newman, 1998, pp. 737–39).
47 On this question see for example Sluhovsky, 1999; Newman, 1998, pp. 733–70.
48 On Eastern connections and the world of demons of the Late Antiquity, and the early Middle Ages see for example Böcher, 1972, pp. 75–76; Franz, 1909, I. pp. 518–20. On the history of incubus and succubus demons, see for example Roscher, 1903; Ranke, 1927; Lecouteux, 1987b.
49 On the devil figures of folk beliefs, see Pócs, 1991–1992; Röhrich, 1966; Woods, 1959; Champneys, 1992; Midelfort, 1992, pp. 99–102; Thomas, 1971, pp. 569–73 also write about the relationship of Medieval and early modern church concepts to folk beliefs. For a comparative summary of the sixteenth century Protestant literature on the devil and the legend material, Brückner–Alsheimer, 1974.
50 Primarily the material collected in Csík with the students of Pécs University and Keszeg, 1999.
51 Collected at Csíkkarcfalva by Éva Pócs. For a more detailed presentation of the material including Romanian data as well, see Pócs, 2001b.
52 For Hungarian data see Pócs, 1996, pp. 59–62; 1991–1992, p. 73, both contain further literature; examples from contemporary Hungarian and Balkans folklore, Pócs, 2001b. With regard to the devil lover as an ally see the material and literature presented in my articles mentioned in footnotes 60 and 68.
53 Csíkkarcfalva, collected by Orsolya Graf. Romanian data, Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, p. 171; Candrea, 1944, p. 114; Mikac, 1934, p. 197, and cf. the above-mentioned data on the possession of the witch from the Balkans.
54 Collected by Éva Pócs, Csíkkarcfalva. The Romanian data are similar, Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, pp. 163–71.
55 Collected by Anita Derjanecz.
56 Midelfort, 1992, pp. 116–17. This is related to the widespread Christian idea of the battle for the soul at the deathbed: the devil wins without battle the soul of someone who had been persuaded to commit suicide. On folk views of the same question see Petzoldt, 1964–1965, p. 77; Bargheer, 1931, p. 28; Ivanits, 1989, p. 48.
57 On the role of the curse in communal systems of witchcraft see for example Thomas, 1971, pp. 599–611; Labouvie, 1993, pp. 121–45; Pócs, 2001c, pp. 419–59. Midelfort is also of the opinion that the idea of possession caused by a curse is of "folk origin" (Midelfort, 1992, p. 103).
58 In Rodewyk's Roman Catholic possession manual (1963, p. 128). In 1996 during a fieldtrip with the students of Pécs University a Romanian monk from Maroshévíz (Romania) conveyed similar views to us (I thank Tünde Komáromi for the interpretation and translation).
59 See in more detail on this question, Pócs, 2001b; and Midelfort, 1992.
60 With respect to Spanish witchcraft see for example Caro Baroja, 1967, pp. 158–66.
61 On the French trials, see for example Mandrou, 1970; Walker, 1981; on the Salem trial, Boyer–Nissenbaum, 1974.
62 On the components and parallels of the belief figure of the witch, see Pócs, 1999, Chapter 3.

63 For data on these beings see for example Ivanits, 1989, pp. 106–107; Ryan, 1999, p. 240; Vinogradova, 1998, pp. 131–40.
64 We could bring several examples for this ambivalent attitude towards living saints and prophets in the Middle Ages and the early modern era. See for example Kleinberg, 1990; Dinzelbacher, 1995; Klaniczay, 1990–1991; Beyer, 1966, pp. 167–274.
65 Edsman (1967) draws a characteristic picture of the ambivalence of the helping spirits of an eighteenth century Swedish healing woman.
66 On this question I am preparing an overview, but I have already written about helping spirits, see Pócs, 1988b and 1991–1992.
67 Marinov, 1914, pp. 213–15; Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, p. 171; Pamfile, 1916, p. 136; Candrea, 1944, p. 148; Đorđević, 1953, p. 6; Zechevich, 1981, p. 140; Krauss, 1908, pp. 57–70; Lilek, 1869, pp. 202–25; Mikac, 1934, p. 197; Perkowski, 1972, p. 31.
68 The trial of Mrs Ferenc Deserits, née Erzsébet Kis, Vadosfalva (Klaniczay–Kristóf–Pócs, 1989, p. 664).
69 See the literature mentioned in footnote 63.
70 In more detail on this question see Pócs, 1991–1992.
71 In Eastern Europe werewolfs not discussed in this study also play a role in these concept, they are connected to *mora* beings in several ways. See Pócs, 1999, pp. 53–58.
72 On South-Eastern European "dual-souled" witches and wizards, see Tolstoi–Tolstaia, 1981, pp. 44–120.
73 I don't have space to provide the entire bibliography of South Eastern European witch beliefs here, some of the most important works are Moszyński, 1939, II. I. p. 344; Burkhart, 1989, pp. 90–93; Marinov, 1914, p. 215; Đorđević, 1953; Bošković-Stulli, 1990; Zelenin, 1927, p. 395; Kovács, 1973, pp. 51–87; Kurochkin, 1991–1992; Candrea, 1944, pp. 106–152; Muşlea–Bîrlea, 1970, pp. 244–77.
74 For a summary with representative examples, see Pócs, 1999, Chapters 2 and 3.
75 Lecouteux, 1992, pp. 220–24. On this terminology, Lecouteux, 1985a.
76 For example in his South African and fifteenth–seventeenth century European comparison (Lewis, 1970). Thomas suggests that the helping animals of the English witch that they may perhaps be the possessors of the witch (Thomas, 1971, pp. 626–27). In the overview of Nildin-Wall and Wall about "witch animals," however, there is no mention of the possibility of possession (Nildin-Wall–Wall, 1993, pp. 67–76).
77 Or rather, as we mentioned it above, it is likely that originally it was a distinctive characteristic of *mora*-beings to ride the possessed. See Bihari, 1980, pp. 78–79. L /I. IX. type.
78 In greater detail on these methods, with examples see Pócs, 2001b.
79 See for examples Thomas, 1971, p. 583; Mair, 1980; Caro Baroja, 1967, p. 160; Petzoldt, 1964–1965, pp. 82–93; Ivanits, 1989, pp. 106–107. The possession-illness of the Russian *klikiushi* is caused by a witch (Mansikka, 1911, p. 626). In Medieval German witchcraft too sending was a special form of maleficium (see Davidson, 1973) and we can find interesting parallels in African and Indian witchcraft too: see the literature in Pócs, 2001b, footnote 169. (However, in the latter cases it need not necessarily be associated with possession.)
80 See Thomas, 1971, pp. 527–31, 626, 653, 657; Nildin-Wall–Wall, 1993. On Hun-

garian and Central and Eastern European witch animals see also the literature noted above on *lidérc-* and *mora*-beings.

81 According to our data from Csík, in the Orthodox East this is closely intertwined: possession can equally be caused by the curse of Orthodox priests and monks or by personal, family curses of lay people.

82 See for examples Petzoldt, 1964–1965, p. 79; Thomas, 1971, p. 583; similarly in sixteenth century Italy (Sluhovsky, 1999; Caro Baroja, 1967, pp. 159–60).

83 See Walker, 1981, pp. 2–6. This is also reflected in some of the demonological treatises, for example the prescription of the Malleus Maleficarum in 1487, or even of Rituale Romanum in 1614 according to which the priest performing the exorcism had to ask the devil whether it had possessed the patient due to maleficium and if yes, then the object causing the harm had to be sought out in the house.

84 For a summary of these questions see for example Di Nola, 1990, pp. 345–49.

85 See Franz's summary (1909, I. pp. 523–83), together with the non-Christian precursors, furthermore Midelfort, 1992, pp. 105–116. Early Christian baptism as exorcism, Dölger, 1909; and its precedents, Böcher, 1970.

86 Besides Franz's above mentioned work see in connection with this my article on healing benedictions, and the references published there (Pócs, 1984).

87 For example it was a service provided by South Tirolian Dominican monks, I thank Leander Petzoldt for the information; Michele Risso et al (1972, p. 160) give data on "folk" exorcism practiced by priests in Southern Italy.

88 Petzoldt, 1964–1965, pp. 81–91. See also Brown, 1993, Chapter 6 on the Late Antique early Medieval evolution of pilgrimage sites: possessed people seeking a cure were part of the everyday life of holy sites.

89 In Italy, Burke, 1978, pp. 211–15; in 1724 among the Basque, Christian, 1972, pp. 196–97.

90 On Hungarian holy sites, see for example Bálint, 1944, pp. 117–18; on Austrian, German territories, Sebald, 1984, p. 134; Petzoldt, 1964–1965, pp. 89–93.

91 Among Roman Catholics only priests who had a permit from the bishop can perform it (Rodewyk, 1963, p. 67). On contemporary cases, see for example Schöck, 1978, pp. 247–53; there are many examples in Rodewyk op.cit.

92 I have collected many data for this in Csík; see also from Tordatúr, Csőgör, 1998, p. 103; or see the Greek legends published by Petzoldt (1964–1965, pp. 88–89) about Romanian priests curing possessed people.

93 See for example Evans-Wentz's (1966, pp. 271–72) Irish examples, or Bogdan-Bijelić, 1908, p. 307; I also collected data on this question at Csíkkarcfalva.

94 Collected by Kinga Jankus and Éva Pócs at Csíkkarcfalva and Csíkjenőfalva; Keszeg, 1999, p. 330. French, English, Irish examples Schmitt, 1994, pp. 156–57; Thomas, 1971, p. 570; Brown, 1979, p. 54; Evans-Wentz, 1966, p. 267.

95 Response given to Questionnaire 9 of the Hungarian Folk Belief Topography at Polgár, Heves county (in the Folk Belief Archives).

96 As Benz puts it: "higher force" (Benz, 1972, p. 125).

97 Limbacher, 1994; collected by Éva Pócs at Csíkkarcfalva and Csíkjenőfalva; Petzoldt (1964–1965) draws a similar picture in his summary of Central European legends about the possessed visiting pilgrimage sites, priests or *kalugers*.

98 See for example the cases of incubatio in the Asklepios temple of Epidaurus (Kee, 1983, Chapter III. "Asklepios the Healer").

99 See for example Dinzelbacher, 1995; Burke, 1978; Beyer, 1966.

100 Delcambre, 1951. See also Bouteiller's summary (1950, pp. 201–235), or the case of Catherina Fagenberg, Edsman, 1967.
101 An'ickov, 1914, pp. 256–85; Schrader, 1911, p. 816 and the sources published by him.
102 Moszyński, 1939, p. 365; An'ickov op. cit. pp. 256–85.
103 Sluhovsky, 1999. Ernst Benz (1972, p. 125) also uses a more general category, that of *being carried away (Ergriffenheit)*, which applies equally to the concepts of *unio mystica* and *circumsessio, possessio*, it is a religious experience, the passive experience of a power coming from above/outside.
104 Blum–Blum, 1965, pp. 52–54 and Benovska-Săbkova personal communication about epileptics as divinely possesed seers, holy men—with regard to the same people as possessed by the devil, I mentioned some Transylvanian and Romanian data above.
105 Indian, Muslim, Jewish and Christian saints alike rose up, flew (Eliade, 1999, p. 152; Dodds, 1971, pp. 232–33).
106 Edsman, 1967; Martino, 1948, Chapter 5.
107 For example Old English, Glosecki, 1989, pp. 72, 103; Finnish, Siikala, 1990; Bulgarian, fairy wizards cure the illnesses caused by possession by fairies; I thank Ivanicka Georgieva for calling my attention to this, see also Georgieva, 1983, IV. black and white table.
108 See Pócs, 1999, pp. 132–37; Sebald, 1984; Meyer-Matheis, 1974; Buchholz, 1986.
109 Cf. for example Diószegi's (1958, pp. 342–95) interpretation of the *táltos* spirit battle.
110 The most comprehensive summary encompassing all the cults, Antoniievich, 1990. Some other important descriptions, or analyses with further literature, Arnaudov, 1917, pp. 50–58; Marinov, 1914; Calverley, 1946; Kligman, 1981; Riznić, 1890, pp. 115–16, 145–48; Majzner, 1921, pp. 226–57; Küppers, 1954, pp. 212–24; Zechevich, 1978; Scharankov, 1980; Danforth, 1985; Puchner, 1981; Pócs, 1989, pp. 47–53; Jung, 1998; Grynaeus, 2000.
111 With the exception of Danforth op.cit., for whom this is a central issue.
112 See for example Zechevich, 1978; Bandich, 1977; however, Károly Jung (1998) does not consider the rusalia rites to belong to the category of shamanism. Closs creates a mongrel category: he calls the rusalia rites and their relatives "Besessenheitschamanismus," Closs, 1971, pp. 11–12.

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PART II

CONTACTS WITH THE OTHER WORLD

HOW WALDENSIANS BECAME WITCHES: HERETICS AND THEIR JOURNEY TO THE OTHER WORLD[1]

WOLFGANG BEHRINGER

The question how the Waldensians became witches has for long interested scholars. Although it did not play a prominent part in the historiography of Waldensian heresy (Döllinger, 1890; Grundmann, 1935; Leff, 1967; Molnar, 1993; Lambert, 1977; Merlo, 1984; Erbstösser, 1984; Audisio, 1989), historians of witchcraft have shown a long standing interest in the subject. The leading scholar of the "rationalist school," the liberal historian and archivist of the municipal archive of Köln, Joseph Hansen (1862–1943),[2] has promoted the idea that Waldensian backwoodsmen and -women had been forced into confessions of witchcraft by the intellectual and physical constraints exercised by the Inquisition (Hansen, 1900). Thus Hansen could be interpreted as a precursor of the "labeling theory" (Becker, 1973), since—according to his theory—the Waldensian heretics were simply labeled: by the "populace" as sodomites,[3] and by Catholic theologians as witches, without themselves giving their accusers any reasons to do so. Hansen's explanation is still widely accepted, for instance—with some modifications—by recent publications, including Norman Cohn, William Monter and Andreas Blauert (Cohn, 1975, pp. 32–59, 225–55; Monter, 1976, pp. 19–24; 1994, pp. 47–58; Blauert, 1989, pp. 26–30).

This theory, however, remains unsatisfactory since it cannot explain why Waldensians, who could have been burnt as heretics anyway, should in addition have been labeled as sorcerers with the specific ability of flying in the air. Attempts to explain the equation of Waldensians and witches with an interior logic cannot be derived from the range of absurd interpretations within the so-called

romantic approach in the historiography of witchcraft (Monter, 1971–72, pp. 435–53). And when Carlo Ginzburg opened new dimensions in the interpretation of the witches' Sabbath with the emphasis on ecstatic experiences, he found no new way to integrate the Waldensians into his concept. As a prelude to the revival of popular myths in his *decifrazione del Sabba* he reconstructed the scapegoating of lepers and Jews in late medieval France to explain why Jewish religious terms like *Synagogue* or *Sabbath* played such a prominent part in the terminology of witchcraft (Ginzburg, 1989; 1990). The terminology has already been discussed by Cohn (1975, pp. 100ff).

Indeed he could point at the bull of Pope Alexander V (ca. 1340–1410, r. 1409–1410), who confirmed to the Inquisitor Ponce Fougeyron in 1409 in form of a rescript, "quod nonnulli christiani et perfidi iudei infra eosdem terminos constituti *novas sectas* et prohibitos ritus eidem fidei repugnantes inveniunt, quos saltem in occulto dogmatizant, docent, praedicant et affirmant" (Pitz, 1988, p. 52). The Jews and Christians in this strange new sect, which operated in the Dauphiné and other parts of the French Alps and in South-Eastern France, were using sorcery, divination, devil worship, etc.[4] The bull was confirmed in 1418 by Pope Martin V (1368–1431, r. 1417–1431) and in 1434 by Pope Eugene IV (ca. 1383–1447, r. 1431–1447) for the same Franciscan inquisitor in the same region (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 16ff).

Within the following five years, however, there occurred a decisive change in the perception of the enigmatic new sect, one is tempted to say with Thomas S. Kuhn, a change of "paradigm" (Kuhn, 1962; 1974, pp. 459–82). In 1437 the same pope issued not an individual rescript, but a general decree to all inquisitors about devil worshippers, who committed "maleficia" by words, touches, or signs (Hansen, 1901a, pp. 17ff). And three years later, a bull "ad perpetua rei memoriam" of the same pope, against the former duke Amadeus VIII of Savoy (1383–1451, r. 1416–1434), elected by the Council of Basel as anti-pope Felix V (r. 1439–1449) (Stutz, 1930, pp. 1–22, 105–120, 189–204, 278–99; Andenmatten–Paravicini Bagliani, 1992), connects this pontificate with all the heresies in his country, devil-worshipping and sorcery, "qui vulgari nomine *stre-*

gule vel *stregones* seu *Waudenses* nuncupantur" (Hansen, 1901a, pp. 18ff; 1901, pp. 408–415).

This—finally—was the name of the new sect. They were neither Christians nor Jews: they were *Waldensian witches*. The papal bull used this terminology for the first time in 1440, explicitly maintaining that it was the popular terminology of a specific region, the *Duchy of Savoy* (Lequin—Mariotte, 1970). That this "label" was not a mere invention, but has been based on something like a subjective perception, and thus "reality," has been demonstrated from trial records. It was exactly this region, including the Swiss dioceses Sion/Sitten and Lausanne, where the term *vauderie* (Waldensianism) for witchcraft was in use early in the fifteenth century (*L'imaginaire du Sabbat*), and predominant throughout the sixteenth century. Already William Monter had recognized: "The lands which used 'heretic' or 'Waldensian' as a synonym for witch after 1425 formed a contiguous geographical zone." And he came to the conclusion: "These conciliarist and Savoyard dioceses were the geographical center of the first popular fusion of heresy and sorcery, which would later be cemented into accepted theory" (de Kerdaniel, 1900, pp. 17–32; Uginet, 1979, pp. 281–89; Monter, 1976, pp. 22ff).

If we leave the level of the official documents and look at the demonological treatises, we can hardly find any connection between Waldensianism and witchcraft before 1435, although of course earlier inquisitors included chapters about sorcery in their inquisitorial handbooks. Bernard Gui (1261–1331) for instance offers a chapter *De sortilegis et divinis et invocatoribus demonum* in his famous *Practica inquisitionis haereticae pravitatis.* In the much larger chapter about the Waldensian heresy, however, he does not mention magical rituals or spiritual fantasies at all. An exception was of course devil worship, and the devil was adored in a rather curious way: in the form of an animal, especially a cat (Gui, 1926–1927. Quoted from: Gui, 1969, p. 392). This form of *latria* had assumed such importance that it generated the very term for heretics in several languages, for instance the German word *Ketzer* (cat = Katze) as well as the Italian *Gazzari* (cat = gatto). Sorcery, however, although potentially implying devil-worship since Augustine,

was still lacking this detail in the Spanish Dominican inquisitor Nicolas Eymeric's (1320–1399) influential *Directorium inquisitorum* of 1376 (Baroja, 1961 [1967], p. 117f). As far as we know, it was not until the 1430s that the adoration of the devil in the form of an animal was transferred to the "new sect" of the witches.

The construction of connections between Waldensianism and witchcraft on the level of learned demonology obviously starts with the treatise *Errores Gazariorum*,[5] presumably written by an inquisitor around 1435 in the duchy of Savoy, who gave the first elaborated description of a witches' Sabbath. The term *Gazzari* was a synonym for Waldensianism here.[6] This can be proved from late fourteenth century Savoyard heresy–trials in Pinerolo, a small town in the Piemontese mountains, where the Dominican inquisitor Antonio di Settimo forced the Waldensian believer Antonio Galosna into confessions, in which nocturnal gatherings, devil-worship and sorcery played an important role.[7] It has been suggested that George de Saluces (?–1461), bishop of the Savoyard vallée d'Aoste on the Italian side of the Alps between 1433 and 1440, then bishop of Lausanne between 1440 and 1461, had played an important role in transplanting the ideas of "synagogues" of the *Gazzari* to French-speaking Switzerland, then still part of the duchy of Savoy (Gamba, 1964, pp. 283–311; Duc, 1908, pp. 378ff). But even earlier Dominican inquisitors like Uldry de Torrenté, responsible for the diocese of Lausanne (ca. 1420–1445) had preferred the term *Vaudois* during their inquisition campaigns, at least since early in the 1430s (Andenmatten–Utz-Tremp, 1992). And maybe the soil for the fusion of witchcraft and Waldensianism had been prepared already by the Dominican preacher Vincent Ferrer (ca. 1350–1419, canonized in 1458), whose apocalyptical sermons between 1399 and 1409 had excited exactly the region where the fusion has taken place, the Piedmont, Lombardy, Savoy, the Dauphiné, and parts of Switzerland, including Lausanne, Geneva and Freiburg/Fribourg (Paravy, 1985–86, pp. 143–55; Paravy, 1993, pp. 343–54).

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The adoration of the devil in form of a cat, in a Grenoble manuscript of Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des Dames.*[8]

As in later descriptions of the witches' Sabbath, devil-worship and sexual orgies at the "synagogues" played a prominent role (Bullough, 1982, pp. 206–217; Ferreiro, 1998). This is not surprising, since Bernard Gui had already treated these deviations as necessary ingredients for Waldensianism (Gui, 1991, p. 392). The new and decisive requirement, however, was the heretic's ability to fly through the air (".. qui scopam vel baculum equitare probantur"). Martine Ostorero relates this idea to a specific inquisitorial trial, mentioned only in the Basel manuscript of the *Errores Gazariorum*. This trial had been conducted by Uldry de Torrenté at Vevey in 1438 against Aymonet Maugetaz, and its records have survived in the Archives Cantonales Vaudoises (Ostorero, 1999, pp. 322, 339–53, esp. pp. 348–51). But it seems rather unlikely that the original fusion had taken place exactly during this trial, since the idea of night-flying female *streghe* had certainly been a traditional ingredient of alpine, or maybe European popular belief.

This can be demonstrated from early fifteenth century demonology. While the inquisitors in the diocese of Lausanne imagined witchcraft as the modernized version of Waldensianism ("modernorum hereticorum Waldensium") (Ostorero, 1995, pp. 174 and 274), other authors, like Alphonsus Tostatus (ca. 1400–1455), were already suggesting that the majority of the new sect were women, whom he labeled with a popular Spanish term as *bruxas* (Alphonsus Tostatus, 1901, pp. 105–109). And during the same years the local Swiss term *Hexen*—what the Italians called *streghe*—rose to prominence in German speaking areas (Franck, 1901, pp. 614–70). Although it was not yet implied in the contemporary papal bulls, nor in the first treatises about the new sect, the members of the new sect tended to be portrayed as predominantly female. And the illustrator of one manuscript felt clearly attracted by this interpretation of Waldensianism. He sketched witches riding through the air on sticks and broomsticks, and although these witches could well have been called *streghe* with the traditional term for night-

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Flying witches, called *vaudoises*, in a Paris manuscript of Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des Dames*, ca. 1451.[9]

flying witches in Italy, *Hexen* in Switzerland, or *bruxas* in Spain, the painter decided to call them *vaudoises*.[10]

Obviously this is the earliest iconographical fusion between witchcraft and Waldensianism. But its interpretation is far from being clear. This is not only due to the fact that the illustrator is unidentifiable (Reynaud, 1993, pp. 101ff; Ostorero and Schmitt, 1999, fr. 12476, f. 105v, pp. 501–508), that the iconography of late medieval Waldensianism seems to be yet unexplored, but also, because the iconography of medieval witchcraft is the subject of controversy. Frescoes of stick—or animal-riding female beings, human or demonic, are for instance represented on Danish church walls. But although two frescoes in the cathedral of Schleswig have been dated into the late thirteenth century (Troeschler, 1952, p. 27; Davidson, 1987; Castelli, 1993, pp. 30–34), after an analysis of seventeen Danish churches Jens Johansen considered it more probable to see these kinds of paintings in the context of fifteenth century preaching campaigns, most likely after or from the 1450s, and commissioned by the bishops for didactic purposes (Johansen, 1990, pp. 217–40). Similar observations have been made for Slovenia, where wall paintings started during the same decade (Rajšp, 1994, pp. 51–66). In Denmark, however, there is evidence for an older tradition of perceiving witches in this way, for instance in an admonition by Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073–1085) to King Harald (r. 1076–1080) in 1080, and obviously we cannot exclude the possibility of the existence of such frescoes before 1450 (Johansen, 1990, p. 219).

These older paintings, however, are interpreted as representations of the female companions of the pagan goddesses Diana or Holda, mentioned in the famous *Canon Episcopi* (Regino of Prüm, 1964, part II, ccclxiv), which defined night-riding as an illusion. By excluding any possibility of interpreting nocturnal flights as real, this paragraph, later included in the Canon Law, had provided for centuries a firewall against popular fantasies, and finally an obstacle to the new ideas of witchcraft (Tschacher, 1999, pp. 225–76). The stick-riding *vaudoises* in the Paris manuscript have been seen as the first representations of the "new witches" attending the Sabbath, and therefore—of course—as an implicit comment on the

Canon Episcopi. And although both the accuser and the defender of the women in Martin Le Franc's poem *Le Champion des Dames* (Barbey and Le Franc, 1985) are discussing female sorcerers, the discussion is based on treatises like the *Errores Gazariorum, seu illorum qui scopam vel baculum equitare probantur*. There Waldensian witches are explicitly thought to be riding on sticks and animals, not as an illusion, but in reality, to real nocturnal gatherings. And the illustrator's marginalia simply echo these ideas (Ostorero and Schmitt, 1999, p. 502).

Not only the *Errores Gazariorum*, but a cluster of five lengthy accounts on the new sect of witches, written between 1430 and 1440,[11] were provoked by the large persecutions in the northern parts of the duchy of Savoy, the neighbouring Dauphiné, and some southern valleys of Switzerland outside Savoy, or the western fringes of today's Switzerland. As far as we can see, these persecutions, with several hundred of victims in total, count among the worst excesses of violence in the European history. These persecutions have not yet been explored systematically, and this is even more regrettable, as they probably played a major role in our story. At least in some places they had obviously started with hunting Waldensians, and ended up with burning witches. In the Habsburg town Freiburg/Fribourg for instance, Waldensians were persecuted in 1399 and again in 1430, with some of the accused being involved in both trials. During the latter trial, however, Waldensianism began to be identified with magic, their *congregatio* was labeled as "synagogue," like in the contemporary witch trials, and the punishment was considerably more severe than a generation earlier (Ochsenbein, 1881; Fiertz, 1943, pp. 340–57; Blauert, 1989, p. 40f).

The interpretation of the large-scale persecution around 1430, however, remained contradictory among contemporaries. The earliest report, written around 1431 by an outsider, the Lucerne chronicler Johann Fründ (ca. 1400–1469) (Kind, 1875), states explicitly that the new heresy of witchcraft, *die ketzerye der hexsen*, had emerged *des ersten under den Walchen und darnach under den Tütschen,* first among the French, afterwards among the Germans. Obviously by this time and in this specific region the German term "Hexen" for the new crime had been coined, unknown before

outside the region. After the pact with the devil the heretical witches could fly through the air and visit the wine cellars, banquetting and feasting whenever they wished, without loss of wine and transforming themselves into animals. In the court of Wallis/Valais since 1428 more than hundred men and women were burnt within 18 months, and even more on the other side of the mountain, where the persecution had begun (Hansen, 1901a, p. 533f; *L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, pp. 23–98).

The other side of the mountain, the Alps of Wallis, was the Aosta valley in the duchy of Savoy, where Ponce Fougeyron had been working as an inquisitor since 1434, and where these witches—like in the valleys of the Piedmont—were called *Gazzari*: the Waldensians. All these valleys belonged to the dukes of Savoy, whose territories stretched from the shores of the Mediterranean, including Nice, northwards to Torino (Turin), Chambéry, Geneva and Lausanne. Savoy in these decades was not a remote country, but an expansive, dynamic "modern" territorial state with an increasing tendency to bureaucratic rule under duke Amadeus VIII, who became the (anti-) pope of the Council of Basel (Blauert, 1989, p. 29f; Chiffoleau, 1992, pp. 19–49). And it is worth considering the fact that in his *Statuta Sabaudiae* of 1430, the major legislative work of this new state, sorcery and heresy were already mentioned together in a paragraph *De hereticis et sortilegis*, although they were still treated separately.[12] This must have changed within only a few years. The above mentioned treatise *Errores Gazariorum* was written around 1435, and enlarged in 1437, on both occasions in the duchy of Savoy, during the early years of the regency of duke Louis of Savoy (1402–1465, r. 1434/1440–1465) (*L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, pp. 267–354).

As in the political sphere, Savoy was competing in the legal sphere with the neighbouring Dauphiné, where synchronically large witch hunts first took place. As in the Piedmont, in the Dauphiné a permanent crusade against Waldensians had been launched in 1384, with devastating effects on the Waldensian villages, for instance in the Val Cluson, which lost half of its population within fifty years (Marx, 1914; Gonnet and Molnar, 1974, pp. 138ff). Like in Aosta, the Franciscans were leading the mission against the here-

tics, with a monastery in Briançon since 1388, but in this principality under French influence in the 1420s secular courts replaced the inquisitors. The chief-prosecutor Claude Tholosan (?–1449) from Briançon was actively conducting witch trials from 1428, he sentenced more than a hundred persons for this new crime, and like his Savoyard counterparts, he considered it necessary to describe it. The treatise *Ut Magorum et Maleficiorum Errores*, based on his trial records, describes the "synagogues" in detail, and mentions also that the members of the sect thought that they were riding through the air on sticks and animals. Tholosan, however, felt not inclined to abandon the *Canon Episcopi*, and he never called the new witches "Waldensians." Rather he used the local term *facturiers*, and the trial records contain the exotic title *Liber fachurerierorum*, still using a male term for the new heretics, although this judge has been burning women as well as men (Paravy, 1979, pp. 322–79; 1990, pp. 118–42). But where had the new sect come from? According to Tholosan, from Lombardy, and before and originally, under the pretext of being healers, from Lyon. Here they are again, even if not explicitly: the "Poor of Lyon," the Waldensians (Tholosan, 1990, pp. 143–59, esp. p. 146, paragraph 10).

It was at the Council of Basel (1431–1449) that the new view of the Waldensians spread, or more likely, was actively propagated (Monter, 1976, p. 21; Blauert, 1989, p. 30f). If we put the things in chronological order: the large-scale persecutions in Savoy, the Dauphiné, the Valais, the Vaud, and some surrounding areas, possibly triggered by a devastating mortality crisis in 1427 (Gamba, 1964, pp. 287ff), prepared the ground for the imagination of a new crime exactly during the early years of the Council, a major event of Western Christianity. Although much has been written about this council as a market-place of opinions (Müller, 1982, pp. 140–70; Helmrath, 1987), also in respect to the condemnation of Joan of Arc (ca. 1410–1431), whose story—with fairy trees, magic rituals, healing, inner voices, divination and ecstatic experiences—resembles in many respects witches' trial records, we do not know much about the specific dicussions of the new crime. Surely the curial faction tried to accuse the counciliarist Savoyards of witchcraft, as Hansen and Monter have stated. And therefore the Savoyard mélange of

witchcraft and Waldensianism, promoted by local Franciscans,[13] and Dominican inquisitors alike, surfaced.

The reaction, however, was in no way uniform. The Swiss chronicler Fründ, as we have seen already, rejected "Waldensianism" as an appropriate label for the new sect, and preferred the local German Swiss term *Hexen*, or the latin term *sortilegi*. The Dauphinois chief-prosecutor Tholosan refused to mix Waldensianism and witchcraft too, and resorted to the local French term *faicturier/faicturières* (Paravy, 1979, pp. 322–79; *L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, pp. 355–438). At the council one of the most prominent participants followed this line: the Dominican theologian Johannes Nider (ca. 1385–1438), who had opened the council in 1431. This professor from the university of Vienna, a famous scholar and preacher, who reformed the convent at Basel and served there as a prior between 1429 and 1436, was deeply involved in the council business (Egger, 1991; Tschacher, 1998; Chène, 1999). Doubtlessly he was well informed about all important news and he included a long chapter about witchcraft in his *Formicarius* (lib. 5), a text, which turned out to be the most influential of the early treatises, with dozens of surviving manuscripts and hundreds of early prints. One of his informants was Nicholaus of Landau, who as prior of the Dominican convent at Berne had been involved in inquisitorial trials against Waldensians in 1399. But although Nider was taking most of his examples from trials in the diocese of Lausanne, chiefly from a secular judge called "Petrus," a Bernese citizen who served as an administrator of a Bernese mountain valley (Simmental), and from the unknown Dominican inquisitor of the diocese of Autun, he does not mention Waldensianism in the context of witchcraft, and constantly uses the traditional Latin term *maleficus*.[14]

The perspective changes decisively as soon as we return to the influential Savoyard milieu, from whence the inquisitor's treatise *Errores Gazariorum* had emerged. Both surviving manuscripts (Basel and Rome) have been found in files with texts related to the Council of Basel, and the latter (Basel) version has been amplified by examples from the inquisitors of Lausanne (*L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, pp. 269–76). Martin Le Franc (ca. 1410–1461), the secretary of the Savoyard anti-pope Felix V, called the witches bluntly *voul-*

droises. And although his accounts of the new crime were encapsulated in dialogues of his lengthy poem *Le Champion des Dames*, the allusions to witchcraft should be taken seriously. It hints directly at the Valpute, a dauphinois valley formerly known as Valluise, but renamed because of its notorious fame as a Waldensian valley. In the Valpute, Waldensianism and witchcraft merged, and at least five executions between 1415 and 1428 could be related to witchcraft (Blanc, Dang and Ostorero, 1999, p. 487). Le Franc had written his contribution to the "Querelles des Femmes" at the beginning of the Savoyard (anti-) pontificate, probably in the very year 1440, when the Roman pope Eugene IV unleashed his bull against his opponent, mentioning the new sect of "*stregule* vel *stregones* seu *Waudenses*" in his territory (Hansen, 1901a, pp. 408–15; 1901b, p. 18f). And as we have seen, it was this latest of our five early texts about the witches' Sabbath, which provided the first iconographic representation of Waldensian witchcraft (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 99–104; *L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, pp. 439–508).

If we check further theologians of the Council of Basel, the result is surprising: Despite many reflections about the new sort of witches, and much debate about the validity of the *Canon Episcopi*, only few authors accepted the equation of witchcraft and Waldensianism. Among them was the Franciscan inquisitor Ponce Fougeyron, who can be connected with the author of the *Errores Gazariorum*, or might even be the author himself.[15] But famous theologians like Nicolaus Cusanus (1401–1464) rejected the idea of a new sect altogether.[16] Others like Felix Hämmerlin or Malleolus (1389–1460) from Zürich, at least maintained the authority of the *Canon Episcopi* (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 109–112). This is true also for the famous Dominican cardinal Johannes a Turrecremata (1388–1468) (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 112–18), or the French Dominican inquisitors Johannes Vineti (ca. 1400–ca. 1475) and Nicholaus Jacquier (ca. 1400–1472). Although the latter even participated in the famous persecution of the "*Vauderie*" at Arras and was convinced of the existence of a new sect of witches, he prefers to call them *haeretici fascinarii* (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 124–30; 133–45). Certainly the use of the term "*Vaudois*" was confusing to contemporaries. The chronicler Enguerrand de Monstrelet mentions explicitly that he

could not explain why these witches were called *Vaudois* now. Is it likely that he was unaware of the fact that pope Eugene IV had called them so in a bull some years ago, or was this rather a rhetoric question to distance himself from an unwelcome interpretation (Hansen, 1901a, p. 408)?

During one generation, the years between 1430 and 1460, there was a danger of a more general fusion of witchcraft and Waldensianism in French-speaking countries, from Savoy to the Netherlands. Joining the Savoyard paradigm, a whole series of trials in eastern Switzerland (Blauert, 1989, pp. 36–50) and France against Waldensian witches took place, with the scandalous trial against Guillaume Adeline (?–1457) at Evreux (Normandy) in 1453 as an outstanding example. Even this distinguished theologian had confessed under torture that he had flown on a broomstick to the "synagogue" of the "Waldensians," where he had adored a he-goat (Friedrich, 1898; Cohn, 1975, p. 230). It was in the Burgundy of duke Philip III (1396–1467, r. 1419–1467), at Arras between 1459 and 1461, that the campaign against the *Vauderie* reached its climax (Singer, 1975; Gonnet, 1982). At Arras former participants of the Council of Basel tried to frame their experiences into demonological theory. An anonymously written *Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum*, an apology of the persecution from May 1460, simply equates witchcraft and Waldensiansm without further explanation, and blames the *Valdenses* for all the *maleficia* of the witches.[17] Another participant of the Council of Basel, Johannes Tinctoris/Jean Taincture (ca. 1400–1469) from Tournai, later a professor at the University of Cologne, and after retirement spending his days as a canon at Tournai, summed up the new perception of the heresy in his sermon *De secta Vaudensium*. For him the sect was more terrible than paganism, Islamic unbelief or even heresy, and implied apostasy, the destruction of Christianity and the end of the world. Several copies of his sermon are available in French, Belgian, and German libraries, and there is even a contemporary translation into the vernacular French, which was very unusual for contemporary demonological treatises. As early as 1477 this *Le traité de Vauderie* was printed in Bruges (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 184–88). One of the manuscripts is illustrated with the famous early

representations of the witches' Sabbath, where men and women are flying through the air, supported by devilish monsters.[18]

For Tinctoris the "secta dampnatissima et perniciosissima, quam Vaudensium vocant" represented the utmost danger for Christianity, and obviously it was the authority of this distinguished theologian, which helped to establish the new perspective for some years. And there is another echo of the events at Arras, represented by a manuscript *La Vauderye de Lyonois en brief*, describing the *dyabolica synagoga* of the witches in another part of France with the same language. Ironically enough, one of the last treatises on Waldensian witches was dedicated to the very region, where the Waldensians, the *Pauperes Lugdunenses*, have originated some centuries earlier (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 188–95; Bibl. Nationale, Ms. lat. 3446, fol. 58–62). With a similar treatise on *Scobaces*, the night-flying *Vaudois*, *De haeresi Valdensium seu pauperum de Lugduno*, written by an anonymus Carthusian in 1485, this genre of demonological literature seems to have ended, just one year before the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hansen, 1901b, 447).

Historians of Waldensianism, as mentioned before, seem to be startled by these events and related demonological texts. Audisio categorically claims concerning Waldensian witches: "The followers of Waldes, the Poor of Lyon, have nothing to do with it" (Audisio, 1989. p. 94). But it should be appropriate to ask, if there was anything inherent in Waldensianism, which could have stimulated or legitimized its identification with witchcraft. Nocturnal or secret gatherings with non-catholic rites were certainly one *tertium comparationis*, and already the Cathars had been labeled as devil-worshipers, the devil repeatedly appearing in the form of a cat, a frog, or a goat, as many historians of heresy have emphasized. Here is obviously the place of the "Sabbath" or of the "synagogue," which were metaphorically applied to Waldensian meetings. Secrecy was in itself suspicious, as can be seen from medieval laws, but it was obviously not enough to provoke papal inquisitors to invent a new crime. The mere reproach of secrecy could also be applied to rebellious peasants, secret lovers, or robber gangs. On the other hand it seems unlikely that popular magic in itself should have challenged the machinery of suppression. These rites were

well-known, they could be found everywhere in Europe, they had been classified in the common penitentiaries and should not have surprised any theologian anywhere in Europe (Schmitz, 1898). Even if the maleficium was approximated to devil-worship, like in Gui's *Practica inquisitionis*, it was still kept separate from traditional heresies (Gui, 1926–27, 1969). One of the most terrible persecutors of the Waldensians in Germany, Bohemia, Austria and Hungary, the Celestinian monk and inquisitor Peter Zwicker (?–1403), in his treatise *Cum dormirent homines* of 1395, though pointing to the Waldensians' devil-worship, explicitly admits that they are not "Luciferans," and does not confuse Waldensianism with witchcraft (Biller, 1989, pp. 223ff).

Waldensian theology, on the other hand, with its biblicism and anti-papalism, its anti-feudalism, anti-capitalism, and pacifism, bears no resemblance to witchcraft. On the contrary: There are many examples that the *pauperes Christi* denied the miracles of the saints, the power of relics, the efficacy of pilgrimages and of offerings, and that they fought actively against superstition (Audisio, 1989/1996, pp. 72ff). As a movement opposing the feudal Roman church, trying to revive the apostolic spirit of the early Christians, and as a persecuted minority, the Waldensians gained the sympathy of many researchers, and maybe also served as a screen for their projections for many individual reasons. And this is obviously why historians of Waldensianism have not yet made many useful contribution to our discussion. In some cases they have tried to conceal the more extravagant roots of Waldensianism, who are normally portrayed as pure evangelical believers. Waldensians seem to be welcome as "enlightened" precursors of the Reformation, but certainly not as supporters of exotic folk-beliefs, and even less as spearheads of ecstatic cults (Ochsenbein, 1881; Cameron, 1984; Blauert, 1989, pp. 38ff, has already critizised this attitude).

But can we be so sure about the reality of the practical religious life of the Waldensians? The majority of this religious group, as in

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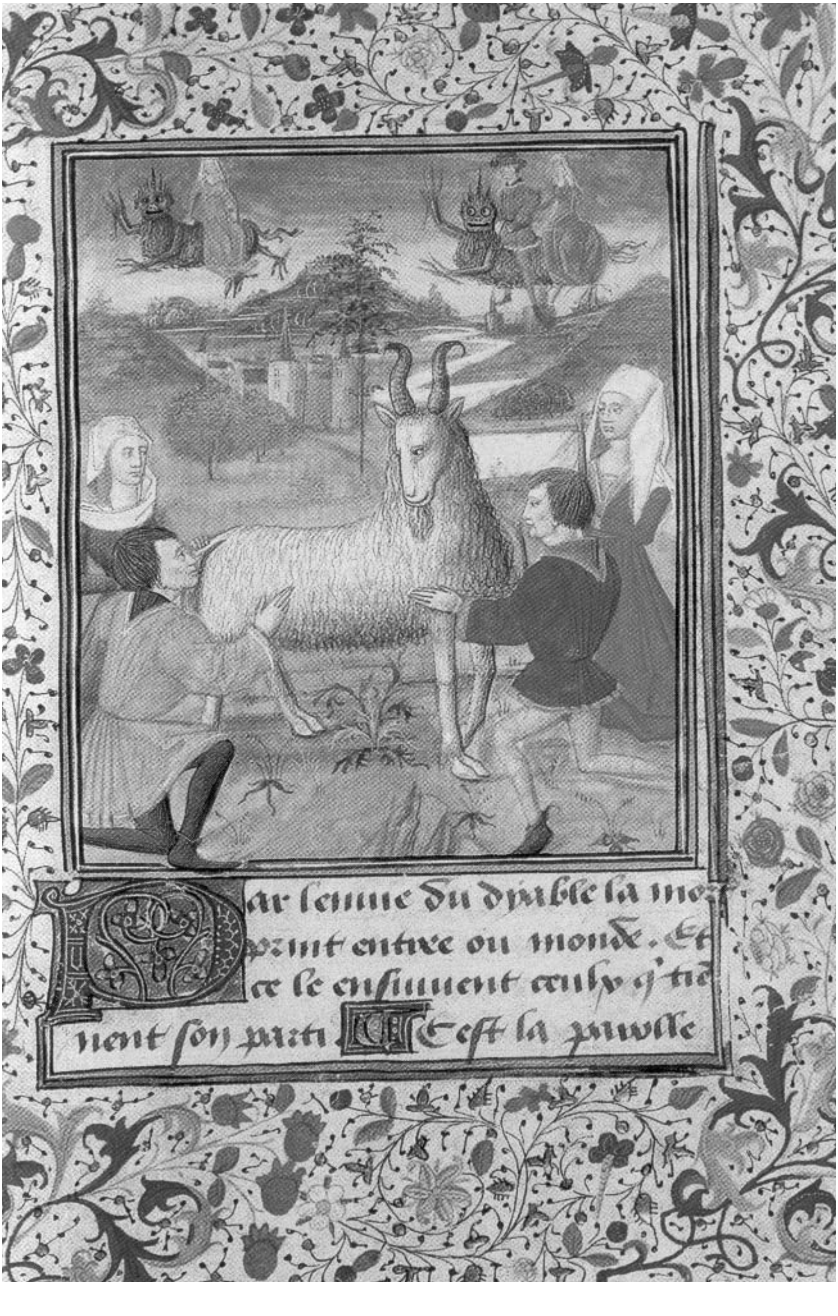
Waldensians, transported through the air by demons. Johannes Tinctoris, "*Tractatus de secta Vaudensium*," ca 1460.[19]



any mass movement, were the lower orders, and due to the persecution, resulting into the so-called "marginalisation of Waldensianism," it was particularly strong among peasants and herdsmen, with a relatively high percentage of mountain farmers and shepherds (Cohn, 1975, p. 38; Erbstösser, 1984, pp. 207ff; Audisio, 1989/1996, p. 51). Is it then likely that the average *credentes* were early rationalists, or puritans, or that they were less superstitious than their catholic neighbours? Even in Swiss towns like Bern or Fribourg suspicions of sorcery played an important role in trials against Waldensians (examples in: Blauert, 1989, pp. 41ff). And how about the peasants in the high Alpine valleys of the Piedmont, the Dauphiné, the Valais, or the Pays de Vaud? These are exactly the places where preachers of the high and late Middle Ages, reformers of the sixteenth century, rationalists of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, as well as folklorists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would expect the most exotic forms of folk-beliefs. And there is certainly historical evidence to support this stereotypical assumption (Gabotto, 1907; Reymond, 1908, pp. 1–14; Bertrand, 1920–21, pp. 151–94; Merlo, 1977, pp. 63–74, 114–20; Centini, 1995). Although Paravy painstakingly tries to keep witchcraft and Waldensianism separate, and has treated the two subjects in subseqent chapters, obviously avoiding any interrelations, trials for magic and sorcery were held in the Waldensian valleys of the Dauphiné.[20] From the Cathar village of Montaillou in the Pyrenees we hear about love magic, harmful magic, the belief in spirits, and the charming story of a soul leaving the body in the form of a snake, walking over a silvery bridge and visiting a castle in a mountain. And magic and divination were not only practiced by the *credentes*, mountain farmers, or herdsmen, but also by the noblewoman Béatrice de Planissoles, and even her spiritual leaders in heresy, for instance Guillaume Bélibaste (?–1321).[21]

To come to the core of our argument: Is it not well worth considering anew the role of the spiritual leaders of the Waldensians? The "brothers," who like the Cathar *perfecti* managed to establish a peculiar spiritual élite outside the Latin Church. What was their position within a peasant society? These brethren or *barbes* had been trained by other brethren, and despite all attempts to recon-

struct their education and the customs of their secret society we do not know very much about it (Audisio, 1989/1996, pp. 134–73). What we certainly know is that they had to be accepted voluntarily by their followers, their communities. This implied charismatic abilities, which had to meet the specific spiritual demands of their followers. But what could the brethren offer, which the Catholic priests could not? My suggestion is that at least some of them must have found a peculiar way to demonstrate their spiritual superiority. What I am speaking of are the astonishingly numerous examples of contacts of Waldensian brethren with the "other world." Maybe evangelically trained Waldensian theologians rejected the idea of ecstasies, like many of their Catholic counterparts, but spiritual contacts to the other world, to the Paradise, to prophets, to angels, or God himself, at least in some areas—as we shall see—were thought to be a specifically Waldensian affair. And maybe already Bernard Gui was hinting at this in his chapter on Waldensianism, when he reported, that the perfect Waldensians, the Waldensians "in the proper sense of the word," claimed to have these abilities: "They have, they say, the same sort of power from God as had the holy apostles" (Gui, 1969, p. 397). We should take this seriously, and reconsider what it must have meant within a traditional society, when the Waldensians held the opinion that the brothers really "were good men, just and holy" (Gui, 1969, p. 403).

The Swiss historian of Waldensianism, Kathrin Utz-Tremp (1991, pp. 57–85; 1999; 2000), not only provides a profound criticism of Le Roy Ladurie's interpretation of the heretics' spiritual world,[22] but explores in her important essay "Waldensians and revenants" the example of Arnauld Gélis who got into contact with the deceased around 1312, with revenants, and could finally see the dead not only in his dreams, but while he was awake. As his inquisitor Jacques Fournier, later pope Benedict XII (1285–1342, r. 1334–1342), reported, Gélis served as a courier for the deceased, and he also received orders from the living before he went to the realm of the dead. This Waldensian worked as a communicator between the living and the dead, and he was well-known for his abilities in the region, serving as a medium to clients who wanted to get into contact with the other world. His spiritual qualities thus by-passed by

far those of Catholic priests and met the demands of the common people in a very peculiar way (Utz-Tremp, 1994, pp. 125–34).

The belief in revenants was of course widespread and in no way peculiar to Waldensianism (Lecouteux, 1986). As we can see, however, it was also believed among the heretics, and even more, it was believed that it was possible to visit the deceased, and to ask them about the past and about future developments. And Gélis was not the only Waldensian with these abilities, he was not even the only one within his family. Rather he was continuing the craft of his cousin, and thus we can conclude that this ability was considered to be hereditary within his lineage. As he explained during his trial in March 1320, his cousin had been able to walk with the dead, and sometimes she had gone with them for three or four days. And finally Gélis acquired the same ability. After a while he began to walk—that means: to fly—with the "good women and the souls of the deceased" [cum bonis dominabus seu animabus defunctorum], who visited the cleanest houses, to eat there and to drink good wine in the cellars (Duvernoy, 1965, I, pp. 533–35 /13. 3. 1320/). Here, of course, we are very close to fairy tales in a literal sense, or housemaid's fantasies, as Keith Thomas interpreted it (Thomas, 1971, pp. 713ff). Clearly we are talking about "extravagant" fantasies, but obviously to many contemporaries they did not appear to be foolish. On the contrary, they were treated with utmost seriousness and care, like for instance in the trial against two women in Milan in 1384, and again in 1390, who had claimed to have ecstatic experiences with the "good lady and her folk," and were therefore able to cure and to look into the future (Muraro, 1976). Obviously the belief in fairies was widespread in many parts of Europe, and among all social classes (Pócs, 1989).

To return to Bernard Gui, these kinds of stories were not included in his chapter on the Waldensians, but a few pages later in his chapter about "Sorcerers, Diviners, and Those Who Invoke Demons." Of course he is mentioning here "the vanity of superstitious men, who turn their attention to spirits of evil and the teachings of demons." In the eyes of an inquisitor this was probably much the same as what the brothers did. But in addition the inquisitors were held to ask the suspected persons about "the situation of souls of

the dead; also, forecasts of future events; also, the fairy women, whom they call the 'good folk', and who, they say, roam about at night; also, making incantations or conjuring with incantations using fruits, herbs, girdles, and other materials [...]. Also, [ask about] curing diseases [...]" (Gui, 1991, p. 444).

Most historians of Waldensianism would claim that this has nothing to do with Waldensianism. But the stories of Arnauld Gélis, which can be very well related to both of Bernard Gui's catalogues, are in no way singular. In Austrian trials against the Waldensians stories of this sort emerge almost synchronically during an extensive persecution, launched by the bishop of Passau, Bernard of Prambach (1285–1313), in the last days of his life. With the support of the archbishop of Salzburg, Eberhard II of Ratisbonne (1170–1246, r. 1200–1246) and the Austrian archduke Frederick the Fair (1289–1330, r. 1298–1330), the bishop appointed several inquisitors for his diocese, who continued their inquisition after his death and finally included almost forty towns in Austria in their persecution. One trial in the town of Krems in the years between 1312 and 1315 is especially well documented (MGH SS 9, pp. 825–27; Nickson, 1967, pp. 311–13). And here the inquisitor's protocol summarizes as one of the typical Waldensian errors that two of the brothers had to go to Paradise every year, to receive the power of binding and resolving, which they could afterwards transmit to their followers.[23] Bernard Gui's suggestions of the brethren's powers, which was thought to be derived directly from God, come to our mind. But this was certainly not merely an inquisitor's fantasy, since Audisio and other scholars of Waldensianism have provided lots of examples from trial records.[24] The priestly power of binding and resolving (Mt. 18,18) was central for the brethren's abilities, at least in the eyes of their followers. Many witnesses from all over Europe, and also from fourteenth and fifteenth century Piedmont and Dauphiné, claimed that their masters possessed this particular power (Merlo, 1977, pp. 43f, 48f; Audisio, 1989/1996, p. 148, 169f).

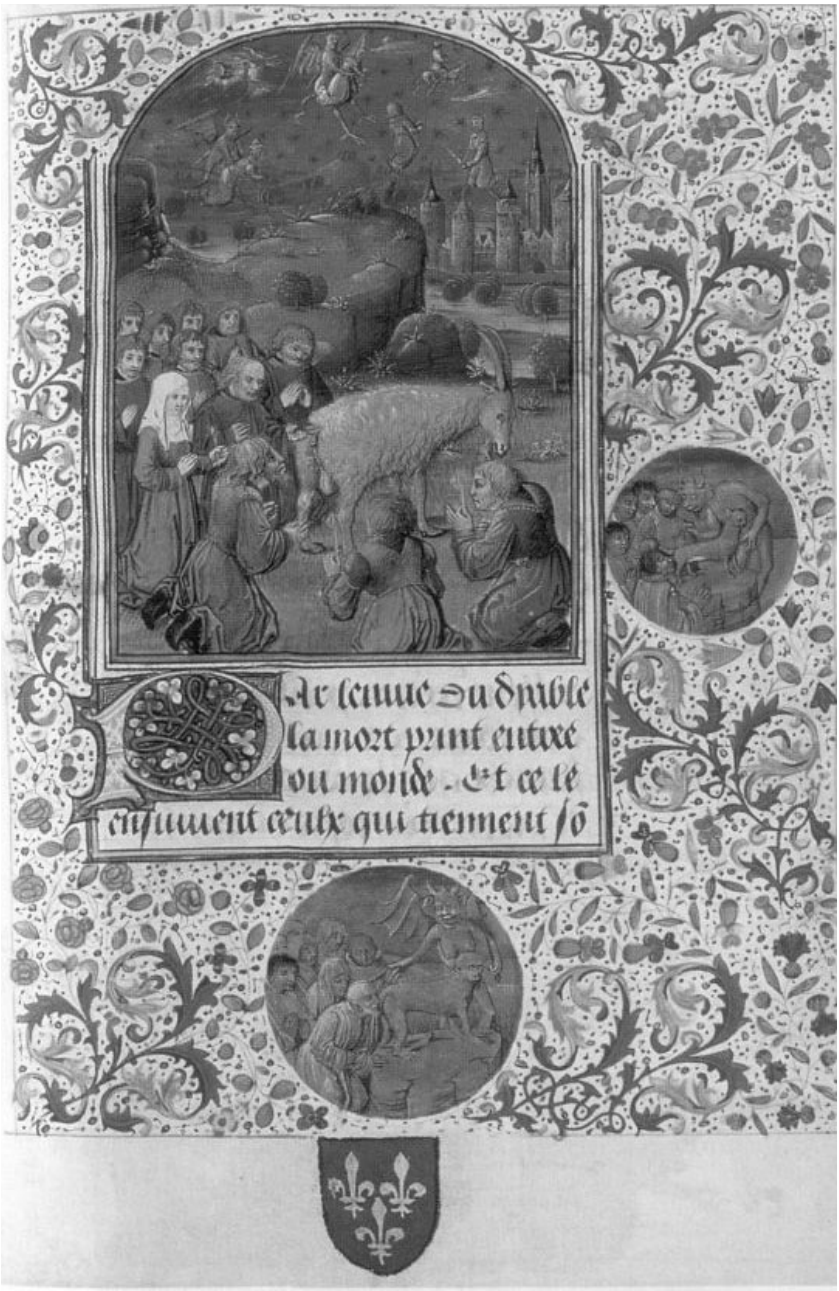
Confessions of other world-experiences of the Waldensian brethren were also found a hundred years later during the extensive inquisition campaigns of Peter Zwicker in Bohemia and Austria in the last years of the fourteenth and the early years of the fif-

teenth centuries (Maleczek, 1986, pp. 31ff). As Richard Kieckhefer has mentioned, in Northern Germany in the late fourteenth century ecstatic experiences were commonly thought to be a Waldensian affair (Kieckhefer, 1979, p. 63). Parts of Zwicker's records in Pomerania and Brandenburg have survived, and they reveal that the Waldensian brethren were thought to make periodic trips to Paradise. Aley [Adelheid?], the wife of Thyde Takken of Bowmgarten (Baumgarten) confessed in March 1394, "that she had heard from a certain woman, that two of their apostolic and heresiarch brethren descended to Hell, and heard the pitiable cries and saw the devils attacking the souls in Hell, saying 'that one was an adulterer, that one a usurer, that one a tavern-haunter', and they designated similarly other sorts of vice-laden souls; and afterwards they came to Paradise and heard the voice of God providing them wisdom and learning, with which they were to instruct the people committed to their care on earth" (Kurze, 1975, pp. 83–87). The Waldensian masters' journey to the other world, Paradise, to receive supernatural powers, authority and wisdom from an angel, or God himself, was even a question of public debate. Some *credentes* assumed, that they had to go there every seven years, others pretended to know that it had to happen more frequently, for instance every year (Audisio, 1989/1996, p. 171).

These kinds of stories sound familiar to historians of witchcraft. Some of the most aggressive witch-hunts in European history have been launched after confessions of witch-doctors with other world experiences, who were themselves regarded as witches by the authorities. One example around 1500 is Hans Tscholi from Kriens, between Luzern and Bern in Switzerland, who had to walk with the souls of the deceased. From their revelations he derived his authority as a witch-doctor. And as in the case of Gélis, Tscholi was not the only member of his family with these kinds of ecstatic

▷

Waldensians, transported through the air by demons, partly in the shapes of animals and broomsticks. In the foreground the adoration of the devil in the shape of a goat. Front page of Johannes Tinctoris, "*Tractatus de secta Vaudensium*," ca. 1470.[25]


Ar leuure du dyable
la mort print entree
ou monde . Et ce le
enfuuent ceulx qui tiennent so

experiences (Hoffmann-Krayer, 1899, pp. 22–40, 81–122, 189–224, 291–329). Another example is Zuanne delle Piatte, a wandering witch-doctor in the Italian Alps, well-known in many villages of the Dolomites, who claimed to visit regularly the *Venusberg*, where the Fairy Queen was living, and whose confessions led to a witch-hunt around Cavalese in the Val di Fiemme/Fleimstal (Bonomo, 1971/1956, pp. 74–84; Dienst, 1988, pp. 249–56). Another example is Diell Breull (?–1632), who visited *Frau Holle* in her mountain castle and was therefore able to foresee the future. His tales caused a large witch-hunt with almost 200 victims within the small Calvinist county of Isenburg-Büdingen as late as 1630 (Niess, 1982). Chonrad Stoeckhlin (1549–1587) fits also in this scheme, a herdsman from Oberstdorf in the German Alps, to whom I have devoted the monograph *Chonrad Stoeckhlin and the Phantoms of the Night* (Behringer, 1994a/1998). All of them were visiting "the other world," and their peculiar position as messengers "between the living and the dead" was obviously the precondition for their ability of healing and making divination (Pócs, 1998).

None of these healers with other world-experiences considered himself a witch, but due to their exotic stories each of them was tortured until they adapted the stories to demonological theory. Stoeckhlin's confessions in 1586 caused the largest witch-hunt within the prince-bishopric of Augsburg, and this impressed the surrounding territories in a way that finally the whole region was affected (Behringer, 1987). Investigating the stories of Chonrad Stoeckhlin about his "*Nachtschar*," which was regularly flying to certain places during the night, observing Hell and Paradise, and his ability to cure and to recognize witchcraft, which he obtained from his spiritual leader, an angel, as he claimed, I found more and more associated stories in neighbouring parts of Austria, but principally in Switzerland, where the vernacular terms *Nachtschar* (phantoms of the night) and *Nachtvolk* (night-folk) were distributed from the German Alps in the North-East to the Swiss Cantons of *Valais* and *Vaud* in the South-West (Luck, 1935; Büchli, 1947, pp. 65–69; Beitl, 1965, pp. 14–21; Guntern, 1978). In part this was caused by the fact that Stoeckhlin's best friends were immigrants from the Little Walser Valley to his home town Oberstdorf in the

German Alps. The Walsers are an Alemannic group, who had migrated southwards to the upper Rhone valley in the early Middle Ages, and had been settled in the Valais (Wallis) for centuries. Due to overpopulation some of them turned northwards in the late Middle Ages, to settle in the Swiss upper Rhine valley, in the canton of Grisons (Graubünden) or as mountain farmers in its side valleys and some high alpine valleys in western Austria (Montafon, Walser Valleys), near the German border (Ilg, 1956; Kreis, 1966).

They brought with them all the strange stories about the phantoms of the night. The stories of herdsmen observing meetings of the good folk, who produced heavenly music, danced in blessed houses, cooked entire cows or oxen, which they restored to life from their skins and bones the next morning, of individuals who were invited to join the *bons hommes* or the good ladies to walk with them, which always means: to fly with them during the night and to obtain superior spiritual qualities, were widespread not only in fairy-tales, but also in late medieval and sixteenth century Swiss sources (Jegerlehner, 1916; Senti, 1974). It is striking to see how far popular beliefs contained ideas about other world journeys, independently of any allusions to witchcraft or Waldensianism. The Lucerne chancellor Renward Cysat (1545–1614), a devout Counter-Reformation Catholic of Milanese ancestry, reports in his chronicles dozens of stories of well-known contemporaries, who were members of the good society. The decisive point seems to me that these examples are not treated like fairy-tales or fables, but as testimonies from reliable individuals, even at the end of the sixteenth century (Cysat, 1969). And it is in no way astonishing that the same subjects had been treated in the witch trials against Waldensians, or witches, or Waldensian witches (Hansen, 1901a, p. 414; Blauert, 1989, pp. 20ff).

Starting my research into the case of Chonrad Stoeckhlin in the German Alps, my investigations have led me directly to the very region where the concept of the witches' Sabbath had emerged, the Swiss Cantons of Wallis/Valais and of Waadtland/*Vaud*—and this name may well have reinforced the use of the term *Vauderie*—and the former duchy of Savoy. At present it seems impossible to assess exactly how far confessions of ecstatic experiences during the per-

secutions of the Waldensians have contributed to the change of paradigm, the fusion of witchcraft and Waldensianism. If so, it must have occurred on the Italian or French side of the linguistic border, German theologians never used the term "Waldensians" for witches. In the French-speaking parts of Switzerland, however, the term *Vaudoises* was used in courts from about 1430, and it persisted around Fribourg until the present (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 414, 546, 556, 569). Since Hansen it has been obvious, that the crusade against the syncretic traditions of a peasant world in Savoy, Piedmont, and the Dauphiné must have decisively contributed to this fusion, even more, since the inquisition was accompanied by propagandistic campaigns of charismatic preachers like the sanctified Vincent Ferrer. But on the other hand it has never been plausibly explained, why Waldensians should have been transformed into witches, while Jews, Cathars, Fraticelli, or other heretics were not. For historians of Waldensianism it remained an enigma, why the witches could be called *Vaudois* (Audisio, 1989/1996, pp. 92ff).

But in a comparative perspective this is in no way astonishing. Obviously the Waldensian brethren, despite lacking any medical training, also worked as doctors and were asked to cure diseases, as is reported for instance from fifteenth century Dauphiné, providing their clients with recipes and herbs, but also using prayers, which might have been understood, or misunderstood, as magical spells. Also, in healing their clients, the *barbes* probably thought to fulfill an evangelical mission (Mt. 10,8) (Biller, 1982, pp. 55–77; Audisio, 1989/1996, pp. 162ff., 166, 172), but in the view of the common people this ability might have been connected with the brethren's reputation of holiness. One of their characteristics was their ascetic life, which exceeded by far the customs of their Catholic counterparts (Biller, 1985, pp. 215–18). And this may have resulted in peculiar forms of veneration, and of expectations: The *barbes* were reported to be *sancti viri*, "holy men." Their "great appearance of holiness" was already mentioned by the Passau Anonymous (Patschowsky and Selge, 1973, p. 73; Passau Anonymous, 1980, p. 152), and the term "holy men" by Bernard Gui, but its usage is confirmed by the Waldensian believers themselves, in trial records from Pomerania, Bohemia, Austria, the Alsace, as well

as in the Piedmont or the Dauphiné (Merlo, 1977, pp. 48ff; Biller, 1985, p. 225f; Audisio, 1989/1996, pp. 146, 169f).

Of course the phenomenon of "living saints" was not uncommon to contemporaries, it was well known in the Roman Church (Brown, 1971; 1980; Weinstein and Bell, 1982), where protagonists like St. Francis advertised the power of Catholicism. On the other hand the phenomenon is not solely a Christian affair, but is well-known in social anthropology (Kiev, 1964; Sterly, 1965; Middleton, 1967; Reid, 1983; Gareis, 1987; Joralemon and Douglas, 1993; Pfleiderer, 1994). And certainly it reminds us of "religious specialists" like Hans Tscholi, Zuanne delle Piatte or Chonrad Stoeckhlin, who were serving their communities as healers, diviners and messengers to the other world. These kinds of superior spiritual qualities are characteristic features of shamanism (Eliade, 1951; 1964; Klaniczay, 1984, pp. 404–22). And although this might have been contrary to the intention of the Gospel, at least some of the brothers were treated as, and seem to have worked as, shamans. Even Audisio points to the fact, that some narratives about the "barbes" have been amplified with additional popular beliefs concerning the liminal experiences of fear, pain or death, thus resembling typical initiation rites of shamans (Audisio, 1989/1996, p. 172).

And maybe even this is not the whole story. The "brothers" were treated as living saints, but in addition, like the Cathar *perfecti* before them (Borst, 1953, pp. 205, 240ff), they were called *boni homines* or *bons hommes* by their followers (Merlo, 1977, pp. 48ff; Erbstösser, 1984, pp. 210ff; Audisio, 1989/1996, pp. 24, 146, 170f). This seemingly harmless term, despite comments by some of the most distinguished scholars of heresy (Grundmann, 1961, pp. 21ff., 65, 169, 209, 417, 423; Merlo, 1977, pp. 48ff), requires further interpretation. "Good men" or "good people"—these are exactly the same terms which have been used for certain supernatural beings in the contemporary folk-belief: the "good ladies" and the "good men," the "good people" were terms of great ambivalence, describing for instance fairy-related people or powerful good spirits in opposition to demonic beings. It was also a term for the deceased, who—according to popular belief—visited the houses of some people, who then were called "the blessed" by others. And of course

there was much ambivalence in a term like "good people" or "good men," it could even serve as a euphemism, since any powerful being could be dangerous, and harm as well as heal. All the inherent ambiguity should be noticed very well, when a Waldensian believer already in 1241 admits that *Master* Petrus de Vallibus, who also served as a healer, was "loved like an angel of God."[26]

My conclusion is that the identification of witchcraft and Waldensianism has not been the mere result of a labelling process. It was rather certain elements in the practice of Waldensianism that made such a transformation plausible. As Peter Biller demonstrated from the treatise *Cum dormirent homines*, its author did not simply invent his accounts and modelled it on Waldensian religious practises, but he rather exaggerated and distorted confessions from his trial records. Beyond the "heresy-topos," where Waldensians were kissing devil-cats under their tails, the secrecy of the nocturnal gatherings could be associated with negatively connoted animals like bats or toads, and it could be linked with evil behaviour, sexual deviance, or the evil itself (Biller, 1989, pp. 223ff). The custom of collecting money among the *credentes* could be linked with ideas on hidden treasures of silver and gold, and again be related to encounters with the devil, in order to enhance the plausibility of the story (Biller, 1987, pp. 139–54). The important role of women in the movement—some *sisters* acted as equivalents to the brothers, and women frequently substituted the *magistri* during their absence—may have been associated with the importance of women in the magical arts. Some believers, like Galosna in Pinerolo, actually confessed that magic was taught at Waldensian "synagogues," and was exercised by women (Döllinger, 1890, II, p. 172; Boffito, 1896, pp. 387, 407f; Cohn, 1975, pp. 37ff; Blauert, 1989, pp. 28ff). But finally, and most importantly not only for the inquisitors, but also for the Waldensians' neighbours, and maybe even for themselves—the holiness of the *masters*, their supernatural abilities, and foremost the brethren's journeys to the "other world," their shamanistic qualities, could have served as a *tertium comparationis* between Wal-densians and witches.

As an epilogue it should be mentioned that the very region where the equation of witchcraft and Waldensianism had emerged,

remained a stronghold of witchcraft and witch persecutions until the seventeenth century (Bader, 1945; Schacher, 1976; Monter, 1974; Kamber, 1982, pp. 21–33; Kundert, 1985, pp. 301–43). But after 1480 the equation of Waldensianism and witchcraft, like Waldensianism itself, lost its attraction. A German translation of the "*Errores Gazariorum*" by Mathias Widman (?–1476) at the Prince Elector's court at Heidelberg does not even mention the Waldensians, and the "*secta Gazariorum*" seemed to have taken on mythical qualities, necessary only to explain a witch trial at Heidelberg, where women had confessed to belong to "the sect of the night-riding people," flying through the air on cats and broomsticks (Hansen, 1901b, pp. 231–35). Not the "*Traité de Vauderie*," but Nider's account of witchcraft, widespread by the printing press since 1475, provided the examples and the terminology for his fellow Dominican Heinrich Kramer (1430–1505), and it was him who formulated pope Innocent VIII's (1432–1492, r. 1484–1492) famous bull "*Summis desiderantes affectibus*" (Pitz, 1988, pp. 53ff), to receive it subsequently as a "rescript," and who in 1486 wrote and published the *Malleus maleficarum*.[27] Krämer never mentions the association of Waldensianism and witchcraft, although—or because—he had been engaged in the inquisitorial trial against the Waldensian bishop Friedrich Reiser (1401–1458).[28] The confusing term *Vauderie* was no longer used in learned demonology as a synonym for witchcraft, and persisted only in some regions as a popular term, for instance in the Netherlands until the seventeenth century and in southwestern Switzerland until the present (Hansen, 1901a, p. 414f).

Notes

1 I would like to thank Gabriel Audisio, Peter Biller, Euan Cameron and William S. Sheils for their suggestions and critical comments.

2 For the history of witchcraft research: Behringer, 1994b, pp. 93–146.

3 Franck, 1901, p. 615. We will trace the question of sexual deviance not further in this essay, although it would be tempting to explore either the "labeling" of ascetical outsiders as sexual deviants, or the possibility of laxitiy among the Waldensians, comparable to the surprising behaviour of Cathar believers in Montaillou. The question how "heresy," and especially "Vauderie" became a synonym

for sexual deviance, and especially homosexuality, in some regions deserves future attention. Sodomy, however, was a capital crime, with death by burning the corpse to ashes was thought to be the appropriate punishment. It would certainly not have been necessary to label sodomites additionally as witches. A short discussion in: Audisio, 1989, pp. 94ff. See also: Monter, 1974, pp. 1023–1033.

4 The text continues: "suntque etiam infra eosdem terminos multi christiani et iudei sortilegi, divini, demonum invocatores, carminatores, coniuratores, superstitiosi, augures, utentes artibus nefariis et prohibitis": Hansen, 1901b, p. 16f. See now the major study: Paravy, 1993.

5 Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des Dames*, Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 352, fol. 346 verso; *L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, 1999, after p. 320, ill. 2.

6 *Errores Gazariorum, seu illorum qui scopam vel baculum equitare probantur*. Manuscripts in: Basel, University library, ms. A II 34, f. 319r-320v. Rome, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 456, fol. 205v-206r. Its relation to the manuscript "*Errores Valdensium*" in the British Library, which also mentions maleficia and the witches' flights, seems to be yet unexplored: Hansen, 1901a, p. 413.

7 Discussion of the term "*gazzari*" by Ostorero, 1999a, pp. 301ff.

8 Boffito, 1896, pp. 387, 407ff; Hansen, 1901b, pp. 118–122; Cohn, 1975, pp. 37ff; Blauert, 1989, pp. 28ff; Paravy, 1993, p. 1054 (not mentioned in the "index des personnes").

9 Martin Le Franc, *Le champion des dames*, written at Arras, ca. 1451, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. fr. 12476, fol. 105 verso; Hansen, 1901b, p. 101.

10 Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des Dames*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms. fr. 12476, fol. 105 verso; Hansen, 1901b, p. 101; *L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, after p. 320, ill. 1.

11 The texts of Johann Fründ, Johannes Nider, Claude Tholosan, Martin Le Franc, and the "Errores Gazariorum," now edited in: *L'imaginaire du Sabbat*.

12 Hansen, 1900, p. 413ff, quoting from: *Statuta Sabaudiae*, lib. 1, cap. 2 "De hereticis et sortilegis."

13 The Franciscan connections seem worth to explore. It was the Swiss friar John of Winterthur, who reported about devil-worship of the Waldensians in the mid-fourteenth century, the Observant Bernardino of Siena, who first spread the news about the new sect in Italy in 1427, and John of Capestrano who was trying to blend witchcraft with Jewishness: Cohn, 1975, p. 49f. Bernardino da Siena, 1989.

14 Nider, *Formicarius*, lib. V,3, is providing an etymological definition: "Maleficus enim dicitur quasi male faciens vel male fidem servans." Chène, 1999, p. 221; Hansen, 1901b, pp. 88–99; Borst, 1988, pp. 262–86.

15 Fougeyron was present at the Council until November 1433, then he went to the diocese of Aosta, the diocese of bishop George de Saluce, to start new inquisitorial trials. The earliest manuscript of the *Errores Gazariorum* was presumably written in the Aosta valley short before 1436: Ostorero, 1999, pp. 331ff.

16 Nicolai Cusae Cardinalis Opera, II, Paris 1514, fol. 170 verso-172 recto. Baum, 1983; Ginzburg, 1994, pp. 283–93.

17 *Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum*, in Hansen, 1901b, pp. 149–83.

18 Jean Taincture, *Tractatus de secta Vaudensium*, (ca. 1460); Hansen, 1901b, pp. 133–95. Copies of the paintings in: Henningsen, 1984, p. 55.

19 Johannes Tinctoris, *Tractatus de secta Vaudensium*. (ca. 1460). Bibliothèque Royale, Bruxelles, ms. 11209, fol. 3. Cohn, 1975, pp. 256ff. *L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, after p. 320, ill. 6.
20 Paravy, 1993, Livre III: pp. 775–812, chapter 14 "La répression de la sorcellerie en Dauphiné"; pp. 813–907, chapter 15 "Autres procès dauphinois"; Livre IV: Un autre modèle de vie chrétienne: Les vaudois de Dauphiné, pp. 909–1178.
21 Le Roy Ladurie, 1975; Benad, 1990, pp. 32ff., 60, 108, 110ff. (spirits); 32ff., 37, 211, 224ff. (magic); 9, 29, 93, 150, 174, 212ff., 222, 224, 245, 303, 329f., 331ff. (sorcery).
22 Le Roy Ladurie, 1975. Another important criticism: Benad, 1990.
23 "Zwei von ihnen würden jedes Jahr in das Paradies eingehen und von Elias und Henoch die Binde- und Lösegewalt erhalten, die sie ihren Anhängern dann weiterverleihen können": Maleczek, 1986, p. 36.
24 There could be an interesting connection to the Gospel (Apg 5,29 "You must obey God more than the people." Audisio, 1989, pp. 26ff., 29, 31, 39, 52, 61.
25 Johannes Tinctoris, *Tractatus de secta Vaudensium*. (ca. 1470). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, fr. 961, fol. 1; Cohn, 1975, pp. 256ff; *L'imaginaire du Sabbat*, after p. 320, ill. 9.
26 "diligebat P. de vallibus Valdensem tanquam angelum Dei," quoted in: Biller, 1982, p. 66.
27 *Malleus Maleficarum* 1487. Von Heinrich Krämer (Institoris). Nachdruck des Erstdrucks von 1487 mit Bulle und Approbatio, Hgg. und eingeleitet v. Günther Jerouschek, Hildesheim u.a. 1992.
28 Heinrich Krämer (Institoris), *Der Hexenhammer. Malleus Maleficarum*. Aus dem Lateinischen neu übersetzt von Wolfgang Behringer, Günter Jerouschek und Werner Tschacher. Herausgegeben von Günter Jerouschek und Wolfgang Behringer. Mit einer Einleitung von Wolfgang Behringer und Günter Jerouschek, München 2000.

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HOSTING THE DEAD: THANOTOPIC ASPECTS OF THE IRISH SIDHE

TOK THOMPSON

My paper is an exploration of the relatively complex and particular relationship between *the dead* and the *fairy folk* of Western Ireland. However, it should be noted that both of these elements—fairy folk and the dead—are often considered separately as key symbols of Irish identity. Concerning the dead, writers such as Witoszek and Sheeran (*Talking to the Dead: A Study of Irish Funerary Traditions*) have characterized Ireland as a "thanatophiliac" nation, critically centered on notions of death and the dead, and the authors' support their claim by citing many examples from modern and historical Irish life.

The fairy folk have long been regarded (both from within and outside Ireland) as one of its most prominent cultural features. Road work, for instance, was halted even last year due to the projected demolition of a sacred fairy thorn bush, and the fairy folk are inscribed everywhere—from names in the landscape to personal narrative to literature of all varieties. The confluence of these two critical aspects, then, seems to me to be of paramount interest.

While the fairy folk are often grouped with the dead in Irish folklore, they are not equivalent categories. The *banshee* is an excellent example of this, and it is one of the most common figures in Irish fairy lore. The Banshee is a *bean sí,* a fairy woman who commonly foretells the death of a family member by wailing, or keening, for the member about to die. Interestingly, banshees are often reputed to follow only families of ancient Irish descent. The banshee thus often acts as a very ancient and yet very involved ancestor spirit—one who is pre-aware of mortal deaths, and thus outside of normal time.

Another common type of story involves the fairy folk as hosts or caretakers of the dead, particularly those who have not had the Christian last rites, such as dead children, sailors lost at sea, and other similarly un-Christianized deaths. This points towards the possibility of a survival of an earlier religion, one based on reincarnation or expressed contact between the living and the dead. Christianity was able to claim the souls of those who died underneath the administering rites of a priest, but for others, the fairy folk still received the souls of the Irish.

Often in these stories, the protagonist enters the realm of the fairy folk (often through a fairy mound or "hill"), and encounters dead relatives dwelling inside (*e.g.* Briggs, 1978, p. 31). Referring to them as "the Gentry" is part of a very common taboo against naming them directly—they are instead often referred to as the "Good People," or some similarly complimentary name.

The fairies occasionally brought the dead outside of the mounds (especially on seasonally astronomically significant days such as May Day and Halloween). Lady Wilde collected a story known as "The Dance of the Dead" in which a woman was approached by a company full of laughter, merriment, songs, and dancing. She recognized a boy, who had drowned the year previous, and he warned her to flee, but she was seized by fairies dancing, along with all of the dead that she had ever known. They took her dancing, until she woke up in the morning with "fairy stroke." The doctor was sent for, but he wasn't able to save the woman—as soon as the moon rose that night a soft fairy music was heard, and the woman died (Wilde, 1887, pp. 149–50). This sort of story has occurred at other places as well.

It may be important to note that the Irish term translated into English as *fairies* (*sí*), in fact means 'mounds' and the fairy folk are thus referred to as the people of the mounds. These mounds often refer to megalithic structures, such as Newgrange—Neolithic-built ritual centers incorporating collective and ritual burial and exhumation practices. The linguistic connection seems to me to be very important for understanding the emic meanings of the traditions.

In examining the possibility of links between the *sí* and the Neolithic (and thus pre-Celtic and pre-Indo-European) inhabitants, we

must first ask ourselves in what way do we construct the theoretical outlines of these terms? The *sí* are primarily items of folklore, while "pre-Celtic inhabitants" usually presumes other kinds of existences: primarily archaeological, although historical and biological evidence has also been convincingly offered.

Early on in the British discipline of folklore, the debates regarding the fairy folk focused heavily on the origins of the tradition. Many wrote that the fairy faith was a remembrance of accounts of the earlier (pre-Celtic) inhabitants. Although the terminologies, categories, and influences of the early theories may seem antiquated, the notion that the fairy folk were connected to pre-Indo-Europeans could be said to have been academically pre-articulated even before modern theories of Indo-European migrations had been established. Folklorists of the time interested in the possibility of connecting the fairy folk with the pre-Celtic peoples often pointed to the constellation of the Megalithic ruins, forts, burial mounds, the fairies' fear of iron, and the neolithic stone arrowheads collected as *fairy darts* throughout the British isles. Also, the oral traditions seemed particularly strong in Celtic areas, and the Celts were at that time known to have controlled the British Isles before the arrival of the various Germanic tribes. Some writers (*e.g.* Larminie, 1893) noted the remarkable uniformity of the tradition over large areas.

Frequently-mentioned is the antipathy of fairies towards Christianity. It is worth noting that the fairy belief in Ireland is often referred to as the "fairy faith." There is much to the tradition that puts this in theoretical opposition to Christianity (an aspect investigated by various authors), implying, if not in fact a religion, then at least a spiritual view of the world. Diarmuid Ó'Giolláin investigated this in "The Fairy Belief and Official Religion in Ireland" in which he characterizes the fairy faith as "a part of Irish popular religion" blending with "folk Christianity" (Ó'Giolláin, 1991, p. 199).

Also, the overlap between supernatural others and natural humans is surprisingly large in Irish tradition—the two categories often lacking the distinctiveness normally associated with "otherness." The interaction between the two groups includes the ideas of fairy folk as intermarrying with non-fairies, to the point where some

families are still identified today as having significant amounts of "fairy blood" in them.

Certainly, the fairies have much in common with the pre-Indo-European people. We have been able to correlate folkloric traditions of the fairy folk and the mounds quite well. In many fairy stories in Ireland, the fairies are "in the mound" (and of course we should remember that the primary definition of *sí* in Irish is "mound"). Tara, for example, is a holy place of the *sí,* which was taken over by the Celts—both folklorically and archaeologically. Newgrange (*sid in Broga*), the fantastic mound with the arcane symbology, crushed white quartz covering,[1] and the exacting sun dagger (set for the solstice), is another example. These mounds, reflecting a ceremonial knowledge that indeed must have seemed "magical" to the Celtic invaders, nevertheless seems to have diffused into Celtic culture, if we can indeed use that label for later Ireland (for an extended discussion of this see my 2002 doctoral dissertation *The Story of the Coming of the Celts and its Place in Modern Irish Discourse*).

Other megalithic structures are also often associated with the *sí*. Many Irish believed that fairies frequently inhabit such places, including the stone circles with their own lunar and solar alignments. These, too, are now held to be built by the pre-Indo-European people, although later Celtic-speaking peoples do seem to have worshipped there as well, officiated by the Druids (this knowledge is largely thanks to radiocarbon dating—early accounts frequently made the Celts the builders and technicians of these complex and massive structures—clearly more in keeping with the notion of Celts as representing a more advanced "Aryan" peoples, but also clearly out of line with the folkloric connections to the *sí*).

All in all, the folkloric accounts are so clear in this regard that the shrinking aboriginal theory of Irish fairy lore still stands as the best single answer for any etiological inquiry, although it should also be noted that a single answer must certainly be insufficient for a complete explanation. Such traditions have also been investigated by writers in other European traditions as well. While many of the early writers had additions to this basic premise, the number of investigators agreeing on the issue is impressive: MacRitchie,

Campbell, Briggs, Andrews, Larminie, Gomme, Henderson, Hyde, MacCulloch, and Rhys, just to name a few.

Many of these (MacRitchie, Campbell, Larminie, etc.) assumed rather straightforward traditions of remembrance of earlier peoples. Later writers, beginning perhaps with Briggs, noted that such origins for the fairy folk do not preclude the possibility of various complexities and historical changes to the tradition over time, although Briggs was still largely in agreement over the basic thesis.

It is important to stress that such an outlook is not meant to discount the other influences in the fairy folk. We have noted some of the various outlooks regarding this tradition, and each part must be considered. My point is not to assert that there are no other influences, but simply that there is a strong etiological basis in the Irish tradition of the fairy folk in the pre-Indo-European population. The other etiological influences frequently cited by folklorists include: 1. The fairies as devolved gods. 2. The fairies as spirits of the dead. 3. The fairies as nature spirits. All of these arguments have their bases of support. It is my position, however, that all of these, in fact, can be joined together. There may be no point in trying to argue for distinct points of origin, since all of these doubtless have some influence, and may in fact not be so different as would appear on the surface. This is a point which should become clearer throughout the course of the paper.

Modern researchers have proposed new influences as well, such as Susan Eberly's work on changelings and congenital disorders, in which being carried off by the fairies represents a removal from the human social world ("Fairies and the Folklore of Disability," 1988). In a similar vein is Joyce Munro's "The Invisible Made Visible: The Fairy Changeling as a Folk Articulation of Failure to Thrive in Infants and Children" (1991), which examines medical conditions functioning as memorate experiences in the changeling tradition. Munro notes the affective import of such experiences, stating that "the changeling embodies the idea of the failure of the parent–infant bond and the physical consequences that flow from that failure" (Munro, 1991, p. 276). These are just two examples among many.

Indeed, the absorptive and adaptive aspects of the belief are themselves impressive: in spite of what seems to be a complete ending of

belief traditions of Indo-European higher mythology (for instance, Roman, Celtic, or Germanic gods), the lower mythology, most probably even more ancient, still continues and thrives in some areas, although no doubt in a form substantially altered over time.

It is this element, I believe, which has made it such a fascinating topic for folklorists, whether in the Victorian era or today.

At this point, we may state with some certainty that the fairy tradition in Ireland is a particularly well-documented, temporally deep, adaptive, and tenacious belief. Two of its most prominent influences seem to be remembrances of pre-Celtic populations and notions of the dead.

Understanding both of these central components requires us to appreciate the temporal dimensions of the belief, and its deep roots in the past. Once done, it will then allow us to bring in the appropriate evidences from other disciplines, including linguistics, genetics, and archaeology.

Most scholars agree that the first Indo-Europeans landed on the British Isles somewhere before 1,000 and 500 BCE (although there is of course some dissension on these dates). Ireland itself seems to have received its first Indo-Europeans even later than Britain. Even allowing for this, the first landing of Celts by no means spelled the end of the indigenous cultures and populations. The Picts of Northwest Scotland, for example, lasted as a historical kingdom well into the 800s CE and even in their final days appear to have been a mix of Celtic and indigenous peoples, retaining distinctly non-Indo-European customs such as matrilineal descent, a unique language of mixed Celtic and non-Indo-European elements, and other oddities.

Recent genetic studies have confirmed that Ireland's genetic makeup is largely pre-Celtic and indigenous, dating back to the initial colonization of the island (e.g., Hill, et al., 2000).

Linguists, too, have recently begun investigating the possibilities of pre-I-E influence on I-E languages, particularly in the insular (British Isles, and now including Brittany) versus continental Celtic.

Most arguments accept the fact that insular Irish and proto-Irish (related to Gaulish) use largely the same lexicons. The dramatic shifts appear in other features, such as in basic word order which under-

went a complete shift from a SVO into a VSO language, and in several other striking features, such as paraphrases (that particular shift from proto-Irish to insular Irish that largely negates use of the copula). Schmidt states: "it does not seem probable that the typological differences—SOV plus agglutinative declension vs. VSO plus inflective declension—developed without any influence from contact languages" (Schmidt, 1988, p. 190, as quoted in Mallory, 1989, p. 274).

For Orin Gensler as well, in his PhD dissertation on the subject, the results of the contact are encoded in this language shift. "It would be expected that a substratal people seeking to learn a new language would focus first and foremost on acquiring its most obvious component, namely vocabulary; there would be little motivation to retain words from the substratal language." (p. 31)

For linguists involved in the puzzle of the great Insular Celtic language shift, one item remains clear: the shift was substantial, and most of the features are very exotic to Indo-European languages. To me, the contact hypothesis seems very well established—not proven, as such things as language shifts may be not provable in the absolute sense, but certainly the argument seems overwhelmingly likely, and consistent with the other patterns of genetic, historical, folkloric, and archaeological data.

From many viewpoints, then, we can see how pre-Indo-European peoples influenced the Indo-European peoples well into the historic period. In Ireland, particularly, on the basis of genetics it seems doubtful that there were ever large numbers of Celts—only that parts of their language, and, by implication, some sort of ruling elite and cultural forms, became dominant.

This paper, then, utilizes the hypothesis of the strong link between the fairy folk and the pre-Celtic inhabitants of Ireland. I believe that not only is this link very strongly established, but that it also is important for understanding the connections between the fairy folk and the dead.

The issue, then, is more complex than first meets the eye. The relationship between the *sí* and the dead is a deeply rooted one, both metaphorically and temporally.

Katherine Briggs, the noted English scholar of fairy lore, wrote that of all the various influences seemingly apparent in the fairy

lore, the connection to the dead seemed the strongest. According to Briggs; "The largest body of belief regards them as the dead, though generally as some special class of the dead" (Briggs, 1957, p. 278). Briggs later wrote that "The recently dead are certainly often described as being among the fairies, but the dead of the ancient tribes of Ireland are also thought of as The Gentry."

So if the fairies are dead themselves, they are of a specific kind. They have such strong energy that they are still encountered by modern-day people, although their origins remain clearly ancient. In fact, "origins" might be an insufficient word; it seems to me that one could almost say that their "place" is ancient.

From what we know of pre-Celtic culture, with its ideas of the afterlife in the mounds, and of the close interactions between the dead and the living, some aspects seem to be still present in these stories—perhaps particularly those that have the *sí* as hosts to the dead within the burial mounds.

These mounds (Irish *sí* literally same word as *fairy folk*) have been heavily investigated by archaeology. The mounds incorporated long-term collective burial and exhumation rituals, and were built with considerations given to the landscape, astronomical alignments, and most probably also with ritual calendrical functions, reflecting a concern with the continuance of life's cycles, and with its relationship with its dead.

Oftentimes, ancient house burials became transformed into communal sites of veneration, growing larger and more powerful over time. Partially due to the complexity and long duration of many of these mounds, archaeology has characterized the Neolithic culture's view of the dead as a "mania" or, more conservatively, as a central tenet of the culture, a truth applied throughout Neolithic Europe, both geographically and temporally.

Therefore, I am arguing that there is nothing new about the central connection between the fairy faith and the dead. In fact, I argue that this has some of its etiological bases in the pre-Celtic Neolithic and Bronze Age inhabitants and their religion, both of which have never completely disappeared, and which instead remain as strong, even vital, elements in Irish culture today. (I suppose I should say that it may appear that I have not done enough in this paper to es-

tablish a link between the fairy folk and the pre-Celtic inhabitants of Ireland. Unfortunately I do not have the time to detail the supporting work done on this, but I do refer interested parties to my 1999 MA thesis, The Fairy Folk and the Dead in Western Ireland, in which I cover the converging evidence from folklore, archaeology, linguistics, and genetic studies.)

It is also, I believe, worth speculating on the current trajectories that the tradition seems to be currently taking. As the twentieth century draws to a close, the growth of international capitalism, instant communications, and global identities can weaken distinctive and unique features in many parts of the world. I believe that the continued interest among the Irish concerning the fairy folk may be a way for Ireland to maintain its own identity in the heady times of the emerging global village. The ties to the past, the landscape, the dead—all of these and more are found in the *sí* tradition. There may indeed be dawning a day when those ties to the past become all the more precious for their ephemeral qualities.

If before the global era identity could be unproblematically asserted as merely residing in the description of a people or culture, now it is quite clearly an articulated statement, a reflective stance on the world stage, and an anchoring of self within a myriad of possible identities. Place, such as landscapes, becomes thus all the more precious of a repository of reality in the increasingly replicated world.

In the popular book and film, "The Secret of Roan Inish" a return to the islands of the West, to the dark-haired people with the "fairy blood" in them, is the only possible means towards redemption from the destruction of Ireland's soul by the modern world. In this view of the world, the fairy folk hold the key to the future. This is a world at once dead and alive, now and long ago. This conflation of time periods—the ancient overlapping with the present; sometimes the future overlapping with the past; the dead overlapping with the living—all of these offer a view of the world as seen somewhat removed from the strictures of temporality.

It is the past, so the fairy folk seem to say, that holds the wisdom for the future, and in so doing the "good people" are continuing to provide valuable functions in the misty, mystical, and yet quite modern Emerald Isle.

Notes

1 Fairy Legends from Donegal, "White Quartz Stones." "It is said there were never white quartz stones anywhere but a place where the hill-folk had a dwelling. They are fairy stones by right and it is not good to have anything to do with them. People have always been forbidden to use them in the stonework when building a house or byre: any building in which they were used would be unlucky." (Ó'hÉochaidh, 1977, p. 99).

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VISIONS OF THE OTHER WORLD AS NARRATED IN CONTEMPORARY BELIEF LEGENDS FROM RESIA*

ROBERTO DAPIT

I would like to focus on a recurrent feature of contemporary popular narratives collected in the Resia valley (an ethnic Slovene area in Italy)—representations and manifestations of the world of the hereafter as obtained exclusively from recent testimonies gathered in the field. Narrative means here a complex of legends to be considered from the communicative standpoint not so much an aesthetic elaboration of items of entertainment as the expression of beliefs and, above all, individual or collective experiences. The age when narration stemmed from the desire to teach or entertain has almost come to an end in Val Resia—this form of expression is now almost bereft of any function. The rural socio-economic structure has been virtually wiped out here, and needs of this kind, even at a domestic level, are met in other ways. There are still about 1,300 people living in the Resia community however, and many people originating from the valley live in Friulan-speaking areas, not to mention those living in other regions of Italy or in other countries. The Resians' strong sense of identity and their attachment to their homeland make it possible for researchers interested in their culture to investigate the fascinating features of the area's material and spiritual-cultural tradition. Through contact with the oldest generations we can re-evoke a time in which their vision of the world may be defined in a variety of ways as mythical, and we can still

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reconstruct various facets of their existential system in its material and symbolic features.

One of the reasons I expressly chose this contemporary material was to highlight the level of conservation of this aspect of spiritual culture. Compared with other areas in similar conditions, oral tradition is in an exceptional state of conservation in Resia. Although the world of hereafter is one of the most frequent themes in folk culture, both as a narrative exercise and as the expression of a simple communicative act, the extent to which it is still to be found in the Resia tradition appears to be noteworthy. It should also be stressed that the testimonies collected—about a hundred—were for the most part recounted with the deepest conviction of their truthfulness. In this regard, it must be pointed out here and now that many stories were narrated to us as direct experience, on the strength of which I define them as autobiographical. Conversely, legendary or fantastic stories are rare, so most of the narratives are devoid of references to known people or places. In my view the distinction between autobiographical accounts and the narration of indirect—reported—experiences is in itself a telling factor.

In order to analyze the collected material during its classification, which was made difficult by the overlapping of themes that may be looked at from various points of view, I have decided to group the stories by their theme and content seen in the light of their effect as expressed by the narrator. In this initial phase, an attempt was made to carry out a preliminary comparison with the nearest ethnic areas, that is, the Friulan, German-speaking Sauris/Zahre and the Veneto traditions. Although the comparison revealed a great many common themes, its results must be considered provisional as some individual and comparative analytical work still remains to be done. With the addition of further testimonies, our intention is to broaden the range of comparison to include the rest of the Slovene-speaking world and, if possible, the neighboring cultures as well, including other Slav countries besides the Latin and Germanic areas. The texts were collected from informants in two villages: Korïto/Coritis and Ućja/Uccea, in the easternmost linguistic area of Val Resia.

The first stage of analysis produced a number of interesting fea-

tures of spiritual culture which undoubtedly go beyond the Val Resia community to link up with testimonies which are very old and often widespread in vast cultural areas. One striking example is the common theme of the dead fiancé coming back for his girl, recalled in the famous lines: *Da káko lëpo lüna gri, dan živi nu dan mrtvi wkwop* (Such beautiful moonlight, the living and the dead together).

As far as religious cultural features are concerned, a frequently recurring concept is that of souls in torment, which may have been assimilated to the Catholic rite of Purgatory. Many stories from Val Resia focus on the conditions of a soul in Purgatory manifesting itself to humans in harmless forms—asking for the intercession of the living or begging for help to free itself of torment and avoid Hell. In return, the living usually receive a reward. In other cases, the manifestation takes the form of the anonymous, invisible but threatening *štrášanjë*, assuming the demoniac features of *ti donáni* (the damned ones). No clearly visible distinction exists in the corpus between tormented souls and damned souls. The former seem to belong predominantly to people who can be identified as relations or acquaintances, while the latter manifest themselves in various forms, including shrieks or fires. Such conceptions of the soul after death reflect "rest denied" and the idea of expiation of sins—the state of damnation. According to local belief, some souls find no place in Hell, Purgatory or Paradise and are so compelled to wander. They exist in a form of suspension, during which they are forced to call for the prayers of the living and expiate their sins both with "damned wandering" and with more specific punishments. They are able, however, to return to ask the intercession of the living, who may provide exculpation and put an end to their torments.

We should also draw attention to the tradition of the Furious Army of the dead, or the Savage Hunt, which seems to appear in a number of narratives and is usually considered by historians and folklore scholars to go back to ancient times.

Another prominent feature of our collection is when the manifestation takes place in dreams. Since dreams are the most important media of communication and dialogue between the living and

the dead, they often serve as a frame for autobiographical accounts of the apparition of the deceased. Although the theme of the apparition of the dead is to be found in Christian literature from the earliest centuries on, such accounts proliferate after the year 1000 AD. It is significant that in our corpus apparitions in dreams often represent autobiographical accounts. Apparitions and visions in a state of wakefulness are less frequent in autobiographical accounts and quite common in reported stories.

In the complex of themes to be found in this corpus, two main groupings may be made. One is composed of the relations between the dead and their living relatives or close friends; the other is manifestations of the hereafter, usually anonymous and often threatening, through visions of human figures, animals or objects, perceptions of noises, the identification of natural elements (light or fire) or atmospheric events. The last two of these, a very small proportion of the total, are represented by premonitions and signs and the identification of spirits with bad weather. Below is a summary of the categories used for the analysis of 80 accounts.

A. Relations with deceased relatives manifested in the following ways:
   a. coming to the aid of living relatives or protecting them either voluntarily or because their aid is explicitly requested by the living;
   b. communicating future events to their living relatives (divination);
   c. manifesting themselves to obtain intercession, services and objects as in earthly life (Mass for the dead, rosary beads, personal effects);
   d. asking to make amends for injustices committed during their lives and so to be freed of torment.

B. Other manifestations attributed to spirits:
   a. perceptions of noises or voices ascribable to the acts or presence of persons, animals, devils and spirits; company of soldiers or the Furious Army;
   b. wakeful visions of human figures;
   c. of animal figures: snakes, toads;

d. of wills-o'-the-wisp, lights, burning candles and other objects;
e. perceptions of noises or movements of things or persons.

C. Premonitions and signs of death.

D. Identification of spirits with atmospheric events: storms, wind.

The first group (A) includes a fair number of autobiographical accounts (11) and communication with the dead frequently occurs in dreams (16). The connection, in a broad sense, may be established through signs or the invocation of the dead.

The autobiographical experiences recounted in the second group (B) are fairly numerous (13) but the manifestation usually occurs through sound or a wakeful vision (7 cases), and not in dreams.

As regards the nature of the accounts, there is a contrast between the "verisimilitude" marking the autobiographical accounts and the "fantasy" permeating certain reported accounts. Some cases thus show a fantastic content or, given the variations in the accounts gathered, they may be considered to represent a family or collective legacy.

In order to be able to analyze the themes and the accounts in general better, I collected testimonies on the system of beliefs about souls and the cult of the dead in the two villages where the research was carried out. The most widely-held beliefs, also widespread elsewhere, include the conviction that the deceased return to their homes on All Souls' night. People place a bucket of water in their homes for the souls of their deceased relatives and light a candle for them—they need the water to drink and the candle to see by. Besides the water given to relieve the souls' thirst, certain rites involving food may be regarded as intercession on their behalf. On All Saints' Day a number of families in Korïto used to make soup—*šijòst*—for the whole village. Whoever went to get his portion before midday said thanks with the following words: *Buh pranasïtë ta-prad wsa wáša düša!* (May God let this reach all your deceased)—a formula used to this day when something is received as a gift, be it food or clothing. Thus, all the souls of the deceased related to the giver enjoy the benefits derived from the gift, because

they also receive them. The gesture of giving does not work, however, unless the sign of the cross is made on the gift—only thus may it be received by the souls of the deceased. It is also said that one old lady in Korïto gave food to the others in the village from time to time, because she knew that after her death her relatives would make no offerings for her survival in the hereafter. This allows us to identify a conception of souls in the hereafter marked by quintessentially human qualities and habits, subject to the same fundamental needs as living humans are for survival.

When someone dies, the custom in Korïto is to leave the doors of the house open, so that those who have already deceased may enter and take the soul with them. By then the only thing to be done is to pray—no attempt may be made to bring the individual back to life. It thus appears that the passage to the hereafter is a difficult moment, which the living should try to make easier. Preparing for the burial, the body has to be dressed in the best clothes and shoes worn by the deceased when alive, since it is believed that the soul must be able to walk in the hereafter. Personal effects are also placed in the coffin—hat, handkerchief, cigarettes and matches for a man. In Ucja this custom seems to be even more elaborate. Besides the best clothes and shoes, the body takes with it his or her wedding ring, earrings, snuff-box and pocket knife (for women), wedding ring and—for smokers—cigarettes (men), and money for both. The bones of the dead must be gathered together and not abandoned, because if something is missing, they will come back to look for it. The same holds true for people who die a violent death—for instance fall from a cliff—and whose remains cannot be found in their entirety: the soul is believed to return to the scene of death to seek what is missing.

Certain manifestations of the hereafter, usually called *štrášanjë* (to frighten [with shrieks])—cause fear and, naturally, defensive reactions in the individuals who experience them. Certain practices are therefore followed to ward them off. These include blessing the rooms of a house in which an individual has not slept for a long time or in which shrieks or other noises have been heard. The blessing, which has to be conducted according to a specific ritual, is also carried out by the occupant of the house, who uses an olive

branch to sprinkle water blessed by a priest considered capable of providing such a blessing. If the presence of a damned soul is perceived, this ritual may be followed by the utterance of a short exorcising formula: *Tacè tu ka Buh ta g'aw!* (Go to the place God has chosen for you!) It is interesting to observe that, as in the case of the ritual just described, this utterance is the prerogative of the individual who feels he must defend himself against such threatening presences and is pronounced by the individual without the mediation of exorcising priests—they are resorted to only when the manifestations are particularly harrowing or of long duration. It is also believed that when a soul in Purgatory manifests itself, it is enough to speak to it in order to free it from its torments.

Preventive rituals are also practiced, especially by people finding themselves outside their homes between the eventide bell and the sound of the morning Angelus. Some time ago it was considered ill-advised to go out after the eventide bell without headgear, and before leaving their homes for a journey outside the immediate locality, the inhabitants of Val Resia would cross themselves with holy water. This practice, which was not confined to the valley alone, appears in many of the accounts collected, functioning as a time-frame for the event. It is to be found not only in stories involving spirits but in others featuring other mythical beings, especially demons. In a variation of the story "The devil and the damned," a voice cries, *Din ë twöj nuć nu t'ë ma!* (The day is yours and the night is mine!)—emphasizing the classic division whereby the hours of daylight are assigned to man and the hours of darkness belong to the powers of evil. The hours around midnight are considered the most dangerous, being dubbed *ta slába óra* (the bad hours).

It is also commonly believed that particular phenomena, such as wakeful visions, can only be experienced by particular individuals. They are considered to be born with this ability: "that's how they're born and those who have eyes like that can see." Physical contact with these people, such as a handshake, is believed to enable others to see ghosts. It is striking that all the autobiographical accounts of wakeful events come from Ućja. Also worthy of attention is the theme of divination featuring in a number of accounts—it usually occurs in dreams.

From an initial observation of the beliefs and themes identified in the accounts collected in Val Resia, it seems that an important nucleus for the development of the conceptions of the soul and the hereafter, seen as a reflection of the collective imagination, is the need for justice—if not during life, it must inevitably prevail after death. The local proverb *Wsë prháä wráćano, tej múka ta posójanä* (Everything comes back, like flour lent out)—exemplifies the sense of universal justice that characterize the messages contained in the tales. The living are thus able to satisfy this conscious or unconscious need by means of services performed for a soul but also, when necessary, warding it off in remote places. This underlines the ability of the living—and this is not a prerogative confined to a chosen few—to influence their own and others' fates in the hereafter. Relations with the deceased are also of great potential benefit to the living, and solidarity is an important feature of them.

Not forgetting the didactic purpose permeating many of the accounts, some themes reflect feelings of individual guilt, including cases of a death unjustly suffered, which may perhaps be translated in terms of the fear of death without expiation of sins. The conceptual core of the entire corpus is, of course, the belief in the immortality of the soul, exemplified in the need for the other-worldly protection offered by guardian spirits or the fear aroused by imminent damnation.

As might be expected, in some accounts the representation of the hereafter is barely visible, which betrays an extremely problematic position with regard both to the passage from this world to the next and to the existence of souls that have to attain eternal peace. What is perceptible is the idea of the separate existence of the two worlds, and the mystery of the hereafter is preserved by the taboos prohibiting any human interference in it. We also have a number of grounds for stating that the Resians consider the other world—*ta krèj na tä*—as a place where souls are allowed an existence which reflects their earthly lives—not only do they need food, but clothes, shoes to walk in and money as well; and they can even satisfy desires like cigarette-smoking and snuff-taking. We may therefore observe that in the hereafter the image of the person is reconstituted, with fairly well-defined human charac-

teristics, but it is in a framework whose representation is almost non-existent.

Val Resia offers us evidence of an intense relationship with the hereafter, and one of the ways it is expressed is through a rich variety of manifestations bound up with the cult of the dead. This relationship is underpinned by innumerable historical–social, cultural and ethnic factors that may sometimes be observed to manifest themselves at a "universal" level.

It will be possible to draw more precise conclusions on the world of the hereafter in Val Resia when the analysis has given due consideration to all the cultural microsystems still extant in the area studied. Here, and probably elsewhere, their dimensions and complexity fortunately promise to be highly unpredictable.

Part III

DIVINATION, SHAMANISM

TRANCE PROPHETS AND DIVINERS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

CHRISTA TUCZAY

In ancient Israel it was widely believed that revelatory trance was caused by the Spirit of God. Prophesying in this *altered state of consciousness* was as common in the ancient Near East as in other places of the world. Scholars have often emphasized the artificial nature of *ecstasy* induced by prophets in the Old Testament. Revelatory trance in biblical times is said to have been induced through the rhythmical beat of music, group excitement, self-flagellation and other methods, including the use of hallucinogens.[1]

Divine revelation had a different social function in the Greek and Roman world than it had for Jews or early and medieval Christians. Oracle prophets in the Greek world were priest-like figures supported by and functioning in a legitimate cult to create stable traditional values.

The medieval prophet's trance-inducing methods changed together with her or his position in society.

Divination in Trance

Telepathy and clairvoyance are modern notions. There are no ancient equivalents of these terms. In so far as they were recognized at all, they were subsumed under the comprehensive notion of divination along with precognition and retrocognition.

The ancient and later the medieval mind did not divide divination according to the content supernormally apprehended, but according to the method of apprehension. They discerned between "technical,"

or ominal, and "natural," or intuitive, divinations. As an example of the ominal class, Cicero mentions divination from entrails, interpretation of prodigies and lightning, augury, astrology, and divination by lots; divination in dreams and in ecstatic states, the subjects of the present survey, he includes in the latter, the intuitive class.

Aristotle wholly rejected ominal divination and ascribed intuition not to divine intervention but to the innate capacity of the human mind.[2] The Stoics reaffirmed the connection between divination and religion, which Aristotle had endeavored to dispense with. For the Neoplatonists, whose influence on medieval thinking should always be taken into consideration, the linkage has become non-physical. The world, Plotinus ponders, is like a great animal and its sympathy abolishes distance. This principle provides a rationale for both prayer and telergic magic.

It is more significant that in antiquity as well as today intuitive precognition emerges in states, which we would call *mental dissociation*, and only in dreams, in waking states ranging from slight distraction the hallucinations of the dying or mentally disturbed, and in voluntarily induced mediumistic states. We owe Aristotle[3] the important observation that precognition occurs when the mind is not occupied with thoughts but is, as it were, deserted and completely empty so that it can respond to external stimuli.

The Lâchenaere: Medicus, *Diviner and Shaman*

The typical diviner is Homer's Calchas "who knew things past, present and to come" (Halliday, 1913, chap. 5; Dodds, 1966, pp. 6–25). The medieval German author Konrad of Würzburg obviously knew prophets of his own time: in his *Trojanerkrieg* (around 1287) he identifies the *lâchenaere* with the Homerian prophet. His Calchas beats his breast with his fists until the spirit comes over him:

Die brust begunde er villen
Vil starke mit der fiuste
Dur daz ar an dû siuste

Der wâren lâchenîe geist,
und aller göte volleist,
die nütze wâren zuo der kunst
(V, 27232–237)

He becomes pale, a spirit possesses him, and he faints:

Âmehteclichen seic er nider,
als im geswunden waere.
Der alte lâchenaere lac dâ stille sam ein stampf
(V, 27246–49)

He lies there in a state similar to death, his hair stands, and in the end he sweats and casts his body around until the spirit is conjured:

Biz im dâ lîp, herz unde sin
Der geist mit sîner craft erfuor,
den er mit worten ê beswuor,
daz im sîn helfe würde schîn
(V, 27268–271)

The author informs his readers that it is the ancient art of the *lâchenie*:

Von noeten muoste er switzen
Und als ein eber schûmen.
Sich woll te an in niht sûmen
Der wîssagunge meisterschaft
Man seit, daz er dâ von ir craft
Vil wunderlîche swaere lite.
Ez was der lâchnaere site
Wie vor alten jâren
Daz man sie sach gebâren
Alsus nâch wildelicher art
(V, 27278–287)

The obviously painful art of divination is performed with the help of a divining spirit:

Swenn in der geist gesendet wart,
der zuo z'ir künste hôrte
ir craft er in zerstôrte
und nam in ir bescheidenheit.

When the spirit possesses the prophet, he becomes weak and unconscious.

The Middle High German word (see Richter, 1967, pp. 258–75) *lâchen* (stn.) means remedy (cf. Gothic: *lêkeis* = medicus). The term *lâchenaere* (stm.) = sorcerer, Old Nordic *laeknari* = medicus; *lâchenen* (swv.) healing with magic; *lâchenie* = remedy. Ulfila (311) renders *medicus* with *lêkeis*; Tatian (830) uses *lâchi* as an expression for a physician. The term (with the meaning *medicus*) is only mentioned five times before the thirteenth century. From the middle of the thirteenth century, the word is applied to sorcerers and diviners:

Un swenner (the Antichrist, devil) *denne erzogen wirt, so gewinnet er zoberer, un lâchenere / Die in mit dez tievels rêten fuellent un lêrent alle boschait.*[4]

The German *Bîhtebuoch* (Confessional) even equates the term with the witch:

Vnn ob dv ie gelovbetost an hecse? Vnn an lâchenerin?[5]

The old High German word *lâchi* is a loanword form Old Irish *liaig* = physician, conjurer. The Gothic word *lêkeis*, Germanic **lekja*, Latin *lego* = to collect, to pick up runes, to read (with the additional meaning "to interpret"), and also: somebody, who conjures illness by incantations. These incantation murmuring physicians, soothsayers, conjurers, and prophets, soon became mixed with sorcerers and, in the *Bîhtebuoch*, with witch figures. The magic art of *lâchenie* = sorcery has to be confessed as a sin:

Wan du solt niht geloben an zober
Noch an luppe noch an hess noch an lâchnye.[6]

Centuries later Olaus Magnus (1450–1523):

If a stranger wants to know how things are back at home they can tell him within 24 hours even if it is 300 miles away or more, and this they do in the following manner: After the magician has performed certain ceremonies and has addressed his hellish gods with certain words, he falls to the ground, like a corpse, from which the soul is gone. And it seems that there is neither movement nor life in him. Then he gives information about the far away place just as if he has seen it himself (Behringer, 1994, p. 155).

Pythia and Her Followers

The most influential of all Greek religious institutions, the oracle of Delphi, owed its influence entirely to the powers attributed to an entranced woman, the Pythia. The onset of trance was induced by a certain ritual: sitting on the god's holy seat, touching his sacred laurel, and drinking from the holy spring. Plutarch (first century AD) tells us of a recent Pythia, who on one occasion began to speak in a hoarse voice and throw herself about as if being possessed by an evil spirit, then rushed away screaming from the sanctuary, and died within a few days.[7] In her normal personality she was a perfectly ordinary woman. When she became possessed (*entheos*) she spoke in riddling symbols. So her words had to be interpreted by the priests.

The Pythia was unique in her status in Greece but not unique in her kind. In addition to the official oracles in classical Greece and later in the Middle Ages, there is evidence for persons who had or claimed to have the gift of automatic speech:

Pytho, Pythonissa, mulier habens pythonem: Pythones, id est ventriloquos, qui per spiritum malignum loquuntur; Pythones in ventre habente nominabantur qui in spiritu immundo fu-

tura praevidebant atque praedicebant (quoted after Harmening, 1979, p. 212).

Like the Sybil of Delphi, the Sybil of Endor and the young girl following the Apostle Paulus (Apostles 16, 16–18) are also prophets.

In the eighth century the word *haegtesse* (Frank, 1901, pp. 614–70; Lecouteux, 1989, pp. 57–70) was a synonym for *Striga*, *erynis*, *eumenis*, *furia*, *pythonissa*, and *filia noctis*. In the tenth century *pythonissa helleruna* and *haegtesse* were applied apparently to any female or male who possessed the spirit of divination. *Haegtesse* as a translation of *striga* and *pythonissa* is interchangeable for human witches (Meaney, 1989, pp. 9–41). They were known as ventriloquists and were believed to have a daemon in their bellies that spoke through their lips and predicted the future in a state of trance. In the Middle Ages they were called *pythons*. The possession state of both *Pythia* and the *pythons* was, so far as we can know, induced autosuggestively.[8] In the German Arthurian Romance, the *Crône* by Heinrich von dem Türlin (1215/20), a little damsel prophesies while being in a state of possession trance:

Aber schunden sie begunde
Der wint an der stunde
Und tet ir sô grôze nôt,
Daz man sie wânde wesen tôt,
Sô sêre huop er sie ûf:
Des wart ein michel zuolouf,
und wânden des, sie wære
Tôt von der swære.
Dô kam sie wider alsam ê:
Ein wort sie vil lûte schrê:
Her künec, ir sît verrâten!

(V, 25 095f.)

The spirit that possesses her is compared to a storm, which throws her around and even makes her levitate and finally unconscious so that bystanders believe she is dead. When she comes round again she screams prophetic words.

Screaming often served as a legitimization to compare the phenomenon to the shamanistic trance and the screaming of the shaman when prophesying. Medieval theologians were especially fascinated by *pythonica divinatio or divinatio per pythones*. The fact that there existed possession trance phenomena cannot alone explain the obviously widespread interest that Christian theology showed in these matters (here I agree with Helbling-Gloor, 1956, p. 69sq). Theologians had to reveal the extent to which one could recognize the demon's work in the divinatory arts.

The preacher Berthold of Regensburg (†1272) even condemns pythonists as heretics (Schönbach, 1900, pp. 11–56, esp. p. 25). In the early modern times Reginald Scot scrutinizes the phenomenon in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). In chapter 16, he mentions pythonists and describes them as being clairvoyant and/or able to prophesy with the help of a familiar, a spirit. He obviously knew the phenomenon from personal experience: he refers to a woman who practiced *ventriloquie* and lived six miles away from his home. One day in October a servant girl, Mildred, became spirit-possessed and was exorcised. Scot says: "So now compare this wench with the witch of Endor and you shall see that both couseages may be done by one art" (Reginald Scot, 1584, p. 105).

Speaking in Tongues

In both Antiquity[9] and the Middle Ages not only epilepsy and delusional insanity were ascribed to the intervention of hostile demons but also phenomena like sleepwalking and the delirium caused by high fever. States of possession (Mills, 1986) have been, and still are, viewed with a mixture of fear, curiosity, and repulsion. Where the mental state is persistent and accompanied by grossly pathological behavior, the possessing agent is assumed to be a sign of the activity of an evil spirit and ritual techniques of exorcism were developed[10] in the Middle Ages.

Supernatural phenomena most often associated with possession, both spontaneous and induced, are precognition, clairvoyance, and speaking in tongues.[11] Psellus (1018–1078) expresses a general view

in his statement that possession may be recognized "when the subject is deprived of all activity [...] but is moved and guided by another spirit, which utters things outside the subject's knowledge and sometimes predicts future events" (*De operatione daemonum*. ed. J. F. Boissonade, 1838, p. 14 and Migne, Patr. Gr. 122, col. 852). The popularity of this tradition proves its inclusion into an official Catholic document, the *Rituale Romanum*, which mentions "the ability to speak or understand an unknown language, and to reveal things distant or hidden" among the criteria of possession up to this day.

Similarities between ancient theurgy, medieval mysticism and modern spiritualism are too numerous to be dismissed as pure coincidence.

The Montanists (see Knox, 1957, p. 36ss; Lanczkowski, 1998; Dinzelbacher, 1994, p. 49s) were followers of a second-century Christian of Phrygia, who claimed that the Holy Spirit dwelt in him and used him as an instrument to guide and purify the Christian Church. They believed in the gifts of the Spirit, especially in prophecy and in speaking tongues. As their enthusiasm degenerated, they died out.

The second-century church father Irenaeus substituted the word *prophecy* for *glossolalia*; it seems that he knew the phenomenon by experience. In his works *Against heresies* (Irenaeus, 1857) he gives a list of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, but omits specific mention of *glossolalia*, which he calls prophecy.

Then, at about the same time that Montanism lost its enthusiastic character, prophetic speaking in tongues ceased to be mentioned as a current phenomenon. From the time of Origen, the middle of the third century, the fathers considered speaking in tongues a common practice of the past. Origen obviously had no first hand acquaintance with genuine ecstatic prophecy. For Augustine *glossolalia* was a special apostolic dispensation; as the *Epistle of St. John* illustrates:

> For who expects in these days that those on whom hands are laid that they may receive the Holy Spirit should forthwith begin to speak with tongues.

Early in the development of the tradition of Western Christianity, speaking in tongues came to be looked upon with suspicion. Evidently, the experience occurred, but was linked in most cases with demon possession rather than angel possession. The signs of possession are the ability to speak in a strange tongue or to understand it when spoken by another person; revealing the future and hidden events and various other indications (Weller, 1952, 2. p. 169).

The first report in the Catholic Church after that of Pachomius in the fourth century is to be found in the *vita* of St. Hildegard, whose lifetime spans the twelfth century. Although uneducated, she was able to speak and interpret not only Latin but also entirely unknown languages. This was recorded, with an unknown alphabet of twenty-three letters, in her manuscript *Lingua Ignota*. St. Hildegard's first experience of this gift apparently came as a part of a strange and powerful religious experience and a long series of visions followed. This ability was possessed by Elisabeth of Schönau (1129–1164) and Catherine of Siena, who dictated her voluminous *Libro* in a few days (Sullivan, 1986, pp. 131–66). In the following century, Thomas Aquinas attempted to cover every aspect of Christian experience, including *glossolalia*, in his *Summa theologica* (1274). He concluded that speaking in tongues belonged to the past and was a supernatural gift, which helped the development of the early church.

Mystics as Revelators

In the state called *Zustand der erhobenen Ruhe* (state of exalted repose) by mystics, they were in an altered state in which they experienced visions, *unio mystica*, and also had revelations of the future.

The saints were (see Kieckhefer, 1988, pp. 1–43) able to prophesy all sorts of future events, both significant and insignificant: many predicted their own deaths.

The fourteenth century is commonly seen as a high point in the history of Christian mysticism. The famous Benedictine and Dominican mystics of Germany, the reclusive figures of England, and the spiritual performers in other parts of Europe founded the mys-

tical era. Many of the saints of the century were mystics, including several of the most prominent like the gifted Catherine of Siena, Bridget of Sweden, Julian of Norwich, Richard Rolle, Henry Suso, and John Ruysbroeck, and less famous figures like Dorothy of Montau, Margarethe Ebner, Christine Ebner and Adelheid Langmann. German convents were often inhabited by such women, whose mystical experiences filled the convent chronicles (see especially the publications of Dinzelbacher, 1990; 1993; 1994; 1995).

Connected with the term mysticism are two closely linked phenomena: ecstatic experiences (raptures) and revelations. Both occur in the *vitae* of fourteenth-century saints and were at times so prominent that they basically replaced the most prominent signs of holiness such as miracles. Rapture left the saint oblivious of the surrounding reality. In the context of hagiography, supernatural revelations usually came in the form of visions. These visions were often quite simple: Christ, an angel, a saint or a deceased person would appear to the living saint to give information or instruction. In other cases, visions are more complex: they involve sequences of events, and are often set in Heaven or in other spiritual environments, which may be described in at least some detail.

A further type of revelation, which was sometimes linked with rapture, is prophecy, the supernatural knowledge of future, distant, or secret affairs. Although the prophetic gift seems to be the opposite to the quiet contemplation of the mystic, there have been some that had the power. The subject matter of prophecy was diverse: Bridget of Sweden (see Dinzelbacher, 1994, p. 340ss) knew in advance that Nicholas Hermansson would become bishop of Linköping. Gertrude of Delft (see Dinzelbacher, 1994, p. 223ss) brought pleasant tidings about such diverse subjects as eternal salvation and real estate. Perhaps just as often, however, the predictions were about misfortunes. Gertrude predicted to her confessor that one Master Theodore of Renen would be killed by his enemies. When the master was killed and mutilated, her confessor became increasingly respectful of her gifts. Not infrequently the subject of prophecy was death, either the saint's own or someone else's.

One saint with a particularly strong claim to the title of prophet was Catherine of Siena. In 1375 she prophesied that a schism would

occur, although it would eventually purify the Church. She also foretold another crusade.

Genuine and/or false prophets claimed the movement of the Anabaptists at the beginning of the early modern times (Goertz, 1989, pp. 171–92; Daiker, 1993).

Mediumistic Trance Techniques: Crystalgazers

From the belief that certain mental states are favorable for the occurrence of supernormal phenomena like prophetism or clairvoyance, it is a short step to the deliberate induction of these states. Of the various devices employed to that end in different societies, one of the simplest and most widely used is the practice of prolonged staring at a translucent or shining object, which enables a minority of persons[12] to see moving pictures inside that object. In modern Europe it is known as crystal gazing, *scrying* or *cristallomancy*.

There are no certain instances of its use before Byzantine times. Cristallomancy appears for the first time under that name in Byzantine books of magic. One of its subclasses is *catoptromancy* (Delatte, 1932), where the *speculum* is a mirror. It appears that it was widespread in the fifth century. Later references to catoptromancy are meager, probably because other methods were employed, although it was known by Iamblichos as an alternative of hydromancy (scrying by water in a natural body). The alternative (and in later times more frequently mentioned) method, which ancient authors called lecanomancy (divination by bowls) or hydromancy used as *speculum* a simple vessel of water with or without the addition of a film of oil. This technique was borrowed, as the ancient writers acknowledge, from the Middle East. Concentration would also induce hallucinatory visions in a certain number of subjects.

Isidore describes the case of a holy woman he knew, who "poured clean water into a glass goblet and saw in the water inside the goblet phantasms of coming events; and the predictions she made from her vision regularly came to pass."[13]

The purpose of the rite was most often precognition either by direct vision or by inducing a god or demon to appear in the *specu-*

lum and answer questions. In the early times scrying was obviously practiced under the aegis of religion.

Where scrying was done by a proxy, both in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, that proxy was almost always a boy or a team of boys under the age of puberty. The prime reason for this choice was no doubt ritualistic: sexual purity is a common ritual requirement in magical operations. In his *Apologia* Apuleius was probably correct in noting that an *animus puerilis et simplex* is especially suited to this purpose (Apuleius, 1912; see Abt, 1908; Hopfner, 1926, pp. 65ff). John of Salisbury (1115–1180) relates the events of his boyhood in his *Policraticus*:

> During my boyhood I was placed under the direction of a priest, to teach me psalms. As he practiced the art of crystal gazing, it chanced that he after preliminary magical rites made use of me and a boy somewhat older, as we sat at his feet, for his sacrilegious art, in order that what he was seeking by means of finger nails moistened with some sort of sacred oil or chrism, or of the smooth polished surface of a basin, might be made manifest to him by information imparted by us. And so after pronouncing names which by the horror they inspired seemed to me, child though I was, to belong to demons, and after administering oaths of which, at God's instance, I know nothing, my companion asserted that he saw certain misty figures, but dimly, while I was so blind to all this that nothing appeared to me except the nails or basin and the other subjects I had seen there before. As a consequence it was adjudged useless for such purpose,[...][14]

If somebody wants to know what a friend at a distant place is doing at the moment, the sorcerer tells a magic formula to the boy knows the historiographer of the divinatory art Johann Hartlieb (1430–1468) and almost 100 years later another physician Johann Weyer (1515–1588) elaborates: *Darauff fellt er in ein augenblick nider, wirdt verzuckt, und liegt ein weil*, (in an instant he falls down in a deep trance or rapture and lies for a while). When he regains his consciousness he answers the questions.[15]

The interpretation of the phenomenon summarized by Pedro Garcia in the fifteenth century is remarkable and seems to have been influential:

> Let us first ask about the divination of hidden matters, concerning which some people say and write that a person can know and divine hidden things naturally, through the power of the soul. The first manner [of doing so] is by gazing at luminous bodies and instruments. [...]
>
> Thus it is, according to the opinion of these magicians, that these luminous bodies function, and particularly mirrors. When the soul of the gazer is turned back on itself [...] the more its filled within by God, so that the beholding it turned into the soul, which can be so turned in to itself and as it were recollected within itself, that the recollection becomes rapture or a state near to rapture, or ecstasy or a condition near to ecstasy.[16]

The Fugger Case

There were good reasons for an early modern merchant to find the possibilities of scrying attractive. When the merchant Anton Fugger (1493–1560) had particular problems, such magical techniques seemed to offer the solution. In the crystal ball Fugger could behold his employees. Megerler, one of his crystal gazers, attests that he saw what they wore and how they lived. With this wonderful piece of early modern spy equipment Fugger could see without himself being seen. Megerler explains that her crystals contained two banned spirits who carried out the tasks she commanded. A powerful sorceress had banned the spirits into the crystal with which Fugger supplied her.[17]

All those who were accused of crystal ball gazing protested that they had not prepared (German *zugericht*) the crystal balls they used. In other words, they presented themselves as mere users of a "technology." It was believed that the spirits, at that time presumably evil spirits, inhabited the balls and were responsible for bringing about the magical powers of vision the balls afforded.

Luther notes about the divinatory arts and especially of scrying:

Zum iij gehören hierher / due do künst suchen durch verbotten wyß. Item die da heimlich ding erforschen durch ein cristal/ fingernagel/ oder gewycht helffenbeyn hefft....zu dem letzten ist es gewiß/ das die ding die in dem cristal/ helffenbein/ oder nagel erschynen/ betrügnuß sind des bösen finds/ wan er macht solch bildnuß/ so es im verhengt würt, sunst nit/ vnd wie das bewert ist/ vermag er das nit allwegen/ noch auch vor ydermann (WA 1, 410.23–25) (see Hausstein, 1990, p. 62s).

When the possession phenomenon became widespread in northern Germany, early modern European demonologists and scholars treated it differently (cf. Hamelmann, 1572; Schubert, 1995, p. 294ss).

In early modern times trance induced by crystals and other luminous bodies was obviously looked upon as an occurrence of suspicious diabolical powers. Certainly, the ecstatic experience emphasized by the Neoplatonists (Iamblichos, 1922, II. p. 14), the medieval seers, the Renaissance magus John Dee[18] (French, 1972), and even Jacob Boehme,[19] was denied and suppressed. During the Renaissance vision trance was not the acknowledged instrument of finding the truth it had been under the patronage of religion in the Middle Ages.

Wise women, wandering scholars, gypsies and other professional "small time" diviners using the crystal were slandered and accused of witchcraft.[20]

Especially researchers of psychology (Lex, 1979, pp. 117–52) have shown interest in intuitive divination, since some of the best modern evidence for extrasensory perception was obtained with percipients in abnormal states like hypnosis and mediumistic trance. The phenomenon of scrying was analyzed at the beginning of the twentieth century and researchers tried to explain it as an autohypnotic state of consciousness.[21]

Notes

1 Unlike that of medieval divination, literature on divination and prophecy of biblical and antique times is vast. Recent studies include, e.g., Cryer, 1994, p. 243f. Also, 1991, pp. 79–88; Hölscher, 1914, pp. 129–57; Guillaume, 1938, pp. 290–333, saw the basis of prophecy to be an ecstatic phenomenon, also Lindblom, 1967, pp. 1–64, 122–37; Kaiser, 1984, pp. 212–18, returns to psychologizing the concept of prophecy and thinks that the phenomenon derives from "nomadisches Sehertum" and "altorientalisches ekstatisches Prophetentum." See Mowinckel, 1923, III; Jepsen, 1934; Haldar, 1962; Aune, 1983.

2 In his *Eudemian Ethics* he associates the capacity for veridical dreaming with the melancholic temperament that enables certain individuals to see, intuitively and irrationally, both the future and the present. In his essay *On divination in sleep* he was primarily concerned with precognition. Aristoteles, *Die Lehrschriften*, Paderborn, 7,2: Eudemische Ethik.

3 Aristoteles, *Werke* op. cit. 6,1 Über die Seele; 6,2 Kleine Seelenkunde.

4 In the wake of the Antichrist are sorcerers and *lâchenere* = obviously diviners or conjurers. Grieshaber, 1844–46, II.

5 (Translation: *Do you believe in witch or a lâchnerin*?) Oberlin, 1784, p. 46.

6 You shall not believe in sorcery, poisonry, witchcraft or lâchenie. Rieder, 1908, p. 28.

7 Dodds, 1951, p. 197 n. 3. that he has seen a medium breaking down during trance. Cases of demonic possession ending with death are stated by Österreich, 1930, pp. 117s., 222s.

8 Beattie–Middleton, 1969, p. 4: It is sometimes asked, how much control has the subject over the onset of his trance? The answer is, about the same control as ordinary people have over falling asleep.

9 A wide range of examples, modern and historical will be found in Österreich's (1921) still indispensable book: Smith (1965) disagrees that there is a so called possession phenomenon in Pre-Christian Greece, in: T.A.P.A. 96 that there is no real evidence for a belief in possession in the classical period of Greek literature. But as regard divine possession the words entheos = having god inside and enthusiasm, which were in common use from the fifth century B.C. onward and katechesthai = to be occupied by god, Plato, testify directly to the belief. Plato giving evidence about oracle-givers and inspired prophets, that it is not they who speak, since their intelligence is not present, but the god himself who speaks to us through them. Basic are: Thurston, 1956; Benz, 1969; Arbmann, 1963–70, 3 vols.

10 See especially the gender discussion by Mazzoni, 1996, p. 3: The Salpêtrière doctor and hysteria expert Henri Legrand du Saulle: "Many women Saints and Blessed were nothing other than simple hysterics! It is enough to reread the life Elizabeth of Hungary, in 1207; of Saint Gertrude, of S. Bridget, of S. Catherine of Siena, in 1347; of Joan of Arc, St. Teresa [...] and of many others: one will be easily convinced of this truth."

11 Lombard, 1910, pp. 162ff. and the inspired priest at the oracle in Boetia who answered a Carian inquirer in his own language, Herodotus, ed. C. Hude (1927), 135 seem to be early pagan examples: both are described in the same terms as great marvel.

12 Myers, 1903, I. p. 237 estimated that perhaps one man or woman in twenty can procure hallucinations by scrying, and that of these successful scryers again perhaps one in twenty obtains in this way "informa-tion not attainable by ordinary means" (1903, I. p. 237). The ancient and medieval use of young boys for the purpose may have somewhat increased the proportions of success. To the history of crystalgazing see my articles 2002 and 2003.

13 Damasius wrote a biography of his predecessor and teacher Isidorus of Alexandria: *Vita Isidori, apud Photius* ed. C. Zintzen (1967). *Bibliotheca graeca et latina* supplem. 1, p. 268.

14 John of Salisbury, 1938, II, 26, p. 147.

15 A medieval cristallomancy in Johan Weyer (1567). *De praestigiis daemonum.* Von Zauberey/ woher sie jren vrsprung hab/ wie manigfeltig dieselb sey/ wie sie geschehe/ welche damit verhafft seindt: vnd welcher massen denjenigen so damit befleckt/ zu helffen: auch von ordentlicher straff derselben/ sechs Bücher, N. N. Very useful the study of Nahl, 1983. See the bibliography to Weyer on www.sfn.unimuenchen.de/hexenverfolgung/einstiegbiblios.htm which lists the literature up to 2002. See especially Tschacher, Werner: "Der Flug durch die Luft zwischen Illusionstheorie und Realitätsbeweis. Studien zum sog. Kanon Episcopi und zum Hexenflug," in: *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Kanonistische Abteilung,* Bd. 85 (1999), pp. 225–276, *and Der Formicarus des Johannes Nider von 1437/38. Studien zu den Anfängen der europäischen Hexenverfolgungen im Spätmittelalter,* Aachen 2000 (Berichte aus der Geschichtswissenschaft), zugl.: Aachen, Techn. Hochsch., Diss., 2000.

16 Petrus Garsia (1489): *In determinationes magistrales contra conclusiones apologales Ioannis Pici Mirandulani Conordie Comitis proemium*, Rom; Translated and quoted by Kieckhefer, 1997, p. 98ss. See Thorndike, 1934, pp. 497–507.

17 Chulee, 1988, pp. 141–42; According to Megerler's testimony Fugger could scry, but had harmed his sight doing so and thus needed her help. Even so, he still engaged another women to teach her. Cf. Roper, 1994, p. 180ss. See Behringer, 1988, p. 205s.

18 See the text http://racerel.library.cornell.edu: 8090/Dienst/UI/1.0/Display/cul.witch/039.

19 He allegedly used his shoemaker's ball for concentration. Wehr, 1979.

20 I disagree with Lyndal Roper that they tried to present the crystals as part of the more or less legal natural magic by denying that they had nothing to do with the power by which they worked.

21 Silberer, 1912, p. 383ss; James Braid (1795–1860) experimented with very similar effects described in the medieval sources. See, Myers, 1888–89, p. 486ss. On rapture or ecstatic state see Barbara Lex's major article on "The Neurobiology of Ritual Trance," which demonstrates the impact of patterned repetitive acts (like prolonged staring on luminescent objects or magical rituals to gain visions) on the human nervous system. (Lex, 1979, pp. 117–51).

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SHAMANISM IN MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE

PETER BUCHHOLZ

"On ne peut pas tout lire." A quotation. It is not very penetrating or original. It need not be quoted at all. Yet it is true. It is a short formulation of a feeling that all scholars, at least in the twentieth century, have experienced. The inevitable consequences of this statement in terms of what we usually call the development of science need not concern us here. (Preliminary studies are, no wonder, lacking.) The quotation is from page 15 of Mircea Eliade's *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* published in 1951. Since then, the topic of shamanism has enjoyed the attention of scholars of different disciplines, and its attraction is apparently ever increasing. It is an interesting topic for the public, probably because people are searching more and more desperately for a way out from the *cul-de-sac* of sterile rationalism; they might also be guided by the less noble aim of providing a respectable legitimization to drug addiction. In Berkeley, and probably elsewhere as well, introductory and "initiation" courses are held into practical shamanism. When in 1988 I was spending my Sabbatical in the University of California, Berkeley, I excused myself from the participation at such a "course". I had after all read scholarly literature on this topic and seen accounts of séances gone askew and ending in death. Fortunately, these cases are exceptional.

The direction in which our civilization developed was predicted as early as 1951 by the renowned Romanian historian of religions, Mircea Eliade. To quote him:

"We believe that such a study can be of interest not only to the specialist but also to the cultivated man, and it is to the latter that

this book is primarily addressed. [...] We make bold to believe that a knowledge of it is a necessity for every true humanist; for it has been some time since humanism has ceased to be identified with the spiritual tradition of the West, great and fertile though that is" (1964, pp. xix–xx).

This is the case with shamanism: a religious and/"or"[1] magical, a magico-religious phenomenon, which is based on ecstasy and the techniques necessary for attaining it; more specifically, a state of ecstasy in which a contact is established with the other world. According to the archaic world-view, this other world exists in the sky as well as under the earth—yes, even on the earth. To get there, one has to surmount obstacles, to cross a border or a river, to pass through a forest. To accomplish this eventually, one had to possess by birth (or through initiation) certain qualities (as a hero of tales, epic figure, protagonist of sagas—literature "or" reality?), or one had to use techniques of ecstasy that could be learned, although we should not forget that according to our literary sources, their acquisition was facilitated by supernatural help such as dreams. The hero's receptiveness to these is often depicted as hereditary in the sources. Here follows Eliade's first definition of shamanism: "A first definition of this complex phenomenon, and perhaps the least hazardous, will be: shamanism = *technique of ecstasy*" (1964, p. 4).

In the ensuing parts of the chapter, Eliade does not bring up any precise definition that can be useful for the peoples living outside the regions of "Shamanism in the strict sense" (1964, p. 4), i.e. Siberia and Central Asia. But, in Eliade's interpretation, this is not a shortcoming, because the author wanted to discover shamanistic *traits*, and the synthetic approach of the researcher may obviously bring in individual components.

Since the 1950s, the research on shamanism can be divided into two schools. The first one treats shamanism as a purely Siberian and Central Asian phenomenon, although it includes the Lapps as well. In my opinion, it is not accidental that the scholars belonging to this group are in a minority. Although ethnologists including the Soviet scholars are quite convinced that in these regions shamanism has reached "its most advanced degree of integration" (Eliade, 1964, p. 12), they acknowledge that shamanism may be recognized

in other parts of the world as well. Anna-Leena Siikala, a Finnish scholar wrote in this spirit in a basic work from 1978 entitled *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman*: "...the most relevant views have been put forward by Åke Hultkrantz, Dominik Schröder and Ursula Knoll-Greiling. Hultkrantz says: We may now define the shaman as a social functionary who, with the help of guardian spirits, attains ecstasy in order to create a rapport with the supernatural world on behalf of his group members" (Siikala, 1978, p. 17). This definition can be found on page 34 of his article "Definition of Shamanism" (1973). Siikala already makes no mention of the opposing school, although László Vajda still does in his bibliography (1959). Most authors[2] of the two important volumes of *Shamanism in Eurasia* (Hoppál, 1984) tend to define shamanistic features among the Eskimos, the Lapps, in North and Central America, China, South Africa[3] and other regions. As early as 1955, Dominik Schröder defined shamanism as "an institutionalized and formally fixed ecstatic contact of man with the other world in service of the community" (Schröder, 1955, p. 879). As can be seen, he does not mention guardian spirits, perhaps because the spirit of a powerful shaman can theoretically get to the other world by its own effort.

The techniques of ecstasy, techniques needed to attain ecstasy, are intended to free the spirit of the shaman, making it fit for the journey to the other world. To serve the community, the shaman has to find the supernatural (that is, the "true") cause of catastrophes such as epidemics, famines or wars, and sometimes he or she has to affect their outcome by fighting with the evil spirits. Thus, shamanism is closely related to animism.

Since by this means shamanism provided an opportunity to get into contact with the causes of the most important events of archaic cultures, we are undoubtedly concerned with a magico-religious phenomenon of extreme importance. If for no other reason, it may reasonably be assumed to be quite ancient. Scholars believe to have found a painting of a shaman in Lascaux. Thus shamanism appears to reach as far back as the Upper Paleolithic age.[4] For this reason we cannot ignore the argument that it existed in Scandinavia, in a medieval European culture based primarily on oral tradition. This is the more likely since we know that the Vi-

kings (and even the North Germanic tribes) had contacts with the Lapps and the Finno-Ugrian peoples of Northern and Eastern Europe, who did practice shamanism. However, this does not necessarily mean that a Scandinavian shamanism was taken over from these tribes. Nothing can be adopted successfully if there is no autochthonous susceptibility or affinity for it in the borrower. Let us not forget the Celtic civilization, which had a huge and hitherto not satisfactorily studied influence on Denmark in the Iron Age (skull cult, trees in sacrificial pits).

Scandinavian Literary Sources

General remarks on the kinds and content of the sources

It would obviously be impossible to give a detailed outline of medieval Scandinavian literary sources here. To sum it up, they are *stories* written in prose and two poetic genres: 1. the *Eddic poetry*, written in strophes: narrative, dramatic (with dialogues) or elegiac-retrospective, preserved in the alliterative form of Germanic poetry; and 2. *Scaldic poems*, mostly panegyric or derisive, in an extremely complicated metre, which for this very reason seems less exposed to the vicissitudes of oral tradition. The prose stories or *sagas* also contain verses, mostly Eddic ones, with different functions. Traditionally, the sagas are grouped in the following categories: Sagas of Icelanders (the story takes place in Iceland), kings' sagas (mostly about Norwegian kings), mythical–heroic sagas (the story takes place in the times before the colonization of Iceland), and knights' sagas (often taken over from France and "Icelandicized"). With the partial exception of this subgenre, all of this literature is more or less based on oral transmission, which often goes back to the pagan periods of Scandinavian history. The bulk of the texts were written down only in the thirteenth century or later, that is, at least two hundred years after the conversion of Iceland in 1000. Even though it may be based on ancient traditions, it is evident that a medieval text written by a cleric is quite different from e.g. a modern scholarly description by an ethnologist.

Like all traditional *stories*, the sagas treat their material with a surprising freedom. This freedom is, I think, the heritage of oral tradition, which did not possess the means to control its own truth-content (to find out "how it was in reality"). Their concept of truth was inevitably "liberal," and man's speculative powers were entitled to the way of thinking of "how it might have been." In addition, we have to be aware of one aspect of the selectivity of our sources, that is, silence. Especially in stories related to our topic, no one was interested in teaching and propagating the magical arts, which would be used to cause harm. Church and secular authorities regarded magic with contempt and awe, and they saw in it demonic deception and a very dangerous thing. That such things should not be talked about, or that spells are forbidden to be recited, are recurring remarks in the texts. Indeed, it is really surprising that medieval Scandinavian literature still contains so many references to magic (cf. Boyer, 1986, passim). However, the explanation is simple: this was the reality. Life was full of magic. This view is proven, if it needs proof at all, by the historical fact that according to all sources magic had played a major role in the rural environments of Europe until the previous century.

The consequences of the specific nature of our medieval sources are very important from our point of view. For instance, it would be unrealistic to expect complete descriptions of magical procedures or shamanistic séances. The saga narrators were not ethnologists. Some of them may be regarded as antiquaries. As a result, Scandinavists have to construct a synthesis from the fragmentary data of the texts.[5] Taking into consideration this basic fact, we shall provide an outline here of the medieval Scandinavian panorama of shamanistic features. Towards its end, the article will also dwell on the encounter with reality outside the texts, i.e. a discussion of some archeological discoveries.

The evidence of the sources in respect of shamanistic features

After many long journeys through Siberia in search of archaic shamans (whom he sometimes could not reach before their death), the Hungarian ethnologist Vilmos Diószegi (see 1968) finally fell victim

of his own research, and his heart stopped to work. A scholar who deserved an epitaph, such as I discovered in Sydney; an epitaph of a folklorist of high military rank, who was killed by the Aborigines in the mid-nineteenth century: *Dulce et decorum est pro scientia mori*. Generally, thanks to fate (held in so much respect by the Teutons), Scandinavists are in a more favorable, or at least less dangerous position than Diószegi was: their texts lie in safely accessible archives and libraries. But, as I have said, one has to find and collect the more or less fragmentary texts. There are very few texts in which magic does not play any role at all. And, at least for the Christian author, the ideology of shamanism belonged to the realm of magic. Furthermore, for them magic and paganism were almost synonymous (Old Norse *forneskja*). There is obviously a problem of demarcation.

If we start from the given definition of *shamanism*, the texts can be divided into three groups: 1. The religious basis of shamanism (spirit concepts, layers of worlds); 2. The techniques of attaining ecstasy; 3. The behavior of the shaman in ecstasy. I have done this classification in my dissertation more than thirty years ago (for its shortened version in English see the Bibliography). Evidently, within the limitations of the present article I cannot even quote the most important sources such as the detailed description of a shamanistic seance in Greenland (*Eiríks saga rauða* 4). In any case, many of the texts are easily accessible in Boyer's book (1986). The first chapter of this book contains an exposé on Northern concepts of the soul; the word *double* in the title is in a way a kind of code word for the spirit. This has two forms of manifestation, which are called *bodily soul* and *free soul*. Of course, it was thought that death is not the end, and in the body or close to it there still remained something that gave a kind of life to it. Thus, for instance, the dead guard their treasures in the grave, they keep on existing as the *living dead* (Old Norse *draugr*), and visit their neighborhood as 'returning dead'. This belief can certainly be traced back to the cult of ancestors, with its duality known from other cultures as well: the ancestor is not always benevolent, and has to be put in a good mood. From the point of view of our study, it is the second aspect, the second form, the *free soul* that has a major significance. This is

the soul that can leave the body and return into it—in ecstasy—and in dreams, which I go as far as calling *everyday ecstasy* here. Texts without anyone having a dream are very rare. It is certain that dreams were extremely important in Scandinavian pagan culture. In Old Norse literature, dreams always come true. This is not a literary phenomenon; much more, it is related to the concept of fate, which can be foreseen but cannot be avoided. The symbiosis between the natural and the supernatural was so close that we can claim that in every culture (excepting that of the "global village"?), the supernatural is a natural part of existence.

A second religious basis of shamanism is the concept that the world is made out of a certain number of layers, e.g. three, seven or nine. The shaman's spirit was able to get through from one layer to another while searching for the supernatural causes of certain phenomena. When depicting the shaman's journey to the other world, some Siberian groups represented the shaman climbing up to, or down from, a tree, which symbolized the World Tree. The World Tree was a well-known concept among medieval Scandinavians (*Yggdrasill*). It is extremely significant that the seer (a woman—*vǫlva*!) in the Eddic poem *Vǫluspá* (Vsp 2) recalls nine worlds, nine branches and "the famous Measure-Tree (*miotvið maeran*) under the ground (*fyr mold neðan*)." The female seer probably took an underground shamanistic journey, in which she climbed down from a tree (in a pit), to find out about the creation of the world. This type of information is typically to be received from under the ground, mostly from the dead, from giants or dwarves. Indeed, in the sacrificial pits (the so-called *square enclosures*) of the Celtic Iron Age, entire trees have been found, which were put into the pits simultaneously with the sacrifice—another example of the perspectives of "Celto-Germanic" research!

As for ecstasy, the distinction between the techniques needed for its attainment and the behavior during ecstasy is only a theoretical one, because the texts typically do not differentiate them clearly. They usually mention hunger, thirst, sleeplessness and pain. Fire has the power of the restoration to life on the one hand, and of complete destruction (e.g. of the returning dead) on the other. In many texts, the shaman has an *outside seat* (Old Norse *útiseta*) at

the crossroads and/or at a burial mound (with the aim of necromancy). Away from human habitation, he also "profits" from isolation and the state of excitement at night. We should not forget that the shaman was convinced of the actual existence of the powers he evoked. Understandably, he had all reasons to be excited. In an environment of oral culture he had often heard about the power of the dead, and this certainly "conditioned" him (cf. Honko, 1962, passim). Not surprisingly, this excitement included sexual excitement as well. This is indicated by the Old Norse term *ergi*, which is frequently mentioned when the text describes the magical process of *seiðr* carried out by men and women alike. The direct meaning of the word *ergi* (*argr* adj.) is passive homosexuality, perhaps an effeminate behaviour. The close connection between *ergi* and magic, which gives a quite negative denotation to the term, may entitle us to regard *ergi* as the negative aspect of sexual ecstasy in its totality. Heterosexuality was after all the only legitimate and accepted form of sexuality in Scandinavian culture.

In the texts, the signal indicating that someone has reached the state of ecstasy (or got back from it into the normal world) is yawning. The spirit leaves the body through the open mouth and makes a long journey in animal shape. Persons who possessed this skill were called *hamrammr* (strong in *hamr*), and *hamr* meant the free soul as well as the shape it took. Such persons often appear in the sagas. They typically use their powers to further their own aims, but these frequently include the well-being of the family and the clan. The impression of egotism may be a bit too superficial from this aspect. We should not forget that medieval Icelandic society just as the Germanic tribes in the migration period were not organized states, therefore in their case we should look at the aspect of serving the community in a somewhat different way. Besides, it was not in the interest of the Christian church to stress this positive side of magic. The "loci classici" of the cult of Odin clearly attest to the use of ecstasy in order to achieve positive goals. Instead of the well-known verses of the Hávamál, in which the god obtains the ancient wisdom preserved in the runes, let me quote here from chapter 17 of Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga*: "Odin changed his shape [...] His body lay there as though he was sleeping, but *he* was a bird,

a beast, a fish or a snake, and he immediately set out to far-off lands."

The Scandinavians had very concrete ideas about the shape of the *hamr*, which they believed to be an animal hide (e.g. of bears or wolves). Persons clad in such hides were called *berserkr* or *úlfheðinn*; these words also denoted persons in the ecstasy of battle. Different sources imply that bear's hide and wolf's hide imply ecstasy. The berserks were warriors of Odin as well, and Odin was the god of ecstasy (*óðr*) par excellence.

In order to practice magic (at least in the process of *seiðr*), the shaman needed certain paraphernalia. As the word for the shaman implies (perhaps not accidentally a feminine form—*vǫlva* f.—the masculine words, like *seiðmaðr*, the equivalent of *seidkona,* are later), these included first of all his/her staff (*vo vǫlr*). In addition, the hairstyle, the head-dress and the belt were also important. The saga of Eric the Red (*Eiríks saga rauða,* Ch. 4) tells us that she had "a fur bag hanging from her belt, in which she kept her magic tools she needed for her art." The text does not mention what these magic tools were (other texts, however, contain some more explicit references to them). It also fails to tell us exactly what the *seiðhjallr* was, the scaffold, staircase or platform that the shaman had to climb in the process of *seiðr*. Is it really unthinkable to suspect a connection with the shaman's tree, which also had to be climbed to attain ecstasy? In such cases some scholars call for the help of the so-called auxiliary disciplines, e.g. onomatology and archaeology. Unfortunately, no magical scaffolds have been found (they were probably not stable enough to survive 2000 years, or at least the conversion to Christianity), but the root *hjallr* does exist in some Danish place names!

Just as importantly, some archeological finds are still unpublished.[6] I am referring to a woman's grave, the No. 4 grave in the graveyard of Fyrkat in Jutland (eighth century). Close to where the belt, which has not been preserved, was originally placed, some amulets, pendants (from the Urals, i.e. imported) in the shape of owl's claws, a miniature chair-shaped pendant and a mortar were found as well as some other objects, which were presumably also worn on the belt. On the basis of the evidence collected in my dis-

sertation from 1968 and other studies, Dr. Vierck concludes in his lengthy article that this is the grave of a *vǫlva*, a shaman from the Danish pagan period (eighth century) with all the necessary utensils including the ones from the Urals. The guardian spirits were called, as it probably happened, to sit on the chair (cf. with the term *varðlokur* from the *Eiríks saga rauða*, which is probably a compound of a verb denoting *enticement* – cf. German *locken* –, and one of the words for the free soul). The owl's claw pendants may be related to ornithomorph hallucinations (guardian spirits were often imagined as birds). Finally, the mortar was obviously used to grind something with it. Let us recall the bag in which the shaman of the *Eiríks saga rauða* kept her magic tools. Near the belt of the *vǫlva* in Fyrkat, a bag was found with some hundred seeds of henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger)* in it, a toxic and hallucinogenic plant containing Scopolamine. Vierck provides the reader with a clinical description of the plant's toxic effects, which is quite fascinating for Scandinavist studies. We find in it, for instance, stony glare, extreme fits of anger (*berserkr*) and lascivious movements (*ergi*).[7]

This epoch-making discovery shows us once more the indispensability of cooperation between different disciplines. This is not the first time that Scandinavian studies and archeology came to each other's aid and managed to break through the laconic style of isolated texts and the silence of isolated digs. In terms of shamanism, this again reveals the age and the inner strength of a phenomenon that is based on human nature.

Notes

1 The ostensibly fundamental difference between religion and magic in my view does not exist.

2 Cf. the articles by Lewis, Gilberg, Hultkrantz and Basilov in vol. 1. of Hoppál, 1984.

3 See Thorpe, 1983, and especially Lewis-Williams, 1989.

4 See ch. 1 of Varagnac and Chollot-Varagnac, 1978, p. 7: "Dès les origines de l'homme, il y a certainement eu des êtres doués de pouvoirs paranormaux," which cannot easily be denied. Whether this implies that shamanism can be traced back, as Varagnac claims, to the times when man developed, i.e. millions of years ago, is something I would not like to go into. But at least for the last 25 000 years see the work of Clottes and Lewis-Williams, 1996.

5 It is a fallacy to confine oneself to one genre only, as does Dillmann, 1986, a work of more volume than substance, in spite of its length of more than 1,200 typewritten pages.
6 My deceased archeologist colleague Dr. Hayo Vierck has discussed the find with me. I follow here his unpublished article from ca. 1980, which is partially based on my 1968 thesis.
7 Cf. the homeopathic handbooks (e.g. Boericke, Materia Medica, s.v. Hyoscyamus), which even list things like the illusion of flying, obsession with nakedness, sexual phantasies, nymphomaniac features, even bluish-pale skin and a biting reflex—all this is well known in the Old Norse depiction of the *berserks*!

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THE KING, THE CAT, AND THE CHAPLAIN
KING CHRISTIAN IV'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE SAMI SHAMANS OF NORTHERN NORWAY AND NORTHERN RUSSIA IN 1599

RUNE BLIX HAGEN

Christian IV's Northern Voyage in 1599
Historical background

The young Danish–Norwegian king, Christian IV (1577–1648), led a dramatic expedition to the north of his lengthy realm during three spring and summer months in 1599. Their voyage proceeded to Vardø and further eastward into northern Russia. Looking back, this expedition emerges as having been an extremely daring project, and it may have been one of the most dangerous endeavors any European monarch was ever actively involved into. The king sailed northward with a naval fleet that consisted of half of the Danish–Norwegian navy, and most of the vessels were equipped with dozens of cannons. The purpose of this expedition was to clear His Majesty the King's "streams" of pirates, freebooters and other undesirable elements who often traversed the area to the north of Vardø without having paid Danish–Norwegian duties.

Eight naval vessels departed from Copenhagen in mid-April and returned to the capital in mid-July 1599. Hundreds of noblemen and sailors participated in this enormous coastal operation. On the royal 44 gun *Victor* alone we can assume that the crew tallied at least 200 men. And there are two accounts that tell of this voyage to the Arctic Ocean. Both of these logs contain interesting topographic and ethnographic information. The logbooks tell of stormy and forbidding coasts, of confrontations with Sami sorcery, Russian officers, the natural environment and living conditions.

Christian IV had been crowned as king of Denmark–Norway in 1596. His first major confrontation, relating to foreign politics, came about as a result of the realm's relationship to Sweden and the king's policy concerning coastal dominion. Sweden, at the end of

the sixteenth century, was seeking to expand its borders, and to make use of its power to impose tax, in the fjord regions of northern Norway. The country threatened Danish–Norwegian interests in northern Scandinavia, and this is the reason that lies behind the king's decision to depart on this voyage. He wished to conduct a personal inspection of conditions in the northernmost part of the dualmonarchy, show the flag and, by so doing, mark his sovereignty in the northern regions.

The voyage accounts tell how *Victor* passed Loppa, where Finnmark begins, on 10 May. A few days later, they sailed around the North Cape, and on 14 May they could anchor their vessels in Bussesundet, close to Vardø. The king continued further eastward with his flagship and some of the largest ships. They confiscated English and Dutch merchant ships, and claimed Danish–Norwegian sovereignty over the coastal waters of northern Russia. Following a terrible collision with an underwater reef, the king and his party had to turn around. He had probably intended to sail even further eastward though. On the return voyage, the squadron was badgered by an excessively bad and cold weather. The logbook authors praise God for having returned them safely from the end of the world and back to civilization.

The experiences of this voyage led the king into enacting a policy of meeting force with force in relation to Sweden, Russia and other merchant states of Western Europe who sailed in northern waters. But the confiscation of English merchant ships resulted in a considerable bitterness between Elizabeth I and Christian IV. Negotiations failed. However, the relationship to England improved when the Stuart king, James I, was enthroned. James came from Scotland, where he reigned as King James VI, and was married to a sister of Christian. James became the mediator in the confrontation between Denmark–Norway and Sweden at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The rivalry over northern Scandinavia, between Denmark–Norway and Sweden, culminated in the so-called Kalmar War (1611–1613) which Christian proved victorious in. In his dealings with Russia, the king made use of the bailiffs in Finnmark. The king's bailiff would go to the town called Malmis (today Murmansk) once a year to present territorial

claims to the Russians. These trips of pretension continued up to 1813.

Several Norwegian historians have claimed that Christian's daring 1599 voyage ensured the future status of Finnmark as part of the Norwegian landscape. If Christian had not equipped the coastal fleet, as he did four hundred years ago, the northernmost district of Norway would probably have been a part of Sweden today.

Caught in a Hurricane at the North-Sea

Traces of this dramatic journey to the end of the world have been found recorded in the two travel logs of the king's personal secretaries, Sivert Grubbe (1566–1636) and Jonas Carisius (1571–1619). Let us begin by listening to their comments as the fleet, now on its way to Copenhagen, has departed from northern Russia and Finnmark. The time of year is mid-June, and our party is caught in a veracious storm as the ships flounder at sea close to the Arctic Circle. [All my references to the diaries in: Rørdam, 1873 (S. Grubbe), and Schlegel, 1773 (J. Carisius).]

"14 June 1599. Thursday. The storm rages now more terribly than ever before on our journey, and it is raining incessantly. At night the captain sat next to my berth. He complained about not being able to sleep due to the weather and because day and night were without end."

Things looked very bad on the way southward. Forward progress became impossible as the fleet sailed through the hurricane blowing from the southwest. Icy cold gusts of Arctic Ocean winds con-

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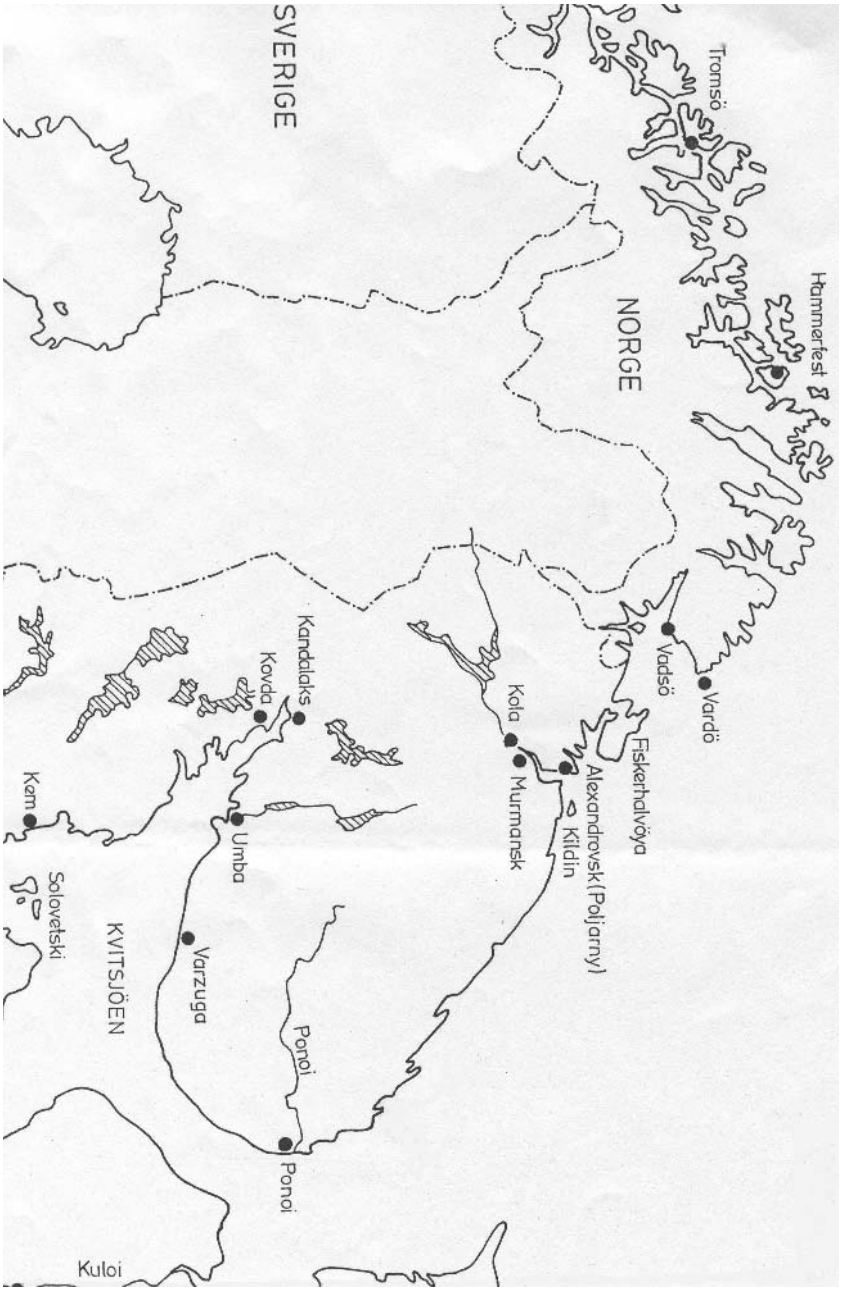
North-Eastern Europe or The North Calotte
After about four weeks at sea, the Danish–Norwegian King Christian IV and his naval fleet of eight ships reached the fortress at Vardø in mid-May 1599. From Vardø the royal *Victor* and two other ships sailed further east along the coast of the Kola Peninsula. Following a serious collision with an underwater reef near Kildin, the king and his ships had to return. It is possible that the king's plan was to sail all the way to Ponoi, or perhaps as far as Arkhangelsk.


SVERIGE
NORGE
Tromsö
Hammerfest
Vadsö
Vardö
Fiskerhalvöya
Alexandrovsk (Poljarny)
Kildin
Murmansk
Kola
Kandalaks
Kovda
Kem
Umba
Solovetski
KVITSJÖEN
Varzuga
Ponoi
Ponoi
Kuloi

tributed, too, to making the situation unsafe. Even the Victor—the huge and trusty admiral ship of the king himself—was experiencing difficulties. Seasickness also seemed to have afflicted several of the men. These were defined as "good berth-huggers" in the accounts. The crew of the *Victor*, it was reported, could hear the booms of three cannons coming from another ship; this was a signal to the rest of the company indicating that someone had died and that the body was now being lowered into the sea. Shortly before this incident, however, the court chaplain had held a sermon on man's resurrection. And, ultimately, the dread and terror of their plight came to inflict Grubbe, too, who concludes his notes of 14 June by telling how all those on board—without exception—had given alms to the poor. Having confessed their sins in this way, they hoped to soothe the wrath of the Lord. But, as we shall see, soon there were other powers, too, trying to get rid of the coastal fleet.

"No land can be seen," writes Carisius, who tells how the topsail can not be raised, as night falls, because the winds are blowing so severely. He also comments on the large number of whales observed swimming close to the *Victor*'s hull. Whales of enormous dimensions are reported on in other connections as well. Being similar to the *Victor* in size, they are described as demon whales.

The weather was no better the following day, on Friday, 15 June. "Apart from the large storm sail, which was raised to some extent, we could not unfurl any sail," reports Carisius, who truly believes that his final hour is close at hand and who beseeches God to save him from the impending doom. Feeling equally as downcast, Grubbe writes: "The winds blew once again, shaking us to the core, and we drifted on the surge at the mercy of the winds. Our only comforts lie in knowing there is little risk of running ashore and that we are in the open sea."

The Sami Cat of Northern Russia

During the king's journey along his rather extended realm, four hundred years ago, a cat came to take the center stage as the journey's most heated topic of debate, according to contemporary rec-

ords. But then it was not any kind of cat either. Its appearance alone indicated that this could not be a common pet. No, indeed, the cat on board the *Victor* was uncommon: it had long, black fur and, according to Grubbe, the animal was "much larger than our Danish cats." Anund of Nidaros—the *Victor*'s mate—grew up in Finnmark, and he obviously knew what he was talking about when he put the blame for the incessant storm on the cat. Was there not something devilishly black and demonic about the cat? Let us follow Grubbe's narration:

"On Saturday, 16 June, the sky was clear but the winds continued to blow as strongly as before. We observed a bird that our captain called Ellu. This bird may be frequently seen during severe storms in these parts. On our boat we had a large cat which was stolen from a Sami woman on the island called Kildin. It was taken away by one of the captain's (or king's) musicians." The catnapping incident occurred as the *Victor* was about to raise its anchor and return to Vardø. Having taken the cat, the musician dashed down to the shore to avoid being left behind. The Sami woman "...ran after him, crying and raving, to get her cat back. The horn player threw a half-dollar piece in her direction, to appease her, but the discontented woman continued to cry out for her cat which the rogue nonetheless carried with him on board." Not having forgotten this incident, the mate seemed to understand the connection while the storm continued its mighty wrath on this particular Saturday. Anund had experienced many things during his long stay in Finnmark, and he knew perfectly well what the Sami could do with their magical powers. The catnapper had unleashed the Sami woman's unearthly powers. A curse rested on the cat, in other words, and it was this, which would not abide the storm. Because of his authority, many crewmembers trusted Anund's explanation. But it seems that our commentator remains rather skeptical to any hint of connection between Sami sorcery, the demonic cat and the storm at sea. Grubbe goes on to describe Anund as superstitious since he wanted "...to placate the wrath of the gods Aeolus and Neptune by killing the cat." One could never know though. Perhaps it was best to follow old Anund's advice? The mate meant that someone close to the king ought to tell him that the cat could no longer be toler-

ated on board because that "...we had such a horrendously unusual storm and headwind." Why was it not possible for the Norwegian mate to take matters in his own hands and simply throw the darned animal overboard? Well, the problem he had to contend with was that the king had become fond of the cat. To suggest putting the cat to death could, in the worst possible way, be looked upon as a serious affront of the captain general—or regarded as lese majesty (high treason). The whole affair ended in a discussion between the parties involved. Christian IV was simply not willing to get rid of the cat. But as Saturday evening transpired, a scheme was worked out to convince the king of the curse that laid upon the *Victor*.

On Sunday, 17 June, Grubbe writes: "After the court chaplain had delivered his sermon, we accused the cat of being responsible for our plight, before the king, saying that it was to blame for these storms. We pleaded for the cat to be thrown overboard. The captain though would hear of no such thing." Instead the king put on a speech in defense of his precious cat. The northern Russian cat seems to have amused the king by its amazing dexterity as it swung like a pendulum among the ship's ropes and rigging. It would even catch birds, at times, to the king's great amusement. No, the king would not hear mention of parting from the cat. In the company of several of his closest companions, the king adamantly insisted on how nothing of what he had returned with from his northern journey was "...so precious as this cat and a Russian lantern—the latter of which was unusually large and handsome, and designed with some kind of Russian glass called Talcum. He had received the glass as a

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A Sami and his familiar spirit

A French Gentleman, *Pierre Martin de la Martinière*, travelling on the North Calotte in 1670 wrote about his visit to the Sami people of Varanger (not so far away from Vadsö): "In each family there is a great black Cat which is highly valued by them: The Laplanders talk to it as if it was a reasonable creature. Every night they go out of their Huts with it to consult it alone, and it will follow like a dog, either at fishing or hunting. Tho' this animal looks like a cat in appearance, yet had I had ever so little more superstition, I should have believ'd it to have been a familiar spirit ministring to them: A terrible sight to a southern Christian."

gift from Sylnanich, a Russian officer, who had also sold different kinds of furs to us rather cheaply," notes Grubbe. Both of the journals that I refer to are also incredibly rich in historical, ethnographic and topographic information. Regarding the cat's fate, the prosecutors came to lodge further complaints before the king. Their final argument, they believed, would convince the king that the cat was a satanic harbinger.

How the Court Chaplain Settles the Cat's Fate

As we have seen, the ship's mate meant that the cat had to go, while the king himself warmly defended his beloved pet. The court chaplain, Master *Anders Bentsson Dall*, gave a sermon since it was Sunday. By shouting above howling gusts of wind, he urged the entire crew to call upon the Lord in this desperate hour. The crew did not comprehend the seriousness of this though and they roared with laughter. But they were not laughing because of the chaplain's serious admonitions. No, it seems that the cat had stolen the show in the middle of this rather solemn service by flinging itself from one rope to another on the ship's rigging. All of this happened to the crew's great amusement. The audience, forgetting the sanctity of the moment, became distracted and got carried away by the cat's silly pranks. When the court chaplain discovered why they were laughing, while listening to the Word of God, he became furious. Not only had they insulted the chaplain but they acted sacrilegious as well. Master Anders abandoned his scripture and began instead to scold the sailors. This was not the moment to laugh but to beg God of mercy, thundered the chaplain. The cavorting but satanic cat, it seems, had managed to annoy the chaplain and hinder the crew from hearing the Word of God. Now the court chaplain, too, demanded to rid the ship of this monster. His pleas came to be decisive in what, more and more, turned into a court case against the cat from the North. We know though of several instances where ordinary legal proceedings were held in cases raised against wolves, dogs, wild boars and other animals during the 1500s and 1600s. In many European countries, the judiciaries treated cases of

this kind and, ultimately, conducted cases against the forces of nature (Febvre, 1982, p. 440; Quaife, 1987, p. 46 and Rheinheimer, 1995, pp. 284–85).

The king was not present during the court chaplain's service. As a result, he did not take part in all the fuss related to the large cat. Christian was immediately given an account of the episode and "...had to requite our charges." Following the row made during the service, the king also came to understand that the cat had to go. Grubbe emphasizes how good it was for them to have this line of defense. And thus the "miserable cat" verdict rested upon Anund, the mate, who was among the first to raise a case against the Sami woman's cat. The old skipper did not delay his ruling: the cat was to be thrown out to sea to drown. At this point, while the animal's fate was being discussed, it appeared as though the cat understood where matters were about to lead. We sense some pity with the cat in Carisius's depictions from this Sunday: "It was odd to observe how quiet the cat became, from that time forth, when mention was made of throwing it out, and how it huddled, as though it knew what was being spoken of."

The verdict was unanimous but, once again, the king intervened. And, despite everything, a king has the final word. A royal prerogative of pardon was granted—even though, in this case, it all revolved around a Russian cat accused of sorcery. Drowning the cat was punishment too severe, according to Christian Fredriksen. The royal decree allowed the cat to be put in a small vessel, making sure it was bound and could not escape, and to provide it with proviant for one month. It might be able to make its way back to its mistress who hardly had any desire to lose it in the first place, and who had shed so many tears that anyone would be led to believe it was her child. The king reasoned thus. However, the ship's mate insisted on killing the cat. He feared the dire consequences if it returned to the Sami woman in Russia. But it all ended, as the king demanded: the cat was put in a vessel, carefully lowered to the raving waves "and departed from us." Grubbe concludes the cat story in this way, while Carisius notes that "we put the cat in a large tub, on 17 June, equipped with bread and fish for several days."

And, naturally, both writers tell their readers how the weather

changed. The winds calmed on that very same evening. "Now we got the kind of wind that was to our liking," Carisius writes. Monday, 18 June, is described as a beautiful day with a light northern breeze and favorable wind. "Perhaps Aeolus and Neptune were placated by our cat offering," concludes the king's secretary. *Thorkild Hansen*, the Danish writer, regarded this incident in a larger perspective when he wrote the following in 1966: "With some good fortune, the cat afloat in the tub could have turned Denmark–Norway into the most important great power, and made Christian IV the most powerful, contemporary monarch" (Hansen, 1966, p. 104).

The whole story about the cat that the Sami woman sat loose on the ship, might be interpreted as a variant of what Éva Pócs (1999, p. 45) recently has called 'sent cat.'

Sami Gand Sorcery and Shamanism

Aside from the mentioned cat story, the expedition came into touch with other kinds of Sami sorcery in both Vardø and Russia. The Danes knew of the rumors concerning Sami sorcery, as did many others throughout early modern Europe. Records indicate that the expedition members experienced the indigenous people's sorcery with fearful interest and curiosity. Even though numerous witches had been put to death at the stake throughout Norway and Denmark, at the end of the 1500s, no one had yet instigated a similar policy of persecution directed towards the Sami for their particular skills. The cat story, as we have seen, seems to suggest that the king and his men nourished less fear for sorcery than what the common sailors did. But not too many years would elapse before Christian IV turned into a monarch agitated by demons: who pursued and hunted down all kinds of sorcery—including Sami sorcery. As a collective group, the Sami posed a threat to the territorial expansion of Denmark–Norway, its state building and its endeavors to spread civilization in the North. Fearful of Sami sorcery, the Norwegians, according to reports forwarded to the king in 1608, did not dare to inhabit the fjords of Finnmark, which were popu-

lated by the Sami. Thus the king, in a letter dated February 1609, commanded his northern-Norwegian district governors to hunt down and eradicate all kinds of Sami sorcery. Those who practiced this form of sorcery would be put to death. This is how the king spoke no more than ten years after his sea voyage. In Finnmark, the civil courts held witch trials for 27 Sami individuals between 1601–1692 (Hagen, 1999, p. 44). Suspicion of sorcery was one of the charges that arose every time serious conflicts emerged between the Sami and Danish–Norwegian authorities during this period.

Sami witchcraft was known to entail three characteristics, according to educated Europeans of the early modern age. The Sami were renown for their abilities to tell fortunes and predict future events. Ever since the Nordic sagas were recorded, this feature of the indigenous populations of the North was well known. The Sami people are described in Nordic sagas as highly skilled in various kinds of magic. In general, Old Norse sources give the impression that all Sami were great sorcerers (Mundal, 1996, p. 112). It was forbidden to travel to Finnmark's Sami, according to ancient Norwegian laws, to have one's fortune told. But closely associated with their powers of prophecy were their abilities to narrate events. By the use of a magic drum (*runebomme*), and other rituals, a Sami shaman (*noaide*) would allow himself to fall into a trance—at which time his spirit would be led far away. Upon awakening, he could tell a patron of events that had occurred at the site to which his spirit had traveled.

Satan himself was thought of having given these drums to the Sami, that according to Christians immersed in demonological concepts of shamanism. The drum, or instrument of the Devil, was the means by which a sorcerer would summon his demons. Such demons were believed to reside in a drum, and these were revived by striking the drum. In this manner, each drumbeat was intended for Satan in hell—to quote a Swedish missionary working among the Sami. While under the spell of his satanic trance, a shaman would communicate with his attendant demon that, because of his tremendous acuity and faculty for moving swiftly, could divulge global events to his master. As a result, seventeenth-century missionaries appointed to the Sami regions made necessary arrangements to burn

the drums and to destroy the pagan gods of the Sami. The demonizing of this pantheistic-like religion proliferated throughout the seventeenth century. And Sami who believed in their abilities to predict the future were accused of being satanic prophets.

"Gand" was the third kind of sorcery attributed to the Sami. Spellcasting—or "gand" (diabolicus gandus)—was what Norwegians, and other pious men and women, feared most during the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Sami were known to cast their evil spells across vast distances. In fact, such spells could be carried upon the northern winds and result in illnesses among people far to the South in Europe. Shooting or sending spells 'on the wind' were also a well-known malefic magic in Russia (Ryan, 1998, pp. 51 and 67). These beliefs were asserted with great conviction by some of the greatest intellectuals residing in France, England and Denmark. Among others, the famous French demonologist Jean Bodin (1530–1596) had a lot to say about the evil magic of 'les sorciers de Lappie' (Bodin, 1988, pp. 90b, 98b and 99b). The "gand" was imagined to be something physical, as a kind of magical projectile. The Swedish exiled archbishop Olaus Magnus (1490–1557), for instance, spoke of this kind of spell as small leaden arrows, at the middle of the 16th century (Olaus Magnus, 1996, book 3 chap. 16). And the Nordland vicar, Petter Dass (1647–1707) described the Sami spell as vile, dark blue flies—otherwise known as Beelzebub's flies—at the end of the seventeenth century. Historical court records, from Finnmark and Nordland, offer specific descriptions and actual illustrations of the Sami "gand." One of the passages even mentions that the "gand" resembles a mouse with heads at both front and rear. Consequently, the Sami were known to bewitch by casting spells upon people. This is the kind of bewitching that is reported upon in the Sami sorcery trials of seventeenth-century Finnmark. Some witch trials were also said to contain elements of shamanism, but only in limited numbers. Let us listen for a while to some lines from a poem by Petter Dass:

The Lapp may well use his old "gann" from afar;
The flies of Beelzebub powerful are
An bite where the witchcraft determines

They go to a man or they go to a beast,
Attacking the helpless deserving it least,
Spread terror wherever they wander.

To anger and peevishness lightly aroused,
The Lapp takes his vengeance in enemy's house
Sends "gann" to his enemy's premise (Dass, 1954, p. 73).

In Touch with Sami Shamanism

On the journey northward to Finnmark and the Kola coast, four hundred years ago, Christian IV and his men came into contact with all these various forms of Sami sorcery.

Several of the largest naval ships sailed in the vicinity of Kola from 15 May–28 May 1599. The Danes had proficient time to become thoroughly acquainted with the island called Kildin. After having run aground on a submerged rock, the *Victor* had been heavily damaged and had to be careened at Kildin. The reparations took several days. According to the travel logs, we can read how their visit gave them ample time to explore local flora, nature and way of living. Hans Lindenov, one of the king's men, had come into contact with a Sami, shortly before the ship set sail to Vardø, who could "gand" (*ganfinnus*)—or cast spells. Lindenov paid the Sami in order to hear news from Copenhagen. Unfortunately, Lindenov had to leave rather hastily while the Sami had started his preparations. It is suggested here that the Sami was in the middle of his trance-like ritual. And even though this story rather suddenly comes to a conclusion, since the Dane had to head off to his ship, it is of interest because it tells of acquaintance with Sami sorcery. This Russian Sami could send out his soul far away, discovering the fate of people living in Copenhagen. The Danes' comprehension of a close connection between the ability to "gand," which was synonymous with evil sorcery or maleficium, and shamanism is also interesting to notice. The relationship between evil witchcraft and shamanism is considered to be the black and white side of the same belief system.

While the ships were docked in Vardø, at the end of May, and making preparations for their return trip homewards, the king was paid a visit by several Sami bailiffs. The king made use of this opportunity to gain information on the imposition of Swedish taxes upon the Sami inhabitants of northern Scandinavia. Carisius, however, was more interested in one of the deputy bailiffs who could "gand." And Grubbe, at about the same time, described his meeting with a "gand-Sami" (*ganfinne*): There was a gand-Sami on the island who was called *Quikwas*. The District Governor of Vardøhus, Hans Olsen, referred to him and told me how he had said that our captain was in great peril onboard his ship, but that he, on such-and-such a day, would return unharmed, something which actually happened. This Quikwas gave me one of his sons, who was a dwarf with an odd appearance, but his mother refused to let him go." Consequently, the Sami had kept the District Governor informed about what happened with the king during the dangerous voyage along the Kola coast. The description of Quikwas as a "gand-Sami" indicates, too, how this man was able to cast spells by making use of "gand" sorcery. Obviously, the District Governor believed in the Sami's skills and, once again, we notice the close connection between a Sami who masters divination and black magic.

I think this narration from 1599 confirm one of the conclusions in Éva Pócs's book *Between the Living and the Dead*: "...the belief systems of European shamanism and witchcraft developed as twin siblings of common parentage and were closely bound to each other" (Pócs, 1999, p. 166).

To Launch a Witch-hunt

These reports of how skilled Sami sorcery could be, have also several other interesting features. The latter incident gives us an important inkling of some of the background for the large number of brutal witch-hunts, which Finnmark would come to experience throughout the 1600s. Since Christian IV turned the northern regions into his first major foreign adventure, he made sure that an efficient and energetic commanding officer was commissioned at

Vardřhus. *Hans Olsen Koefod* was endowed with Vardøhus Fortress, and Finnmark, in June 1597. The man traveled across great expanses of land in northern Norway, in the winter of 1597/98 and the subsequent winter, to investigate Swedish taxation of the Sami. Conscientiously, he presented his findings to the king. It is likely that Koefod's report on the Swedish drive towards the coast was what convinced Christian to sail northwards. Koefod was known for actively taking care of the crown's northern policies in a highly satisfactory manner. Not only did he disclose Swedish expansionism, without also having impounded goods that were charged levy by Russian bailiffs. This stern and strong bachelor was the king's right-hand man. Things looked rather optimistic with such an energetic man at the outermost outpost of the far-stretched realm, but Hans Olsen Koefod suddenly died in Vardø, in May 1601, barely 40 years old. This was a hard blow for King Christian when, during the summer, he was informed about Koefod's unexpected death. Koefod had not died of natural causes, however. His death was due to a spell that had been cast upon him. A Norwegian and a Sami were said to have joined forces in order to bewitch the king's emissary. And, because of this, the stage was set for the largest peacetime persecution in Norwegian history. Vardø became the site of the first two bonfires used in the convictions of the Sami, *Morten Olsen*, from the Sami community in Varanger (*Sii'da*), and the Norwegian, *Christen Schreder* living in Vardø, who were condemned to death at the stake for having cast a spell on the District Governor. It is likely that their mutual conspiracy was the result of the Norwegian having paid the Sami to cast a lethal spell on Hans Olsen. Morten and Christen may have conspired with others in their plot against the king's civil servant, but only these two are mentioned in administrative reports since large sums of money were left behind in their estates. The first couple of witch trials in the North are omens of escalating domestic dangers—in addition to the external perils posed by Swedes, Russians and foreign merchants.

During the seventeenth century the county of Finnmark held about 140 civil trials connected with the crime of witchcraft. About ninety cases are known to have resulted in death sentences. When we take the low population of Finnmark into consideration,

the persecution of alleged witches is among the worst in all of Europe.

Witch-trials in Finnmark 1593–1692:

Sami – Female	8
Sami – Male	19
Norwegians – Female	103
Norwegians – Male	8
Total	**138**

English translation by Mark Ledingham

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