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# Supernatural Communication in Central and Eastern Europe

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## 1. ARCHAIC, UNIVERSAL FOUNDATIONS OF TECHNIQUES FOR CREATING CONTACT.

### The Living and the Dead

Our sources, reflecting on the mediatory techniques of the specialists as well as on everyday communicative practice, remark that early modern mediatory techniques (besides the common technique of attaining an altered state of consciousness) have certain general basic conditions that are common across the whole of Europe. The general characteristics of relationships between the living and the dead are a case in point. Mediatory practice (apart from visions with a Christian content) is primarily and fundamentally communication conducted with the dead as well as a predominantly „dead” demonic and spirit world. In the background (and differing from today) there was a close relationship between the living and the dead.

On the basis of rich contemporaneous and early modern source materials, English, French, German, and Russian researchers have recorded the characteristics of the relationship between the living and the dead in the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> Our data indicate that the Hungarian belief system may have shared similar characteristics. Paxton or the opinion that in Western Europe from the fifth to the eighteenth centuries, „the living and the dead coexisted in close proximity, and in many ways death was a natural part of life.”<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, Gurevich claims that the borders were passable in either direction; in the Middle Ages people had a wider receptive capacity in their sense of reality than in the eras that followed. In visions and dreams, they saw the invasion of the highest reality into everyday life; it was a way of discovering the secrets of the otherworld, or seeing into the future.<sup>3</sup> The living could even temporarily enter the otherworld when the dead and the demons — corresponding to the realm of God and the spirits in Christian mythology — appeared on Earth and snatched them away. Researchers analyzed the origins of Western and Northern European historical sources, and examined extant and more archaic traditions of Northeastern, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, which contributed to sketching out a general picture for the whole of Europe.

The dead, primarily individual or „personal dead” *revenants*, that is, the returning dead, arrived and stayed according to various time frameworks. The impersonal, communal dead also returned periodically: at the beginning of the year, in midwinter, and during other „death” periods.<sup>4</sup> Among the days of the dead, both the (Germanic) celebration of the winter solstice and the Celtic New Year’s Eve (November 1) were characterized by the various traditions of death sacrifice existing in Northern and Western Europe. The latter date was designated a commemorative death celebration by the Council of Cluny in the middle of the eleventh century, preparing the grounds for the doctrine of purgatory that emerged from the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>5</sup> Easter and Pentecost were the most important festivals of the dead in Orthodox East and Southeastern Europe. The dead would continue to return home so long as tensions, conflicts, and unresolved issues remained between the living and the dead. They also came back as guardians and as creatures of taboo and sanction that influenced fate. As Keith Thomas writes about early modern England: „in a relatively traditional society... it is

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<sup>1</sup> K. Ranke; Lecouteux, 1–24; Schmitt; Gurevič, chapter 4; Finucane.

<sup>2</sup> 1990, 17.

<sup>3</sup> 1987, 222,

<sup>4</sup> I have no room to quote the enormous quantity of literature concerning this question. A few important summaries: K. Ranke; Murko; Ränk; Straubergs; Pentikäinen.

<sup>5</sup> Le Goff 1981.

believed that in significant areas of life the behavior of the living should be governed by the presumed wishes of the dead”.<sup>6</sup>

All across Europe demonic soul troops, which followed on from the „communal visitors”, were known, particularly in the periods between Christmas and Epiphany, to visit the settlements of the living as hosts of „cloud-leading souls” swooping in tempests, or as repentant souls (or, in their most common Christian variant, unbaptized souls).<sup>7</sup> The common characterization of the otherworld of the hordes of the dead (among many local variations) is as a horizontal race above the Earth in storms or storm clouds, in an archaic netherworld neither in heaven nor on earth.<sup>8</sup> The development of the Christian variants was heavily influenced by the doctrines of purgatory from the thirteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The returning dead were essentially ambivalent about the living. Through the diverse forms of ancestor cults, death cults, and death sacrifices, they were involved in exchange relationships with them. Apart from those variants distinguished as bad or good souls, they became either guardians protecting their families, nations, and villages; or malevolent demons – for example, tempest demons who brought hail, or demons of pestilence who launched attacks on their own nations. In ancient Europe the good spirits ensured the agricultural fertility of the community in return for sacrifices; the welfare of the community depended on their good will.<sup>10</sup> The Christian forms of appeasement – mass, feast, and alms – appeared in the twelfth century. The archaic, kinder characteristics of the guardians of the good dead remain apparent in many peripheral areas of Europe to this day. (For example, in Eastern and Southeastern Europe storm-demon spirits protect the agricultural fertility of their villages, They are thought to fight battles in the clouds with the guardians of neighboring communities.)<sup>11</sup> In several European regions – in the Balkans, Ireland, and Scandinavia – a few attributes of the good dead have endured even into the Modern Age in a characteristic fairy mythology connected with death.<sup>12</sup>

During the festivals of the dead it was possible to contact the deceased as they visited the human world. Apart from sacrifices, the most important form of communication between the living and the dead took place in direct meeting – that is, in the soul-to-soul communications that occurred during altered states of consciousness. Both the hordes of the dead as well as individual souls could be encountered, and they appeared to the living as apparitions, visions, and dreams. The ritual mediatory techniques of professional seers were also bound to these occasions; even within Christianity their general framework was governed by the festivals of the dead.

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<sup>6</sup> 1971, 719.

<sup>7</sup> In Croatian, Serbian, and Hungarian there is reference to them as „unbaptized”; in Bulgarian, Romanian, and Greek as „shadows”. The Germanic *wütendes Heer*, *Nachtvolk*, *Nachtschar*, and *arme Seelen* represent a similar spirit host, as do the Slovakian and Macedonian *nav*, *navi*, and the like. Their Hungarian versions are *gonoszok*, *rosszak*, and also „unbaptized”. A few important sources are: Liungmann, 2:618–19; de Vries, 1:448–50; Zečević, 123–25; Strausz, 173–74; Dukova, 9; Candrea, 152–56, 163–64; Vlachsos, 235–36; Lawson, 288; Hahn, 161–62; Waschnitius; Meisen; Schmëing, 110–18; Kuret, 80–92. For a brief summary of the Hungarian data, see Pócs, 16–17.

<sup>8</sup> The transitional world between heaven and earth was a general characteristic of all Indo-European mythology. See, for example: Moszyński, 651–53; Rohde, 1:248–49; Schell, 315. The late antiquity and early Christian syncretistic demon world also populated this area: Hart, 89–135.

<sup>9</sup> Le Goff; Dinzelbacher, 74. It has naturally changed *from where* the dead returned from the other world, or from a transitional place of penitence, *to where* one had to go in order to meet them.

<sup>10</sup> Rohde, 246–49; Christiansen; Ränk; Lecouteux, 240–248.

<sup>11</sup> For an outline of the subject, see Pócs, 33–34, and , 150.

<sup>12</sup> Lecouteux 1992; Pócs 1989b.

## Soul Images, *Mara/Mahr/Mora*, and Werewolves

The image of a soul that departs from its body is familiar in all European cultures, as is the belief in alter egos, or doubles, that appear during altered states of consciousness. Although the richest sources for this are Germanic and Celtic (from the Middle Ages), and from our perspective the most extensive studies are also based upon those sources,<sup>13</sup> we are actually talking about common Indo-European (and similarly Hungarian) beliefs. In essence these are that humans have a double (to use one of the most frequently applied European terms, „shadow”; also ancient Nordic *fylgja* and Gaelic *cochoisiche*, and so forth) that can detach from, leave, or during a trance be sent by its owner, and after death live on as a dead soul. It can have physical and spiritual (soul) variants: the material variant being the „second body”, an exact physical replica of the human; and the spiritual variant being a phantom body, a haunting figure visible during dreams or trances. It has permanent „escorting soul” variants too; it can also fulfill the role of a „fate soul”. Both types of alter ego have the ability to metamorphose – that is, to take on the form of an animal. In this instance the double is not referred to here as a „free soul” (an otherwise more familiar term) that can detach from the body,<sup>14</sup> because of the existence of the second body, the physical alter ego.<sup>15</sup>

While the physical bodies of humans live on in the world, their alter egos are part of a different, alternative world. It is through the latter that an individual is able to communicate with the spiritual world and the dead, as well as to „see”: Anybody could have a double, but seeing could only occur in certain situations or states, or in certain „death” frameworks: that is, an individual in a condition without status (i.e., in a state of transition), or while the souls of the dead made their terrestrial visits. During the death festival periods, more or less anybody could contrive spontaneous contact with the alternative world, but for several reasons seers were able to take this contact further. Seers were thought to have innate abilities (by their selection by birth) and knowledge gained through an initiation into this supernatural world; consequently they had closer and more permanent contact with the dead themselves.

The *mara/mahr/mora* and werewolf creatures have to be mentioned in several contexts: first, when referring to general characteristics; second, with the fundamentals of the common belief system of the European with; and also in the context of the conditions for supernatural communication. *Mara/mahr/mora* creatures are the characteristic embodiments of double images, as well as of the creatures that have doubles – for example, the seers who are capable of trance. Slav researchers write about the assumed Indo-European relationship between the Germanic *mara/mahr/mare*, the French *cauchemar*, the southern Slavic *mora/mura/zmora/morina/morava*, the eastern Slavic (*kiki*)*mora*, the Romanian *moroi*, and so forth; one probable source of origin is related to the Indo-European word *\*móros* (death).<sup>16</sup> The same creatures can be known under different names – for example, the German *Alp* or *Trut*.

I will enumerate the most characteristic features briefly below without going into great detail about the rich and rather varied *mara/mora* images of Europe. The richest historical source about them is the Germanic literature of the Middle Ages, and in the Modern Age a wealth of data was collected about Swedish, northern and northeastern German, as well as

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<sup>13</sup> Campbell; Rohde; Schmëing; Meier To Bernd; Peuckert, 11–35; Paulson; Belmont, 52–63; Meyer-Matheis; Strömbäck; Grober-Glück; Lecouteux, 229–30.

<sup>14</sup> In this aspect Lecouteux’s argumentation has to be accepted; see his , 177–78.

<sup>15</sup> The richest traditions for this are in Celtic and Germanic areas in particular, even in the twentieth century. However, *mora* and witch beliefs also maintain the image of the physical double elsewhere – for example, among the Slav peoples.

<sup>16</sup> Toporov; Dukova, 30–36. The other source of origin, though less well supported is *\*mer* (drive out) (Dagmar Burkhart, 87).

southern Slavic belief systems.<sup>17</sup> These creatures (the term „mora creatures” is used from here on to refer to all European versions) are in close relationship with the images of doubles mentioned above: mora creatures are generally human beings who are able to send their souls out at night while in a trance. Thus they can make journeys by assuming the shapes of animals (snakes, butterflies, mice, hens, cats). They infiltrate people’s dwellings as incubi, confinement demons, or even as vampires, and they „ride upon” or torment people.

According to both Slavic or Germanic data, the mora creatures in general owe this ability to having been born with a caul, or in Eastern Europe even with teeth; the caul is the quasi-residence or embodiment of their alter egos. They are mostly female, as opposed to the mostly male werewolf; one of their southern Slavic names is *nočnica*, meaning „night woman”. All the peoples of Europe are acquainted with mora creatures that appear exclusively as dead souls – as returning souls – but generally it is clear that the dead moras are the dead variants of those who were mora creatures during their lifetime. They are the double that lives on. On the other hand, there are variations of mora figures who became independent as helping spirits – for example, among certain Slavic peoples and the French. Dead moras usually attack (or more rarely protect) their nation as an evil (or good) guardian. As community guardians they have relationships with the periodically returning dead and, in many areas, with unbaptized souls. So-called analogical injury (whereby an injury to a double hurts its owner), as well as the characteristic forms of „soul journeying”, such as walking on water or hovering above water, or traveling in a sieve or a bolter are characteristic motifs of the mora narratives.

Although it is evident that the mora figures were widely known as a result of several popular legends that spread throughout Europe, it is very likely that persistent local traditions are bound to variations of the creatures. At the same time, these possess several common European features among which the most important are their relationship with the dead and soul images, and with the figure of the witch. Characteristic features of the mora creatures vary from place to place and from people to people, as do the extent and manner in which they are connected to the figure of the witch (or identified with it completely). In considering the European witches, it can generally be stated that the complexity of the mora creatures is important in that it serves as the basis for a witch belief with similarly complex witch figures.

The European werewolf traditions are also closely connected with double images and with witches. The bedrock of werewolf (man wolf) beliefs in the existence of the animal alter ego – that is, the double that leaves the body during a trance and becomes an animal. This phenomenon is often connected to individuals born in a caul or, in other cases, with a „surplus of body parts.” In Eastern Europe, for example, werewolf creatures are thought to be born with a double set of teeth or, in many places in South and Eastern Europe, with two hearts. Werewolves with animal marks (tails, wings, or furry bodies) sometimes appeared. I mention only a few features of the werewolf that are essential to an understanding of the witch and sorcerer figures we are concerned with, as well as for recognizing their werewolf characteristics.<sup>18</sup> I consequently disregard the wealth of material about European belief in them; the Slavic, Germanic, Greek, Roman, and other variants.

Besides the wolf (and secondarily the dog), European werewolf images are also known to be connected with bears, snakes, cats, wild boars, and several other animals. Like the mora, werewolves are also double beings: their living and dead counterparts, as well as

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<sup>17</sup> The most important sources of the data are Krauss, 146–51; Mansikka, 624–25; Moszyński, 633–36; Đorđević, 2–32, 132; Candra, 152–56; Tokar’ev, 102–4; Zečević, 114–20; Georgieva, 168–69; Dagmar Burkhart, 87–89; MacCulloch, 2:288–90; F. Ranke, 1508–11; Runeberg, 137–38; Tillhagen; Peuckert, and ; Raudvere; Lecouteux. A Hungarian version of *mora* is the *nora*, see Barna.

<sup>18</sup> From the most important literature and sources of data, see: Hertz; MacCulloch, 2:291–94; Odstedt; Schmidt, 157–65; Abbot, 217; Lawson, 239–40; Kretzenbacher, 128; Mušlea and Bîrlea, 227–29; Zečević, 126–37; Dagmar Burkhart, 95–96.

their independent helping-spirit variants – such as the „sent wolf” – all exist in many parts of Central Europe, including Hungary. They also have close relationships with the returning dead and were thought to become active (become wolves) during the periods of the festivals of the dead. Dead, demonic werewolves can also be seen as guardians that attack or protect their tribes. In given cases in some belief systems (for example, in Swedish and Norwegian beliefs), they differ from the mora creatures only in that they are male. Despite this, they are seen as independent figures everywhere and exist alongside witches, even where their figures strongly merge with them (for example in Ukrainian and Romanian folk beliefs). As in Western, Northern, and Southern Europe, mora creatures contributed to the belief figure of the witch. In Eastern Europe this creature was the werewolf, and the Hungarian situation is peculiar in that the Hungarian witch was enriched by both.

## 2. TECHNIQUES OF SUPERNATURAL COMMUNICATION

*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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>) 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 *obsessio* is the besieged fortress being attacked from “outside.”<sup>23</sup>

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;<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> 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

<sup>19</sup> Crapanzano 1987, 14

<sup>20</sup> Bourguignon 1976. 7-8; Holm 1982. 8-15; Siikala 1982.

<sup>21</sup> Oesterreich 1921. Chapter I; Danforth 1985; Arbman 1963. III. 211, 239; Crapanzano 1987. 14; Goodman 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Benz 1972. 137-139.

<sup>23</sup> Benz 1972, 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. 29).

<sup>24</sup> 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 *Ergriffenheit* (*rapture*) and only use *Besessenheit* to refer to demonic possession (Benz 1972). On the category of mysticism in this context see Holm 1982. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Eliade 1987. 376: “the oracular medium ... loses all awareness ... and therefore often remains ignorant of the message that is communicated...” (according to Oesterreich’s distinction).

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<sup>26</sup> – 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".<sup>27</sup>

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.<sup>28</sup> 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."<sup>29</sup>

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*. Over-generalization 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.<sup>30</sup> 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<sup>31</sup> 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.)<sup>32</sup>

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

<sup>26</sup> Siikala 1982. 103; Holm 1982. 3

<sup>27</sup> Firth 1967. 296, quoted by Crapanzano 1987. 12. when he delineates the three categories of *possession*, *mediumism* and *shamanism*.

<sup>28</sup> Bourguignon 1973. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis I.M. (1971) 1978. 46

<sup>30</sup> Cf. for example Lixfeld 1972.

<sup>31</sup> According to Findesien (1957. 121-139), and later de Heusch (1971. 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 (1978; 1984) and Eliade (1987) too, the spirit journey is the most significant or at least the most important attribute of shamanism.

<sup>32</sup> Hultkranz's criteria include the celestial supreme being and the shaman's mystical flight along the *axis mundi*/cosmic tree emphasized by Eliade, Hultkranz 1989, 43.

through the example of Tungus shamanism.<sup>33</sup> The above difference in itself does not constitute enough proof: “Those who practise controlled possession, ‘mastering’ spirits, are in the Arctic known as ‘shamans’.”<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup>

Firth<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup>

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 SE 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.

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<sup>33</sup> Lewis 1978. 56.

<sup>34</sup> Lewis (1971) 1978., 64.

<sup>35</sup> Bourguignon 1968. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Hoffmann 1972., 95.

<sup>37</sup> Firth 1967. 296.

<sup>38</sup> 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 1984 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 dual categories of divine/demonic possession as holy man/wizard - witch/illness demon/evil fairy etc.

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<sup>39</sup> – 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 similar questions 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 neighbouring 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.<sup>40</sup> 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,<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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

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<sup>39</sup> The 1997 conference in Chantilly entitled “Le Chamanisme: perspectives Religieuses et Politiques”.

<sup>40</sup> I spent three weeks at Csíkkarcfalva and Csíkjenőfalva 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.

<sup>41</sup> 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 1997) a rich body of materials of 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> Keszeg 1999.

often in the form of folklore/narration, it is necessary to modify the definition cited above from Crapanzano thus: *whatever is spoken of in the culturally defined metaphorical idiom of possession can be considered to be possession.*

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 psycho-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<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> All these – thus 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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

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<sup>43</sup>Naturally, this metaphorical system is related to the body, to its physiological and physical state cf. Boddy 1999. 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.

<sup>44</sup> 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, cf. Pócs 1997 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. 28-29, Peuckert 1960, Buchholz 1968, Meyer-Matheis 1974, Strömbäck 1975, Boyer 1986, Lecouteux 1992.

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.<sup>45</sup> (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, most likely can 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

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<sup>45</sup> Findeisen, 127-131.

and is off limits to the living. We may think of Eastern Slavic or Northern European beliefs about the dead visiting 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.<sup>46</sup>

### Possession by the dead

According to Goodman's survey<sup>47</sup> – 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<sup>48</sup>), 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.<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup> 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

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<sup>46</sup> See e.g. Ränk 1949. On the fairy versions of these taboos in Hungary and the Balkans, see: Pócs 1989.

<sup>47</sup> Goodman 1998. 95-99.

<sup>48</sup> 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. 11-18, 42-45.

<sup>49</sup> See for example Lecouteux 1987a.

<sup>50</sup> I will only note here that occultist 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.

<sup>51</sup> Stenin 1890. 268; Mansikka 1911; Candrea 1944. 152-156.

are repenting souls who have no status (are not baptised) or could not enter the other world or the purgatory.<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup> 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<sup>55</sup> – 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.<sup>56</sup>

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.<sup>57</sup> 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 = 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<sup>58</sup> – 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.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>52</sup> See in more detail on this question: Pócs 1999. 30-31; Pócs 2000. Some of the most important literature on the question: Pentikäinen 1968; Lecouteux 1987a. 233-248; Schmitt 1994.

<sup>53</sup> See the category of “Evil ones” in the Hungarian Folk Belief Archives at the Ethnological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences..

<sup>54</sup> Keszeg 1991. 91-95; Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970. 163-170.

<sup>55</sup> On the taboos of spaces of the dead: Pócs 1983, Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970. 163-170.

<sup>56</sup> Jankó 1891. 278.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Nachtschar* hiedelmek: **beírni!**

<sup>58</sup> Keszeg 1999: 93, 316

<sup>59</sup> Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970. 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),<sup>60</sup> and they also cause illness, attack people. Two distinctive metaphors of possession characterise 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.<sup>61</sup> 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<sup>62</sup> there are similar Transylvanian Hungarian data as well.<sup>63</sup>

#### 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*,<sup>64</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century do not belong to the subject matter of this paper.<sup>65</sup> (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, 20<sup>th</sup> 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

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<sup>60</sup> Jankó 1891. 277.

<sup>61</sup> Evil spirits who carry off people in the air, wind, see for example Manninen 1922. 107-117 Moszyński 1929. 651-653; Meisen 1935; Kuret 1975; Zečević 1981. 123-125. (Finnish, Lapp, Inkeri, Estonian, German, Russian, etc.)

<sup>62</sup> Manninen 1922. 108.

<sup>63</sup> The person whom the spirit appearing in the whirlwind enters becomes impure and falls ill: Keszeg 1999. 331-332.

<sup>64</sup> Zuesse 1987. 376.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. for example Parker 1975. 57-62.

his/her body.<sup>66</sup> (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."<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup>

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.

#### 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.

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<sup>66</sup> For overviews on the Hungarian necromancer, or its two types: Diószegi 1958: 297-302; Barna 1981; Czövek 1987. See in more detail about the data: Pócs 2001a.

<sup>67</sup> Csík, collected by Éva Pócs.

<sup>68</sup> See for more detail Pócs 1996.

<sup>69</sup> Salo 1974, 141-160

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.<sup>70</sup> 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*.<sup>71</sup> (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, deflowers women can be traced from the 13<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup> 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,<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> 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

<sup>70</sup> See: Pócs 2001b. 140-150.

<sup>71</sup> Franz 1909: 514-527; Thomas 1973. 569-570. According to a 20th 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. 22; Newman 1998. 737-739.

<sup>72</sup> On this question see for example: Sluhovsky 1999; Newman 1998. 733-770.

<sup>73</sup> Midelfort 1992. 118-119.

<sup>74</sup> On Eastern connections and the world of demons of the Late Antiquity, and the early Middle Ages see for example: Böcher 1972. 75-76; Franz 1909. I. 518-520. On the history of incubus and succubus demons, see for example: Roscher 1903; Ranke 1927; Lecouteux 1987b.

<sup>75</sup> Flint 1991. 146-157.

<sup>76</sup> On the devil figures of folk beliefs, see: Röhrich 1966, Woods 1959, Pócs 1991-1992, Champneys 1992, Midelfort 1992. 99-102. Thomas 1971. 569-573 also writes about the relationship of Medieval and early modern church concepts to folk beliefs. For a comparative summary of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant literature on the devil and the legend material: Brückner - Alsheimer 1974.

Christian devil figure: this is well-documented by Hungarian, Estonian, Russian, Romanian data.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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,<sup>79</sup> 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<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup>

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”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Keszeg 1999. 93, Loorits 1949. 1. 375, Maksimov 1994. 5-27, Ivanits 1989. 40-45.

<sup>78</sup> Primarily the material collected in Csík with the students of Pécs University and Keszeg 1999.

<sup>79</sup> Collected at Csíkkarcfalva by Éva Pócs. For a more detailed presentation of the material including Romanian data as well, see: Pócs 2001b.

<sup>80</sup> Schmitt 1994. 15-145.

<sup>81</sup> For Hungarian data see: Pócs 1999. 48-49, 1991-1992. 323-324, 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.

<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup> 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.”<sup>84</sup> 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.”<sup>85</sup>

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 became devilish.”<sup>86</sup> 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.”<sup>87</sup>

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).<sup>88</sup> This episode corresponds to 16<sup>th</sup> century ecclesiastic views and a legend type, which is widespread all over Europe.<sup>89</sup> 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”.<sup>90</sup>

Leander Petzoldt provided a summary of the folklore motifs of diabolic possession for Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present.<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> 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

<sup>83</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs.

<sup>84</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs.

<sup>85</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs.

<sup>86</sup> Csíkkarcfalva, collected by Orsolya Graf. Romanian data: Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970. 171; Candrea 1944. 114; Mikac, 1934. 197, and cf. the above-mentioned data on the possession of the witch from the Balkans.

<sup>87</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs, Csíkkarcfalva. The Romanian data are similar: Muşlea – Bîrlea, 1970. 163-171.

<sup>88</sup> Collected by Anita Derjanecz.

<sup>89</sup> Midelfort 1992. 116-117. 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. 77; Bargheer 1931. 28. Ivanits 1984. 48.

<sup>90</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs and Nóra Muzsai.

<sup>91</sup> Petzoldt, 1964–1965.

<sup>92</sup> Op. cit. 84-86.

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<sup>93</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup> (Both Roman Catholic and Orthodox notions of possession include this role of the curse).<sup>95</sup>

## 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;<sup>96</sup> 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.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> I will only say that the first exorcist ceremony (baptism in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century) already had links to a rich – Babylonian, Hebrew and Greco-Roman – tradition of the exorcism of demons,<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup> 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

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<sup>93</sup> Op. cit. 79.

<sup>94</sup> On the role of the curse in communal systems of witchcraft see for example: Thomas 1971. 599-611; Labouvie 1993. 121-145; Pócs 2001c. 419-459. Midelfort is also of the opinion that the idea of possession caused by a curse is of “folk origin”: Midelfort 1992. 103.

<sup>95</sup> In Rodewyk’s Romanian Catholic possession manual: 1963. 128. In 1996 during a fieldtrip with the students of Pécs University a Romanian monk from Maroshévíz conveyed similar views to us (I thank Tünde Komáromi for the interpretation and translation).

<sup>96</sup> For a summary of these questions see for example: Di Nola 1990. 345-349.

<sup>97</sup> Rodewyk 1963. 67.

<sup>98</sup> Pócs 2001b.

<sup>99</sup> See Franz’s summary (1909. I. 523-583), together with the non-Christian precursors, furthermore: Midelfort 1992. 105-116. Early Christian baptism as exorcism: Dölger 1909; and its precedents: Böcher 1970.

<sup>100</sup> Besides Franz’s above mentioned work see in connection with this my article on healing benedictions, and the references published there: Pócs 1984.

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,<sup>101</sup> 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.<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup> In the modern era in Central and Western Europe we mostly know of the latter practices.<sup>104</sup> In contrast to the very circumscribed practice of direct exorcism in these areas,<sup>105</sup> in the Orthodox East, these services at sacred places continue to be an important part of the spiritual life of village communities.<sup>106</sup> 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 Csíkszentalmás 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.”<sup>107</sup>

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 friends 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.<sup>108</sup> 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.<sup>109</sup> The same rites served to cleanse haunted houses (i.e. possessed by the dead) too.<sup>110</sup> 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

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<sup>101</sup> For example it was a service provided by South Tirolian Dominican monks, I thank Leander Petzoldt for the information; Michele Riso et al (1972. 160) give data on “folk” exorcism practiced by priests in Southern Italy.

<sup>102</sup> Petzoldt, 1964-1965. 81-91. See also Brown 1980 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.

<sup>103</sup> In Italy: Burke 1978. 211-215; in 1724 among the Basque, Christian 1989. 196-197.

<sup>104</sup> On Hungarian holy sites, see for example Bálint 1944. 117-118; on Austrian, German territories: Sebald 1984. 134, Petzoldt 1964-1965. 89-93.

<sup>105</sup> Among Roman Catholics only priests who had a permit from the bishop can perform it: Rodewyk 1963. 67. On contemporary cases see for example: Schöck 1978. 247-253; there are many examples in Rodewyk op.cit.

<sup>106</sup> I have collected many data for this in Csík; see also from Tordatúr: Csógör 1998. 103; or see the Greek legends published by Petzoldt (1964-1965. 88-89) about Romanian priests curing possessed people.

<sup>107</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs.

<sup>108</sup> Csíkkarcfalva, collected by Éva Pócs.

<sup>109</sup> See for example Evans-Wentz's (1966. 271-272) Irish examples, or: Bogdan-Bijelić 1908. 307; I also collected data on this question at Csíkkarcfalva.

prevent nightmares they sprinkle the room, the bed, or the cradle of the newborn with holy water or fumigate it with incense.<sup>111</sup> 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<sup>112</sup> 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,<sup>113</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>114</sup> 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.<sup>115</sup> 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<sup>116</sup> 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

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<sup>110</sup>Collected by Kinga Jankus and Éva Pócs at Csíkkarcfalva and Csíkjenőfalva; Keszeg 1999. 330. French, English, Irish examples Schmitt 1994. 156-157; Thomas 1971. 570; Th. Brown 1979. 54; Evans-Wentz 1966. 267.

<sup>111</sup> Response given to Questionnaire 9 of the Hungarian Folk Belief Topography at Polgár, Heves county (in the Folk Belief Archives at the Ethnological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences).

<sup>112</sup> As Benz puts it : “higher force” Benz 1972. 125.

<sup>113</sup> Eliade 1958. 367-379.

<sup>114</sup> Limbacher op.cit.; 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*.

<sup>115</sup> Finucane 1977. 108.

<sup>116</sup> See Pócs 2001c.

devil they were to be “possessed” as it were by the Holy Spirit.<sup>117</sup> 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.<sup>118</sup>

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).<sup>119</sup> 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).<sup>120</sup> 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.<sup>121</sup> (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 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> century Lotharingian healers studied by Delcambre often acquired their knowledge through divine possession.<sup>122</sup> Medieval data on Russian holy fools, the *iurodivyie*, indicate that they acquired the capabilities of wizards and seers through divine possession (holy illness: epilepsy);<sup>123</sup> 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.<sup>124</sup>

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.<sup>125</sup> 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 Gagyí 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.<sup>126</sup>

Examining Medieval and early modern mystics and living saints we find that divine possession is a 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 Sluhovský – treats it as “union/identification with God” which is opposed to demonic possession and all other related

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<sup>117</sup> Brown 1980. 140.

<sup>118</sup> See for example the cases of incubatio in the Asklepios temple of Epidaurus: Kee 1983. Chapter III: “Asklepios the Healer.”

<sup>119</sup> See for example Dinzelbacher 1995; Burke 1978; Beyer 1996.

<sup>120</sup> Kieckhefer 1988. 12.

<sup>121</sup> Zuesse 1987. 379; Benz 1972. 132.

<sup>122</sup> Delcambre 1951. See also Bouteiller’s summary (1950. 201-235), or the case of Catherina Fagenberg: Edsman 1967.

<sup>123</sup> An’ickov 1914. 256-285; Schrader 1911: 816 and the sources published by him.

<sup>124</sup> Moszyński 1939. 365; An’ickov op. cit. 256-285.

<sup>125</sup> Blum 1970. 52-54.

<sup>126</sup> Gagyí 2001.

phenomena (diabolical deception: illusion).<sup>127</sup> 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” behaviour 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.<sup>128</sup> 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,<sup>129</sup> 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.<sup>130</sup>

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 the Late Antique theurgists it was a proof of the deification of man, the manifestation of very holy men.<sup>131</sup> Often it is explicitly a symptom of possession:<sup>132</sup> 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...”<sup>133</sup> 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

<sup>127</sup> Sluhovsky 1999. Ernst Benz (1972.125) also uses a more general category, that of *being carried away* (*Ergriffenheit*), which applies equally to the concepts of *unio mystica* and *circumpossessio, possessio*, it is a religious experience, the passive experience of a power coming from above/outside.

<sup>128</sup> Dinzelbacher 1995. 32-36, 56-96, 159-166; Sluhovsky 1999.

<sup>129</sup> Sluhovsky 1999.

<sup>130</sup> Blum – Blum 1965. 52-54 and Benovska-Săbkova personal communication about epileptics as divinely possessed seers, holy men – with regard to the same people as possessed by the devil, I mentioned some Transylvanian and Romanian data above.

<sup>131</sup> Indian, Muslim, Jewish and Christian saints alike rose up, flew: Eliade 1959. 152; Dodds 1971. 232-233.

<sup>132</sup> Dinzelbacher 1997. 111-138.

<sup>133</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs.

patient and assume the evil spirit from them.<sup>134</sup> Eliade describes these kinds of healing rites as rather widespread phenomena which go beyond the opposition of divine-diabolic possession of Christian Europe.<sup>135</sup> From a medical point of view, József Vass Hungarian psychotherapist, sees it as the joint trance of the physician and the patient where ego-identical and ego-alien spirits are fighting for the soul.<sup>136</sup> 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,<sup>137</sup> 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, merging with his divine guardian spirit, chases away the demon.<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup>

Lauri Honko also sees a connection between this type of healing and possession,<sup>140</sup> 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,<sup>141</sup> 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 *călușarii*, *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,<sup>142</sup> however, researchers paid less attention to the possession phenomena related to them,<sup>143</sup> rather, they tended to discuss them under the category of shamanism.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Edsman 1967; Martino 1948 chapter 5; see also the information in footnote 200.

<sup>135</sup> Hanna 1987. 209-210.

<sup>136</sup> Vas 1998.

<sup>137</sup> Goodman 1998. 23-25.

<sup>138</sup> For example Old English: Glosecki 1989. 72, 103; Finnish: Siikala 1990; Bulgarian: fairy wizards cure the illnesses caused by possession by fairies; I thank Ivanička Georgieva for calling my attention to this, see also Georgieva 1983. IV. black and white table.

<sup>139</sup> See: Pócs 1999. 111-115, Sebald 1984; Meyer-Matheis 1974.; Buchholz 1988.

<sup>140</sup> Honko 1959. 31.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. for example Diószegi's (1958. 342-395) interpretation of the *táltos* spirit battle.

<sup>142</sup> The most comprehensive summary encompassing all the cults: Antonijević 1990. Some other important descriptions, or analyses with further literature: Arnaudov 1917. 50-58, Marinov 1914, Calverley 1946, Kligman 1981, Rižnić 1890. 115-116, 145-148, Majzner 1921. 226-257, Küppers 1954. 212-224, Zečević 1978, Scharankov 1980, Danforth 1985, Puchner 1981, Pócs 1986. 228-232, Jung 1998, Grynæus 2000.

<sup>143</sup> With the exception of Danforth op.cit., for whom this is a central issue.

<sup>144</sup> See for example: Zečević 1977, Bandić 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. 11-12.

I do not have sufficient space to analyse them in detail here but as par excellence possession systems these rites need to be mentioned.<sup>145</sup> 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 rusalía and the *călușarii* 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 rusalía 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 rusalía and *călușarii* 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 rusalías, 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.

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<sup>145</sup> Pócs 1998 and 2001a.

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 Giacometti's proposal,<sup>146</sup> suggested that –at 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*. 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.

### 3. CONTACT WITH NATURE-DEMONS: WEREWOLF MAGICIANS

In this chapter, my focus is on shape-shift creatures with a double identity which are equally familiar in the worlds of *nature* and *culture* (the *werewolf* and related beings), examined on the basis of belief-related data from historical sources of the early modern period and folklore texts collected in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> At the above mentioned shamanism-possession conference held at Chantilly.

<sup>147</sup> My Central and Eastern European data come mostly from Hungarians and from the published folklore data of the surrounding nations (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Romanians, Slovaks, Poles and Austrians); only occasionally do I make excursions to the more distant parts of Europe by way of comparison for certain important

My second question concerns so-called "good werewolves" and magicians who carry werewolf traits much emphasised in the research of what is termed European shamanism. How they can be determined within the system of werewolf beliefs and rites, whether they can be considered a peculiar type of "werewolf-being" and what their position is amongst Central and Eastern European mediators who function within various systems of supernatural communication.<sup>148</sup> Data regarding such figures largely come from folklore accounts, which allow for no more than extremely cautious and indirect conclusions regarding reality. More direct data about genuine mediating activity are encountered mostly in the records of magicians' trials, one of these being the famous trial of 1691 held in Livland against a werewolf named Thieß.<sup>149</sup> Hungarian witchcraft trials also offer data which reflect the activity of magicians with werewolf characteristics, including some relevant traits of certain *táltos*.<sup>150</sup> These relatively more precise mirrors of reality help us interpret our legend data from the 20<sup>th</sup> century which outline several different types of werewolf magicians from Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. However, in the present paper I only explore these questions as regards beliefs and narratives. I say nothing about the actual activity of magicians (traces of which still existed in the region in question in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century), but talk about beliefs and the motifs of legends and tales. Classifying these magicians into categories and exploring their communicational rites and real-life roles in the community will constitute the subject of a further paper. In the present article I mainly describe this unique system of communication between nature and culture as a mythical milieu for magicians (as a unique kind of werewolf being) and an ideological foundation for their mediating activity.

### The "raw" world of nature

The system we are looking at is one which in some form or other covered the whole of Europe. These systems actually represent the deep structure of a unique and varied set of beliefs and rites which nevertheless share the same symbolism. Such a system of binary oppositions, which manifests the opposition between the human world and the natural world, defines the place of man and nature within the universe, as juxtaposed to a non-human periphery.<sup>151</sup> Man inhabits the central space characterised by culture, as opposed to the periphery which surrounds him and is partially uninhabited and partially populated by wild beasts, dead people and spirits. As Kirk also points out in his excellent study on the nature-culture aspects of the Gilgamesh epic,<sup>152</sup> the outside world may spread from the direct earthly environment to the broader cosmological aspect of nature (the sky, the celestial bodies or the world of storm clouds, which may still be populated by spirits and demons).

The juxtaposition of *nature* and *culture* in Europe may be characterised by the opposition of the *raw* and the *cooked* which Lévi-Strauss originally described as one of the central structures within the mentality of Indians in Central Brazil,<sup>153</sup> which clearly indicates that the universal nature of this system of oppositions reaches well beyond European culture. Nature is characterised by being populated, instead of domestic animals, by wild animals and a lack, instead of presence, of cultivated plants. Processes and products of culture such as

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phenomena.

<sup>148</sup> The present paper was preceded by a Hungarian publication which offered a more extensive overview (Pócs2002a) and a paper in English on the spatial and temporal structures of werewolf systems: Pócs (2008). This work is not identical with either of those but occasional repetitions are inevitable.

<sup>149</sup> See Höfler (1934) pp. 345–350, based on Hermann von Bruiningk's publication from 1924–1928.

<sup>150</sup> For a detailed description of the magicians and *táltos* of Hungarian witchcraft trials see Pócs (1999) chapter 7.

<sup>151</sup> This double structure was seen by Ivanov (1969), (1974) and Toporov (1974) as the semiotic model of archaic societies. On a few relevant aspects of Hungarian folk belief see Pócs (1992).

<sup>152</sup> Kirk (1970) chapter II. 5.

<sup>153</sup> Lévi-Strauss (1964).

ploughing and sowing are also absent; the domestication of wild animals is a characteristic trait as are the presence of the hearth, the blacksmith's craft, iron, spinning and weaving, clothes and the Christian sacraments. The belief narratives examined mention in concrete terms the absence of a number of other "cultural operations" such as cutting hair from the head or body, shaving, plaiting hair, speech or counting, while nature is characterised, besides a lack of cultural products, as a more abstract symbol of the *raw*, by half-finished, faulty or incomplete products or the inclusion of a more archaic degree of culture in technology (e.g. baking unleavened instead of leavened bread).<sup>154</sup> At other times, in accordance with the usual "reversal" of death rites, rites and gestures are carried out in a reversed direction, contrary to their normal course, with the left hand etc. Illustrative examples of these are offered below precisely in the context of werewolf beliefs and rites.

In the Central and Southeast European territories under examination (also according to some Hungarian beliefs),<sup>155</sup> a *werewolf* can be a living human being who is capable of metamorphosis or may also be a demon which assumes an animal shape. Those of them who are human wolves during their lifetime turn into demonic werewolves or wolf ghosts after their death. On the other hand, "dead werewolves" can also have a positive aspect as spirits who protect, call or initiate werewolf-magicians.

The most important animal figures among both *living* and *dead* werewolves are the wolf, dog and snake, but horses, wild boars, bears, birds and fish (!) are also possible.<sup>156</sup> Wolves appear in the werewolf beliefs all over Central and South-Eastern Europe. Romania, including the Hungarian population of Transylvania, represent the most typical area for the appearance of dog-man, Romanian *pricolici* or Transylvanian Hungarian *prikulics*. The relevant German terms mean 'human wolf' (e. g. German *Werwolf*, English *werewolf*); while terms used on the Balkans are often used today to refer to vampires instead of werewolves (Bulgarian *vlkolak*, *vrkolak*, Serbian and Croatian *vrkolak*, *vukodlak*, Slovenian *vukodlak* as well as Greek *burkolakas*, derived from the ancient Slavic term for wolf's hide).<sup>157</sup> This is due to the fact that in many places the belief figure of the werewolf came to be substituted by the *vampire*, while the werewolf assumed the bloodsucking trait of the former.<sup>158</sup> On the other hand, the boundary is sometimes extremely hard to draw between blood-thirsty wolf-men who injure or tear to pieces people or animals and vampires who also appear in animal form

<sup>154</sup> For a detailed analysis see Pócs (1992).

<sup>155</sup> This brief description is offered on the basis of my similarly concise summary on the werewolf figures of the Balkans. The original publication includes the further bibliography omitted here for want of space. Pócs (1989a) pp. 22–23. The most complete review of the question so far was offered by Hertz (1862); for a more recent summary collection of studies see Eisler (1951). Important works which summarise the data of a particular people or area include for Slavic data: Jakobson–Szeftel (1966); Margul (1981); Słupecki (1987); Marinov (1914) p. 221; Zečević (1981) pp. 126–137, 168–169; (1981) pp. 126–137, 168–169; Kelemina (1930) pp. 39–40, 88–94; for Romania: Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) pp. 227–229, 236–244; Senn (1982); for Greece: Schmidt (1871) pp. 157–165; Lawson (1910) pp. 190–255; for Germany: Müller (1937), Peuckert (1941); in Western European respect: Lecouteux (1992); (1938); Odstedt (1943); Blécourt (2007a).

<sup>156</sup> German historical data also speak, besides bears, of cats, wild boards and dogs. As regards ghost werewolves, they also seem generally widespread based on published data from Slavic, German or Romanian areas, although research has always focused on the living variant, the par excellence werewolf. See, e.g. MacCulloch (1915) pp. 206–209; Senn (1982) p. 76.

<sup>157</sup> For a linguistic reconstruction of the origin of the Slavic terminology and detailed description of the various types see Dukova (1984); Jakobson – Szeftel (1966) pp. 344–345; Abbot (1903) p. 217. On the Romanian terminology see Senn (1982) p. 19. On terminology in general see Hertz (1862) p. 113.

<sup>158</sup> Unless indeed the werewolf, or at least some types of it, have always been creatures having vampire, meaning blood-sucking, traits. Having studied werewolf beliefs on the Balkans, particularly in Romania, Senn believes that this process probably took place in the Middle Ages: Senn (1982) p. 19. A number of 18th-19th century publications make no clear distinction or discuss under one heading the phenomena of werewolves, vampires (and often witches), see e.g. Klapper (1910). For a summary of the vampire beliefs of the area examined, complete with further literature, see Burkhart (1966), (1989) pp. 65–108; Perkowski (1976); Lecouteux (1999) and Pócs (2006).

and suck the blood of humans. The same is true of werewolf and *mora* beings therefore pure types in this respect only exist in narratives and in fiction.

The *living werewolf* of the Balkans and Central Europe is a double being who has the capability of turning into a wolf, other animal or animal-shaped demon or possesses an animal alter ego; while *dead werewolves* are assaulting demons (former werewolves after their death). The living werewolf turns into an animal at certain periods or points in time and joins the wild troops that sweep it away. There are many local variants as to whether the werewolf assaults humans or animals and what sort of animals these are. (E. g. in the Western Hungarian tradition the *csordásfarkas*, meaning a cowherd of a werewolf nature, assaults the cows of the hostile neighbour or hated landlord; while the ‘wise shepherds’ of the Great Plane “send” a wolf onto each other’s sheep. The Hungarian *táltos*<sup>159</sup> also displays some werewolf traits). Less common in latter-day belief legends are motifs of human wolves who attack the harvest, damage or snatch the grain. More precisely, these figures are often merely related to werewolves, such as *dragons* or *dog-headed demons*.<sup>160</sup>

The above-described traits of the nature-culture opposition are more widespread than werewolf beliefs themselves: the werewolf is merely one of a number of known variants of shape-shifters with a double identity. These, just like the varied figures of local mythologies, have a number of local and linguistic variants, but they are all connected by the common grounds of communication between nature and culture.

Certain *archaic notions of the soul* seem to be present in every European culture as universal grounds for communication with the spirit world and appear to be basic criteria underlying any type of communication with the supernatural. According to European religions, i.e. beliefs, humans have a *life soul*. Humans are also held to have a *free, external* or *shadow soul (alter ego)* which can become detached from the body. It may take the shape of an animal, but it also has bodily/physical and soul/spiritual variants, as well as forms which fill the role of *accompanying soul, destiny soul* or *guardian soul*. Going further, humans also have a soul or alter ego which appears in a formal variant identical with or similar to these and lives on after death. Certain basic manifestations of supernatural communication are based on varied constellations of bodies, souls, alter egos, and spirits which lend themselves to various interpretations.<sup>161</sup> Different interpretations entail different variants for the communication of these double beings.<sup>162</sup> Another important source of differences is in the local variants of “other worlds” within the natural sphere and different local variants of the spiritual beings who populate that world. In the European region under examination the most important shape-shifters who belong to this circle are, besides the werewolf, the *mora*, vampires, witches, fairies, as well as weather magicians or “wind magicians” know by a variety of names (certain variants of Serbian or Croatian *stuha/zduhač*, Polish, Ukrainian and Southern Slavic wind magicians such as *chmurnik, planetnyk, vetrovnjak*, the Hungarian *táltos* who also once functioned in reality or the legend figure of Hungarian *garabonciás*, Croatian *grabancijaš* as well as the various forms of ‘wise men’ (*tudósok*), or ‘children born with teeth’), each of whom may have carried various traits characteristic of double beings/shape-shifters.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> The *táltos* is the belief figure which was seen as the legacy of ancient Hungarian shamanism by a considerable strand of research; see e.g. Diószegi (1958). The present frames do not allow for a more detailed discussion of these connections.

<sup>160</sup> For dog-headed demons not discussed in the paper see e.g. Kretzenbacher (1968: 127).

<sup>161</sup> Naturally, this is only a very sketchy and simplified presentation of the highly varied notions of the soul that existed and still exist within the frames of Christianity. A few important works on European notions of the soul relevant to our context include Rohde (1925); Meyer-Mattheis (1974); Boyer (1986); Lecouteux (1987b), (1992), (1997); Tuczay 2009; see also chapter 2 in Pócs (1999).

<sup>162</sup> On certain aspects of this question see Pócs (1999), chapters 2 and 7.

<sup>163</sup> The bibliographical data of magicians see in note 116.

Within the above range of beings, *mora/morina/Mahr/lidérc* type figures, which are closest to werewolves, as well as certain formal variants of Central and Eastern European *witches* and *vampires* all have both living and dead, physical and spiritual alter egos. These play a similar role in communication between the two worlds as the communication of werewolves. Their living and dead alter egos can also play the role of guardian or helping spirit.<sup>164</sup> It is no accident that, similarly to werewolf figures, both witches and vampires are often termed as *two-soul beings* (*kétlelkű, dvoiedushnik, dvedushnik* etc.), by which they sometimes mean a *living person* and his/her *alter ego* (demonic figure), and at other times the duality of a *living* and *dead person* (demon). The main difference between the above-listed figures and the werewolf is that the implied "other world" is different in the two cases. While the other world of werewolf creatures is *nature* par excellence, complete with wild animals (this is matched by their wild animal alter egos and guardian spirits), the other world of *mora* beings and witches with *mora* type connotations is the night time world of the direct environment of humans, usually populated by domestic animals (these latter also mean the animal world of the animal alter egos and dead variants and helping spirits of the *mora* and the witch, such as cats, chickens, turkeys, frogs, lizards and so on). Demonic assaults by *mora* figures and demons alike were usually directed against the habitat, the family, the people in the house and the internal, feminine world of the household, as opposed to werewolves who tend to ravage the farm, the animals, herds or grain fields. Finally, *mora* beings and witches tend to be female, at least in the region researched, while werewolf beings, if their sex is defined at all, are usually male.

Certain types of *weather magicians* on the Balkans, although they belong to the circle of beings associated with *nature-culture* communication, do to some extent differ from the above line of figures in that they keep contact with a spiritual world which is partially different. Weather magicians keep in contact with the storm demons that live inside the nature domain of the storm cloud. In the Balkans and in several areas of Eastern Europe these storm demons are 'unbaptised' demons, meaning demonic beings that came from the souls of newborn babies that had not been baptised. These dead are in a liminal state; they never gained their final status in the other world and assault the human communities in the form of weather demons.<sup>165</sup> (In the area in question a number of methods of defence are used against them even beyond the averting practise of magicians. It is important to prevent newborn babies becoming demons of this kind, therefore babies need to be baptised straight away.) Connections between unbaptised demons and werewolf beings are also illustrated through the fact that children who die without having been baptised (as well as other dead who never gained a reassuring status in the other world) may turn into dead *strigoi* (the dead variant of

<sup>164</sup> Slavic *mora/zmora/morina* etc. are night-time "pressing" or vampire-type demons on the one hand or the double of a living person "sent out" in a trance on the other hand; according to several early modern data, it is a living person with a capability for trance and with animal alter egos and *dead mora* ancestors; who owe their capability of trance usually to the fact that they were born in a caul. Beings with many similar traits include the *Alp* and *Mahr* of German speaking areas, the Northern European *mara* and the Western European *mare* (*nightmare, cauchemar*) figures, the German, Austrian, Slovenian and Croatian *Schrat, Schrattel, skrat*, and related figures. For a more extensive description of these figures see Pócs (1997a) chapters 2–3; Pócs (2005) pp. 107–109 with bibliography. Some important works are: Ranke (1933); Moszyński (1939) pp. 633–636; Tillhagen (1960); Peuckert (1960); Muşlea – Birlea (1970) pp. 189–194; Lixfeld (1971); Strömbäck (1976/77); Zečević (1981) pp. 114–120; Georgieva (1983) pp. 168–169; Lecouteux (1987), (1992); Raudvere (1993).

<sup>165</sup> The Transylvanian Hungarian *kereszteletlenek*, the Croatian *nekrestenci, nevidinčići, mačići*, etc., Bulgarian *navi, navije*, etc. I present these figures in detail together with the Central and Southeast European literature in my article about them: Pócs (2000). See also the NA, groups of *Kereszteletlenek* ('The Unbaptised') and *Rosszak* ('The Evil'). Zečević (1981) pp. 123–125, 183–166; Marinov (1914) pp. 218–219; Georgieva (1985) pp. 102–103; Strausz (1897) p. 173.

Romanian witches, who also bear some werewolf and vampire traits) or *vîrcolac* (Romanian demonic werewolf).<sup>166</sup>

These different variants of shape-shifters are connected to each other, beyond the shared trait of communicating between culture and nature, by the fact that their shape-shifter and double being features are also known in the belief and legend world of the relevant regions as general human characteristics, supernatural capabilities of common earthly beings or as forms of everyday communication. (Anyone can be born with the destiny of a werewolf, anyone can have an animal alter ego, anyone may be "taken away" by the dead etc.) At the same time, each type of communication had its own specialists in the persons of seers or magicians who were active and fulfilled genuine functions in the community.

Besides, in the folklore of the region we encounter a broad range of legendary magician figures (such as the Hungarian/Croatian *garabonciás/grabancijaš*) that may also carry certain traits of communication between nature and culture. These magicians have certain extra capabilities, usually owing to their birth traits, their initiation or, possibly, to their initiating or helping spirit. They may bear the marks of several different types of communication simultaneously. Pure types who are depositories of the werewolf-magician or the *mora* type seer, etc. may be captured much more on the level of narratives than in reality.

Coming back to the characteristics of werewolf beings, the werewolf, familiar with the world of wild nature, shares one or other of its aspects with other types of demons or spirits. Examples include the forest spirits who are tied closely to the world of nature, as well as the "watery" *dragon*, which lives in a "cloud-nature", in a marsh or cave and plays the role of storm demon.<sup>167</sup> At the same time the dragon is the prototype for chaos figures – it is through vanquishing the dragon that from chaos the world, and human culture, emerged, according to Indo-European dragon fight myths.<sup>168</sup> These demons have loaned several of their traits to the werewolf figures of the region, far from unified pure types, and as regards opposition to the human world they are often barely distinguishable from the demonic werewolf and, as we shall see, may play the part of the protecting or initiating spirit of magicians.

A further group of figures we encounter are *transitory, liminal beings* who do not belong to any of the human or demonic categories of nature and are found on the boundary between the two worlds of the cosmogonic order. The uncertainty of their position carries the risk of not being classified. The mingling of two sharply delineated classes leads to hybrids and monsters. These emerge, for instance, by crossovers between the human and the animal/demon world or marriage with demons or animals. (It is no accident that birth anomalies and the birth of physically distorted persons were usually seen as the outcome of sexual relations or marriage between humans and demons or the devil.<sup>169</sup>) Becoming a liminal being or assuming demonic or animal traits can happen to persons who became ill through the intrusion of the demon world or the periphery. This includes sick children referred to as *agos* ("old"), but beliefs about *changelings*<sup>170</sup> also have in their background the notion of having been born from a demon.

Both nature demons and these hybrid and chaos beings deserve attention in our present context because in many respects they have a shared role with the demonic figures of *nature* and with the demonic/animal alter ego of double beings including werewolves. This way the two categories merge into each other with regard to certain beliefs and contact making or averting rites.

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<sup>166</sup> Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) pp. 228, 257, 449.

<sup>167</sup> For a summary on dragons in Central-Eastern-Europa see Erdész (1984) and Pócs (1988), as well as Mackensen (1930); Zečević (1969), (1981) pp. 69–71; Dukova (1970), Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970: 182–189); Benovska-Săbkova (1992).

<sup>168</sup> On the fight with the dragon see e.g. Mackensen (1930); Burkhart (1967); Lord (1968).

<sup>169</sup> On this see Schoon Eberly (1988: 59–60).

<sup>170</sup> On the general European *changeling*-beliefs see e.g. Piashevsky (1935); Doulet (2002).

## Metamorphoses

As regards the transformation of the werewolf into a wolf (dog, bear etc.), certain magic/ritual techniques are described by beliefs and a rich wealth of European legend. One method which appears common throughout Europe was to put on wolf skin (bear skin) or the “wolf shirt” made from it. In the central and Western parts of Europe leather belts play a similar role,<sup>171</sup> in line with the archaic view that a person wearing a masque will assimilate to the being symbolised by the masque not only in terms of costume but also in body and soul. As Hertz emphasises in his European survey of wolf shirts (from Armenians to island Celts), the power of the metamorphosis is in the shirt.<sup>172</sup> The same is true of the “wolf belt” – in order to illustrate this we quote from the documents of a Hungarian werewolf trial. The following is a section from the statement of a *szakállas farkas* (‘bearded wolf’) from 1754.

Yes, I am half man and half wolf and I have a belt at Penc at Ferenc Holdos’ place which works so that if I tie it about me I am instantly transformed. This belt was given to me by a man named Pál in Podrecsány who was a shepherd there.<sup>173</sup>

Among Hungarians another, Eastern European trait was more widespread – this is when the person is made to slip through a (wooden) hoop as a legend motif (Polish data speak of using the bark of a lime tree).<sup>174</sup> For instance, according to data from Western Hungary if a midwife slips the baby through a willow hoop three times over, it will turn into a *csordásfarkas*. Turning into a *prikulici* or *prikulics* by doing a somersault is the way of metamorphosis characteristic uniquely of the man-dog and man-wolf in Romania.

All of these methods carry the symbolism of birth/rebirth and of transformation (a somersault as a symbolic reversal; cf. the meaning of the Romanian term for werewolf which is ‘skin turned inside out’), while the ‘wolf shirt’ is a “second skin”, similarly to the caul or to the snake skin (cf. the fact that both are called a *shirt*). As regards the metamorphosis back into the original shape, it was a common view that the werewolf assumes a human shape once more as soon as it receives an injury which draws blood – data of such content exist with regard to Romanian, French, German and Spanish werewolves alike.<sup>175</sup>

Part of the data indicate that the textual motif of metamorphosis sometimes conceals the belief that it is the soul, departing from the body (in a state of trance), which assumes an animal shape. Then it is the human person’s *animal alter ego* (“animal soul”) that makes its assaults, solitary or in groups, against domestic animals and humans,<sup>176</sup> revealing its nature hungry for raw meat and blood. We also possess some Hungarian accounts of individual trance and dream experiences about turning into an animal, but the majority of data only contain the symbolic/legendary representations of the metamorphosis.

Werewolves (as well as their “double being” relatives: *mora/lidérc* figures, witches and vampires) are destined for this life course by certain determining traits and signs related to their birth. The most characteristic trait of werewolf beings is that they are born with some *extra body part* which is usually a trait referential to their animal nature. Having teeth, a double line of teeth, a tail, wing, hair, bristles or snake skin are equally characteristic of werewolves and double beings, occurring in different local cultural variations (Dalmatian and

<sup>171</sup> See for instance a number of data on the wolf shirt, ranging from the Armenians to the Irish and the Ancient Greeks in Hertz (1862), pp. 79–97.

<sup>172</sup> Hertz (1862) p. 55.

<sup>173</sup> Török (1959) p. 288.

<sup>174</sup> For Poland see Margul (1981: 71), for Hungary: NA, group *The Metamorphosis of the Werewolf*.

<sup>175</sup> MacCulloch (1915) p. 206; Senn (1982) pp. 2–3, 74. Senn believes that this has to do with the notion of the skin turned inside out: the blood which runs out ‘brings to the surface the human soul’ and thus brings back human shape: Senn (1982) p. 19.

<sup>176</sup> In this respect German and Nordic werewolf data have been particularly closely examined, see note 37.

Albanian ‘tailed men’, Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian witches and werewolves may have a tail, while Eastern Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian *zmaj*, *zmej*, *zmajevit čovek* (‘dragon’, ‘snake’, ‘snake man’) or Albanian *drangue* or *dragua* (‘dragon’) are born with little wings under their arms or in a snake skin; We also know of variants to the different werewolf beings of the Balkans, as well as to the Hungarian *táltos* and *garabonciás*, which are born with hair, bristles, a wild animal’s body or body parts.<sup>177</sup> Werewolves and “two- soul creatures” of the Eastern and Western Slavs can all be born with teeth or even a double line of teeth,<sup>178</sup> but being born with teeth is most characteristic of the Hungarian *táltos*.<sup>179</sup> An equally common birth trait of European, and particularly Central and Eastern European, werewolf creatures is being born the wrong way round, i.e. *feet first*, as a figurative symbol of the reversal of nature and periphery.<sup>180</sup> All of these traits sometimes go beyond the sphere of werewolf beliefs and may be characteristic of vampires or *mora* beings alike (or of Romanian *strigoi* who are half werewolf, half vampire), but are also a natural consequence of being born a werewolf.<sup>181</sup>

A birth trait known all over Europe is being born in a caul which may not only indicate and guarantee the individual’s destiny to be a werewolf but can also be referential to a general clairvoyance (the capability of trance) and not only for werewolf beings. According to the legend legacy, amongst the German and Slavic peoples and Romanians alike, as well as in some sporadic Hungarian beliefs, the metamorphosis of the latter from human to animal is tied in with being born in a caul. The caul appears in these notions as the seat of the alter ego, the home and symbol of the “animal soul”, practically as the alter ego, the other self.<sup>182</sup> It is in the context of the caul that we may observe the symbolism of a “second skin” or dress symbolism. In several European languages it is referred to as a shirt, a frock or a bonnet (e.g. German *Glückshemd*, *Glückshaube*, English *caul*, as well as examples in most South Slavic languages in our region). In contrast to real shirts, however, which play a part of initiation into culture that we shall discuss below, the caul is a natural variant, as it is the depository of the animal alter ego.

Several further types of beliefs related to the birth of double beings are surrounded by the chaos/death symbolism of a lack of classification, belonging to no group. The figures three, seven and nine in the context of the werewolf’s birth also indicate the anomalies of being one too many and being outside of time; i.e. these numbers carry the symbolism of

<sup>177</sup> See Pócs (1999) p. 135 and the included bibliography. The *strigoi*’s strength is in his tail and *strigoi* born this way ‘can play with wolves and bears’: Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) p. 245. For further data on wolf *strigoi* see Pamfile (1916) p. 133. *Vukodlak* with tail: Mikac (1934) p. 197.

<sup>178</sup> Werewolf, *mora* and vampires born with teeth or with a double line of teeth: Hertz (1862) p. 123, Klapper (1910); Drozdowska (1962) p. 127; Machal (1964) p. 229; Grober-Glück (1966) p. 98; Baldinger (1967) p. 146; Burkhart (1989) pp. 71, 91–94.

<sup>179</sup> For a bibliography of these magicians see note 114. Winged *strigoi* also exist, see Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) p. 257.

<sup>180</sup> For Slavic, including Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Bulgarian data and for Romanian and Italian data, see Belmont (1971) pp. 129–160; Anonymous (1883); personal information by courtesy of Milko Matičetov regarding Slovenian folk belief; Georgieva (1983) p. 85; Đorđević (1953) p. 238; Bošković-Stulli (1960) p. 282; Machal (1964) p. 229; Senn (1982) p. 65; Pamfile (1916) p. 202; Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) p. 228; Ginzburg (1983) p. 60. For sporadic Hungarian data see: NA, group: *birth*.

<sup>181</sup> Delpech, who examines mediaeval and early modern Spanish material, not in the context of werewolves, emphasises that these birth traits are associated with monsters of the underworld: Delpech (1992) pp. 39–40.

<sup>182</sup> On the role of the caul, the connection between *caul-fylgja/hamr-alter ego* and generally the birth traits in the context of German werewolf notions and European (Celtic, German) seers see Ploss (1872); Weiser-Aall (1960) p. 30; Belmont (1971) pp. 28–30, 50–63, 189–190; Gélis (1984) pp. 282–284; Lecouteux (1992) pp. 59–91. In Hungarian folk belief there are fewer data testifying to a connection between *double beings – being born in a caul* than among our Slavic, German and Romanian neighbours, but the caul can be a positive sign in Hungary, too: it means a lucky life, guarantees magical protection against bullets or the law (less frequently some *táltos* or *garabonciás* may also be born this way). For Hungarian data on caul see Temesváry (1900); NA: group *born in a caul*.

being unclassified.<sup>183</sup> Connotations of the werewolf that surround seventh or ninth children come under the same heading. In Slovenia, for another example, if there are nine daughters, the last is going to have a son who is a snake-child.<sup>184</sup> The same figures often appear in the date of the conception or birth of these double beings.

The idea that *not* belonging to a group may entail the person being a werewolf is illustrated by the belief of the illegitimate birth of werewolves (vampires, witches) which means that they are outside of any social group.<sup>185</sup> Artificial means of bringing about a werewolf's destiny through curse, excommunication or exile also fit well into these symbolic systems.<sup>186</sup>

The destiny of the werewolf is determined at birth. A future of both human and demon/animal life is equally open to the infant who is born. A famous European data, a record by Burchard von Worms from 1025, makes the werewolf's fate dependent on the decision of the *Fates (Parcae)*.<sup>187</sup> Such a role of fate women, or midwives who mediate the will of fate, has echoes even in 20<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Europe.<sup>188</sup> According to Romanian data, for instance, if a baby is born in a caul, the midwife reads the various alternative destinies from the "bonnet" on the baby's head<sup>189</sup> and she declares the destiny that was "ordained in the mother's womb". According to a very typical Hungarian data from the Mezőség region, published by Vilmos Keszeg, determination by fate is typical even without the presence of the midwife:

In the life of some people it was dealt out that they should be a *prikolics*. After they turned seven, once every three months they would turn into a dog...<sup>190</sup>

Being a werewolf is a characteristically cyclic way of being. The metamorphosis of the werewolf usually happens periodically, at "wolf-time" which is tied in with the changes of the moon or with cycles marked by the figures three and seven mentioned earlier. The most obvious wolf-time is the new moon, as well as points in time associated with the phases of the moon and with the cycles of seven in the moon calendar, including Sundays or, on the Balkans, more commonly Saturdays, as the seventh day. The dark period of the winter solstice is also important (cf. the werewolf snatching the celestial bodies) – there are a great many Slavic, Baltic and German data about people who turn into wolves or go wild at the time of the twelfth day of Christmas.<sup>191</sup> We could quote a number of examples about such beliefs in Central and Eastern Europe: Croatian *strigon* and *kudlak* are invited by their fellows to join their ranks at the age of 7, 18 or 21.<sup>192</sup> Romanian children born at Easter are said to disappear into the forest at the age of 12 where they live as wolves for seven years,<sup>193</sup> and so on. A typical Hungarian example from Zala county:

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<sup>183</sup> For more detail see Francisco Vaz da Silva (2002) pp. 29–36 and Pócs (2008).

<sup>184</sup> Matičetov (1973: 77).

<sup>185</sup> On *vîrcolac, prikolici, vampire, dead strigoi*: Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) pp. 228, 238–240, 257, 291, 491; (1896. IV) p. 108.

<sup>186</sup> For Romanian, Bulgarian and Greek data see Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) p. 298; Senn (1982) pp. 3–5; Georgieva (1983) pp. 95–96; Lawson (1910) p. 375.

<sup>187</sup> The three Fates (*Parzen*) may cause the expected child to turn into a werewolf: Lea (1957. I.) p. 186.

<sup>188</sup> Marian (1899: 96), Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) p. 246), Senn (1982) p. 3. On the beliefs of fate women and fate legends still extant in East-Central European folk belief in the 20th century see Brednich's summary work (1964).

<sup>189</sup> Collected by Vilmos Diószegi among Romanians at Méhkerék, Békés county (NA, group *Birth*).

<sup>190</sup> Keszeg (1999) p. 197.

<sup>191</sup> The period between Christmas and Twelfth Night. For a summary on dates see Hertz (1862) p. 133, 359; but all publications mention this.

<sup>192</sup> Bošković-Stulli (1960) p. 290.

<sup>193</sup> Senn (1982) p. 92, 99.

...until the age of 9 he was brought up at home. But even then he would go out to the woods from time to time to join the big snake. He would even bring milk for it each time... When he was 9, he left his parents' house. By this time he had grown so familiar with these snakes, they had clearly become friends...<sup>194</sup>

The fact that being a werewolf is a destiny is indicated also by data according to which at certain points in time these werewolf beings "have to go". Hungarian 'children born with teeth', for instance, usually leave at the age of seven.<sup>195</sup> Or a *táltos* from Tolna county who had been born in a caul, "at the age of seven he will go into the land and no one will hear about him any more. He will leave home even if he is chained."<sup>196</sup> Legends of Slavic and Germanic areas equally emphasise the *necessity* of becoming a wolf and the irresistible urge to ravage and destroy humans and animals, as well as their belongings.<sup>197</sup>

The fact of "having to go" and "being taken away" are the beginning of transformation into animals, of a form of life in the natural sphere and thus, in the eyes of the human community, the beginning of death. At the age of 7 or 21<sup>198</sup> the Croatian *strigon* or *kudlak* disappears for ever or dies. In this context the words meaning *being taken away*, *dying* and *turning into a wolf (or other animal)* are synonyms across the whole of Europe. An illustrative example of this is a Romanian data which says that a child who, according to the declaration of the midwives, was born a *priculici* grew wolf hair at the age of nine months, developed a stench like an animal and then died.<sup>199</sup>

"Just bake it, bake it, to make it younger" – initiation for life

The dilemma of alternative life courses declared at birth is resolved by rites which serve the acceptance of one of the alternatives of werewolf existence and averting/preventing the other. These may be simple techniques of metamorphosis which help the person, born to become a werewolf, to make the transition to nature (or back), while other, preventive rituals forestall the dangers of the negative alternative threatening at birth – death by nature. These may be seen as acts of "initiation into life". These motifs of initiation into life also appear in the beliefs of all variants of double beings, as well as in the context of rites aiming to avert assaulting demons or curing illnesses that come from nature, in other words they are characteristic, beyond werewolf beliefs, of the entire system of nature–culture.

The most commonly known method for averting a werewolf's destiny is to eradicate the birth attributes – pull out the tooth, cut off the tail, little wings, cows' hooves or other animal traits, remove the caul from the newborn, destroy it, bury it etc., so that the baby does not become a *vedomec*, *táltos*, *strigoi*, *kallinkatsaros* etc.<sup>200</sup> Another set of rites which may be seen as rebirth for a new life are slip-through rites used to cure illnesses of a demonic origin

<sup>194</sup> Petánovics (1991) p. 121.

<sup>195</sup> NA group Children born with teeth.

<sup>196</sup> Szögliget, County Abauj-Torna, Paládi-Kovács (1999) p. 287.

<sup>197</sup> Hertz (1862: 82).

<sup>198</sup> Szerb: (1981: 151). On the alternatives to being taken away/kidnapped at the age of seven see NA groups *Werewolf*, *Táltos*, *Garabonciás* as well as Diószegi (1973) pp. 190–191.

<sup>199</sup> Senn (1982) p. 96.

<sup>200</sup> Kallikantsari or karakondsuli are demonic werewolves born or conceived between Christmas and the Twelfth Night: Lawson (1910: 209); Zečević (1981: 128, 166); Filipović (1982: 167–170). In Hungarian speaking areas it was commonly held that if a baby is born with teeth the midwife needs to pull them out to prevent the child becoming a *táltos* or werewolf or from being taken away, dying early or being changed Diószegi (1958) pp. 129–130), NA group *Children born with teeth*. According to Zita Deáky this was actual practice among midwives: Deáky (1996) p. 69. For Romanian, Greek, Serbian and Slovenian data see Pamfile (1916) p. 130; Murgoci (1926) p. 330; Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) pp. 245, 249, 268, 277; Senn (1982) p. 5; Megas (1963) p. 34; Zečević (1981) p. 151; Kelemina (1930) p. 147.

or to prevent a werewolf's destiny. According to Slovenian data from Gorizia, for instance, newborn babies born in a caul need to be stuck out through the window, as this way they will be saved from becoming a *vedomec*.<sup>201</sup>

In all the mentioned contexts of "initiation into life", the most illustrative examples to demonstrate the opposition of "the raw and the cooked" within nature and culture are re-birth rites to do with fire and the hearth. A very common method of rebirth in the context of werewolf-creatures is to turn round (over the stove or open fire) babies who were born feet first – this will prevent the baby from becoming a *volkodlak*, *vedomec* or *malandante* (which is the "evil" variant of the "good" *benandante*).<sup>202</sup> In other words he is reborn as a "normal" human being.

Slovenians in Venice, identifying the mother's womb with a stove, would turn a new born baby around inside the stove if it had been born a *vedomec*.<sup>203</sup> Here we are witnessing a case of symbolic baking as a union of initiation into culture and symbolic immersion into the womb or mother earth as a form of rebirth.<sup>204</sup> Imitating the gesture of putting a *changeling* into the stove is common all over the Hungarian-speaking territory.<sup>205</sup> The following is an example from a Hungarian witchcraft trial:

...Ilona Sarlo's baby having been born a cripple, this accused person here said to her to light the stove at dawn and that we should place the baby on the peel and stick it in the stove and you will see that your baby will fly out through the chimney and a different child will come in its place.<sup>206</sup>

Similar rites include "swapping back" Serbian *podmeće* (changeling),<sup>207</sup> as well as the Russian and Ukrainian rites *perepekanii* ('re-baking') published by William Ryan.<sup>208</sup> Obviously evading the "nature" option is also secured by the hearth itself and the cultural operation of baking. Several groups of Hungarians, as well as various peoples of the Balkans know the practice of symbolically "cooking" changelings or *agos* children<sup>209</sup> over the steam of an open fire.<sup>210</sup> The hearth itself, as the centre of family life, also plays its part in initiation through cooking, as it is a condensed expression of the role that culture plays in integrating people into the community, but the same is true of the iron cauldron as a cultural product of the blacksmith's work.<sup>211</sup>

Fire, fire instruments (lighting steel) and metals appear frequently in different contexts to do with werewolves as representatives of the side of culture as against raw nature. We could mention under this heading all iron items or metalwork tools that are used in defence against demons (knife or hammer<sup>212</sup> used against damage by *mora*; Russians putting up a symbolic iron fence against wild animals;<sup>213</sup> a sickle placed over dead people's stomach to prevent them from becoming werewolf demons or vampires;<sup>214</sup> axes used to retrieve

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<sup>201</sup> Kelemina (1930) p. 90.

<sup>202</sup> Anonymous (1883), Ginzburg (1983: 60).

<sup>203</sup> Kelemina (1930: 92).

<sup>204</sup> On the initiation symbolism of the mother's womb see Eliade (1959) pp. 133–139, 118–126.

<sup>205</sup> See NA group *Changelings*.

<sup>206</sup> Kecskemét, between 1691–1696, Schram (1970. I.) p. 462.

<sup>207</sup> Filipović (1982) p. 170.

<sup>208</sup> Ryan (1999) p. 200.

<sup>209</sup> The disease called *agos* comes from from demons or dogs, while *changelings* are even the children of demons.

<sup>210</sup> Puchner (1992) p. 498: the name of the Bulgarian disease *pesec*, *pesica*, *pesici* also derives from the word for dog.

<sup>211</sup> On the magical cauldron of Indo-European mythologies in which dead persons are restored see Oosten (1985) pp. 83–85. Cf. Eliade (1959) pp. 123–127): initiation in a cauldron. The anti-demon role of iron: Oosten (1985) pp. 83–85 (chapter *The iron house*).

<sup>212</sup> Carić (1899) p. 605; or a Hungarian data collected by Judit Morvay, Abaujlak, Abauj-Torna county.

<sup>213</sup> Ryan (1999: 200).

changelings to their original form.<sup>215</sup> We could list a number of further examples where a broader context reaching beyond the initiation of werewolves comes to include stringing a fire, the role of giving new life that metals play in rituals which also appears in folklore (cf. legends of people being "hammered into youth" widespread practically throughout the whole of Europe in the Middle Ages and early modern times<sup>216</sup>).

The symbolic meaning of being baked into human shape also extends to the product of the baking – the *bread*. In the werewolf trial of Livonia the accused says in his own defence that he and his fellow werewolves eat meat cooked, just like humans.<sup>217</sup> Taming the fierce werewolf who eats raw meat into a human by using bread is a common legend motif all over Europe. Once a wolf breaks in upon the herd it can be assuaged and turned into a human by giving it bread. The *volkodlak* or the Hungarian werewolf ceases to be a wild beast if someone throws it some bread,<sup>218</sup> and we also know of Hungarian data of bread given in order to render a snake harmless if it attacks the herd.<sup>219</sup>

"It is the clothes that make the man."

A further technique for turning a werewolf from animal back to human is by dressing it in human clothes. This is also a mirror image of the metamorphosis with the wolf shirt on a higher level; the level of culture. Just as one can turn from human to animal by donning the wolf shirt, if a creature puts on a human garment they will turn human. This is also where we need to mention data from werewolf legends known to the whole of Europe even in the Middle Ages, according to which the werewolf becomes a wolf when he takes off his human clothes (and if the clothes are stolen during this time, he cannot change back).<sup>220</sup> Dressing in a shirt is a ritual used for "initiation into being human" in a number of places on the Balkans even as part of the rites that aim to prevent the destiny of becoming a werewolf at birth, already mentioned in connection with baking.

To prevent babies born during the twelfth day of Christmas (here the 'unbaptised days') becoming *karakondsuli*, meaning "unbaptised" demons, they are given a shirt to wear. In Bulgaria, although this death time entails a taboo on spinning, if a baby is born at this time, *three women* make a shirt out of wool for it – this has to be complete before the morning and the baby has to wear it.<sup>221</sup> Serbs act similarly in analogous cases.<sup>222</sup> A group of three women integrates the baby in *the group of the living*. Their role is similar to that of Godparents who donate a baptising shirt to new born babies (this is a customary optional part of the Catholic baptism ceremony to this very day<sup>223</sup>). Giving a shirt as a ritual of integration into the group also appears in the Ukrainian variants of healing changelings, where the sick baby was pulled through the mother's shirt three times over proceeding from the neck toward the bottom and was this way "reborn".<sup>224</sup> The same kind of ritual was performed in several northern

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<sup>214</sup> Pamfile (1916) p. 137; data also exist regarding sickles and other iron objects (ploughs, axes) being placed over the stomach of the dead person in Eastern Hungary, but no particular explanation is attached. K. Kovács (1944) pp. 84–85, 104–113.

<sup>215</sup> NA Group *Changeling*.

<sup>216</sup> Dänhardt (1909. II.) pp. 154–171.

<sup>217</sup> Kretzenbacher (1968) p. 93.

<sup>218</sup> Anonymous (1883); the werewolf-shepherd trial of Lakompak, county Sopron, 1651: Eckhardt (1954): 133; Drozdowska (1962) note 18.

<sup>219</sup> E. g. at Karcsa, Zemplén county; Balassa (1963): 262.

<sup>220</sup> Hertz (1862: 91-92, 95, 97).

<sup>221</sup> Verbal information by courtesy of Evgeniia Mitseva, Sofia 1988.

<sup>222</sup> Zečević (1981: 168).

<sup>223</sup> On the Hungarian data on baptismal layette see Kapros (1986) p. 267.

<sup>224</sup> Ryan (1999) p. 178.

Hungarian villages when, as a form of defence against beings "changed", the baby is dressed in its mother's or father's clothes or some item made out of such, for instance the shirt or waistcoat that the father had worn as a bridegroom or a part of the mother's blouse or its father's or mother's shirt is tucked under its swaddle. On other occasions babies born with teeth are protected from becoming a *táltos* by covering them with their mother's apron.<sup>225</sup>

Baptism as initiation into being human is brought in connection with rituals of the wolf's shirt by the *baptismal robe*. An illustrative example of this is the legendary motif of unbaptised children coming back as ghosts to haunt the living, when these creatures, living a miserable life in a liminal existence, are symbolically baptised. If their crying is heard, they are given a name and a garment which serves as a baptising shirt is thrown in the direction of the crying sound, so that the infant soul can attain its final status in the other world. Symbolic baptising shirts are also "thrown" as defence against unbaptised demons. This way the atoning ghost is "freed".<sup>226</sup>

As we shall see, these beliefs and certain rites are in some sense related to relevant werewolf beliefs as well,<sup>227</sup> precisely on the level of initiation rites. Baptism, as a prerequisite of heavenly bliss, also prevents the dead person becoming a dangerous *unbaptised demon*. Through baptism the individual wins his or her final status within the Christian community, this way it is also a rite of initiation into being human. By contrast, babies who have not been baptised are quasi dead persons in the liminal state of exclusion, in close contact with the world of the dead, with the chaotic periphery – they may easily be taken into the "other world" of demons (cf. beliefs about changelings or unbaptised demons).

You had to take care of him otherwise the dragons would take him and bring one of those *garabonciás* students in his place.<sup>228</sup>

In this context, an interesting feature is the custom of baptising the caul. In several northern Hungarian villages, the caul which ensures clairvoyance is taken to (seven) baptisms tucked into a swaddle<sup>229</sup> – in this context we can once more talk about "confirming" through culture the natural elements.

Semi-finished ("raw") products of cloth-making and weaving, such as tow and thread, appear in a number of data concerning defence against werewolf demons, the unbaptised or vampires.<sup>230</sup> One instance worth noting is when tow is placed on a little distaff as a sacrifice offered to an assaulting demon, while the demon is invited to work – it is told to spin the tow instead of the horse's mane (if a horse's mane is plaited, in other words ruffled, that is a sign of assault by the devil). The offering may be some hemp thread woven with the left hand or a spindle with a "broken tip" to symbolise imperfection or incompleteness.

Of all the basic work procedures of human culture, cooking and baking, spinning and weaving, but also the blacksmith's trade play an important part in taming or ennobling the demon world of nature and the inherently demonic aspects of man and in defending human culture. Such archaic representations of the relationship of nature and culture fit into the above-mentioned system of binary oppositions which is represented as the raw and the cooked to this day by the most archaic folklore traditions of Europe. Indeed, as our examples

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<sup>225</sup> Data from Hungarian villages: Kapros (1986) p. 235; Bondár (1982): 52; NA, groups *Changeling* and *Children born with teeth*.

<sup>226</sup> For more detail on these data see Pócs (2000) p. 48.

<sup>227</sup> Among Albanians, Romanians and the Greek, people who die unbaptised expressly turn into dead werewolves or werewolf demons who attack the herds. Dieterich (1905) p. 389; Wlislöcki (1896) p. 90 – 91. Moldován (1897) p. 195.

<sup>228</sup> Kapros (1986) pp. 233–234.

<sup>229</sup> Csáky (1992) p. 44; Kapros (1986) p. 180.

<sup>230</sup> Zečević (1981) p. 131; Pamfile (1916) p. 139.

showed, the individual elements of the ritual systems testify to the same. The above-system fundamentally shows that culture needs to be founded on the world of nature, retaining its *fertile* "raw" aspects, it needs to be "built up" and strengthened, and at the same time be protected against the dangers of *assaulting nature*. (This is indicated by the "raw" element of the rites which refer to nature.) Being initiated into human existence is immersion into nature followed by rebirth bursting up from beneath. (Cf.: in the liminal stage of rites of transition the individual, as symbolically dead, comes in contact with the world of the dead.)

In a previous paper I wrote about the appearance of raw and unfinished products or a more primitive technological standard appearing in *sacrifices* which are offered to the creatures of nature for the benefit of *culture*. A cultural product created during or in spite of taboos can also be a raw sacrifice (which during the time of the dead can only be made for the dead).<sup>231</sup> This kind of meaning may be deciphered in the present context, too: a shirt woven during the taboo on spinning is not (only) an object of culture for man but also a "raw" sacrifice made for the demons of nature or offered to the "lord of the animals" type patron saints of the herds. The taboos on spinning or sewing which affect wolf-time (the Twelfth day of Christmas or *wolf holidays* or the days of St. George, St. Andrew, St. Peter and other patron saints of the herds) as well as prohibitions on lighting a fire or housework also serve to protect the herd and prevent the assault of wolves.<sup>232</sup>

### The "good werewolf" and its patrons

One alternative within the existence of a werewolf is to assault human culture as a demon taking an animal form. However, the assaulting demon is but one aspect of the werewolf's ambivalent existence. The werewolf can be a positive, protecting figure, a patron who vanquishes the assaulting werewolf – a *Wolfsbanner* by its German name.<sup>233</sup> Weather magicians who were able to play the part of a mediator keeping contact with nature and fight in defence of culture against the demons of nature still existed in certain points of Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and filled certain communal functions. Some of them were clearly werewolves (often called by the local name of werewolf, such as, for instance, the names *vukodlak*, *mogut*, *zmej*, *zmaj*, *vedomec* mentioned above).<sup>234</sup> As regards others, we can only speak of certain werewolf aspects or characteristics such as in the case of the Italian *benandanti*<sup>235</sup> and of the Hungarian *táltos* or the previously mentioned belief figures of Hungarian legend. Even the entirely fictitious legendary magician figures such as

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<sup>231</sup> For instance: an offering of unleavened bread for a good harvest of grain; unleavened baked despite the baking taboo on Good Friday as an offering for the deceased. On the role of semi-finished products or items representing a lower technical/technological standard as raw offerings within the European belief systems see Pócs (1992).

<sup>232</sup> See Peuckert (1941) pp. 782–783; Kuret (1975); Muşlea – Bîrlea (1970) p. 407. According to Harry Senn (1982) p. 53 people are not allowed to wash the floor, eat meat, weave or comb their hair. On the topics of the lord of the wolves, wolf-holidays and taboos on these days see the comprehensive works of Mirjam Mencej: Mencej (2001), (2009).

<sup>233</sup> Peuckert (1941).

<sup>234</sup> See Klaniczay (1990); Pócs (1989b), (1999) chapter 7, with a rich bibliography on Central, South-Eastern and Eastern European literature. The most important works among these are: the first significant summary of Slavic magicians by Moszyński (1967 [1929]) pp. 651–655; later Đorđević (1953) pp. 237–250 and Zečević (1981) pp. 149–151) summarised the Serbian and Croatian material; Marinov (1914) pp. 208–209, later Georgieva (1983) pp. 79–83) summarised the Bulgarian material, while Kelemina (1930) publishes a great amount of Slovenian data. For a Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian summary see Bošković-Stulli (1960), for Poland: Udziela (1898), for Albania: Lambertz (1922) pp. 102–104, Hahn (1853) p. 163; Elsie (2001) p. 74–76.

<sup>235</sup> See Ginzburg (1983 [1966]).

the Hungarian or Croatian *garabonciás/grabancijaš*, Romanian *şolomonar*<sup>236</sup> and their relations may have certain werewolf characteristics.

There is no room within the present frames to offer a detailed description of the beliefs that surround various types of magicians or to present the various types in detail.<sup>237</sup> The types may be delineated on the basis of their werewolf characteristics. These are their birth traits, their method of initiation, their animal alter egos, their helping animals, the fact that they fight in defence of culture; indeed, they occasionally fill the role of the cultural hero. *Stuha, zduhac, zmej, mogut, drangue, dragua* and other magicians from the Balkans, as well as certain types of *táltos* are born with wolf's teeth, a double line of teeth, a tail or wings and have wolf-, snake or dragon alter egos. A further important characteristic is that their destiny is defined at birth, as is their cyclic change of the plane of existence which essentially follows the lunar calendar. The fictitious figure of the Romanian *strigoi* also has a number of werewolf traits besides its vampire characteristics. *Garabonciás/grabancijaš* is born with a double line of teeth, its alter egos or helping animals are a snake or dragon or sometimes a wild boar or dog. We know of *garabonciás* with a bristly back, with cow's hooves or with horns, they may also have a snake alter ego; this category also includes "lunatic" *garabonciás* that are moved by the changes of the moon.<sup>238</sup>

The beliefs and narratives about active magicians do not reflect "pure" types. Often the magician figures also have werewolf and *mora* attributes, and mixed instances are numerous. These include the majority of *táltos* recorded in 18<sup>th</sup> century witchcraft trials, as well as Bulgarian, Serbian, Macedonian and Albanian dragon magicians *zmej/zmaj/zmij* and *dragua/drangue*.

#### The magician's fated life course

Based on the relevant narratives, what distinguished magicians from ordinary werewolf beings was that they partook of the positive version of the destiny defined at birth. When a werewolf is born (or at the beginning of a new cycle of life and death), the transitory nature of the beginning of the cycle always offers two different possible life courses. When the destiny is pronounced, alternative options are also stated, for example in the beliefs of the midwives who mark out the destiny. According to certain Romanian *strigoi* data, a *strigoi* fated "for milk" will damage the cattle herds but if the midwife says that someone is fated for work, that person will work hard, even at night they will always be working".<sup>239</sup> Indeed, if someone has artistic talent, they are a *strigoi* "for music" or "for dance" etc.<sup>240</sup>

As regards birth attributes, different options of alternative destiny are also clearly outlined. We have seen above that babies born with teeth have the teeth extracted by the midwife to make sure the baby does not become a werewolf. In Slovenia if a baby is born in a caul, the caul is destroyed so the baby escapes turning into a *volkodlak*. At the same time, we know of a number of beliefs about preserving most carefully the tooth or caul which secure the other alternative within this double existence.<sup>241</sup> This is not a contradiction but the consequence of the ambivalence of the werewolf's existence. According to Hungarian belief, if the newborn has a tooth it must be left in place, otherwise the baby cannot become a

<sup>236</sup> On these legendary figures see: Jagić (1877); Gaster (1883); Holló (1934); Erdész (1984) pp. 114–138; Pócs (1988); Marks (2009).

<sup>237</sup> For a summary of the most important types see Pócs (1999) chapter 7. Ginzburg's (1990a) attempt at comprehensive typology is also important: Ginzburg (1990) pp. 153–182 (chapter "Kämpfen in Ekstase").

<sup>238</sup> See NA, group *Garabonciás*, data from Komárom, Borsod, Heves, Zala and Veszprém counties.

<sup>239</sup> Collected by Vilmos Diószegi among the Romanians of Méhkerék (Békés county), NA group *Birth*.

<sup>240</sup> Senn (1982) p. 15.

<sup>241</sup> See the above mentioned sources for caul and teeth.

*táltos*,<sup>242</sup> while according to Hungarian, Slovenian and Croatian belief the caul must be kept. Preserving the caul is particularly important in the mediating activity of magicians, and there are many beliefs about how this allows for both the metamorphosis and the battles of the alter egos against demons.<sup>243</sup> The positive role can only become manifest if the caul is dried and put away and is used as an amulet (under a shirt or under the arm, tied into a bundle or sewn into an item of clothing), in some cases it needs to be baptised (taken to an actual Christening). In Slovenia the cauls of babies are either destroyed to prevent the destiny of the *volkodlak* or the child wears it sewn in under his arm to help him become a seer or a good magician.<sup>244</sup>

The dates of birth related to a cycle of seven, as well as to the changes of the moon or the dark sun cycle, are not only associated with the birth of the wild werewolf – they also have a strong positive connotation which refers to the possible positive life courses open to werewolf beings. Several European types of magicians and seers are born at the time of the winter solstice, between Christmas and Epiphany – this is when werewolves attacking from the underworld, such as *kallikantsari*, are born. Hungarian folk belief also has it that babies born at Christmas or at St. Lucy's day are to become *táltos*.<sup>245</sup> Being born the seventh, just like Saturday and Sunday as the seventh day, have a double role. Sunday babies are seen as lucky all over Europe and are believed to be meant for a seer's fate,<sup>246</sup> while in the Balkans those born on Saturday are to become vampire seers.<sup>247</sup>

Twin brothers or sisters, people born on the same day at the same place, bearing the same name or born on the identical day of a different year are seen as siblings representing the other alternative of the werewolf's destiny. They will be the vanquishing opponent, the 'vampire seer' or 'strigoi seer'.<sup>248</sup> Such a person can be his or her "own alternative", in other words their own demonic counterpart: the Polish *strzyga* (vampire-type werewolf), besides being born with a double line of teeth, is originally a twin child who survives a birth where its twin sibling dies – this latter becomes his or her alter ego.<sup>249</sup>

Coming from a "mixed" marriage leads to the birth of misshapen babies, "chaos" monsters from the underworld, but this is not the only possible outcome. Among the Macedonians, Bulgarians, Serbs and Albanians, werewolf magicians called *zmej/zmaj/zmajevit čovek*, *drangue*, *dragua* etc. (meaning 'snake', 'dragon', 'dragon man'), born in a snake skin and/or with wings, who possess dragon or snake alter egos, come from fathers who are a snake, dragon or eagle. Among the Serbs of Leskovač a vampire father will have a *vampirovići* ('vampire seer') child, while the father of the *mogut* at Turopolje, a good werewolf who procures acorns for the pig herds, is the devil himself.<sup>250</sup>

Certain data speak of an animal father in the context of the Hungarian *táltos*, however, this does not necessarily entail a "totemic" descent, as some researchers believe<sup>251</sup> but is more a sign of an animal forebear guardian spirit who belongs to the positive aspect of a werewolf's existence, which is, as is often the case with the data from the Balkans mentioned above, identical with the werewolf's own animal alter ego or "soul animal". Such an identity between the ancestor, the guardian spirit and the animal alter ego is confirmed by the fact that

<sup>242</sup> Diószegi (1959: 129).

<sup>243</sup> On the role of the caul in the context of magicians see Anderson (1930–1931); Mikac (1934) p. 195; Belmont (1971); Jakobson–Szeftel (1996).

<sup>244</sup> Kelemina (1930) p. 147.

<sup>245</sup> Grober-Glück (1966) p. 97. For sporadic data on Hungarian *táltos* and the day of St. Lucy or Christmas see: NA, group 'Birth'.

<sup>246</sup> Kummer (1929–1930), Andersson (1930–1931), Weiser-Aall (1960) p. 32; Belmont (1971) pp. 28–30.

<sup>247</sup> Abbot (1903) p. 221; Strausz (1897) p. 165; Candrea (1944) p. 108.

<sup>248</sup> Pamfile (1916) pp. 133, 137, 140.

<sup>249</sup> Drozdowska (1962) p. 127.

<sup>250</sup> Chloupek (1953) p. 241.

<sup>251</sup> Gunda (1963), in the context of a Hungarian *táltos* with a wolf father from Bihar county.

being born from a snake father, in a snake skin or as a snake are connected by a semantic identity with being born in a caul. This was pointed out by Roman Jakobson analysing the mythical context of the werewolf heroes, born in a caul, in Russian heroic epic.<sup>252</sup>

Being born in a caul, in a snake skin, with wings or teeth or as a seventh child are all marks of possessing the kind of demonic power springing from nature which compel the human wolf to metamorphose into its natural form of existence, to turn into an animal. In the case of the good magician this allows the person to become a "good" magician of special capabilities whose capacities enable them to keep contact with the spirit world but also perform at a superhuman standard in culture. They also retain the physical force which is referential to nature, as narratives testify. It is no accident that one type of Hungarian and Slavic werewolf terminology is related to words meaning 'wise man', (Slovenian *vedomec*, *vedarec*, Serbian *vidovito*, Ukrainian *viscun*, Polish *wieszcz* and so on<sup>253</sup>), but Dalmatian and Albanian 'men with tail' or 'billy-goats'<sup>254</sup> are also positive werewolves. All of these figures are "wise men" of the kind who, besides their clairvoyance, are characterised by extraordinary physical strength and an exalted lifestyle and who perform uncommon physical feats even in human shape.

These legendary motifs about the special circumstances of the magician's birth may equally well surround genuine, active magicians or fictitious, legendary magicians and also appear in the heroic epic of the Balkans and the Eastern Slavs where they surround the figure of the "werewolf warrior".<sup>255</sup> On the one hand it occasionally happens that they gain their uncommon strength through seven or nine years of pregnancy or breastfeeding; on the other hand narratives characterise them by the motif of *puer senex*. The magician child instantly becomes an adult, it starts talking as a baby and instantly starts its mediating activity: it rises from the cradle to go into a dragons' battle as a *zmej*, *zmija* or *dragua* magician. Babies of this kind grow up rapidly, have superhuman strength, are extraordinarily good walkers, they travel at a superhuman speed, indeed they fly; when wrestling they overcome the most powerful sportsmen etc. In the case of "good" werewolves thus the strength of nature manifests not in assaults against humanity but in a heightened physical existence and, instead of attacking culture, in feverish work to build culture.<sup>256</sup> Certain figures of legend are experts of magic related to the harvest and use their superhuman potential to increase the yield of their farm. E.g. one type of the Hungarian *táltos* has a plough that ploughs by itself, when he is gathering in the hay he only needs to whistle and his haystacks fly to him, etc.<sup>257</sup> Owing to its inherent demonic force, which springs from nature, in other words its "wolf nature", the warrior werewolf is capable of superhuman acts of war. Even if this is the bloody ravaging of a wolf, the actions may qualify as positive; a "good werewolf's" deeds in defence of the tribe. In this sense, being a werewolf is a form of recourse to nature within culture; or, viewed from the other side, the inspiring intrusion of nature into culture.

The cyclic movement determined by fate, and the alternation of life and death, are behind the typical duality or ambivalence characteristic of magicians with a werewolf connotation which manifests itself in the alternation of their positive and negative character depending on their current role.

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<sup>252</sup>As we know from papers by Roman Jakobson, Vseslav of the Russian bylina, *Volch*, the wolf-man was born, according to the most archaic bylina variants, from a snake; a snake-wolf connection also appears in the very name of *Zmaj Ognjenij Vuk*, the warrior of the Southern Slav epic (meaning 'Dragon Fiery Wolf'); Jakobson – Ružičić (1950); Jakobson – Szeftel 1966. On this see also Vaz da Silva (2002) pp. 43–48.

<sup>253</sup>Dukova (1984) p. 13; Jakobson – Szeftel (1966) pp. 344–374.

<sup>254</sup>Hahn (1854) p. 193; Carić (1899) p. 605.

<sup>255</sup>On the warrior werewolf in heroic epic Jakobson–Ružičić (1950); Zenkovsky (1963) pp. 140–160; Jakobson–Szeftel (1966); Ivanov–Toporov (1970); Čajkanović (1973).

<sup>256</sup>Senn (1982) pp. 14–15 also writes about this in the context of the Romanian *strigoi*.

<sup>257</sup>See NA group 'Wise man' (subgroup 'Work gets done by itself')

Owing to its birth traits the werewolf is suited for alternative existence – it is born with animal traits, a double identity. However, our data show that in order for it to become not simply a wild werewolf representing nature but also a mediator representing culture, certain rites of initiation are necessary.

The ritual weaving of shirts is also shown as a rite of passage for magicians according to Bulgarian data. If after 11 months of pregnancy a *zmejče* (“dragon child”) is born with a tail and wings, either twelve young girls or nine old women need to weave a shirt for it in one night. They use pine cones to shred the cotton, they spin it and weave it in complete silence and then put it on the baby to cover up its tail and wings. They must not tell anyone that the baby is a *zmej* because it would die. Unless they dress it in a shirt it does not turn into a *zmej* (dragon) and thus will not become the “patron saint” of the village, but through the shirt comes to possess a “special power and will be able to send away the *hala* (the assaulting dragon who brings hail).<sup>258</sup>

But why does the mediator need to be initiated into culture as well? I believe that his contacts with the demonic periphery grant him strength to vanquish the demons but if he wants to fight a successful struggle against demons in defence of culture he also needs to be a member of the human community, a depository of culture – in our case he needs to undergo the act of a group making him a shirt which integrates him into culture. Our data seem to testify that the layer of the power received from the birth traits which refer to nature should be overlaid by another layer of the “special power” of culture. This is expressed through the element of the ritual whereby the baby’s tail and wings need to be covered up by clothes. Owing to this shirt, the magician is able to enter combat with the dragon against which the shirt protects him. The nature figure initiated into culture will come to vanquish the nature figures.

In order to vanquish the demons, however, it seems that the above described methods for initiation into humanity/culture are not satisfactory. As may be deciphered from a great number of belief and narrative data from Central and South-Eastern Europe, magicians need to go through a kind of “initiation in nature”. Beliefs outline a number of methods for this. As we have seen thus far, choosing the alternative of nature/death carries the potential of becoming a magician or a mediator for double beings. It was formulated as one potential variant of werewolf destiny that they are being “taken away” for initiation, in order to stand a test. Even werewolves with a positive destiny experience their life course in (usually seven) cycles of life and death – being taken away, initiated into nature, returning, starting activity for culture. Legends about this often make mention of the calling spirit, as well: these are the demonic variants of the given type of magician. Serbian *dragon child* (*zmejče*), similarly to Hungarian *táltos* or Croatian *kresnik* and *strigo* are called at the age of seven by *kresniks*, *dragons*, *táltos*, *wolves* etc.<sup>259</sup>

At the village of Bősárkány... a child was born with teeth and so it had teeth. When he became seven, a horse came to get him... Then the child died. A few days later he woke up and was already a *táltos*.<sup>260</sup>

It often becomes clear that in these cases we are talking about the above- mentioned guardian spirit werewolf or its *lord of the animals* or *wolf shepherd* variant (possibly the

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<sup>258</sup> Collected by and verbal information by courtesy of Ievgeniia Mitseva, 1988; similarly Georgieva (1983) p. 80.

<sup>259</sup> See Diószegi (1958) pp. 48, 60; NA groups *Táltos* and ‘*Children born with teeth*’; Bošković-Stulli (1953) pp. 278, 289, 290.

<sup>260</sup> Sopron county, Diószegi (1958) pp. 25, 60. At the age of seven, *táltos* are taken away for three days or seven years (to be initiated), then they return: Diószegi (1958) pp. 64,70. For similar data see NA, group *Táltos*, subgroup *Calling*; group *Garabonciás*, subgroup *Calling*; group *Children born with teeth*.

variants that live on in the Christian saints who are patrons of animals and "wolf shepherds).<sup>261</sup>

An initiation motif which occurs in werewolf legends in the Balkans, the Alps and sporadically also in Hungary is *tearing apart – taking out bones – putting together/waking up*.<sup>262</sup> A demonic werewolf team can initiate its candidate in this fashion – for instance Slovenian *vedomec* tear to pieces anyone who comes to mingle with them by accident and then revive the person from the bones.<sup>263</sup> In Hungarian narratives the *táltos* and similar figures "crush the arms and legs" of the new *táltos*.<sup>264</sup> In Hungarian legends, but also in the Balkans or among the Russians, figures appearing in the guise of fairies or fate women and witches can also carry traits of this kind.<sup>265</sup> *Taking out the bones* (the legend motif whereby the revived animal or person has a bone missing or is lame<sup>266</sup>) also pertains to the context of werewolves.<sup>267</sup> This is probably where we can place the well-known motif from Hungarian legend of the *táltos* or *garabonciás* losing a tooth or having it taken out at trials or in battles.<sup>268</sup>

### The strife for culture

The duality of the figure of the werewolf, partly wild and partly tamed by culture, peaks in the notions of battle where its own two alternatives stand juxtaposed. The most important characteristic of the positive werewolf is its capacity for communicating with the supernatural through its animal alter ego. At least a few of the accounts in our possession state that the "soul" or animal alter ego of the werewolf-being enters the world of nature in a (fictional or real) trance or dream where it fights battles with the demons assaulting the community, most often at the call or with the guidance of some guardian and helping spirits.

Within the region examined, it was mostly from the documentation of Hungarian witchcraft trials that I was able to document beliefs reflecting the above-described archaic notion of the soul as *doubles, living and dead, corporal and spiritual alter egos* which are able to depart from the body or accompany it.<sup>269</sup> The trial documentation also shows that these formed an important base for the otherworldly journeys and spirit battles of both *mora* type seers, magicians and witches and of magicians with werewolf traits and at the same time provided the *guardian and helping spirits* necessary for entering contact. These guardian and helping spirits were also in close contact with the *dead ancestors*. The existence of guardian and helping spirits is a characteristic surplus that professional mediators possess when compared to everyday techniques. They are often helped in communication with the other

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<sup>261</sup> See e.g. Paulson's (1964) summary. The lord/mistress of the animals figure of hunting peoples is, according to its original function, the protector of wild animals, helper of hunters and fishermen. For its European aspects see Schmidt (1952). Röhrich (1959).

<sup>262</sup> Which is otherwise known from the context of the initiation of Eurasian shamans, see e.g. Eliade (1957) pp. 43–76).

<sup>263</sup> Kelemina (1930) p. 12.

<sup>264</sup> Diószegi (1958) p. 52.

<sup>265</sup> E. g. Diószegi (1967) p. 44. See for more data Pócs (2002a).

<sup>266</sup> For legends of Pelops and the wooden legged witch see Schmidt (1952b), Matičetov (1959).

<sup>267</sup> Which Ginzburg clearly classifies in his detailed analysis, reaching back to ancient and even Biblical motifs, as an initiation motif. This is entirely justified even if the threads reaching back to the distant past do not necessarily entail a historical continuity (these initiation motifs can be considered, similarly to the phenomena here discussed, as general archaic characteristics of *nature and culture*): Ginzburg (1990) pp. 227–232, 240–243; cf. Eliade (1999) pp. 179–188.

<sup>268</sup> Diószegi (1958) p. 130; NA, group *Children born with teeth*; group *Táltos*, subgroup *Birth of*.

<sup>269</sup> There is no room here to enumerate the vast literature on these questions;

world by the souls of their forebears. Their calling spirits and the leaders and helpers of their soul battles are certainly some sort of "good" variants of the "dead" alter ego of the werewolf.

Thus the demonic *dead* werewolf is often a guardian spirit. We also know of werewolf guardian spirits who guard the wolves and lead the wild pack of werewolves; this spirit has features both of the "good" wolf ancestor and of the "lord of the animals". These include Croatian and Serbian *vučji pastir*, German *Wolfsführer*, *Wolfshirt* or Hungarian *farkaspásztor* ('wolf shepherd'). In other variants they protect the herds from the attacks of wolves – such guardian spirits protecting their herds are the guard dogs which appear in Hungarian legends (and tales) about *wise shepherds*.<sup>270</sup> In fact, protecting their own world against assaults from the periphery and the patronage of the "living" magicians who defend the community are important functions of all types of magicians.<sup>271</sup> Bulgarian *zmej* magicians with dragon or eagle alter egos receive their calling from, and are assisted in battle by dragons or eagles which are communal guardian spirits and may at the same time be "animal fathers" to the magician.

Spirit battles of the characteristic guardian spirits of nature-culture systems are also known about in the region, and this is true not only of werewolf type creatures but also storm demons, fairies and *mora* type guardian spirits (e.g. between the guardian spirits of two neighbouring communities or between the witch and the witchdoctor). Spirit battles are a general *topoi* of these archaic systems.<sup>272</sup> The characteristic battles of werewolf magicians differ from all other spirit battles in that their purpose is to defend culture. This way they tower above common werewolf battles which are characterised by self-seeking wildness or, at best, some sort of power test:

... they have to go out, five or six kilometres, fifteen or twenty of them. [So as to] fight there in spirit. ... Just like cats and dogs out in the field they go at each other, to see which is stronger. ... Not them against one another – it is the spirits [they fight] at night... No, he lies in bed at home, he does not go anywhere. Just stays in the bed and only his spirit is out in the forest at Csonkás, only his spirit – he is in his bed.<sup>273</sup>

The good werewolf fights its battles for the community. Magicians fighting in the guise of a snake, eagle, dragon or wild boar (or, in the narratives, often on the backs of these) protect their community from hostile werewolf demons who snatch the grain, destroy the harvest, bring hail or epidemics – essentially against their own evil alternative.

One type of legend from Hungary or the Balkans presents battles as repetitive acts which conclude or begin a new cycle in the system of the werewolf's life cycles. These battles have the character, at least to some extent, of a trial or initiation. It is said of the *táltos* of Sárret that

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<sup>270</sup> See Hertz (1862) pp. 121–122; Krauss (1908) pp. 141, 142; Róheim (1925) p. 92), Bošković-Stulli (1960) pp. 276, 289; Peuckert (1941). For 'guardian dogs' see NA, group *Wise shepherd*; as regards tale type AaTh 449/A see Dégh (1960). This role is often played by such saints of the Christian calendars as are known protectors of the herds, St. Blaise, St. Andrew, St. Michael, St. George, the winter St. Peter of the Orthodox faith, St. Sava, St. Demetrios. In many cases these are the Christian versions of the variants of patrons or *lords of the animals* as they live in the folk belief of Central and Eastern Europe. On this, particularly as regards the cult of St. Sava, Schneeweiss (1961) p. 14; Čajkanović (1973).

<sup>271</sup> Lecouteux (1995); on the types of werewolf guardian spirits of the Balkans see also, for instance, Pócs (1989a) pp. 32–34.

<sup>272</sup> See for instance the battles of different guardian and helping spirits: Bošković-Stulli (1960); Tolstói–Tolstaia (1981).

<sup>273</sup> Collected by Magdolna Nagy, from ethnic Hungarian population in Kémer/Camăr, Szilágy/Sălaj county, Romania.

at the age of seven all of a sudden he ran away from home because he had to go out to a dry patch in the meadows ... to fight the wolves that the old *táltos* people had set upon him.<sup>274</sup>

Speaking of a winged *táltos* (with a dragon attribute) from Sárretudvari, Ilona Madar writes, "in order to renew their strength they need to fight each other every seven years and whoever proves stronger increases sevenfold in strength".<sup>275</sup> This means that the mediator becomes rejuvenated in the battle – vanquishing his natural enemy is also a kind of initiation into the next cycle. This fits into the above-described regularities of werewolf existence. On the other hand, the repetition of the battles also follows the changes of agricultural cycles and the vegetation (e.g. in connection with the timing of battles at the beginning of seasons). The winner is reborn and the vegetation revives as a consequence of their victory. The aim of their battle is to reacquire the grain that had been snatched (taken to the underworld) and bring it up to the surface.<sup>276</sup> Battles decide the future of human communities as a form of divine justice. These destinies are a reflection of the good and evil alternatives of werewolf existence that became their lot owing to the decisions of the Fates. In this sense the werewolf who vanquishes himself fights against his own evil self.

The werewolf battles that emerge from the data are of many kinds: the animal forms and guardian spirits of the magicians, the purpose and course of the battle, the symbolic other world may all be different, but there is no space here to go into details. Examples of battles against creatures who snatch the grain come from Italy, the Baltic area, Osetia or the Balkans alike.<sup>277</sup> Certain traits of Bulgarian and Macedonian werewolf magicians who have a dragon for an alter ego and also a dragon for a calling and guardian spirit, are also referential to the chaos dragon who snatches the sun. At the same time, however, they also represent the vanquishing of the chaos dragon and fight, under the patronage of the dragon killing deities, against the demons of the underworld who snatch the sun, the water or bring hailstorms.<sup>278</sup> The mythical struggle against the demons of nature or chaos dragon is sometimes transformed into a strife to defend the tribe, the country or the true faith (particularly in the case of the warrior werewolves of the heroic epic of the Balkans or the Eastern Slavs such as Zmaj Ognjenij Vuk, János Hunyadi or Vseslav of the Russian *Slovo*).<sup>279</sup> This is the origin of the military motifs of battles fought in nature.<sup>280</sup>

The fact that the mediating activity of werewolf magicians has a feature of protecting culture is well illustrated by the battle *topos* of belief legends about various weapons. One

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<sup>274</sup> Kodolányi (1945: 33).

<sup>275</sup> P. Madar (1967: 171). For similar data see NA *Táltos/fights*

<sup>276</sup> Slovenian, Croatian magicians often do battle with this very purpose or, at other times, fight the dead or the hostile magicians who snatch the grain in order to re-conquer the harvest without going "down" into the other world. Other types of magicians fight the demons of the underworld who bring hailstorms or the magicians and guardian spirits of the neighbouring village or area. For a more detailed description of these types of battle see Ginzburg (1990); Klaniczay (1983); Pócs (1997) chapter 7.

<sup>277</sup> See *zduhač, kresnik, benandante*: Bošković-Stulli (1960), Ginzburg (1983), Klaniczay (1983), Pócs (1997: chapter 7).

<sup>278</sup> In the context of the fight with the dragon cf. attempts at reconstructing Indo-European myths (the fiery god, in Slavic reconstructions the Ancient Slavic Perun, fights the monster/chaos dragon of the underworld; or the rain is set free by vanquishing the monster who had snatched the cows). Regardless of the problems of reconstruction, we do find certain typological parallels between the "battle of the deity and the monster" of certain Indo-European peoples and the battle *topoi* discussed here, particularly as regards the *zmej* magician. See: Ivanov–Toporov (1970); Sudnik (1980); Puhvel (1987) pp. 237–247; Pócs (1993), (1995); Katičić (1989); etc.

<sup>279</sup> On the various degrees of strife from myth to heroic epic and from a cosmic, world creating struggle to the battle of protecting the person's own community see Meletinskii (1976) part II; Lecouteux (1995: part II, *Conquete et défense du sol*).

<sup>280</sup> It is particularly the various types of the *zduhač* magician who fight in military order, with ranks.

type of the Serbian or Croatian *zduhač* (a type born in a caul) and to some extent the Romanian *strigoi*, use the devices of cereal cultivation to fight for a good harvest often in troops arranged in proper military order. They use swingles, sythes, rakes and mrotars as weapons. In cases when they do not march on the backs of animals or in animal shape, they travel to the scene of battle on wine barrels, swingles or brooms. One type of the battles of *strigoi* is fought with the devices used for growing hemp. In such cases we are talking not so much or not only about the soul battles of the living magician variants of the *strigoi*, but the mutual struggles of the "dead *strigoi*" against each other. A *dead strigoi* (as a werewolf demon) may equally well be the dead guardian spirit of the magician or an assaulting "stranger" of a demon. In the latter case we are facing the *own – alien* battle represented by the guardian spirits of two neighbouring communities. The battles of the *strigoi* guardian spirits are fought against epidemics, the assaults of illness demons, with the two troops of *strigoi* fighting against each other for the prospects of their own village. The village which wins is avoided by plague, cholera; mortality goes down (to the disadvantage of the other village). In the battles they beat each other with hemp-breaker, the handle of the hemp-breaker, or flax-comb.<sup>281</sup> According to a 19<sup>th</sup> century description from the collection published by Muşlea and Bîrlea, in the heat of battle they shout things like those below (cf. what we said above about ripping apart, taking out bones and the trial/initiation character of these battles):

I turn pale but I won't get hurt, I won't go lame, I won't get crippled, I won't go blind." They don't kill each other but lose control to the degree of bloodiness. If one "bleeds" the other, their entire tribe will get cholera and plague will ravage them for seven years. If someone cuts themselves, in their village the people will die.<sup>282</sup>

The *strigoi* also have a female guardian spirit variant which bears spinning attributes (as well as some "mistress of the animals" traits). It is usually depicted in belief legends as a spinning woman travelling on the back of a hemp-breaker or with a distaff. The previously mentioned sacrifice gestures can also be associated with her figure (in this specific case the offerings of flax, wool and hemp. On "wolf-days", when the battles are fought, (the days of St. Andrew, St. George, St. John) spinning is taboo. Indeed, requisites of working with hemp, such as bundles of hemp, tow and devices like the hemp-breaker are to be hidden, otherwise the *strigoi* souls who rise from their grave to depart for their "otherworldly" battles (or, in the case of living variants, the souls departing from the body of the *strigoi* lying unconscious) will steal on their way the hemp breakers and other devices that had been left out. These objects then become their weapons. This way they use the sacrificial objects of their taboo days to fight for the life of the human communities. Their activity of influencing the lot of other humans does not end with the battle. After fighting they gather at "a barren house", they spin the hemp stolen from the houses, they blanche it, sew it and make a shirt. Should they fail to finish on time, when the cock crows they have to leave the shirt behind unfinished.<sup>283</sup> Here we see the ritual of weaving a shirt elevated to the mythical level of determining the welfare of human communities. The *strigoi* who participate in this dispose as fate women over far more than the individual prospects of the werewolf. Through the mediating activity of werewolf magicians the mythical weaving of the shirt projects the ordained nature of the werewolf's existence onto the destiny of human communities and onto the alternatives of culture or nature. These mythical activities of the *strigoi* (and other, previously mentioned "initiation" motifs related to the *strigoi*) comprise the mediating activity of werewolf

<sup>281</sup> On *strigoi* battles see Muşlea—Bîrlea (1970) pp. 251–268), Candrea (1944) p. 178.

<sup>282</sup> Muşlea—Bîrlea (1970) p. 253.

<sup>283</sup> Muşlea—Bîrlea (1970) p. 267.

magicians and tie them into one system through invisible threads. This also extends to the way in which raw offerings for agricultural fertility create culture.

These archaic systems of communication between nature and culture crop up at the most varied points and semantic strata of European belief systems, and Christian as well as non-Christian religious systems. As I claimed probable in an earlier paper on European systems of possession<sup>284</sup> systems of various shape-shifters and double beings appear to be distinct and clearly outlined communication systems which may be delineated from other communication systems (such as shamanism, possession, mediumism, Christian visions), as unique manifestations of the communication between beings of culture and nature. Within this it is possible to define, on the level of myths, beliefs and narratives, the peculiar local variants of belief systems characteristic of werewolves and other were-animals. Beliefs and narratives about specialists of supernatural communication, benign magicians with werewolf traits and the "good werewolf" constitute an organic part of the Central and Eastern European systems examined in more detail. The main subjects of these are the birth of the magician as a "double being", their life cycles as determined by fate, their calling, initiation and helping spirits and the supernatural communication they carry out in sleep or in trance: their soul battles in a special storm cloud nature setting.

As I have already mentioned in my introduction, further questions of my research concern the connection of the above-outlined belief system with reality, and the genuine activity of magicians. In a coming paper I shall also attempt to answer the questions, much debated in recent research, whether werewolf-magicians as such ever existed and how they functioned – did they indeed "travel" in a trance to the other world or is all of this mere narrative fiction or the construct of researchers. Furthermore, if they did exist, do they have anything to do with some form of shamanism.<sup>285</sup> In this projected paper I will also revise to some extent my earlier view on European shamanism, and on the categorisation of "shamanistic magicians".<sup>286</sup>

#### 4. CONTACT WITH THE FAIRIES

Of all the systems of metamorphosis discussed in Chapter 2, the most dominant in the region is communication with fairies. Its primary traits, at least in these areas of Europe, are notions of *demon-human transition figures* and *double beings* on the one hand and phenomena which belong to the *emic* category of possession on the other hand. As regards channels of communication, dreams and spiritual experiences in a state of trance both play an important role. Phenomena of collective ritual trance are present in the Eastern Balkans in the form of *possession cults* to do with 'possessing' fairies.

My analyses are based on folklore data about Hungarian, as well as Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Romanian, Albanian and Greek fairies of any period (narrative traditions of popular verse, prose epic and belief legends) and, less frequently, on published results of anthropological field work.<sup>287</sup> Documents of witchcraft trials from the 17<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Pócs (2005).

<sup>285</sup> See for these questions e.g. Blécourt 2007.

<sup>286</sup> See Pócs (1995), (1999), (2002b).

<sup>287</sup> The present frames do not allow me to offer a more detailed bibliography of the literature of the fairy world in the way included in Pócs 1899, so I merely refer to a few items relevant to the present topic: Hahn 1853, 161–162; Čabej... ; Lawson 1910, 13–173; Ivanišević 1905, 254–261; Lang 1914, 136–137; Marinov 1914; Ardalić

and 18<sup>th</sup> century have also been included in the investigations. I also use these in an indirect fashion relying on publications which process this material.<sup>288</sup>

The beliefs and rites of the Balkans have many shared traits. I also included the beliefs surrounding a particular type of Hungarian fairies, most frequently termed *szépasszony*, meaning *fair woman*, as it is closely related to beliefs of the Balkans.<sup>289</sup> The different peoples of the Balkans exhibit a coherent system of beliefs and mythology, narratives and rites. The same is true of certain Hungarian speaking areas. Beliefs are alive in many places partly as explanations of disaster and partly as regulatory systems of human conduct, causing them to be deeply embedded in the normative structures of everyday life. All of this is reflected by a multitude of narratives about personal ‘encounters’ with fairies, narrated in the first person singular. Essential analogies allow one to talk comprehensively about the fairy world and related communication of the peoples of the Balkans and the Hungarian communities, focussing on the shared and general traits. Naturally, I shall also be referring to local characteristics and differences and, wherever necessary, handle Hungarian beliefs separately where they appear secondary.

Some of the characteristic fairy traits of the Balkans also apply to fairy beliefs of Eastern and Western Slavic nations. (This must be due to shared Slavic traditions.)<sup>290</sup> Sicilian fairy beliefs and fairy cult are also related to those on the Balkans. Remarkable typological similarities are also found with the Irish, Scottish and Scandinavian world of fairies, even though in these cases it would be hard to talk of shared historical roots. There are almost shocking similarities between the Celtic and the Slavic fairy world in the typical kinds of connection which obtain between the fairies and the dead, in the forms of possession and ‘being seized’, in the diffuse connections between this world and the other and in the sacrifices made to the fairies.<sup>291</sup> As regards connections with the dead, notions of troops of dead people (and living people seized to join) headed by a goddess-like creature are known in the Slovenian – Austrian – South German – Swiss area, as we mentioned in the section about communication with the dead. This way, the web of connections among fairy beliefs and cults becomes extended to this region, to involve Slovenian, Austrian and German goddess-like figures (*Pehrta baba*, *Zlata Baba*, *Perchta*, *Holda*, *Frau Helga*, *Frau Sälde* etc.). In fact, practically the fairy folklore of practically the whole of Europe is interconnected by, perhaps slightly more vague, lines of similarities and typological convergences. Western European researchers have occasionally talked about universal European constants connecting different fairy figures, such as their natural spirit traits, their deadly character or their divine attributes.

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## Fairies

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1917; Lambertz 1958, 156–157; Saineanu 1899; Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970, 206–218. Đorđević 1953; Kelemina 1930, 96–97; Valarelski 1964; Blum – Blum 1965, 168–174; 1970, 12–115; Zečević 1981, 31–38, 40–49; Stewart 1985

<sup>288</sup> Cf. primarily publications by Zoran Cica.

<sup>289</sup> We are mainly talking here about beliefs extant in the Southern and Eastern parts of the Hungarian speaking area: Pócs 1899; **Tündéres angol**

<sup>290</sup> **keleti és nyugati szláv bibl.**

<sup>291</sup> See, e.g., from the Irish literature: O’Hogain 1990, Lehmacher 1951; Hartmann 194; Spence 1946; Evans-Wentz–Yeding 1911; Scandinavian: Brongaard 1969, **svéd!**

<sup>292</sup> See e.g. MacCulloch 1912 or, on the general traits of fairy healers Blöcker’s paper of 1982 which presents Swiss and German historical material. Further connections could be registered in the context of the fairy world of the Caucasians and Asia Minor and the related formations of spirit possession as well as of the ritual activity of magicians and healers, with reference to various Turkic and Caucasian peoples (see e.g. papers on fairy notions and rituals of the Hindukus region by Friedl, of Turcestan by Troitskaia and of the *mingrel* type by Istvánovits.

Fairies appear as versatile and ambivalent mythical beings in the belief system of the Balkans and the Hungarian population. On the one hand, they are seen as good, benevolent, bringing bliss and fertility, often acting as guarding spirits and healers of village communities or individuals, as well as patrons of cultic organizations. It is generally believed that the grass grows taller and greener in the spot where they dance their ring dance. According to Croats living along the river Dráva, the *vila* protect the village or the fields from hailstorms.<sup>293</sup>

Fairies are also known to be demons of a deadly character who appear in storm clouds as wind demon souls of dead people. They are in close relations with their dead forebears. One of the main roots of related beliefs and rites goes back to notions of the dead who return to haunt people in periods associated with the dead (e. g. the death feast of the Eastern church). Ambivalence may manifest in the simultaneous positive and negative traits of fairies, as well as in the parallel existence of notions of 'good' and 'evil' fairies (e.g. in Dalmatia *good women* are the protectors of the community, while *evil vila* bring storms and hail). Evil fairies of a deadly nature also appear in Bulgarian and Romanian beliefs. The Bulgarian *iuda* are seen in the middle of stormy whirlwinds; the *rusali* who appear in the period between Easter and Whitsun are often envisaged as ugly old women in contrast to fair/good fairies and '...sing in the air sometimes like young maidens and sometimes like the dead'. Deadly fairies are not necessarily evil, however. They inherit from the haunting dead the ability to bring bliss and fertility to human habitats. Certain Bulgarian and Serbian beliefs have it that fairies who arrive during the part of the Rusalia week which is devoted to the dead bring disease to human communities, but they also bring dew to the meadows, thus granting a good harvest.<sup>294</sup>

Fairies can be nature spirits (nymphs) who appear in groups at particular spots of the natural environment – by springs, in groves, by the waterfront, under or on top of trees or in the midst of storms or whirlwinds. Narratives and memorates of personal encounters with the fairies they are described as charming women who rush about in groups singing, playing music, floating in mid-air or flying with the whirlwind. (Their characteristic instruments are pipes, drums, the violin and the bagpipe). Fairies can also assume animal shapes and appear as falcons, wild geese or snakes on the one hand or mares, mules, goats or similar creatures on the other.

This versatility is indicated by a whole range of names which all refer to the characteristic traits or appearance of the fairies. There are appellations which refer to their connection with air, stormy winds or whirlwinds such as Greek *aerika*, Serbian and Croatian *vila*, Romanian *vântoasele* ('windy things'), Bulgarian *samodiva*, *samovila*, Greek *neraide/s* (originally meaning water nymph). Other names allude to mythological 'fairy forebears', such as Albanian *zana*, *zëra*, *zinâ*, Aromanian *dzuna* or Romanian *zâna* which (according to Eliade)<sup>295</sup> come from the name Diana. Attributes referring to the 'woods', the 'waters' or the 'hills' are also often attached to their names. Taboo names are frequently used, too, perhaps owing to their divine/deadly character and the fearful nature of the numinous. Greek *exotika* ('those outside'), Romanian *iele* ('they'), *dînsele* ('they themselves'), Serbian *divna* ('majestic'), Greek *kyra kalo* ('the beautiful lady') *kalokyrades* ('our good ladies'), Hungarian *szépasszony* ('fair woman'), Romanian *doamnele* ('the young maidens'), *frumoasele* ('the beauties'), *milostivele* ('the gracious ones') are just a few of these.

This versatility of names is the result of a cultural scene stratified by various population migration movements, shifts in language use and complex linguistic and cultural exchanges. The figures of the fairies actually show an amalgamation of the most varied mythical and ritual legacies and fragments from ancient goddesses such as Diana or Artemis through the

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<sup>293</sup> Frankovics 1972–1973, 247. For more detail characterizing the fairies of the Balkans see Pócs 1989.

<sup>294</sup> Marinov 1914, 191; Zečević 1981, 37.

<sup>295</sup> Eliade **zina név**

possible legacy of the Thracian cult of Dionysius and Greco-Roman fate women<sup>296</sup>, Greek nymphs, Slavic and Albanian nature spirits, storm demons, the souls of those who died prematurely and are now to be found in storm clouds<sup>297</sup>, all the way to the dragons and snakes of myths and legends and to werewolf beliefs.<sup>298</sup>

The multiplicity of assumed roots and foundations is comprised in one whole by the uniform image of fairy women of radiant beauty, dancing and playing music. This image is ubiquitous and was extant in popular narratives right into the 20<sup>th</sup> century even in those areas of the Western Balkans or the Hungarian speaking territory where beliefs and rites had lost their direct regulating role in everyday life and mentality.

### Everyday communication

The most common form of communication with the fairies is seeing visions, apparitions and dreams. This is based on a living faith in spiritual beings whom people ‘really’ encounter and who one can communicate with. The huge wealth of fairy narratives existing on the Balkans or in Hungary mostly describes vision and dream experiences, meaning direct encounters with the supernatural world of the fairies. The regularities of narratives mentioned in the context of the dead also apply to fairy narratives of the peoples of the Balkans or the Hungarian community. Living fairy belief tends to be present alongside accounts of real experiences and narrative fictions speckled with the metaphoric expressions of possession experiences. Differences between encounters in the imagination, in dreams, half-waking states or possibly in a trance are washed away on the narrative level until there is no relevant difference. It appears that direct first person accounts of living fairy belief and ‘genuine’ encounters and the literary, metaphoric expression of the same are seen as equally relevant alternative ways of expression as regards the ‘reality’ of the encounters that had happened. Thus it is a good idea to explore the typical linguistic formulas connected specially to supernatural communication with one or the other of these spirit figures.

A recurring theme of the narratives of fairy phenomena and visions is seeing or hearing the appearance of the beautiful fairies who dance and make music. There are countless narratives throughout the region explored here about the beauty of the singing or music of the fairies, and about the pleasure and delight of those listening. These often betray dreams of a desired world, complete with sexual overtones. The narratives also reflect the divine/deadly ambivalence of the fairies, particularly through their ambivalent relation to the chief attributes of the fairies and their activity – music and dance. The aspect of bringing bliss and fertility is best expressed through the ‘divine’ dance. For instance in a Croatian narrative we hear,

Whenever people saw small, glittering lights in the fields or the woods, they knew it could be nothing but the ring dance of the fairies. This meant a blessing from God around here ... Whenever people noticed their presence they would cross themselves, because fairies are divine creatures, and just pass quietly by...<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Greek *moira*, Roman *Fatae*, *Parcae*, Serban *sudnica*, Croatian *sudjenice*, Slovenian *rojenice*, *sojanice*, Bulgarian *urosници*, Romanian *ursitoare*, Albanian *ora*, etc. (Pócs 1989; Brednich ...) As regards the supposed connections with antiquity, on nymphs, fates and the cult of Artemis see primarily Lawson 1910, 121-173. On the cult of Diana see Eliade ..., on the cult of Dionysos see Rohde? Nilsson?

<sup>297</sup> This is a dominant trait of the rusalki and villi of the Eastern and Western Slavs.

<sup>298</sup> Carlo Ginzburg (1989) seeks to identify one of the historical roots of the fairy cult of the Balkans in the ecstatic cult of prehistoric and ancient chthonic goddess figures of the Mediterranean and the Near East. I am convinced that the goddess traits of fairies are such universal European characteristics that it would be a very risky exercise to try to trace a single thread into such a distant historical past.

<sup>299</sup> Samobor, Croatia, Lang 1914. 138.

Whenever fairies are presented in a divine role, the folk tradition of all the peoples of the Balkans also show them as cultural heroes inventing new songs: they are the authors of beautiful or *the* most beautiful songs. According to a Hungarian narrative from Moldova ‘our old parents always said that songs are started by fairy girls. That is where they come from – the fairies...’<sup>300</sup> The ability to play on an instrument is also explained in Romanian beliefs by fairy influence. Hearing a competent player they would say, ‘He plays as if he got it from the saints (this being the taboo name of fairies).’<sup>301</sup>

True to the ambivalence which surrounds fairies, listening to the music of their singing and dancing troops as they fly past in great clamour gives delight and fear at the same time. The fear of the numinous also appears in accounts of their singing. According to one Greek data, for instance,

I remember sitting at the window once in 1938. It was about midnight when I heard the nereids and aerika passing by with drums and violins. They were dancing, and going towards their square where they always went to dance, a square which is up towards the mountains. These nereids did not harm anyone, but when you heard them you became frightened and you shivered.<sup>302</sup>

The divine competence of fairies in song and dance is also surrounded by prohibition and taboo – they guard it jealously as their own divine possession and if a human overhears them or happens to eavesdrop, they will punish the intruder.

They will snatch anyone and lift him up in the air if he’s seen them dance or has set foot on the spot where they dance or walk, or anyone who works or sleeps alone in that spot. They will snatch the person and force him to dance with them, then let him down again, and he will have gone mad or crippled for the rest of his life.<sup>303</sup>

Fairies also seize people who catch sight of them dancing at ‘their places’ or singing, as data from many places testify. They return their victims sick and throw them on the ground. In other cases those kidnapped wake from a trance to find themselves crushed, paralysed or numb. Fairy song can be the sign of disease caused by fairy possession according to Romanian data. Should a person cross the dance circles of fairies, they will hear the music of fairy bagpipers and fairy songs constantly resounding in their ears. In other cases, the transgressor will go deaf or paralysed as a form of punishment. In these cases, the negative aspect of music and dance comes to the fore – as a Romanian data says, ‘The *iele* come in the shape of lovely girls and disgrace the world with their stirring singing.’<sup>304</sup>

On the other hand, with the patronage of the fairies, people can acquire from them the songs or the skill to play an instrument – there are many narratives describing how the fairies initiate musicians or the instruments themselves. According to a Dalmatian item, ‘the fairies can sing most beautifully in the whole world, but if people ask them, they can also give you their voice’.<sup>305</sup> However, fairies can also take revenge on people who appropriate their song and owe their own singing talent to them, as shown by numerous Romanian, Bulgarian, Croatian and Greek data. See the following,

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<sup>300</sup> Bosnyák 1982. 104.

<sup>301</sup> Pamfile 1916. 262.

<sup>302</sup> Blum–Blum 1970. 114. [eredeti angol idézet!]

<sup>303</sup> Muşlea–Bîrlea 1970. 214.

<sup>304</sup>

<sup>305</sup> Đorđević 1953. 115.

...there was a man who was a really fine singer. One day as he was walking home alongside the forest, singing. The fairies told him not to sing or they would take his voice, but the man did not care and just kept on singing all the time. The third time this happened they actually took his voice away so he could never even speak any more.<sup>306</sup>

### 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.<sup>307</sup> 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.<sup>308</sup>

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.”<sup>309</sup> 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.<sup>310</sup> *Carrying off* is a characteristic punishment of those who breach the taboos surrounding 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).<sup>311</sup>

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?”<sup>312</sup> “Calling out at night,” mentioned in connection with the dead, is

<sup>306</sup> Croatians living along the Dráva, Frankovics 1972–1973. 240.

<sup>307</sup> See for more detail my Central South-Eastern European overview: Pócs 1986.

<sup>308</sup> Lecouteux 1988, 1992; as well as Hartmann, E. 1936; Hartmann, H. 1942; Evans-Wentz 1966.

<sup>309</sup> Candrea 1944, 160

<sup>310</sup> Blum – Blum 1970. 50.

<sup>311</sup> 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, H. 1942. 131-134.

<sup>312</sup> Collected by Anita Derjanecz, Ágnes Hesz, Kinga Jankus.

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, lose his mind, or become disfigured.<sup>313</sup> 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/little 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).<sup>314</sup> 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.”<sup>315</sup> The metaphor of the *stroke* –known from possession by the dead– is also very common in the context of possession by fairies,<sup>316</sup> 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.<sup>317</sup>

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.”<sup>318</sup> 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<sup>319</sup> 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

<sup>313</sup> Candrea 1944, 160; also collected by Éva Pócs in Csík.

<sup>314</sup> Zečević 1978. 38.

<sup>315</sup> Collected by Kinga Jankus, Csíkkarcfalva

<sup>316</sup> This is the Western European *fairy-stroke*. According to Evans-Wentz Irish data (1966. 266-273) for example humans, houses, cows, milking vessels may equally become possessed as a result of “fairy-stroke”.

<sup>317</sup> Blum – Blum 1970. 53

<sup>318</sup> 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. 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).

<sup>319</sup> Candrea 1944, 160

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.<sup>320</sup> 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”.<sup>321</sup> 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...”

<sup>322</sup> 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).<sup>323</sup> 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.

People who break divine taboos are usually punished by the fairies who inflict illness on them, while breaking the taboos related to music or dance mostly receives the punishment of abduction by the fairies. As we have already mentioned in the context of communication with the dead, this can be interpreted as a unique and archaic form of possession. The characteristic surplus of possession by fairies over possession by the dead is that the music and dance which accompanies the act of seizing also expresses the divine character of the fairies. It is generally believed all over the Balkans that people who step inside the dancing circles of fairies, also referred to as ‘their places’, will be seized by the fairies by being lured away with seductive song and music and forced to join the group which is making music and dancing. According

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<sup>320</sup> For more detail on this question, see Pócs 1989.

<sup>321</sup> Candrea 1944. 160. Similar data on Serb *rusalkas*: Zečević 1978. 38. For Hungarian data and further parallels from the Balkans, see: Pócs 1989. On data from Csík: Pócs 2001a. 130-131.

<sup>322</sup> Salamon (1975: 109-110).

<sup>323</sup> Eliade 1980; Rouget 1980; Portefaix 1982. See on this question and possible historical connections Pócs 1989 with further literature.

to Romanian data, men are ‘lulled to sleep by their song and rocked to sleep’.<sup>324</sup> They give pleasure to those who dance with them and at the same time make them ill; men who have been seduced to dance with the fairies or play on one of their instruments will be made ill or taken away for ever (killed). Epileptics, paralyzed or shriveled people are believed in certain parts of Romania to have been ‘in the *hora* of the ill-boding fairies’.<sup>325</sup> In other cases...

...they will pick up anybody who can play an instrument and get him to play for them. They fall in love with people who can sing or play the recorder well, seize him away, get him to play for them and then drive him insane.<sup>326</sup>

Here is an illustrative Hungarian narrative about a young man who was driven to a trance by the fairies’ song and dance and became possessed,

...a swishing wind came and three women... beautiful as the sunshine, oh, for the world, and they got him to dance and dance and dance and dance, endlessly... So the lad collapsed. He collapsed in the end. But he could not say anything. ... He is ill, he is ill, he could only just pant and couldn’t do anything else. He was past making any sense... his reason was all gone [his ‘soul’ left him, meaning he lost consciousness]<sup>327</sup>

This is the condition of Dionysian ecstasy which Plato describes as *nympholeptos* and which Lawson also reports when speaking about ‘*neroid-seized*’ people.<sup>328</sup> This state of ecstatic seizure by nymphs or, from another aspect, a *unio mystica* – becoming godlike, was indeed highly characteristic of the cult of Dionysus which prevailed right until the time of late antiquity in Thracia. This kind of possession is, according to present-day descriptions, a condition similar to *circumsession* – the deity engages the human person in his or her milieu and rules him without invading his body.

To sum up, these narratives claim that the music of the fairies puts people in a trance. It is actually the capacity of music and dance to induce a state of trance (also familiar from rituals) that they attribute to the fairies. Trance induced by music and dance, together with the state of possession, are basically the requisites of the collective possession cult of the Balkans. At the same time it is a part of the beliefs and mythologemes [jó ez? van ilyen szó? Nem mythologemes akkor már? Esetleg mitológiai motívumok?] which allude to the divine nature of fairies. (The essence of collective cults is the divine possession of the healers, as we shall see later on.) The narratives also conjure up a world of (male) desires, complete with feasts and sexual pleasures. All of this is the narrative fiction of fairy communication to do with music and song, in which the aspect of the male world of desires indicates the erotic aspect of possession by the deity (goddesses).<sup>329</sup> The deadly or demonic character of these same fairies also becomes manifest in the same narrative tradition, whenever the dance of the fairies makes people ill or when the trance induced by music and dance manifests in compulsive dancing or fits of dancing.<sup>330</sup>

The seeing of fairies or communication with them take place in the unique structure of time and space we have already discussed in connection with communication with the dead. These structures provide the frame for the normative role of fairies in regulating behaviour and for the rules of communication between humans and fairies. According to the latter,

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<sup>324</sup> Candrea 1944, 160.

<sup>325</sup> Muşlea–Bîrlea 1970. 215

<sup>326</sup> Romanian data, Muşlea–Bîrlea 1970. 214.

<sup>327</sup> Gyimesközéplök, Salamon (1975: 109-110).

<sup>328</sup> Lawson 142.

<sup>329</sup> For more on this see Pócs 1989.

<sup>330</sup> Zečević 1981. 38.

fairies appear under special circumstances, it is forbidden to see or hear them except perhaps under specific conditions, as spotting them may bring harm or blessing to people depending on the ambivalent nature of these creatures.

The archaic structure of time and space that we discussed in the context of communication with the dead also applies here. The universe is divided into the world of the living and the world of the dead. Any one section of space or stretch of time belongs either to the living or to the dead – in this case to humans or to fairies. The fairies hold their own part of space occupied at ‘fairy times’, e.g. on the previously mentioned feasts of the dead, or at night, at noon or other specifically appointed times. They take possession of territories which are barred from humans at these times and bound by taboos. The fairies send diseases to punish those who offend against their space and time taboos (i.e. people who go out into the open at night or noon or during the feasts of the dead or approach their springs, paths, dancing spots or trace the steps of their ring dances). The most typical such ‘fairy diseases’ are headaches, neurological diseases, epileptic symptoms, dumbness, blindness, paralysis or troubles of the (lower) limbs. One Romanian informer said that if a person slept outdoors at night and ‘the fairies flew over him at night, he would be paralysed, go dumb or have a stroke’.<sup>331</sup>

The Greeks believe that if somebody sleeps out of doors, they will be hurt by the *nerheids*. For instance, one young woman slept under a fairy tree overnight and the next morning she got a terrible headache.<sup>332</sup> Romanian *iele* challenge people, sleeping unawares at night, to come out of their house. When someone complies, they drive him crazy, twist his head back or cause distortions or other damage.<sup>333</sup>

Narratives of innumerable variants describe that anyone who spots fairies when they are not supposed to (i.e. trespasses in their territory) must not tell other people what they had seen or heard, because fairies will ‘possess’ people who spy on them, disturb their dances or enter their ‘dancing places’. Croatian, Serbian, Bulgarian narratives speak of possessing fairies. Thus, according to Serbian and Croatian data, possessing fairies will send smallpox or chicken pox to humans as punishment. People who break the Whitsun work taboo will be struck by *rusalka* and this results in possession and ‘the nasty disease’ (epilepsy).<sup>334</sup>

The Greeks believe it is extremely dangerous to go outdoors at night, particularly on the night of the new moon, because one may easily be ‘struck by the *nerheids*’.<sup>335</sup> ‘Being struck’ is a frequent metaphor for possession in this context, also known from the context of the dead.<sup>336</sup> This probably has to do with the wind-demon aspect of fairies. Cases of sudden loss of consciousness are described in many European languages by words meaning ‘striking’ and brought in association with fairies, wind demons and other demonic spirit creatures that fly in the air and cause illness.<sup>337</sup>

The narratives reveal several different notions about the concrete physical impulses experienced by people who are possessed. Being possessed by fairies in the concrete bodily sense is most commonly encountered in Romanian beliefs. Fairies that invade the body, like all invasive demons, restructure people in both body and mind. A characteristic expression of the bodily rule of fairies is the *loss* of body parts or of the face, which can also mean a distorted exterior. ‘They take people’s arms or legs or distort their face.’ In another case a person who was ‘surprised’ by fairies of a kind termed ‘little falcons’ became ‘like a falcon’,

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<sup>331</sup> Candrea 1944, 160

<sup>332</sup> Blum 50.

<sup>333</sup> Candrea 1944, 160. Similar Hungarian beliefs are also known, see Pócs 1989

<sup>334</sup> Čajkanović (1973: 153); Vivot (2008a).

<sup>335</sup> Blum 53

<sup>336</sup> This is what is called fairy-struck in Western Europe. According to Evans-Wentz’s Irish data (266-273) human, houses, cows or a milking container can equally come to be possessed through a fairy-struck.

<sup>337</sup> Manninen **széldémonok**

meaning that his face became distorted. Victims assume the physical and psychological characteristics of the possessing power, as is common with people possessed.<sup>338</sup> Accordingly, possession by fairies also exists as a consciously used explanation for illness, a less concrete, diffuse, *emically* defined category.

This way the fact that fairies punish taboo-breakers by typical fairy diseases may be seen as a special (deadly) form of possession related to fairies, similarly to *circumpossession* active in the frames of the archaic double spatial structure. This is not a strict category characterised by a specific constellation of bodies and souls (as is defined by theoretical systems of communication, such as shamanism, possession or mediumship [esetleg inkább mediumism?]) Experiential accounts of possession betray the possibility for a whole set of body-mind connections to be present simultaneously or alternately (e.g. departure from the body or possession by actual invasion of the body). Possession by fairies brings a conflation or confusion of varied configurations of body and mind unparalleled in other possession systems. According to Eastern Hungarian narratives collected in recent years, possession can occur as a quasi-death experienced in a state of trance: a temporary form of existence in the earthly other world of fairies (or even in a heavenly other world similar to the Christian heaven with its shining radiance and music). Being *seized* can be ‘bodily’ or ‘mental’, it may happen while awake or asleep. Hungarians of the Székelyföld region of Transylvania often give narratives of clearly being seized *in the body*. The *szépasszony* ‘take away’ or ‘snatch’ people who stray to the wrong place. Here we see an example of bodily seizure in a Hungarian narrative from Székelyföld.

...something just picked him up... they carried him, put him down somewhere and that is where he finally came round. ... And when he came round, he found himself in a large factory area. The old lady told me many times how they looked for his father of a morning and he was nowhere and then all of a sudden there he was, staggering home.<sup>339</sup>

As regards being snatched ‘in the mind’ it is enough to think of the lad from Gyimes who was made to dance until he lost consciousness. A Serbian informer described beyond doubt how the soul left the body while sleeping, a fairy moved into its place as an ‘evil soul’ and danced it to death. The same is supposed to happen to anyone who catches sight of the dance of the fairies.<sup>340</sup>

Whether the journey takes place in body or mind does not seem to be a relevant difference. The two conditions can even be perceived simultaneously by the travellers, according to the unique logic of these narratives.<sup>341</sup> One memorate coming from ethnic Croats living in Hungary, describes how a person is abducted by the fairies to become a piper and a family member actually sees the sleeping body disappear from the bench where the man was sleeping. In the morning he notes that he is back again.

In the morning they asked him, ‘Did you not suffer from the cold?’ ‘It wasn’t cold’, he answered. ‘There was plenty of dancing, there was everything else, wine, *pálinka*, lots of it. I had to play music for them’ He had been with the *szépasszony*.<sup>342</sup>

People who meet the fairies usually describe a world full of pleasure and beauty, and, on

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<sup>338</sup>Candrea 1944, 160. In connection with ‘taking somebody’s face away’ I wish to mention that according to Irish examples the metaphor of snatching the soul is obvious. (Hartmann 1942, 118).

<sup>339</sup> Collected by Kinga Jankus, Csíkkarcfalva

<sup>340</sup> Zečević

<sup>341</sup> It is interesting to note that Adalsteinsson 1993 made a similar observation while exploring the connection between Icelandic fairy beliefs and narratives.

<sup>342</sup> Frankovics 1972-73, 246.

occasion, great feasts and sexual delights – an alternative to the troubles and torments of earthly life. Sometimes they speak of a golden fairy heaven similar to the Christian heaven, where images of the heavenly Jerusalem from the visionary literature of the Middle Ages are as likely to recur as motifs of the earthly paradise complete with fruit trees and the scent of flowers. This latter has been known since the 8<sup>th</sup> century from *Legenda Aurea* and then appeared in popular narratives all over Europe.<sup>343</sup> This syncretic, pagan-Christian heaven can also be a scene of death, and is also used as an explanation of sudden death all over the Balkans. Those abducted return to earth with otherworldly presents from the fairies according to a number of accounts which had become fixed as legends or fairy tales.<sup>344</sup> During their temporary absence they also receive fairy attributes, for instance wings to fly with – indeed, they might turn into birds. Others are sent home dressed in bright, colourful or shiny clothes. Changelings abducted from poor parents are fattened up, men grow stronger or gain immunity to bullets.<sup>345</sup>

Differences between this world and the other, fairy world find expression in unique ways according to the type and epic characteristics of the narrative and the same is true of the way in which people travelling between these worlds shift between levels. Golden dresses, golden feasts, sexual pleasures, flying or turning into birds – all of this can be a fairy tale motif expressing a fairy world of desires. Narratives of personal experiences of the other world in dreams or visions contain the same motifs. The following example is a Hungarian memorate:

Those women who go about at night, they dress up, so that you would be talking to them during the day as an ordinary woman, but at night they will put on different clothes and leave home – they play the recorder or the bagpipe and dance about in the meadows somewhere by the edge of the village.<sup>346</sup>

The same motifs can be found in the beliefs that surround fairy magicians – the active mediators of fairies. Data from Dalmatia, for instance, have it that healers who ‘go about with the fairies’ are given gold coins as a gift from time to time (which is known to turn into feathers or excrement when spoken about, as relevant legends describe).<sup>347</sup>

The encounter between ordinary humans and the fairy other world is also described in many variants featuring demons and witches. Ideas of the witches’ Sabbath became widely known in the West Balkans and the Hungarian population through the persecution of witches and this also cast the shade of witchcraft over the fairy world.<sup>348</sup> I enumerated a number of examples of a demonical fairy other world and accounts of fairy festivities in a book I wrote about the way in which the fairy world became tinted with witchcraft in Central Europe. The most characteristic motif is that the ‘heavenly’ fairy feasts, food and drink, dance and instruments suddenly turn coarse and hellish or vanish entirely, as is known from many international legend motifs which are widespread in areas of Europe which do not otherwise ‘believe’ in fairies.<sup>349</sup>

We have seen that the characteristics of encounters with another world, of the mutual

<sup>343</sup> Patch, *stb.*, földi mennyországok

<sup>344</sup> Cf. eg. Gaben des kleinen Volkes (AaTh 503) and Supernatural Helpers, story types (AaTh 500-559); for more on this see Uther *EnzdM*.

<sup>345</sup> Eg. Dordevic 93-96; Zečević 47.

<sup>346</sup> Pávai 1994, 184 (Lészped)

<sup>347</sup> Poljice

<sup>348</sup> Pócs 1989; 1997, 109–113; for Croatian data see e.g. Krauss 1908, 45–55.

<sup>349</sup> There is no room here to discuss connections of fairy beliefs with witchcraft or, more generally, the integration of archaic fairy cult with witchcraft. For more on this see e.g. Bonomo 1959, 15–183; Eliade 1974; C. Lecouteux 1985; Henningsen 1990; Behringer 1994; Čiča 2002a; 2002b. Similar processes have taken place in Scotland, see. Purkiss 1996. 159–161; Henderson – Cowan 2001. Chapter 4, *The Rise of the Demonic*.

interaction and diffuse boundaries of the two worlds which we discussed in terms of communication with the dead also apply here, such as meetings, touches with that other world, or the material testimony of bodily attributes or objects brought over to this world. There are no sharp boundaries between reality and dream, experiences of this world and the fairy otherworld. Borders are easily crossed, the two parallel worlds penetrate each other. Humans cross them easily both in their physical and their spiritual reality, while spirits easily become ‘embodied’, e.g. by inhabiting a living creature. The equivalence between these two worlds is sensed easily, just like in communication with the dead. Tangible proofs brought from the other world break through the boundary easily, when people bring back bodily or physical attributes from creatures of the fairy world as a kind of proof of their visit.

A further important trait of this type of communication is that people who come in touch with fairies themselves become similar to fairies, or semi-demonic beings. There is no sharp divide in this sense between natural and supernatural. The existence of these persons has a ‘fairy’ alternative which is present permanently and simultaneously. People who regularly visit the supernatural world of the fairies (in dreams or visions) are referred to in narratives in Hungary or the Balkans as ‘going about with the fairies’ or ‘turned into fairies’ or ‘learnt the fairies’ craft’ or ‘s vilovske strane’ (‘come from fairy land’), as the Croats call them.<sup>350</sup> Some people are actually given the byname *fairy* in real life. One example is a woman who figured in a Transylvanian Hungarian witchcraft trial in 1646, originally called Anna Orbán. She was condemned for adultery, murder and witchcraft and is referred to as Anna Tündér (Fairy) in the heading of the case: ‘Contra captivam presentem Annam Tündér alias Orbán.’<sup>351</sup> Other data refer to certain conditions of everyday earthly life as fairyhood – a predicament or period when a person is dancing with the fairies.<sup>352</sup> Let us quote here an account of semi-fairy people which refers to a Hungarian man from Klézse in Moldova (Romania) who “walked with the fairies” (the *fair ones*):

I have a brother. When in 1919 we travelled to the Hungarian parts... he was there, too, in Budapest. They were staying there and there was one of them... a lad from over these parts. He was so slight, so tormented. And my brother asked him, ‘Why are you so slight and wasted?’ ‘I travel home every night,’ he says. ‘How can you travel home from Budapest?’ ‘I travel home every night.’ And he explained that he travelled with the *fair ones*. He was one like that, too. He said, ‘So and so is from your village, from Klézse.’ And he explained it all, ‘There are seven people from your village. There are others from our village, there are people from all the villages. They come and go; we dance there on the hill at night...’<sup>353</sup>

Initiated mediators are thus not the only ones who can come into communicative contact with the fairy world according to these archaic notions. We also need to mention here beliefs about the *privileged* – these are people who can communicate with the fairy world more easily, more frequently or even non-stop, owing to unique conditions of birth or some other fortunate circumstance. Beliefs of this kind are prevalent over the entire area under examination and the related skills are associated with special life positions or ages. According to Romanian, Croatian or Greek beliefs, fairies are only visible to good, pure or innocent people. One common belief is that children alone are privileged to see the fairies, while in Greece the mentally retarded are thought to be so gifted. It is very commonly believed that in ‘dangerous’ periods of life, e.g. during engagement or in the impurity taboo period of

<sup>350</sup> E.g. Ardalić 1917, 302–303.

<sup>351</sup> Komáromy, Andor 1910, 107 (Nyárédszereda).

<sup>352</sup> 1659; Schram 1982, 46.

<sup>353</sup> Bosnyák, 1980, 112.

childbed, women are more prone to see fairies (or other demons) who assault or kidnap them. In Greece, this category also includes people who were born on a Saturday. Another belief held in Greece, as well as in Dalmatia is that the poorly baptised (Greek *kakovaptismenoi*) also fall into this category.<sup>354</sup> Clearly, it is people or conditions lacking a clear status that attract the opportunity or skill of contact with the spirit world, just like we said about communication with the dead. The folk epic of the Balkans (songs, legends, tales) depicts people who keep in contact with fairies as relatives, descendants, milk siblings of the fairies or in an artificial brotherhood of *probratinstvo* which means adopted brother. If they are men, the fairies support them in their fighting, if women, they help them with house work or child raising.

Motifs of fairies helping with various types of farm work, cultivating the land, working in the forest, fishing or hunting also keep occurring. The fairy wedding as a legend or fairy story motif, prevalent all over Europe, also applies to fairies of the Balkans.<sup>355</sup>

All of this is actually an expression of the utopian desire for a fairy heaven on earth mediated through the means of folklore epic. When the representatives of this desired heaven are depicted as fellow humans assisting earthly life, this also testifies to the diffuse merging of this world and the other. This way these may be thought of as characteristic traits of an archaic world view which may be detected in the cult of the dead and the fairy cult prevalent among peoples of the Balkans.

The initiates: magicians, healers, seers

By *fairy magicians*<sup>356</sup> I mean those initiated magicians whom Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Greek, Albanian and Hungarian data show to maintain a mediating relationship with the fairy other world. They communicate with the fairies in their imagination, their dreams or a state of trance, in order to carry out their earthly tasks and fulfil their function in the community. Folklore research shows that 50-100 years ago these magicians were still active and sometimes still operate today in some Serbian, Romanian and Bulgarian territories.

The attitude of fairies as patrons, mentioned previously, is also present in the beliefs which surround genuine, initiate magicians. Fairy magicians of all types may also be related to fairies as friends, family members or relatives. According to Serbian data, for instance, the *vilenjak*, protected by the fairies, come from people who are favoured by fairies in exchange for some good deed they had done for them.<sup>357</sup> At other times the fairies are said to be ancestors of these magicians, or a mother a 'sister' who guards them like a guardian angel.<sup>358</sup> In their activity as healers in the community, the magicians continue to relate to the fairies as their patrons.

As initiates of the fairies, these magicians were mainly involved in healing (curing the 'fairy disease' of people who had broken the fairy taboos), having learnt the art from their fairy patrons. According to data, performing sacrifices is an indispensable element of this

<sup>354</sup> Ardalic 1917, lap; Stewart lap

<sup>355</sup> Kelemina 189-190, Ardalic 1917, Filakovac 1905, Lang 1914, 138, Dordevic 96-108, Marinov 1914, 202-205, 94-95??

<sup>356</sup> Vivod 2005, és?? I have summarized data and further reading on fairy magicians of the Balkans in my book on connections between fairies and witchcraft in Hungary: Pócs, É. 1989, angol lapszám. See also: Pócs 1999, angol lapszám, as well as my more recent article on fairy magicians. Acta-cikk. For a more recent summary on Croatian fairy magicians (a shorter and a longer version) see Z. Čiča 2002a és 2002b.

<sup>357</sup> T. R. Đorđević 1953. 117.

<sup>358</sup> For instance, Croatian *kresnik* is 'a relative of the *vila*, someone whom the *vila* love'; the protector of the village and a mediator with the *vila*. The Croatian magician of the Dráva valley called *vedovnjak* refers to the fairies as his 'sisters': Frankovics 1972-1973, 248. In a trial held at Dubrovnik, published by Čiča, the *vilenica* speaks of the *vila* who had initiated her as her 'aunt': Čiča 2002a. 136.

healing activity, which again points to the ‘divine’ character of the fairies discussed above. On the other hand, this also has the consequence that their healing cult is seen by relevant research as a *fairy cult* (together with the collective possession cults mentioned above).

The communicational system of fairy mediators fits into a wider frame of everyday contact with the fairy world even according to latter-day sources at several points of the region under examination. Beliefs surrounding living magicians position them amidst the archaic cosmos of figures who ‘go about with the fairies’. They, too, are human-demon beings who easily cross boundaries – they are snatched by fairies and turn into fairies themselves during communication with the other world, either temporarily or irrevocably. As Zoran Čiča wrote in the context of historical data on the Croatian fairy cult, fairy healers are originally women who live in an atmosphere of intense ‘fairy encounters’, who had been kidnapped by fairies as children or in adulthood and, once returned to the human world, they become healers or fortune-tellers in their own community.<sup>359</sup> Their name also indicates this aspect of ‘becoming a fairy’ – they are quite simply referred to by the same term as their patron (*vila, tündér, samodiva, etc.*). In other cases they are termed ‘fairy-like’, as in Serbian and Croatian *vilovniak, vileniak, vilenica, vilaš*, or Hungarian *tündéres*. According to Bulgarian views, trouble caused by the *samovila* can only be cured by the *samovildzhii*; while in Romanian belief diseases caused by the *rusalia* fairies are cured by the *rusalias*, and so on. According to some Slovenian data, the name of ‘fairy goddesses’ is reflected in female healers calling themselves *bogina*, meaning goddess.<sup>360</sup> Similarly to the fairies themselves, the healers are practically all women.

Active magicians are different from people who ‘go about with the fairies’ in that they have been initiated into fairy knowledge and given a vocation about their fairy-related activity. There is no sharp dividing line, these initiates have no monopoly over the role of healer in the community. Even without being initiated by the fairies or, indeed, being acquainted with the related mythical and ritual context, many diviners addressed themselves to diseases attributed to the fairies (although this is contradicted by the commonly held belief whereby ‘fairy disease can only be cured by fairy healers’). Regrettably, there are not many data based on observation regarding the activity of these magicians, their actual role in the community or the intensity of their activity (as opposed to collective cults which are far more actively studied). Since narratives were often the only way in which ritual practice was accessible to folklore collectors of the past century, it is hard to distinguish accounts, beliefs, fictional and attributed rites from real practice. We have not many safe indicators to tell whether in any given case we are talking about visions of an ordinary person or professional mediators.

Evaluation is also made more difficult by the fact that initiation into fairy knowledge is a popular motif of textual folklore even associated with other fictional legendary figures. One such motif is where a kidnapped musician is taught music, such as the initiation of bagpipers in hell<sup>361</sup> or the initiation of a piper by fairies of the underworld or by a devilish type of fairy at the crossroads ‘at the entrance to hell’. Romanian and Hungarian accounts from Moldova about the initiation of pipers are probably pure legendary *topos*. They describe that the recorder is filled with milk and stopped up, then it is carried to the crossroads by the musician and buried for three days. On his way the musician is accompanied by two black dogs, he must not wear any clothes nor look back or speak a word. At night the fairies appear and ask the piper what he wants. The piper asks for the gift of song and in exchange the fairies ask for a part of his body – he promises the little finger of his left hand. The fairies tread down the

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<sup>359</sup> Čiča 2002b??, 62.

<sup>360</sup> Lang 1914, 136., 201;

<sup>361</sup> Zečević 1981, 41; Đorđević 1953, 94–117; D. Marinov 1914, 205–206; Dömötör T. 1969. Ez ide tartozik? Nem gyógyítók???

place with their dance where the recorder is buried, occupying the instrument as part of their own territory – this way the owner becomes an excellent player, the possessor of fairy music.<sup>362</sup> (An interesting motif is that maiming the hand is an indispensable element as a sacrifice in exchange for the skill of playing an instrument.)

Now let us look at an account where a Croatian bagpiper along the river Dráva describes an initiating soul journey as if it had been his own personal experience. This piper was told in the other world by the fairies, ‘Be careful – from now on anything you see you will be able to do, this is the power we give you.’ So he learnt the art of playing the bagpipe from the fairies, and in exchange (again, as a kind of sacrifice) he was maimed – one of his fingers became crooked.<sup>363</sup> We could go on enumerating further data to this effect – thus, Stewart mentions a player from Naxos who was kidnapped by the fairies to play for them and in return he got the gift of being able to cure diseases of the throat.<sup>364</sup>

One could wonder whether there is a grain of reality in all of this, meaning whether the Croatian bagpiper had any kind of initiation experience at all in his visions or he simply enjoyed talking about this kind of thing knowing local fairy beliefs and his own belief in fairies. We will never know the truth, and perhaps it is not important to know it, either, since in this fairy-like context of an archaic cosmos, dreams and reality, genuine rites, beliefs and narratives somehow play the same role as regards the magicians fulfilling their role and practising their vocation. The key element is their belief that they receive their knowledge from fairies and it is the fairies who help them either as healers or as musicians as long as they accurately perform the prescribed healing and other rites and the sacrifices they demand. This is the token of them successfully practising their vocation.

Initiation beliefs which surround active magicians are actually very similar to initiation as it appears in fictional pieces and legends. The subject is in a trance or asleep when he is kidnapped by the fairies to a glowing, golden other world resounding with music and dance, where goddess-like fairies (e.g. Tündér Ilona) guide them to take part at great feasts. These glorious figures teach the initiate how to use medical herbs and how to perform fairy sacrifices. Viewed from the perspective of communication technique, these incidents can also be interpreted as possession by the fairies.

The surplus of the initiate magician is that they enter the fairy other world with the intention of becoming initiated and once admitted, gain knowledge which helps them fulfil their function in the community. The gift they receive often takes the form of specific herbs, remedies, written recipes, recipe books or holy books which travel without difficulty over the boundary between this and the other world.<sup>365</sup>

In contemporary times, the initiation of fairy magicians takes place in a trance or dream. At the least, the magician has to be acquainted or to have undergone such experience. According to information published by Marinov almost a hundred years ago<sup>366</sup>, a woman in the Bulgarian village of Kumarica used to go to the rivers or shallow waters at night and there she would meet the *samovila* who taught her which herbs and grasses corresponded to which illness. According to Serbian data, some healers saw otherworldly figures (fairies? dead persons?) in their dreams and were selected by them to act as mediators between the human and the fairy world. According to Serbian data, this vocation is accompanied by fairy music – as it were, the fairies use the music to possess the candidate. This takes the form of

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<sup>362</sup> Pamfile 1916; Pop 1984, 232; Muşlea–Bîrlea 1970, 212.

<sup>363</sup> Frankovics 246–248.

<sup>364</sup> Stewart 1985?

<sup>365</sup> Similar forms of communication are known to exist among the Irish in relation to their fairies and magicians. Traces of similar forms are found in Scottish fairy beliefs and narratives even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See e.g. Henderson – Cowan 2001, Chapter 3, “Enchantment of Fairies.” The clichés of the fairy other world and access to it are similar in the trial documents of a Swedish fairy magician published by Jan-Inge Wall (1989).

<sup>366</sup> Marinov 1914, 215.

compulsive dancing (thus we see that the trance inducing role of music and dance also plays an important role in ‘real’ initiation events). For instance, the potential fairy magician, once he has reached the right age, becomes possessed and, in a semi-unconscious state, goes to the so-called fairy-trees of the village where he begins to dance. In other cases, they will inadvertently start an ecstatic dance which, as one data item had it, lasts through 9 days and 9 nights.<sup>367</sup> According to an 1890 publication by Marienescu on Transylvanian Romanians, the best healers to treat fairy disease effectively and to perform fairy rituals are those who

...fall to the ground and lie unconscious for a few hours or even days. During this time they go about with the goddesses [fairies], fly with them, dance and feast with them; they teach them all manner of magic and charms; this is why they know so much. They are much appreciated by people – guests are invited even from seven villages away for the preparation of this kind of sacrifice. These people must not speak about any of it, the dance of the fairies, the feast table or any of what they had seen, heard or learnt. If they do so, they will lose their power and the goddesses take revenge.<sup>368</sup>

As for Hungarian data, we quote here the minutes of an 18<sup>th</sup> century witchcraft trial about the initiation of a fairy healer who had acquired her knowledge in the Christian heaven but the motif of ‘delights and feasting’ is clearly of a fairy nature (from the witchcraft trial of Zsófia, Mrs. Mihály Antal, in Eger in 1720):

... and after lying dead for nine days she was snatched up to the other world to God. There was great rejoicing there and a great feast and she was well treated; but she came back because God had sent her to heal and help people and even gave her knowledge in a letter which was found under her neck, over her shoulders when she rose from the dead after nine days.<sup>369</sup>

As narratives about initiation testify, the fairy other world could easily become Christianised and, vice versa, the fairy patrons and guardian spirits could also be replaced by certain saints, Jesus, the Virgin Mary or God himself. Fairy magicians of Croatian and Hungarian witchcraft trials accused of the evil eye tend to emphasise repeatedly in their statements, preserved in the trial documentation, that they are good magicians who do healing in the name of the Virgin Mary or Jesus.

The initiates eventually become the professional healers of their community who pursue their activity with the patronage and assistance of the fairies. Some of them re-enter contact with the fairies from time to time – this is called ‘going about with the fairies’. Maria Vivod describes on the basis of field observations the practice of a Serbian ‘fairy seeing’ healer from Voivodina<sup>370</sup>. She explains that this woman was in constant communication with her fairy helpers who ‘send her’ the patient’s diagnosis and also explain to her how she can help the patient. She used the term *fairy disease* to refer to mental diseases and states of possession, and would offer healing and fortune telling. We also know of magicians who communicated with the dead and who, although fairy magicians by name (*vilarka*), in their spontaneously induced states of trance mostly transmit messages of the dead to the living.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Zečević 1978, 37-42.

<sup>368</sup> Marienescu 1890. 5, 7, 57.

<sup>369</sup> Diószegi 1958, 77.

<sup>370</sup> Vivod 2005. According to this author, active fairy magicians of Voivodina (Western Serbia) are a unique phenomenon today. The situation, Vivod reports, is different in Eastern Serbia where fairy healers are still present today. For a related reference see: Radenković, <http://www.ipak.org/vlachs/abstract.html>.

<sup>371</sup> Zečević 1978, 41.

Performing sacrifices was an indispensable element of the healing activity of fairy magicians on the Balkans. This prevailed, particularly in the Orthodox regions of the Balkans, right until the recent past (as regards Hungarian practice, there are only vague historical data which do not easily lend themselves to interpretation).<sup>372</sup> Healing and the offering of sacrifices took place in the unique time and space structures characteristic of the fairy world. It could happen in the meadows of the fairies, by their springs, trees or a ritually demarcated sacred space (e.g. a circle the magician would draw around herself or himself) or at the spot where the illness had begun as a consequence of breaking a taboo (where the patient suffered the 'fairy-stroke'). The fairy tree can be a special kind of tree such as a mayflower (Serbs), a rose bush (Transylvanian Romanians) etc., while the time when the healing took place was usually one of the deadly/fairy times of the calendar year, e.g. the *rusalia* week before Whitsun (Bulgarian *rusalska sednitsa*, meaning the week of the *rusalkas*; Romanian *rusalia*, Serbian *rusalje*) or took place at characteristic, recurring 'fairy times' (one week, one month or one year after the outbreak of illness).

The sequence of sacrificial foods and drinks almost invariably includes milk, honey, wine, bread or sweetbread; occasionally it includes salt and a (white) chicken, as well as further sweetmeats. According to Transylvanian Romanians, the *white sacrifice* must include flour as well as (white) salt. All of this is usually offered to the fairies on a white tablecloth spread out on the ground, according to some Greek data people also prepare them a knife, a fork and a glass; sometimes candles are lit. On the isle of Naxos red sweets are served on a table laid with a red cloth. According to Serbian data, the magician carries food covered with a handkerchief across the meadow where fairies are expected to appear.

The offering is often preceded or followed by the rite of inviting or invoking the fairies, in the presence of the patient. (For instance, Albanian fairy healers usually make their patient, who is dressed in all white, sit down at a quiet spot, inside a circle they draw). During this rite the healer 'meets' the fairies. According to data collected in Greece by the Blums, the magician asks the fairies why they had inflicted the disease, such as paralysis or muteness, on the patient; Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian, Albanian and Croatian data describe them praying in whispers to the fairies (among Transylvanian Hungarians the magician bows three times), or speaks charms in a loud chanting voice in a half-trance, pleading to them to withdraw the damage and restore the patient's health in exchange for their offering. A more detailed report from Albania reveals that while the patient is kneeling in the sacred circle, the healer greets the fairies and then they wait, quietly, watching for the secret signs. After the charms are recited, the magician bids the fairies good night and leads the patient backwards along the circle. After three days the magician gives the patient a wash – this is the point at which the latter's destiny is decided, whether it is to be recovery or death.<sup>373</sup> The patient usually spends the night at the fairy spot; in other cases the healer sleeps there with the patient who is healed by the fairies during an incubation dream.

According to a number of Serbian, Romanian and Greek data, in the morning the patient drinks some of the water prepared for the fairies or is bathed in it. Greek and Romanian sources<sup>374</sup> reveal that the sacrifices can also be performed at the patient's house. This is what happens, for instance, among the Transylvanian Romanians if the patient cannot remember where the fairy-stroke happened. In cases like this, the healer will walk round the patient's house nine times and recite the charm nine times.

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<sup>372</sup> Zečević 1981, 45; Blum – Blum 1970, 118; Marinov 1914, 215; Hahn 1853, 159; Saineanu 80, 201, 207, Moldován 1897, 160; Stewart ...; Lawson 1910, .... For Hungarian data see: Pócs 2005. For a summary on rites see: Pócs 1989 **lapok**;

<sup>373</sup> Hahn 1853, 159,

<sup>374</sup> Stewart 39; Marienescu 1890, 4.

In 1914 Marinov reported a rite practiced at many points in Bulgaria<sup>375</sup> in the context of healing diseases caused by the *rusalka*. He gives a vivid description of the vague and transient boundaries between the physical and the spiritual world and of instances of interpenetration between the two. Accordingly, during the *rusalska sednitsa* patients go to sleep in meadows where *rossen*<sup>376</sup> is blooming in great quantities (this plant is in some sort of mythical contact with the *rusalka*). Before going to sleep, they place milk, honey and sweetbread for the fairies on a white table-cloth spread on the grass. The people accompanying the patients watch everything keenly from a place set aside and note that around midnight, when the sick people are fast asleep, a whirlwind approaches with whispering, laughing, murmuring voices and it covers the tablecloth with sand, leaves, dry twigs and the like. All of this is interpreted by them, as external onlookers of the sleeping patients, as the appearance of the *rusalki*. In the morning they take home the things that the *rusalki* ‘left behind’ and use them to smoke the sick people with. Some people keep repeating these rites until they recover.

Lawson had already noted that fairy sacrifices had an air of association with the dead – the sacrifices performed in Greece in favour of the *nerheids* are actually identical with the *pomana* of the dead – the funerary offering carried to the cemetery (in the Christian re-framing this is offered for the sake of the salvation of the deceased).<sup>377</sup> The *vilevniak* of Dalmatia often communicate with the dead themselves during their rites in order to cure fairy sickness. This again underlines the powerful deadly character of the fairy world of the Balkans: the connection of Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek fairy magicians can be seen almost as a kind of communication with the dead. (I believe that the similarity is no accident between these sacrificial and healing rites and the Finnish healing rites performed in the cemetery which we mentioned earlier. In the latter, the patient or the healer speaks with the invoked dead person in a trance or dream.)

Several traits of fairy magicians are known in other parts of Europe, too. Healers who had learnt their art from the fairies or practice it with their help and communicate with them in trance or dream are reported by practically all peoples in Europe who speak of fairy-like demonic figures. Nor do they lack the kind of cult similar to that described on the Balkans, and in this context we can safely speak of ties connecting them to Asia Minor and the Caucasians.<sup>378</sup>

To return to the Balkans, we must now mention a specific type of the fairy magician. According to Croatian and Slovenian data, the previously mentioned par excellence fairy magicians were not the only ones who could be in ritual/ecstatic contact with the fairy world. Weather magicians, who form the subject of the coming chapters, could do the same. (More recent research has placed these latter in the category of so-called shamanistic magicians.) Of these, *zduhač*, *kresnik*, *vetrovnjak* and *planetarj* are most likely to have fairy patrons. They usually have other spiritual guides, too, such as storm souls or demonic werewolves<sup>379</sup>, but they are as likely to have been initiated in their art by fairies as by seers or healers. They are often connected to fairies as ancestors, sisters or helpers. (Carlo Ginzburg had already indicated this ‘fairy connection’ in the context of publishing the trial documentation of the Italian magicians known as *benandante* when looking for the analogies of the *benandante* on

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<sup>375</sup> See Marinov (1914, 470–475); Kazarow (1933).

<sup>376</sup> *Dictamnus Fraxinella* Pers., *D. Albus* L.

<sup>377</sup> Lawson 1910, 150, 169.

<sup>378</sup> See the literature on the connections of fairies on the Balkans, particularly as regards Scottish, Swedish and Austrian historical data revealed by the documents of witchcraft trials. (Wall, Brown, Maxwell-Stuart, Behringer). The famous ‘shaman of Obersdorf’ presented by Behringer, also had some fairy magician traits, besides communicating with the dead. In this respect there is a noticeable similarity between the practice of cults and cultic magicians of the Hindukus and Karakorum area and rites practiced on the Balkans. **Bibl.**

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the Balkans and believed to have found them in the figure of the *zduhač* miagician.)<sup>380</sup> These relations go in all directions – as we have mentioned, Croatian fairy magicians often communicate, besides fairies, also with the dead or with storm demons who bring bad weather. This is the consequence of the merging of the fairy world and the world of the dead and their interconnections, and partly going back to shared historical roots in the Central and Southern European region.

## Fairy societies

By fairy societies we mean the conglomeration of earthly humans (mostly women, according to our data), who communicate in their dreams with a 'heavenly' fairy society. The most detailed account available comes not from the region under examination here, but at least from its close surroundings. A publication by Gustav Henningsen describes the operation of one such society based on the 18<sup>th</sup> century court documentation of the Sicilian *donna di fuori* ('ladies from outside').<sup>381</sup> Besides this fairy trial, we also have data from Croatia and Hungary, mostly also based on historical sources. The latter are rather obscure sources nevertheless suited to prove the concrete existence of such societies. From the Dalmatian data it appears that there were female societies in that country similar in their main traits to those in Sicily. Data from Western Hungary, which I suspect to come from the Croatian population which settled there in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, allow us to discern societies which are in some ways similar to the Sicilian and Croatian societies and different in other respects. We need to add here that Sicilian documents can be supplemented with contemporary descriptions<sup>382</sup> which indicate the existence of fairy societies, as well as other data using a varied array of names in the sources (*Diana's society, the Good Ladies, Signore Oriente's society*') which were partly revealed at interrogations by the inquisition in Milan between 1384 and 1390.<sup>383</sup> To mention a few parallels which are geographically more remote: Wolfgang Behringer refers in a similar context, related to the Waldensian heretics, to the societies of *bons hommes* or *good ladies*<sup>384</sup>; while in Renward Cysat's (1545-1614) famous Lucerne Chronicles we find literally dozens of accounts about contemporaries who are members of *good societies*.<sup>385</sup>

All of these data can be best interpreted in the light of the rich documentary material published by Henningsen which also contains transcripts of the court statements of 'fairy women'. The continued publication of Sicilian and Italian data between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century indicates that these cults had historical continuity here and they played an important role amongst the non-Christian formations of supernatural communication. One of the most important common traits seems to have been that members of these societies had *shared dream experiences* about their 'journeys' to the fairy otherworld. Henningsen goes so far as to speak of a *dream cult* in this respect.<sup>386</sup> Members of the Sicilian societies are similar to the individual healers of the Balkans who 'go about with the fairies' in that they are demon-human *double beings*, having 'half turned into fairies'. From the period between 1588 and

<sup>380</sup> C. Ginzburg 1983. 142–143. For a most recent detailed summary on the fairy patron of the Croatian *zduhač* and *planetarj*, as well as the fairy magician *vilenjak* see: Z. Čiča, 2002a; 2002b.

<sup>381</sup> Henningsen 1985, 1997 [és?](#)

<sup>382</sup> Chapman 1970; for more on these see: Henningsen 1985, 779.

<sup>383</sup> Bonomo discloses these in his book summarizing witchcraft in Italy (1959, [1956??](#) 15–183: chapter *La "Societa di Diana" e la stregoneria*, particularly pages 74-84); but they are also mentioned on a commonplace basis in historical reviews of European witchcraft beliefs. [Ginzburg hivatkozásai!](#)

<sup>384</sup> Behringer [Waldens-cikk](#)

<sup>385</sup> Cysat.

<sup>386</sup> Henningsen 1997, 184; communication in dreams is precisely what differentiates this fairy cult from shamanism. This is one reason why the author does not consider it a member of the category which scholars are starting to call European shamanism, besides the fact that there is no collective spectacle taking place. We shall say more about this in chapter 12 which offers a comprehensive review of forms of communication.

1600 Henningsen reports the existence of female societies of 5-7 members, sometimes including a male member, as well. The women who ‘had turned into fairies’ travel to meetings held in a their dream on three set nights of the week where they dance in fine clothes to the music made by the male member. They also receive instruction about the use of medical herbs, they learn to tell the future and to avert evil spirits. All of this is highly similar to the initiating soul journeys which fairy magicians of the Balkans take to the other world. The fusion, however, is even closer here than in the case of individual fairy magicians who, as they ‘go about with the fairies’, in a way become ‘filled’ with fairy nature, come back to earth and do their healing alone (although with fairy assistance). Sicilian women healers lead fairy groups of otherworldly creatures to visit the houses of sick people (who sense their healing music and dance in their dreams or night time visions). The fairies are given a warm welcome with sweet food such as sweetened meat dishes, bread, water and wine prepared on a table by the sickbed. They help themselves to the delicacies and bless the house by way of farewell, ‘May the dancing end and prosperity increase.’ (In this context we may recall the fairy sacrifices of the Balkans and the similar healing role of music and dance.) Henningsen describes several variants of the same in the trial documents he processed. According to some data the fairies help poor earthly women in housework, sewing, lace-making and child raising. According to a 20<sup>th</sup> century description by Charlotte Chapman, members of the Sicilian fairy societies called *donni di notte* (‘ladies of the night’) or *donni di casa* (‘ladies of the house’) still travelled to their meetings in the same way, in their dreams on set nights of the week and pursued the same activities.<sup>387</sup>

Based on hints found in the minutes of Dalmatian witchcraft trials, Zoran Čiča has reconstructed a fairy cult very similar to that in Sicily but he did not have access to any concrete data to give a notion of the actual workings of the societies. In the minutes of the Dubrovnik trials of 1680 that he relies on, members of the female societies sometimes appear as *vilenica* (fairy) healers and the opponents of witches and sometimes as harmful witches.<sup>388</sup> The fairy magician who was accused of witchcraft, the *vilenica* Janjina claimed at court that she was member of a society of nine and the group was involved not in bewitchment but healing. A fairy had taught them the use of medical herbs and they are able to detect witches.<sup>389</sup>

This opposition between the *healing fairy* and the *malevolent witch*, as well as the role of human fairies in identifying witches, are also characteristic in the little information available about Hungarian witchcraft trials. Some of these documents speak of persons who appear in dreams and use music to cure people. In a trial in Western Hungary, for instance, the minutes of the inquest regarding one Mrs. András Hegedűs conducted at Babarc (Sopron county) in 1742 describe how a company playing music on bagpipes appeared by the sick person’s bedside and

... in her dream she heard music in her room and she was healed, and it was said, ‘Thank the piper for this,’ and her daughter never complained of any malady ever again.<sup>390</sup>

The fact that all data about fairy societies in the early modern period come into our scope in the context of witchcraft may be a consequence of the nature of our sources. Documents which provide a written record of the official anti-witchcraft procedures must by definition make the fairies appear as the enemies of witches. This, however, does not preclude the existence of different kinds of fairy societies, where organising anti-witchcraft action is

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<sup>387</sup> Chapman 1970.

<sup>388</sup> Čiča 2002a; 2002b.

<sup>389</sup> Čiča 2002a. 59–60.

<sup>390</sup> Schram 1970, II. 169.

not their main task. Whatever the case, all the known Hungarian, Croatian, Austrian and Italian data show that in the entire territory of Roman Catholic Central Europe the world of fairies shifted massively in the direction of witchcraft (as we have already mentioned in the context of fairy beliefs and individual magicians). These societies gained a witchcraft type context even in Sicily in the modern period<sup>391</sup> (where, according to Henningsen, witchcraft had ‘not yet’ appeared during the time of the previously mentioned fairy trials). The ‘transformation’ of fairy societies into ‘witchcraft societies’ in the chapter of his book was quoted earlier.

Certain court documents from Western Hungary also reveal that fairy societies consisting of Hungarians or Germans living in Hungary were active in this country. In a trial held at Csorna (Sopron county) in 1745, witness Erzsébet Rácz mentions that the accused may possibly have been a witch and quotes the accused having ‘said that the people believed to be witches were not witches but believe themselves to be from the order of St. Ilona’ who are terrified even at the mention of witches.<sup>392</sup> (*The order of St. Ilona* never existed as a monastic order, however, the name St. Ilona is easily associated with the figure of Tündér Ilona [Fairy Ilona] so central in Hungarian fairy belief.) Data about a fairy society named after St. Ilona or, in her Croatian name, St. Elena are also mentioned in the documentation of the German-Hungarian witchcraft trial of Mátyás Forintos, held at Kőszeg in 1554.<sup>393</sup> This court case contains an unusually detailed description of the struggles of the society against witches and the ‘soul battles’ they fought at night against the fairies. The accusation claims that in 1552 the accused, a German by the name of Michael Wacker, sent frost over the vineyards of Kőszeg with the assistance of Hungarian Mátyás Forintos. (Accusations of hail or frost making from demonological manuals of witchcraft persecutors spread to Western Hungary through the witchcraft-trials of the Alpine region. The same kind of accusation also appears in other trials in Western Hungary in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>394</sup>) Interrogation by torture finally revealed that the accuse and his accomplices were members of a devilish witch society which held its conventions by the deserted church on St. Vid’s Hill and performed a dance at the time of Whitsun to produce snow and ice which spoilt the harvest. One member of the society, a man referred to as *Janus*, son of *Katherine Herter*, also made a statement. This reveals that he also belonged to a society, but not so much a witch group which spoils the harvest as an alleged sect at war with the former, called *Sanct Elena Zech*. This society was headed by one *Michael Schwarz* and, as Bariska summarizes, they...

...could sneak into cellars at night even through the smallest possible holes if they wanted to, to get food and drink. Then one day when the members of the two sects happened to come across each other at the church on St. Vid’s Hill, Michael Schwarz caught Forintos just as the latter was about to bring bad weather on the region to spoil the fruit and the grain harvest. However, members of St. Elena’s Guild interrupted him, two sects clashed and in the fighting Michael Schwarz injured Forintos’s leg so that he limped for a long time afterwards. By the end of the combat Schwarz, the head of the sect and members of the guild, squeezed Forintos and his people as far back as the foot of the hill near Kőszeg. On another occasion they clashed under Pronnendorf (?) ...<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Chapman 1970, 201.

<sup>392</sup> Schram 1970. II. 236., 240.

<sup>393</sup> Minutes of the trial were first studied and published by István Bariska: Bariska I. 1988. (Vas County Archives, Kőszeg Branch, Kőszeg Város Polgárságának iratai [Documents of the Citizens of the City of Kőszeg], Acta Miscellanea July 4<sup>th</sup> 1561.)

<sup>394</sup> For more on this see Pócs 2002b.

<sup>395</sup> Bariska 1988, 250.

The reason why the gang of witches was able to produce the frost which constitutes the charge here was that on this occasion members of St. Elena's Guild failed to appear and engage in combat with them to forestall the damage.<sup>396</sup> The 'soul battle' of fairy magicians against teams of witches appears in the statement of young Herter as a personal experience, involving such stereotypes of switching existential levels as demonstrating injuries acquired in combat. All of this together constitutes a unique testimony about the mythical battles of magicians, where personal accounts, or at least references to such, are available from both parties.

The image of a fairy society engaging in battle with witches is very close to fairy societies in Croatia and Sicily and also to the soul battles of entire groups of Croatian *zduhač* magicians which perform fertility magic – these will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on weather magicians. Images of battles appearing in this context combine fairy beliefs (probably of Croatian origin), beliefs and communications techniques of weather magicians doing soul battles against storm demons on the Balkans, and the hailstorm accusations of anti-witchcraft demonology. In the background we find the court documentation of the genuine existence of fairy societies. For want of data we cannot ascertain if weather magic and soul battles against hail-making enemies were only occasionally tied in as attributes of human fairies or this phenomenon had deeper roots and was more widespread in time and space in the area. At any rate, this phenomenon is another document of the intertwining between different weather magicians, seen as mediators of fairy magicians and storm demons, which have been detected in other respects. We have no data to show the existence of fairy societies similar to those in Hungary, the Western Balkans or Sicily in the Eastern, Orthodox part of the Balkans. It seems that a similar function was filled, one might say substituted, here by different cultic bodies: societies of healers of fairy disease who held in ritual contact with the fairy world through practicing the various possession cults.

### Collective possession cults

As we have already mentioned in Chapter 3, possessions cults or traces of their former existence may be found today amongst practically all peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. The practice of such cults was probably characteristic of the entire Mediterranean area from Southern Europe through Asia Minor all the way to North Africa. What differentiates narrower cultural zones within this broad spectrum is the nature of the possessing agent. Various powers – gods and spirits – of the local belief world range from the spirits of the dead, fairies, saints all the way to the Holy Ghost. Of the different rites and cults known in the region we are only going to take a look here at those which are related to fairy belief (e.g. instances of possession by fairies). These include the healing societies of the Eastern Balkans known as *rusalia*, *rusalje* and *čalušari* which were still active in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>397</sup> We are not going to examine the possession cult of *nestinari* related to dancing on ambers which was associated, instead of fairy mythology, with different healing saints (primarily St. Constantine and St. Helena) and was practiced on their calendar holidays. Nor are we touching on cults such as *tarantism* or *argia* practiced in Southern Italy and Sicily and are associated with St. Paul and other saints and are also geographically outside the narrower

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<sup>396</sup> Bariska 1988, 249–250; for a full text of the document see: Tóth G. 2005, for a more detailed description see: Pócs 2008.

<sup>397</sup> For the most complete summary which extends to every cult see D. Antonijević 1990. A few further studies with further bibliography are the following: Arnaudov 1917, 50–58; Majzner 1921; Vuia 1935; Calverley 1946; Küppers 1954; Scharankov 1980; Danforth 1985; Riznić 1890. 115–116, 145–148; Kuret 1973; Zečević 1978; Kligman 1981; Puchner 1987. In a previous paper I briefly examined these rites in the context of the fairy magicians of the Balkans: Pócs 1986, 228–232.

region under examination here.<sup>398</sup> We must, however, refer to instances of possession by the dead – as we have mentioned earlier, ritual elements and beliefs of possession by the dead are present in this region in fairy possession cults, either alternatively or intertwined with possession by the fairies.

Romanian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Macedonian *călușari*, *rusalia*, *rusalje* societies were cultic groups which functioned intermittently, and were closely tied in with the mythical fairy world (occasionally, as in Serbia, even with the dead). Their collective goal was primarily to cure certain diseases caused by possession (by fairies or the dead), and they did this by inflicting their own *fairy possession or possession by the dead*. They attained the state (experience) of possession in a ritual trance induced by music and dance.

It is important that we do not simplify complex, multi-functional rites whose interpretation also continually changed over time to communication with the possessing fairies. This is just one of their components which may still be present today, particularly in certain areas of Romania<sup>399</sup>, but usually the ‘original’ meaning needs to be deciphered from the dead texts of folklore collections. Today, in response to the needs of *folklorism* and tourism, these healing societies are invited into very different functions from the charismatic purpose they served in the past. Those society members who now perform their pre-fabricated roles for tourists at folklore festivals are probably not acting in the same spirit of intense fairy belief and possession as their forebears, and only occasionally perceive themselves as possessed by or representing the fairies or healers of fairy diseases. It can fairly be expected that field work by researchers of the countries of the Balkans<sup>400</sup> will be able to penetrate beyond these new roles and bring to the surface a great many important aspects of the past operation of the societies that are not mentioned here. Nevertheless, even though my knowledge is limited and based merely on old literature on the subject, it is inevitable that in this work I should refer at least in passing to those traits of the societies which were known or assumed in the past and based on which we can place at least the most important general characteristics of the many different ritual variants among the Southern European formations of supernatural communication.

Members of healing societies conglomerated on an occasional basis to heal fairy diseases at periods when the hazard of the outbreak of such ailments was highest, i.e. during *Rusalia* week between Easter and Whitsun. (This is a time when, according to Romanian as well as Bulgarian or Serbian belief heaven stands open and hosts of fairies and the dead both appear among the living.<sup>401</sup>) In other words, during these times the fairy societies take over the role that private healers and magicians practice all the year round. Another, slightly less privileged time for the formation of such societies (among the Bulgarians, Serbs and Transylvanian Romanians) is the *twelve days* between Christmas and Twelfth Night which is seen a period of the dead rather than of the fairies. *Călușari* are Romanian societies consisting of 11 mature or unmarried men. In Bulgaria there were also female societies; the *rusalia* of Serbia and Duboka (originally practiced by Romanians) or Serbian *rusalje* societies almost always consisted of 3-11 women. It was said mostly about Romanian *călușari* members that they are followers and protégés of ‘fairy mistresses’ Doamna Zinelor or Irodeasa (who at these times come to reside among humans with their fairy hosts). Mircea Eliade claims that *călușari* members are representatives of the fairies whom, according to certain data, they also embody or emulate in their costume, the ornamentation of their clothes and hair and other ritual requisites. He believes that the high jumps that form a part of their dance imitate the

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<sup>398</sup> For more on these see, e.g., Scharankov 1980; Danforth 1985, de Martino, Pizza, **argia-tanulmány**.

<sup>399</sup> For instance, local correspondent reports and excellent films by Bogdan Neagona reveal that in the Olt and Dolj counties of Romania the rite still prevails in its ‘original’ fairy-related healing function. (Neagota...).

<sup>400</sup> Ma folyó kutatások: Neagota, Benga, Sinani, Hedeșan, stb.

<sup>401</sup> Timotin: **Herodias**

flight of the fairies that possess them.<sup>402</sup> Gail Kligman published data according to which the *călușari* members themselves liken their dance to the dance of the falcons (fairies in the guise of falcons)<sup>403</sup>. Other *călușari* members believed that their power derived from the *zâne* who live in the waters, still further ones claimed that they came from the *iele*.<sup>404</sup> As an introduction to their rites they invoked the fairy Irodeasa to help them in their struggle against evil fairies. Elsewhere, among the Bulgarians or Serbians, there are also beliefs whereby society members are initiates of the fairies and gain their healing knowledge from them. Be that as it may, the awareness of a close relationship with the fairies which we find among individual healers is also present among fairy societies.

These societies also have a 'secret society' character, with secret initiating rites and sacred requisites. Before the society becomes active on *rusalia* week, the members spend a period of time preparing and learning. In Romania, *călușari* members spend this time fasting and in religious abstinence, retreating to a hidden spot. They also perform 'swearing in' initiation rituals in relation to the society flag<sup>404</sup>, and learning about medical herbs and secret words is common both here and in Bulgarian *rusalia*. Among Bulgarians, the most important sacred object of the society is the drum which is kept, during the dead season between two *rusalia* periods, as a special treasure in a house or room specially dedicated to the purpose.<sup>405</sup>

In all areas examined there are several accounts about the invocation of society members to the troupes of the fairy queen who dance in the skies, which can at the same time mean the calling to the earthly society of members. The calling often takes the metaphoric form of abduction mentioned before. For instance, a Romanian account of the *călușari* talks about a person who broke the taboo related to the dead at Whitsun by washing her hair. As a consequence she felt she was being abducted, she 'had to go', and she went about with the *călușari* for two years, doing their healing dances.<sup>406</sup> Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian narratives about calling and initiation all speak about possession induced by music and dance which manifest in a dream or trance experience. The healing rites themselves take place in the time-space structures characteristic of the dead and of fairies. As Kligman points out in her detailed analysis of the *călușari*, 'time and space are the organizing factors underlying the ritual *căluș*'.<sup>407</sup> The dances of the healing societies can also be considered rites for occupying space within the dual spatial structure of fairy communication. The *călușari* walk all along the village, particularly to places where there are people suffering from fairy disease. The patient's family will invite them in to perform their healing dances or they take the patient to a place where the fairies often do harm. Before the dance one of the characters, the *mute* walks about the others in a reverse direction, drawing a magic circle around them with a wooden stick. The space thus created is sacred, no one is allowed to step in there except the sick persons. At other times they do a dance around the flag which is the centre point of their rites in order to mark out their dancing spots as the sacred territory of divine possession.

The common characteristic of the rites of these societies is that during the ritual the members, or at least some of them, most often the leader and/or some appointed persons, enter an ecstatic state through music and dance. They become possessed by the healing deity or good fairy. As we have explained, patients who have been snatched or struck by the evil fairies are also possessed. The *călușari* appear in the role of being possessed by the fairies and thus oppose themselves against the patients possessed by demonic forces. The sick people themselves join in with their dance, in other cases they dance around them and enter a shared trance and fight together against the possessing evil fairies. The strength they acquire from the

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<sup>402</sup> Eliade 1980. 8.

<sup>403</sup> Kligman 46-55.

<sup>404</sup> Vaverley 1946.

<sup>405</sup> Vakareski 366.

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<sup>407</sup> Kligman 107-108.

possessing good spirit enables them to expel the evil spirit from the sick person, in other words they take over the possessing demons from the patients. In other words, we are talking about the simultaneous duality and opposition of divine and demonic possession. All of this takes place at a certain degree of trance achieved through increasingly rapid music and dance which is different for the group leader, for the members and the patients.

There are many different variants for absorbing the possessing evil agents of disease and of the symbolic struggle between good and evil spirits and there is no room here to describe all of them. We can, however, mention a few variants which can give us a rough general idea of the complex network of relations which characterize these cults in terms of music and dance, possession and recovery.

In certain variants of Romanian rites, the leader, *vataf*, is able to ascertain the cause of the illness and decide what kind of dance should be used for the healing. The dance grows quicker and quicker and at a certain moment the *vataf* 'looks very hard' on the dancing patient who must fall into a trance at a certain point of the ritual. At the same time, the *vataf* chews garlic, mugwort and/or other strong smelling herbs and spits them in the patient's face as a kind of drug. Under the influence of all of this the patient dances faster and faster and finally, when the *vataf* swishes them with the flag, collapses unconscious. This condition can last from a few minutes to a maximum of one hour. When the dance of the *călușari* around the patient reaches its peak and, at least in theory, all dancers are in a state of light trance, the oldest dancer dances out of the circle following a sign from the *vataf*. He moves on to a pot newly made for the purpose, filled with water and prepared at the beginning of the rite, and knocks it to pieces with a stick. The water spills over the *călușari* and the patient. At this point the patient must jump up and run away cured, and one of the dancers must fall down. The dancer who falls is selected by the *vataf* who induces hypnosis in the dancer (by 'looking hard'). In some cases the *vataf* does this three times over, each time to a different *călușar* appointed for the role. They fall down one after the other and, as it is said, 'give their health over to the patient'. The *călușari* chase the demon out of the patient crying 'go to the *călușar*', encouraging it to leave the patient and inhabit the dancer(s) lying on the ground. They dance around their unconscious fellow-dancers to bring them back soon, because it is believed that they could even die if they stay in a trance too long.<sup>408</sup>

A similar element of the Bulgarian *rusalia* is that after the patient jumps up supposedly recovered after the dance has been performed around them and they had undergone the state of trance, one or two of the dancers fall to the ground and lie there prostrate and rigid, until eventually everyone is revived with various 'waking' songs. The *padalice* (meaning 'those who fall', on their backs in an unconscious state) of the Serbian *rusalje* are possessed not by fairies but dead persons. They collapse *en masse*, spontaneously rather than under the influence of music and dance, and their unconscious state may last as long as an hour. They, too, are awakened by music serving this purpose and then, after recovery, are subjected to cleansing rites, too (having been in contact with the dead). A part of this is that the *padalici* have to be carried over water (e.g. if there is a stream nearby).

*Collective ritual trance* is a term used in the literature to denote the ritually induced state of unconsciousness used by healing societies.<sup>409</sup> We must add that this element is prescribed by tradition but is not psychologically indispensable and can be pretended.<sup>410</sup> The main characteristic of these cults is the element of the spectacular – a dramatic performance with strong visuals, symbolic objects, costumes and dramatic gestures, complete with the visual symbols of trance, the soul journey and the struggle against demons. During the Serbian *rusalje* rite, for instance, as soon as the sick hear the sound of the music inviting them

<sup>408</sup> Mostly based on Kligman's field work in (hely), Transylvania in the 1970's. Kligman....

<sup>409</sup> See e.g. Antonijević 1990.

<sup>410</sup> Cf. Crapanzano 1987.???

to dance, they are seized by contractions and throw themselves around to the rhythm of the music as if ‘possessed’. The *rusalec* also keep hitting the legs of the sick people with sticks to encourage the demon to go away. In another dance they brandish knives in the air. In Bulgaria the *vataf*, who is in charge of the ritual, keeps blowing at the patient from four directions as if to blow in the divine spirit which will inhabit the person in lieu of the exorcised demon. Romanian rites often contain dances performed with twigs, sticks or whips, particularly with the aim of expelling evil. In most societies certain herbs, as well as garlic, play an important role in expelling demons (keeping evil fairies at bay).

Phenomena of *necromantic mediumism* also form a part of the Serbian *rusalje* rite. One of the central parts of the rite is when the *rusalia* or *padalica* awaken from their healing trance and mediate the message of the dead to the entire village and the relevant individuals (these are to do with the future of the individual dead person and of the community, e.g. the harvest prospects for the given year). We have both Bulgarian and Romanian data to the effect that during *rusalia* week it is actually the lingering dead who possess the sick. Bulgarian researchers consider contact with the ancestors as guarding spirits of the community (the ‘good dead’) the essence of the cults on the Balkans.<sup>411</sup>

Although practically all of the literature I refer to offers some information about the connection of music and dance, the authors say little that is specific, and usually simply emphasize the role of dance performed to a quickening pace of music (*hora* or *kolo*) in inducing trance. In the context of *Rusalia* rites Dragoslav Antonijević talks about the possible trance-inducing effect of Dorian and Phrygian keys in the one time cult of Dionysos<sup>412</sup> which naturally offers no conclusions whatever regarding the different types of *rusalia* music. From the data it appears that when the trance is not pretended but actually sets in, this is usually the joint result of the dance, the suggestion by the *vataf* and the auto-suggestion of the patient.<sup>413</sup> (Based on extensive field work, Gail Kligman also emphasizes the role of hypnosis and auto-suggestion in cases when the *vataf* brings trance over the patient and then over the dancers who take over the disease).<sup>414</sup> This is supported also by the data that Majzner quotes from accounts of persons who had been in a trance. One informant, for instance, said that when the *vataf* looked him in the eye, he was overcome by numbness, could not feel anything, saw darkness, etc., then finally, when he came round, he felt better and relieved.<sup>415</sup> Serbian *padalica* report that upon reviving from the unconscious state they feel they had been filled with a new strength etc.<sup>416</sup> Antonijević also describes at the locus quoted above, and this view is repeatedly confirmed by the data we have examined, that beyond the effect of increasingly fast spinning motion which is known to generate trance, music and dance are also important factors in producing the experience of possession by the deity. When the state of trance sets in (or is pretended), this is a symbolic sign of the presence of the deity, signaling that contact has been established. At the same time I am convinced that this awareness can in itself induce a sense of possession. This way we can say that in these rituals, music and dance are the means of creating a mediating relationship. As we have seen above, music and dance played a very similar role in popular beliefs and in the fairy experience of individual helpers. Narratives and legend *topos* of fairy communication repeatedly talk about abduction by music and dance.

Now, based on our present knowledge we can ask whether we concede the opinion of scholars who have examined the connection of music and ecstasy, foremost among them Gilbert Rouget who has produced a grand-scale summary on the subject, and who claim that,

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<sup>411</sup> Popova 1968.

<sup>412</sup> Đorđević 1953, 28–38. (This Thracian cult is often likened to the *rusalia*, regrettably there is no room here to discuss the question.

<sup>413</sup> Eliade is of the same opinion, *ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> Eliade 1980, 9.

<sup>415</sup> Majzner 1921, 251–252.

<sup>416</sup> Majzner 1921, 233.

these are not cases of healing by music and dance as is commonly believed, but instead the music and dance produce the state of possession in which the healing potential becomes activated. In other words, they argue, the healing is done not by the music but the possessing spirit.<sup>417</sup> My response, in the light of the above, is in the affirmative. In the possession cults of the Balkans the healing is done by divine possessing agents by vanquishing and expelling the possessing demons.

If now finally we want to attempt a comprehensive characterization of the varied forms of communication with the fairies, we can say that a whole range of communicational forms is present in the region simultaneously, in parallel, accreted over each other and living alongside, with different versions dominating in different areas. Daily communication, the practice of individual magicians and collective cults can all be defined as possession, more accurately circumpossession functioning in the frames of the archaic double space structure which can be regarded a loose category containing different formations of the connection of body, soul and spirit.

As we have repeatedly emphasized, since the fairies have original connections with the dead, their forms and metaphors of possession are also similar and in many cases identical with those of possession by the dead. Possession by fairies may be regarded as a cultural variant of possession by the dead which is highly dominant in Southeastern Europe (and also shows traits of divine possession) where a very important feature is trance induced by music and dance. Besides direct communication, we must also emphasize the important role of sacrifices offered to fairies of a divine character. An important trait is that certain sacrificial rites are also connected to direct communication with the supernatural; in other words the fairies invoked are given sacrificial foods, during the direct encounter experiences and dialogues the fairies are 'fed'.

'Possession' operating in a double spatial structure is an archaic trait also observed in the context of possession by the dead. This goes hand in hand with another archaic trait, which is the different communicational forms of *humans who turn half demon* as double/transitory beings and the related *dream communication*. This must not be identified with possession but in our cases often goes hand in hand with them. Nevertheless, we must also note the presence of necromantic mediumism as a special form of possession. (Moreover, the rites used by individual healers to invoke fairies are reminiscent of the methods of necromancy the use of which extended from antiquity until the early modern period, including the domain of elite magic.)

Several researchers of the possession cults of the Balkans (e.g. Slobodan Zečević or Alois Closs<sup>418</sup>) have proposed that these instances might be defined as cases of shamanism. We believe that this is a consequence of the customary over-generalization of the category of shamanism and is not a relevant question in the context of fairy cults.<sup>419</sup> The factor which connects these various communicational forms and contains them within one system is the fairy world itself, *the beliefs and mythology of the fairies*, as well as the *practical roles associated with the fairies, played by magicians, healers and cultic societies*. In this perspective, communication with fairies, no matter how heterogeneous in terms of

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<sup>417</sup> Rouget 1980, 237.

<sup>418</sup> Closs, Zečević **samanizms**

<sup>419</sup> It must be noted that in his comprehensive work on possession cults Antoniević refuted these views – as there is no voluntary trance, no protective spirit and no initiation featuring in these cases, he argues, there is also no reason to talk about shamanism. As we can see, his arguments are not very fortunately chosen, as each of the phenomena he denies are actually present in these cults, nevertheless we must agree with him that classifying possession cults or other forms of fairy cult as shamanism is a rather absurd idea.

communication techniques, is a clearly outlined system with a pronounced character which may be declared a system in its own right simply as *fairy communication*.

## 5. CONTACTS WITH DEMONS OF THE AIR: WEATHER MAGICIANS

Weather magicians have been known throughout the whole of European culture, indeed, data and traces about their activity go back right as far as pre-Christian antiquity.<sup>420</sup> Indeed, several types of weather magicians have been ascribed direct, 'visionary' methods of supernatural communication. Their activity, still accessible to study in the field in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was based on a practice of weather magic mostly experienced in a trance or 'in spirit' in a unique 'cloud other world'. It may be assumed that some of the data from the historical past of Europe also refer to magicians of this kind. As regards fertility magicians, their category partly overlaps with that of weather magicians, since magically influencing the weather and averting hailstorms also meant securing a good harvest of grain or fruit for any community. We can, however, distinguish a distinct category of fertility magicians, discussed in the last section of this chapter, which comprises magicians who entered into contact with the dead specifically with the purpose of securing the grain harvest. Besides reviewing relics of the past, this chapter focuses on the religion, mentality, beliefs and ritual practice of Catholic and Orthodox village communities of 50-100 years ago, based on material mostly from Hungary, the whole Carpathian Basin and the broader Central and Eastern European region. The majority of my data come from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a smaller portion are more recent, often of my own ethnographic collection. As regards the historical past, I draw my data about European clerical sources from secondary publications, while primary historical sources on the activities of the magicians were available to me mostly in a Hungarian respect, primarily in the form of witchcraft trial documentation. In mediaeval and early modern agricultural societies, beyond common weather magic and rain rituals which everyone used to practice, the magicians of village communities also had a crucial role in handling the crisis situations flowing from the uncertainties and extremes of weather and agricultural yield. As regards the early modern period, a relatively detailed view of the activity of weather magicians is available from England and France.<sup>421</sup> This is a period where minutes of witchcraft trials are also becoming available, offering more direct data about the real life activity of weather magicians. These include the documents of a trial which took place in Livonia in 1691 against a magician with werewolf characteristics called Thieß<sup>422</sup> or the prolonged court processes which dragged on for decades prosecuting the *benandanti* of Friuli. The rich documentation was processed and published by Carlo Ginzburg in his book *I benandanti*, published in 1996.<sup>423</sup> Hungarian witchcraft trials also offer much that reflects the activity of weather magicians, including some relevant data about various *táltos*. However, of almost thirty mentions of *táltos* only 3-4 refer to persons who could be classified as weather magicians, the rest of them pursued activities such as seeing treasure, healing, divination or identifying

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<sup>420</sup> For data from antiquity see e.g. Nilsson II. 106; Franz I. 28; Kieckhefer 1990, 41; Flint 1991, 109.

<sup>421</sup> See: Thomas, 264–265; Kieckhefer, 1976; Peters, 1978, 165.

<sup>422</sup> Documentation of Thieß's trial was published, besides Höfler (1934: 345-350), also by Kretzenbacher (1968: 92-95) (with some hiatuses), based on Hermann von Bruiningk's publication of 1924-1928.

<sup>423</sup> Ginzburg 1966

witches. Even if some of them were invested with the mythology of the 'vying *táltos*', their struggles were not in service of good weather.<sup>424</sup> At any rate, all of this is in strange contrast with the high number of references to *táltos* as weather magicians which we encounter in legends in the 20th century.<sup>425</sup> We cannot be sure whether this means there were not many weather magicians in Hungarian peasant communities or that they were rarely accused of witchcraft. The fact that *táltos* (or other types of weather magicians in other parts of Europe) rarely appear in these trials may also have to do with the fact that these magicians were mostly male. As far as I know, the situation in Austria is similar – Heide Dienst found that in the Alpine region weather magic was also mostly an activity pursued by men, while witchcraft accusations of conjuring up hailstorms were mostly directed against women.<sup>426</sup> Since they served the entire community, weather magicians were not a likely to become starting points of conflict within the community. Keith Thomas's observations apply to these cases as well – Thomas says that misfortunes which are not explained by interpersonal relations (e.g. epidemics or fire) are not usually brought in connection with witchcraft.<sup>427</sup> Croatian and Slovenian witchcraft trials are probably a similar case, but research has not yet exploited this rich field of information from this point of view. Court processes were directed against real persons, and the accusations against them, as well as the statements made by the accused or the witnesses, certainly contain a degree of reality, even if mostly we are talking about a narrative tradition and the use of legend toposes. These more accurate mirrors of reality help us interpret the data of 20th century folklore narratives which rarely contain direct references to active weather magicians.

The magicians of the early modern period known from historical sources have received distinguished attention in the research of presumed European and pre-Christian Hungarian shamanism. Regrettably, European research did not really discover the rich material on magicians of this kind among the Slavic peoples which was first published by Kazimierz Moszyński in 1929 in a large ethnographic summary written in Polish and discussing all of the Slavic groups.<sup>428</sup> Only after the publication of Carlo Ginzburg's previously mentioned book on the magicians of Friuli, attention turned toward the magicians of the Western and Northern Balkans. In the wake of Maja Bošković-Stulli's paper on Croatian/Slovenian *krsnik/kresnik* first Ginzburg, then Gábor Klaniczay<sup>429</sup> turned their attention to this subject. Based on this publication and Carlo Ginzburg's rich material on the *benandanti*, Gábor Klaniczay outlined the mutual relations of the *táltos* with *kresnik*, *zduhač*, *mogut* and other Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian magicians, placing the emphasis on the way in which these magicians were integrated in the broader system of witchcraft. As regards Hungarian scholarship, the focus has been, for the past one hundred years, on the magician called *táltos*, who also plays a weather magician role and is seen as the latter-day depository of the presumed pre-Christian shamanism of Hungarians.<sup>430</sup> (Parallel phenomena may be registered among our linguistic neighbors, too: researchers of several peoples from the Balkans incorporated the figures of such magicians, seen in a mythological light, in the reconstruction of their ancient Slavic mythology.) In his second book dedicated to 'shamanistic' magicians, Ginzburg drew the attention to this broader context of magicians,

<sup>424</sup> For a detailed account of the *táltos* of witchcraft trials see Pócs, 1899, Chapter 7.; Pócs, *A magyar szamanizmus*,. Pócs 2002, 355–387.

<sup>425</sup> See summaries by Diószegi: Diószegi 1958, 342–395; 1973, 189–204.

<sup>426</sup> Dienst, 1987, 191–192.

<sup>427</sup> Thomas, 665.

<sup>428</sup> Moszyński 651–654; this author published data from the Slavic areas.

<sup>429</sup> Klaniczay 1983; Ginzburg... In his second book, devoted to shamanistic magicians, Ginzburg offers a typology comprising contemporary types. (Ginzburg 1989).

<sup>430</sup> Róheim 1925, ...; Diószegi 1958; this assumption remains popular in Hungarian research to this day (see e.g. Dömötör,, Hoppál.....).

including parallels from Hungary, the Balkans, Livonia and Russia, and made an attempt to construct a general East and Southeast European typology of magicians.<sup>431</sup> I myself have also dedicated a number of papers to discussing previously unexplored aspects of magicians. I distinguished four types of magicians, supplementing Ginzburg's typology with further types unknown to him, such as the Serbian/Bulgarian/Macedonian *zmej/zmaj/zmija* magician, the Albanian *drangue* and the 'cloud magicians' of the Eastern Slavs, as well as the Hungarian types corresponding to each of these, meaning the relevant types of the *táltos*.<sup>432</sup>

Today, in the light of data that have recently come to light and in the context of different types of supernatural communication, I see this typology differently, and make an attempt to draw up this different structure in this book. I am also aware that the diffuse groups within the material I have examined do not allow for delineating sharply outlined groups. In theory, certain features of magicians (such as their birth traits, morphological variants, opponents, helping spirits or other worlds) do allow us to demarcate certain characteristic groups which are also marked by their names allusive to one or other of their essential traits (e.g. 'snaky', 'werewolf', 'windy' 'cloudy'). If, however, we look at the practice of these magicians as it occasionally becomes accessible to us instead of drawing a system of textual motifs from narrative stereotypes, we hardly ever encounter pure types. Nevertheless, in order to keep the material manageable and presentable, I shall, with great caution and reservations, outline a kind of classification. I shall do this on the level of the stereotyping which appears in the narratives, since I have access to almost nothing but narrative stereotypes which only indirectly reflect the genuine living practice of magic. Thus the categories I present are the scholarly fiction [szívem szerint scholarly construct-nak fordítanám] rather than *emic* categories of the communities in question.

It has also become clear to me that one cannot examine so-called shamanistic magicians, who communicate with the other world and keep spiritual contact with its beings, in isolation from the general European context of weather magic. Even the available mediaeval data make it quite clear that individuals who 'communicate in their soul' are only one type of weather magician, who have used, and are still using today, a whole array of other rites and other 'mechanical' methods of magic aimed at switching off the supernatural, in order to influence the demonic world which regulates precipitation or, if they are no longer acquainted with this demon world, influence the precipitation itself.

Based on contemporary collecting experience my present understanding is that magicians of a community could influence the weather with a varied array of sometimes supernatural, at other times magical methods, as well as religious rites, and in various places several types of magicians and methods could be seen as valid. Magical techniques were used not only by magicians – a huge amount of lay, ordinary methods for influencing precipitation have been known in Europe since the Middle Ages right up till now.

It has also become clear that the majority of magicians somehow keep in spiritual contact with the dead, but their communicational techniques vary widely. From a closer examination we can conclude with certainty that they cannot be classified into a unified category of magicians making soul journeys to the other world, nor can their communication activity be simply termed shamanism based on an expanded and overly generalized concept of shamanism. The Christian churches themselves, almost as rivals to the activity of everyday lay magic and weather magicians, also offered a number of methods for influencing the weather and continue to do so to this day. Keith Thomas came to the conclusion from his research of early modern England that in that period the activity of all magicians formed part of both elite and popular culture except for weather magic which, quite naturally, only figured

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<sup>431</sup> Ginzburg: *Storia*

<sup>432</sup> Pócs 1993a; 1995b; 1996a; 1999a, Chapter 7; 1999b.

in the life of the agricultural population.<sup>433</sup> This, however, holds true only as long as we do not include the varied activities of priests practiced in the interest of good weather. Their votive masses served or processions held in order to bring rain, attempts to keep storms away by the use of 'storm crosses' and other sacraments were probably just as important to the life of mediaeval and early modern agricultural communities as was the activity of weather magicians. The practice of placing the Holy Sacrament or some relic as protection in front of the monastery or using the cloaks of saints against hail has been known from a number of mediaeval sources. The widespread mediaeval practice of processions headed by priests with the purpose of preventing hailstorms or pleading for rain lived on in Protestant communities in many places even after the Reformation, and has been known in the modern period in both Roman Catholic and Orthodox areas. Placing *sacramentalia* such as consecrated budding willow reeds in vineyards and wheat fields has been a common practice right until modern times in the Catholic areas of Europe and a few other *sacramentalia* e.g. holy water or consecrated candles have also been used in many places with the function of weather magic or protection against hail.<sup>434</sup> In contemporary modernity, in rural communities that have retained their traditional magical/religious world view, including many points of the area we have been studying, the activity of rural weather magicians has outlived the practices offered by priests and techniques of clerical origin.

#### Dead people and the weather

For magicians specialized in influencing the weather, this often means supernatural, 'spiritual' communication with the dead, alongside knowing and practicing other methods. The class of the dead these practitioners most often tend to address are those who existed in the context of weather magic in European cultures as *storm demons*. At least according to the Central and Southeast European beliefs of the modern period, these spirit creatures, living in rain clouds, were spirits of dead persons without status (e.g. those who died without having been baptized, people who had drowned and were never buried, suicides and the unburied victims of the battlefields), who never reached the other world and linger in the intermediate space in atonement.

These storm demons live in the other world of clouds and storms, in the 'upper waters' of creation, which is the other world of the dead in charge of the weather. This is a particular archaic notion of an earthly other world, more accurately one which is positioned between heaven and earth and which, according to Moszyński, may have been an attribute of the mythology of all Indo-European peoples. Indeed, there are Germanic, Slavic and Greek data which testify to this from the period of European antiquity.<sup>435</sup> This is the space which the syncretic demon world of late antiquity and early Christianity inhabited<sup>436</sup>. There are plenty of allusions by the church fathers (and even the New Testament) to the hosts of demons flying over their heads.<sup>437</sup> These demons of the beliefs of the modern age are usually creatures that bring bad weather, such as hailstorms, or damage the crops. As Tolstaya describes, based on her relevant Ukrainian data, atmospheric phenomena were closely connected to the dead ancestors, but, among them, mostly with to impure dead who had drowned as suicides or had hanged themselves.<sup>438</sup> A rich East and Southeast European collection of data seems to indicate

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<sup>433</sup> Thomas, 264–265.

<sup>434</sup> For a summary on the Middle Ages see: Franz 1910, II. 17, 69, 110–111; for a few European data see Labouvie 1992, 152–154; Dienst, 1986, 86. Warner, 64; Andrian 30-33; Di Nola, 364–366.

<sup>435</sup> Rohde 1925, I. 248-249; Moszyński 1929, 651-653.

<sup>436</sup> Hart 1988, 89-135.

<sup>437</sup> Franz 1909, II. 24-26.

<sup>438</sup> Tolstaya, 2001, 179 (who did field work on the subject in Polessie, the Chernigov district of the Ukraine).

that the dead who lacked status turn into storm demons who regulate precipitation. According to Romanian belief ‘the impure’ hold the rain captive and cause draught, but can also bring a hailstorm<sup>439</sup>. Russian ‘evil’ ancestors called *zalozhnyie* or the Ukrainian impure referred to as *Polessie* also withhold the rain and destroy the harvest by hailstorm.<sup>440</sup> According to Serbian and Bosnian data, suicides, people who had hanged themselves or drowned in water bring hail clouds.<sup>441</sup> The demons that the Southern Slavs call ‘unbaptised’ (*nekrestenci, nevidinčići*, etc.) are also related to the weather. They arrive in troupes between Christmas and Twelfth Night in the shape of small children, birds with a child’s head or a crying bird and, in certain formal variants, bring a stormy wind or a hailstorm<sup>442</sup>, as do Romanian *moroi*<sup>443</sup> or Hungaian *tisztátalanok, keresztelenek* [impure, unbaptized].<sup>444</sup> Ukrainian and Serbian beliefs also envision cloud animals in this storm other world – the impure dead are the shepherds to herds of cloud cows, bulls, oxen or lambs.<sup>445</sup>

Another group of demons who come from dead people without status turn into ‘good dead’ or house ghosts or protective spirits who defend their community and bring fertility to human communities, who often become the guarding spirits of an entire family or village. The 20th century beliefs of the region we have been examining also often figure these demons as protective spirits of their own community: they bring fertility to their village or clan, while they fight the ‘cloud drivers’ of the neighboring village or clan that bring the threat of hail. Thus the ‘bad dead’ include the ‘foreign’ guarding spirits of the neighboring community, too. All of this also appears in the images of the battles between the guarding spirits of the two neighboring villages.<sup>446</sup> Another creature known to regulate the weather is the *storm dragon* which is known in the entire region under study. Several authors refer to the wind/storm nature of the South Slavic dragons, their identity with certain types of wind or storm – these dragons even get their name from the different types of wind. In their case the positive-negative opposition characteristic of weather demons means a polarization of the *heavenly* as against that of the *underworld*. The storm demon dragon moves around between the lower and the upper waters, it lives in swamps or damp places or is born there (from a snake or other water animal). It is able to direct the storm clouds and fly up into the clouds. This way they move around along with the circulation of water between the spheres of heaven and earth. According to a widespread view it uses its tail, drooped into the water, to suck up and transport water and it ‘rains down’ along with the storm. The dragons living in the clouds may play the role of the guarding spirit of the weather magician and his community, while the dragons of the underworld snatch the rain or the harvest, lock the precipitation into underground caves and bring hailstorms, ‘driving the hail cloud’. Battles of ‘good and evil’ between dragons and guarding spirits form a part of the beliefs about dragons. Weather magicians with dragons, as we shall see below, engage in battle with the dragons of the underworld, with the help of the ‘heavenly’ dragons who act as their patrons.<sup>447</sup> In the

<sup>439</sup> Candrea 1944, 128.

<sup>440</sup> Warner 2002, 47; Tolstaya 2001, 179.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid. and Herrmann 1895, 199.

<sup>442</sup> Zečević 1981, 123-125, 165-166; Schneeweiss 1961, 5-6; Bošković-Stulli 1953, 338; Georgieva 1985, 102–103.

<sup>443</sup> Moldován, Candrea

<sup>444</sup> Jankó 1891, 277, Seres 1994; Wlislöckiné Dörfler 1893; for a summary see Pócs....

<sup>445</sup> Tolstaya, 2001, 179–180; Tolstoi–Tolstaia 103.

<sup>446</sup> On wind souls and cloud-driving demons see e.g. Franz I. 19–27, II. 37–55; Moszyński, 1967, 651–653.

Rohde 1925, I. 248–249; Lawson 1910, 283; Marinov 1914, 213–214; Kelemina, 40–41; Runeberg 1947, 118–119; Muşlea – Bîrlea, 1970, 182–184; Zečević 1981, 123–125, 149; Andrian 26–27, 31; Zentai 1983, 78–79. For more detail on the subject see Pócs 2002, 64–77.

<sup>447</sup> On weather demon dragons see Mackensen 1929/30; Benovska-Sabkova 1992; Marinov 1914, 207–211; Sadnik 1951, 482–485; Dukova 1970, 209–252; Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970, 182–189; Chloupek 1953, 247–248; Georgieva 1983, 79–85; 1985, 64–; Erdész 1984; Pócs 1998; Petrović 2004. For further dimensions of the

discernible past of Europe it has been these demonic figures that provided the mythical frames for humans' attempts to regulate the weather. Ever since the philosophers of antiquity through the church fathers into late mediaeval demonology it has been a general view that storms and bad weather are caused by demons and that weather magicians manipulate demons, as they are in contact with such demons who either help them or are hostile to them. They are often referred to in mediaeval magician accusations, clerical rules and regulations about weather magic. We know from 10th century benediction texts that the Christian church most seriously reckoned with them, there are even clerical references to 'cloud-driving demons' from 1585.<sup>448</sup> Specific forms of weather demons which had not been transformed into Christian devils mostly survived until the modern period in the Balkans, among Eastern and Western Slavic people and in the Alpine areas such as Switzerland, Austria and Southern Germany. The belief system of any nation may also contain variants which had turned into *devils* alongside local storm demons that carry unique local traits. As Christianity became more widespread, these originally pagan demons gradually became identified with the Christian Satan and its devils. Substituting the wind demons or cloud-driving souls by the devil began, in the beliefs of the church fathers, even in early Christianity. By around the 9<sup>th</sup> century the view had fully emerged whereby magicians or witches create bad weather with the help of the devil.<sup>449</sup> To a certain extent dragons also merged with this scene – their figure also turned into a devil or at least devilish during the later Middle Ages.<sup>450</sup> This tendency toward demonization resulted in a very powerful demonological narrative which contained varied motifs of the demonological fictions of weather magic and weather magicians (as we shall see by the end of this chapter); which in many cases covered over the genuine activity of weather magicians, making it almost undecipherable (e.g. in the text of 20<sup>th</sup> century folklore collection).

Besides dead persons who specialized into storm demons, the 'common dead' can also be brought into connection with the activity of weather magicians: ancestors of the community who act either as 'good dead' supportive of the community or as hostile 'evil dead' and either bring about or take away fertility, doing this in the rhythm of the agricultural cycles, the agricultural holidays of the Christian calendar. The memory of the dead returning to human communities particularly at the start-of-the-year or end-of-year holidays and at so-called periods of the dead in the calendar are still preserved from pre-Christian times in a number of rites and beliefs surviving in our region.<sup>451</sup> There are also some faint traces of the role that benevolent ancestors played in the communities in securing the grain harvest – in exchange for certain offerings. The dead, however, could also harm human communities, having the power to rob them of fertility. This is best illustrated by the battles which the magicians we are about to discuss held with the dead and by other mythologems describing their other escapades to acquire grain. Magicians communicating with the dead are not par excellence weather magicians, they also had a number of other activities. It is more accurate to call them fertility magicians: their main task in the community was to procure or regain the harvest of grain, fruit or vine from the dead, during those holidays of the calendar which we

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duality of dragons in Byzantine apocryphal texts, see... According to *Otkrovenie Varuchogo*, dragons move between heaven and hell, as both are open to them. (Bonwetsch, N.: Das slavisch erhaltene Baruchbuch. In Nachrichten der Kgl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Kl. 1896 H. 1.; quoted by Sadnik 1951, 483.)

<sup>448</sup> Franz 1909, I. 17–26., II. 24–28; Hart 1988, 89–135; Blöcker, 119.

<sup>449</sup> Di Nola, 361–362; Andrian, 26–27.

<sup>450</sup> On identifying the Satan with the dragon and, at the same time, with a natural demon which brings storms or rain, see Franz, II. 19–37.

<sup>451</sup> On data about dead persons who appear among the living and bring fertility from Europe's pre-Christian and early Christian past see Rohde, 1925, 246–249; Ranke, 1951; Lecouteux 1987, 232–240. Conclusions on this may be drawn from offerings performed at certain feasts of the dead in this region in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See e.g. Murko 1910; Ränk, 1949. We shall be touching on the question also in relation to fairy cult – see the sections in Chapter 6 on the role of fairies, identified with the returning dead, in bringing fertility.

mentioned earlier in connection with the dead who bring fertility. Before we talk about them, however, we must enumerate the various types of weather magicians communicating with the dead.

The activity of the Catholic Church in averting hailstorms or bringing rain was related, besides using all other previously mentioned methods, to storm demons. These were seen as dangerous enemies in the eyes both of the Western and the Oriental church. Priests of the mediaeval church, who practiced benedictions and exorcism, saw healing as only one of their crucial functions, while their other important task was to keep at bay or drive away demons and devils who brought storms and hail by curses, blessing and sacrament.<sup>452</sup> The repertoire of benedictions, the objects, gestures and textual corpus were inherited partly from pre-Christian pagan magic and existed in constant interaction with popular practice throughout the entire Middle Ages. Historical data also indicate the intertwining of the practice of priests and magicians and connections between these two on many levels. It is no accident that the texts of benedictions often speak against the 'pagan' storm demons of popular religion, indeed hope to render harmless the 'evil magicians' (*incantatores malorum*) who call demons to their aid.<sup>453</sup> It is also no accident that throughout the centuries of the Middle Ages and early modern period the church disparaged the 'pagan' and 'magical' practice of the priesthood and the 'storm conjurer' methods of certain priests deemed irreconcilable with the Christian religion.<sup>454</sup> Thus the impact that the Christian benedictions of village priests had on the 'pagan' practice of village magicians was quite natural. We could quote German or Austrian examples, as well, to show how throughout the centuries of witchcraft persecution the repertoire of lay magicians also included those texts of benedictions against storm demons which originally came from the magical practice of the ancient Orient<sup>455</sup>. Indeed, we could go on listing examples which prove the intertwining of the practices of priests and magicians. For instance, a passage of the 'Malleus maleficarum' from the end of the 15th century states that a peasant questioned about weather magic mentions a benediction text to Sprenger<sup>456</sup> from his own practice.

Let us illustrate the influence of church benedictions on the practice of magicians by a Galician example from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ukrainian folklore collection. This 'cloud-driving' magician 'copies' precisely the gestures of priestly benediction.

Being on a visit to Sessori I saw a man who could disperse the clouds, he would not let hail or any kind of storm beat the fields outside Sessori or the village itself. He was a man of medium height, with a gloomy face, and he knew so much about clouds that bring hail or stormy rainfall that whenever one of these terrible clouds appeared over

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<sup>452</sup> For the most complete summary of the mediaeval church see Franz 1910, I. 38–70, 105–111, II. 1–123. On weather related benedictions see, besides Franz's previously quoted work, Blöcker, 119.; in his work summarizing data on Germanic weather magicians Lecouteux publishes the benediction texts they used from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards: Lecouteux 1998, 151–169. For a more detailed analysis of church benedictions against storm demons, and on the practices of profane rain magic for averting storm demons see: Idővarázsló-cikk, Charms-cikk.

<sup>453</sup> As, for instance, a hail averting text recorded in Lausanne in 1500 or other benediction texts also mention magicians or at least the murmuring of charms ("murmuratio incantatorum"): Franz II. 74

<sup>454</sup> See Franz at the loci quoted or see for instance, on the practice of the Spanish priests of Val D'Aran of binding clouds Brunet ..., 473–474, 493–497, 697.

<sup>455</sup> Behringer 1988, 203. old. 20. On the use of this benediction text by Hungarian village healers and sages in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Pócs, 2013, **lapok**. Another text on driving away clouds, for instance in a witchcraft trial in Ober-Voitsberg, Styria, from 1647 see Byloff: *Das Verbrechen*, 398. **Bill spanyol cikkében is!**

<sup>456</sup> Krämer – Sprenger book II, part I, chapter 13. On the question of the relationships discussed here see also Brown, 1970, 17–45; Dienst 1986, 86; Blöcker 121; Andrian 1984, 38–39, 105–111; Franz, II. 69; Di Nola, 364; Pócs 2013, **...**

he forests of Kamaralsk, he walked out to meet the clouds, crossed them, and spoke a spell onto them, so that the clouds instantly parted two ways, one part drifted off beyond their fields, the other part in yet another direction, and in that village the people did not suffer any harm either from hail or from cloudburst. In return for this he drew a few *hornec* of grain each year.<sup>457</sup>

In the Middle Ages, clerical and popular rites of weather magic lived in parallel and mutually beneficial interaction with each other. The new concepts of the early modern period stamped rural magicians with the demonological stigma and turned the two areas against each other. Due to the archaic opposition whereby what is our own is good and what is other is bad, each party became an enemy from the viewpoint of the other. The priest became their own good magician and the village magician became the bad and hostile magician who carries on with the ‘pagan’ tradition. It is no accident that in the eyes of the village people, who viewed the scene ‘from below,’ the inverse of this fiction also came into existence: According to Greek, Romanian and Bulgarian belief legends of today, the priest performs a counter-magic in opposition to the beneficial operation of the weather magicians and he is the one to bring hail to the village.<sup>458</sup> As we shall see below, the narrative tradition of certain types of magicians figures Catholic priests in the cloud battles of weather magicians, identifying them with demons that bring bad weather.

A part of the lay rituals for bringing rain, ending draught or keeping hailstorms at bay were also tied in with storm demons just like magical practice. While magicians were able to fight against the demons directly, ‘in spirit’, in the cloud other-world, lay everyday practice included methods of analogous magic using water in different ways<sup>459</sup>, the use of sacramentalia, offerings and prayers addressed to storm demons. It is particularly from Orthodox Eastern Europe that we can bring examples of offerings of food during times of draught or hailstorm, as well as of rites where prayer-like entreaties were addressed to the dead who had died unburied, as has been repeatedly reported by Zečević and by Tolstoj and Tolstaia. In the Serbian village of Radalo, for instance, when a storm cloud approached, people called upon suicides and those who had drowned in water for help. The Serbian demons *pogibaltsi* who bring rain were addressed as former members of the community. In the Serbian village of Iarmenovtsi, they prayed to the spirit of a person who had either been hanged or drowned in water (in other words someone who had not been buried or not in the regular fashion), saying, ‘... send these white bulls and cows [meaning the clouds] somewhere else...’<sup>460</sup> In the village of Vietreni, in turn, a feast was dedicated at times like this to all the people of the village who ‘had died a bad death’, and so on.<sup>461</sup> Amongst anti-demon efforts of the peasantry we must mention sounding the sanctified church bells or using small bells, which were also used in many places by village weather magicians. For instance, hired ‘field watchmen’ of Eastern Hungarian population groups (of Moldavia or the Csángó region) would hammer on the church bells or their own special sanctified bells whenever a storm approached.<sup>462</sup> In a broader Central and Southeast European region figures of storm demons

<sup>457</sup> Hnatjuk, 1904, point 374.

<sup>458</sup> Filakovać 1905, 148; Kretzenbacher 1968, 122; Bošković-Stulli 1953, 338; Đorđević 1953, 25–26; Andrian 1984, 33. Hegyi 1937, 472–474; Pócs 2005, **lap?**;

<sup>459</sup> For instance spilling or stirring water, throwing objects, ‘rain stones’ or people into the water or watering them in order to bring on rain. for more detail on this method see Andrian, Pócs

<sup>460</sup> Tolstoj–Tolstaya 1981, 103.

<sup>461</sup> For a multitude of similar data see Tolstoj–Tolstaya 1981; Tolstaya 2001; Zečević 1916.

<sup>462</sup> Franz, II. 69; Blöcker, 123–124; Andrian, 32; Varga 1985, 67–86; Sacher, **Das Hexenwesen**, 72, 73. old.; Andrian, 30–31. It has been general practice until recently among Catholic Hungarians to keep hail clouds at bay by ringing (consecrated) bells. At many places this was actually encouraged by priests, at others it was done despite the disapproval of the priesthood. At Jenőfalva (Harghita County, Romania), e.g. it was the duty of the paid field guard to pray and toll the bells whenever a hail cloud was approaching. (My own collection from

that had turned into, or fused with, *witches* have also been known. Storm witches – similarly to the previously mentioned demons – may either be the good demons of their own community or evil creatures who are hostile and bring hailstorms or take away the rain. Central and Eastern Europe’ storm witches do battle in whirlwinds, bring hailstorm to their village, snatch people into whirlwinds or storms or drive storm clouds over the fields or vineyards of their enemies. Serbian witches turn into eagles to drive storm clouds, Slovenian, Serbian and Croatian troupes of witches, according to the relevant beliefs, fight inside clouds against the troupes of the neighboring village or a black bird and beat the fields and vineyards of their ‘enemies’ with hailstorms. This is how they appear in the documents of 18<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian witchcraft trials<sup>463</sup> or, similarly, in contemporary Balkans, Hungarian or Ukrainian beliefs.<sup>464</sup>

As we shall present in detail below, these cloud-driving demons or their witch variants are the beings that weather magicians communicate with. Dead bodies play no part in their ritual practice, but they played an even greater role in lay or priestly weather magic. This role partly manifests in the general Eastern and Southeast European beliefs about *the thirsty dead*. We have Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Serbian, Hungarian and, to go further, Italian examples to show that the dead who had been buried are thirsty. This happens in the period after burial, usually lasting forty days and lasts as long as the soul lingers around the place where it lived or was buried, until it departs finally. In parallel to this, the body does not die a conclusive death either, but stays in a transitional state until it dries out, turns to dust and becomes one with the earth. (This way fertilizing the soil, according to certain beliefs.) Thus these thirsty dead behave as living dead bodies, but for sustaining their vegetating existence they need to get life-giving fluids. Unless we give them water, they absorb the life-giving fluids of the earth instead of fertilizing the soil by losing their own fluids and drying out. Particularly dangerous are those thirsty dead whose body does not dry out because the soil won’t accept them. There are innumerable beliefs in Eastern Europe about the above mentioned dead who had died or were buried in dissatisfactory ways, and fail to turn into dust. For instance, the Russian *zalozhnyie* cause draughts or hailstorms. The consecrated soil of the cemetery will not absorb them, even the pieces of their coffin protrude from the ground, despite repeated re-burials.<sup>465</sup> Notions of dangerous dead bodies which cause draught are also associated with vampire beliefs of East and Southeast Europe. Just like the previously mentioned thirsty dead, vampires fail to dry out and are thirsty in the physical sense. Just like the former, they, too, can also steal life-giving water from human communities.<sup>466</sup> There seems to be a connection between cloud-driving souls who secure water for their community or snatch water from them and the dead bodies which fertilize or dry out the soil: the body and the soul are both in a dangerous transitory state, they have not died fully, nor have they gained their final otherworldly status.

In the region that we know of several lay and clerical rites have been used in order to prevent draught or hailstorm caused by living dead bodies. Graves were watered in the cemeteries, some object from the cemetery or the cross of the dead person were immersed in

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1996)

<sup>463</sup> For Hungarian witchcraft trials see, for instance, Bessenyei, II. 95; Schram, II. 189, 648; Komáromy 1910, 329, 587, 680; Schram 1970, I. 467, 542, 543, 545, etc.

<sup>464</sup> Tolstoy – Tolstaya 1981; Tkalčić, 27; Đorđević 1953, 25–27; Krauss, *Slavische Volksforschungen*, 81–82; Zečević, 149; Bošković-Stulli 1960, 275–298; Burkhart, *melyik?* 83-84; Collected by József Gagyai at Márafalva (Harghita County, Romania, 1998)

Bošković-Stulli, “Witchcraft trials in Croatia”, 505; Kelemina, 247; Pajek 1884, II. 26; Andrian, 1–39.

For somewhat more detail on storm witches see Pócs *idővar. új angol cikk*

<sup>465</sup> For data on the *zalozhnyie* see: Warner 2002, 47–48. On the thirsty dead and carcasses which make the soil fertile see Tolstoy-Tolstaya and Pócs 2012, *Holttest*-cikk adatanyagát.

<sup>466</sup> There is no room here to present the vast literature on Central European vampire beliefs, for a summary see: Pócs *EWC*

water, and so on. These rites were often conducted with the participation of the priest.<sup>467</sup> The re-burial of the unburied dead was considered equally effective; dead people unabsorbed by the soil (vampires) were rendered harmless by a second burial after exhumation – this rite puts an end to the condition of the body lacking status. At the same time, it brings rain to the village community which suffers from draught.<sup>468</sup>

#### Field guards, hail guards<sup>469</sup>

A certain part of the data about weather magicians from the ancient and early modern period in Europe talk about guards or rangers guarding grain fields, orchards and vineyards, whose duty included keeping the hail clouds at bay. The exact nature of their activity is hard to define and is only rarely discernible, so it is hard to classify them into categories. What appears to be their most noticeable characteristic is that their community hires them for money to keep the hailstorms away and they meet this expectation by using various techniques (either rites which emulate church benedictions or methods of sympathetic magic or by prayer). On the other hand, Eastern European data of the modern period seem to show that direct supernatural communication with storm demons was also not foreign to them. However, the type of communication taking place in a trance or dream and termed ‘shamanistic’ by researchers was only one of their magicians’ toolkit, of their religious and magical methods. Our sporadic historical data testify that rangers of this kind paid by the community were known as far back as Roman data. In Cleonae, Seneca describes that they hired a ‘hail officer’ on public money who would keep watch and indicate an approaching storm and perform an offering of a lamb or chicken to the demons of the storm.<sup>470</sup> Hungarian witchcraft trials also speak of magicians hired as hail guards. For instance in a trial prosecuting cowherd Kristóf Szauer and his wife at Szalónak in 1653<sup>471</sup>, another of the accused claimed that Szauer could make hail by ‘getting a virgin to blow his horn’. He himself, Lorencz, on the other hand, would have been willing to protect the village from the hail and in exchange wanted some wine and a measure of grain and one *garas* [money] from each citizen. According to another witness he had threatened the village that unless they hire him as a field guard, their fields will be beaten by hail and this indeed came to pass. Another field guard, a German man from Brassó, is known from a summary report by Andor Komáromy from 1615. A young girl boasted to her father saying she could produce a hailstorm if she wanted to. The father requested her to raise a hailstorm which would only destroy his own vineyard. The little girl did this and admitted to her father that she had learnt this from her mother.<sup>472</sup>

The faded memory of 16-17<sup>th</sup> century field guard is retained in several types of legends in the 20<sup>th</sup> century about *táltos* and *garabonciás*, but we also have data about Hungarian field guards who were actually active in the recent past among the Easternmost groups of Hungarians, from (Ciuc, Romania) and Moldavia (Moldova, Romania). The ‘weather guards’ who were called *hail guards* or *hail carriers* in Moldva volunteered to guard the fields in return for payment and their communities believed they could control the hail clouds.

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<sup>467</sup> See the works listed under note No. 46.

<sup>468</sup> There is no room here to present all of the many rites for bringing rain which are related to the thirsty dead and the body of the ‘bad dead’. For more on these rites see my previously mentioned article, as well as Pócs 2003a, and Tolstaya 2001. Some further important sources are Haland 2001, Kovács E. 1988, 156; Ryan 1999, 74; Zelenin 1916....; Faeta 2007, 219-221 ([magyar lapszám](#)) On this dangerous liminal state of the body see also Nancy Caciola’s paper with Western European mediaeval data. (Caciola....)

<sup>469</sup> A fejezetemben a varázslók vas megyei, illetve moldvai nevei.

<sup>470</sup> Flint, 1991, 109. old.

<sup>471</sup> Schlaining, Ausztria, Schram II. 722–724.

<sup>472</sup> Komáromy 1910, 88.; a “Chronicon Fuchsio Lupino-Oltardinum” record for the years 1615.

They prayed, used charms and spells, wielded their sticks or axes to cut, wave and prick in the direction of the hail storms or threatened them by the noise of their whips. According to certain accounts they could also make ice out of lake water and then crushed this ice and made it rain down upon the neighboring village or any local opponent who happened not to have paid properly for their services. This method of 'hail-making' was also attributed to Romanian *şolomonar* or other Romanian weather magicians (e.g. those termed 'hail maker') in this region.<sup>473</sup> The following is an extract from a text from Moldavia which was related about the famous weather magician of Diószén, András Kertész.

He stood by the crossroads and stuck his post into the ground and then I am sure I don't know what he did with it but by the afternoon the hailstorm gave us such a beating there was nothing left. But it only came down where he wanted it. If he wanted, it even rained frogs.<sup>474</sup>

A few further magician techniques constitute narrative stereotypes which form part of the corpus of legends surrounding all types of weather magicians of the region (Hungarian and Croatian *garabonciás*, Hungarian *táltos*, Romanian *solomonár*). They use books of magic, and rise up to the clouds with the help of the book or on the back of a bridled dragon. There are, however, some data from Moldavia which confirm our suspicion – perhaps apart from their other magical and religious methods the field guards who wielded their sticks in the direction of the clouds may also have been in some sort of a spiritual contact with the cloud demons, communicating with them in a trance.

A woman told us her memory of weather magician György Kánya from Pusztina whom she had seen as still a little girl. Accordingly,

whenever the hailstorm came, he prayed and kept throwing the sign of the cross at the clouds (the way priests do), then for a while he would 'lose his mind' (probably meaning that he fell into a trance), and 'shrieked' at the clouds. When asked what he was doing, he replied 'I am fighting the clouds'. 'We were scared when he did his shrieking. Don't be scared, our mother said, for he is working, he is driving the clouds away'.

This was the account given to the collector by the woman.<sup>475</sup> András Kertész, famous weather magician of Diószén, used several methods.

Many people saw him on the hill, when the hailstorm came, he stood on top of the hill, waved his hands and prayed... And then, if the hailstorm came after all, he said that in the other village there was another man, just like him, and this time that man beat him, and was stronger...<sup>476</sup>

Narratives surrounding this man also say that he drew the picture of a cart in the dust and used that to rise into the clouds, where again he fought with the hostile magician who also rose on a cart. According to other narratives he fought on the back of a dragon (with the opposing priest!).<sup>477</sup> An eye witness, whom we quote here, also reports that András Kertész

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<sup>473</sup> Román solomonár, jégcsináló bibl.

<sup>474</sup> Diószén, Bákó County, Romania, Seres 1994, 322.

<sup>475</sup> Pusztina, Bákó County, Romania; Halász 2005, 385.

<sup>476</sup> Klézse, Moldva (Romania), Bosnyák 1980, 70.

<sup>477</sup> Bosnyák 1980, 70–71.

fell into a trance in order to do his duty as a weather magician, and at the same time used his book of magic, and his stick.

...it was still very early when we left to visit András Kertész for lunch. His wife was a relative of mine. Then András Kertész put the book under his arm and went out of the house. In the bottom of his garden he had a walnut tree and under that he dug a hole. He jumped over that hole nine times over, then read from his book, after which he looked up at the tree and threw up his stick. Now he took the book and just looked into it, then he came into the house and there he started to writhe and his mouth went crooked and his eyes looked up and to the side, while his mind was gone, and then he started to talk to us just fine, like any man.<sup>478</sup>

According to another narrative, Kertész uses magic to bring the opposing priest (as an evil magician who brings hailstorms to them) down to the ground by spinning a stick he holds in front of the storm clouds.

...and he kept on just whirling that stick and whirling it until the priest fell bottom first onto that great big stick.' He is the hail driver.... he protects our fields from the hail. He did not do healing. When these foolish times came to him... his mind wasn't in the right place.<sup>479</sup> [i.e. he lost consciousness]

According to our data, besides Romanians Serbs, Croatians and Poles also had active weather magicians similar to Hungarian field guards right into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Serbian cloud-drivers of Dragachevo also used sticks to wave around at times of hailstorm, directing the clouds.<sup>480</sup> Polish magicians used prayers, sacred bells and charms similar to the text of priestly benedictions and were also able to hold dialogue with cloud demons: they replied to questions asked by a voice 'coming from above', they told the demons where to drive the hail cloud.<sup>481</sup> Croatian data also shed light on an extra feature which has not been detected in this context elsewhere – Croatian field guards may have fairy patrons.

These mythical beings are patron saints who often bring fertility and rain to a community (and its magician). For instance, the Croatian field guards of the region of the river Dráva, whose job is to protect the harvest from hail, keep in contact with the *vila*. At times of harvest the *vila* look at the kind of wheat harvest they are having, and if the field guard had done a poor job, they punish him.<sup>482</sup> This motif brings this Croatian magician in close relation with the *zduhač* magician to be discussed below, and strengthens our supposition which was also substantiated by data from Moldavia, whereby at least some of the paid field guards were also depositories of direct communication with storm spirits and were able to enter spiritual contact with the storm demons in some way, in a trance or dream. This, however, is evidently not the essence of their activity, only a contingent part of it.

'Windy' and 'cloudy' magicians – people who turn into storm demons

One widely known group of Central and Southeast European weather magicians (known to Western, Eastern and Southern Slav nations, other nations of the Balkans and to Hungarians)

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<sup>478</sup> Diószén, Bákó County, Románia; collected by András Seres from a man of 78 in 1981 (Seres 1994, 323.)

<sup>479</sup> Diószén, Bákó County, Romania; Seres 1994, 324.

<sup>480</sup> See e.g. the data in Tolstoy–Tolstaya (1981).

<sup>481</sup> By courtesy of Urszula Lehr's verbal information based on field work she did in villages of the Northern Carpathians around the turn of the millennium.

<sup>482</sup> Frankovics 1972-1973, 247–248. For more on magicians who keep in contact with fairies see Chapter 6 of the present book.

is characterized by a unique form of communication and a related set of unique ‘other world’ notions, namely the previously mentioned ‘watery’ cloud other world of the storm demons. This is a place where demons and related weather magicians move around either by flying or by swimming or on a boat or raft. Owing to their spiritual contact with storm demons, these magicians can direct storm clouds even in their human shape, from the ground, but the majority of related narratives describes their mediating activity as a spirit battle with opposing storm demons. They are often called into battle by the ‘good’ storm demons who are their patrons and may also act as helpers and guides in battle. Such magicians include one type of the *stuha/zduhač* magician described in Ginzburg’s book of 1989, certain types of the *zmej/zmaj/zmija/zmajevit čovek* (‘snake’, ‘dragon’, ‘dragon man’), of *chmurnik, planetnyk, planetarj, obločnik, obločar, oblakoprogonnik*, meaning ‘cloudy’ and of *vetrovnjak* (windy) magicians, certain types of the Hungarian *táltos*, but certain traits of this storm magician are also carried by belief figures such as the Croatian and Hungarian *garabonciás* or the Romanian *šolomonar*.<sup>483</sup> Communication with a watery cloud otherworld is a leitmotif characteristic of each type, while some other features are only found in areas of varying sizes for a particular type of magician marked by a special local name.

Our relevant data partly come from historical sources (church regulations, prohibitions, witch and *táltos* trials), these allusions only partly shed light on details of the genuine activity of magicians. The majority of our 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century material are legends which come from folklore collection and do not reflect the living reality of magicians. We can only very occasionally come up against accounts of direct field observations or subjective experiential accounts of magicians, mostly with regard to Croatian, Serbian and Bulgarian magicians. The idea of ‘weather making’ has been known ever since the Greeks, what is more, the first known European data about magicians who keep in supernatural contact with storm demons also probably come from the Greeks. These were the *nephodióktai* (‘cloud-drivers’), that Christian authors of the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century also wrote about (further mentions are found in relevant laws and regulations), asking whether it was true that they could cause lightning or rain with the help of their demons.<sup>484</sup> The mediaeval clerical prohibitions and sanctions which probably referred to magicians of this kind point to a partially devilish anti-Christian practice. Even the synod of Braga, held as early as 563, declares that magicians practice their trade with the help of storm demons and the devil and that believing in them is a frailty and merits punishment. On the other hand, they talk about migrant *tempestarius* (‘storm makers’, ‘stormers’) in other words *immissor tempestatis* (‘storm sender’), and *tempestatum ductor* (storm-driver) who blackmail the gullible village people for money them with threats of hailstorm.

Visigoth laws against *tempestarii* have been known about since the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and we also know of clerical prohibitions, sanctions and penitence until the 9<sup>th</sup> century against storm makers, cloud-driving weather magicians and persons who believe that storm clouds can be driven by human force or the help of the devil.<sup>485</sup> Passage 159 of Burchard von Worms’ *Derec* from 1024 clearly refers to the spirit battles of storm magicians. In this the bishop condemns

<sup>483</sup> For a summary on weather magicians see Bošković-Stulli 1960, 284–286; Bošković-Stulli, 1994, **angol lapszám!**; Chloupek 1953, 248; Zečević 1981, 149; Đorđević, 1953, 237–250; Burkhart 1989, 83–84; Plotnikova 1998; Tolstói-Tolstaia 1981.

<sup>484</sup> Franz 1909, II. 28; Soldan–Hepe 1911, I. 85.

<sup>485</sup> Franz II. 27–37; **(nem I?)** Cohn, 152–154. **(magyar lapszám!)** Hansen, *Quellen*; Lea 1939, ...; Soldan – Hepe, II. 176–177. Harmening, 1979, 247–250; Byloff, *Das Verbrechen*, 325; Blöcker 117–131; on 7<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium see Ryan 1999, 409; Caro Baroja 1961, 1-1. fejezet; Flint 1991, 109. From the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards German laws were issued about the *tempestarii* and Anglo-Saxon books of penitence are known from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Besides church regulations Lecouteux (1998) also mentions some early German and Finnish data. At its Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople the Byzantine church banned cloud-driving among other types of magic. (Ryan 408). In the late Middle Ages it appeared less frequently in laws but people believed in it extensively. Cohn 174–175 **(magyar lapszám!)**.

women who believe that, together with other wicked persons, they can hide behind closed doors and rise up into the air at night, fight against others and get wounds.<sup>486</sup>

It is commonly known that this text echoes Regino von Prüm's records from 906<sup>487</sup>, but the most detailed mediaeval report of weather magic, Agobard bishop of Lyon's ' *Liber contra insulsam vulgi opinionem de grandine et tonitruis* ' which is quoted by many authors, comes from even earlier, from 840.<sup>488</sup> The author rules it out as impossible that demons and weather magicians could raise storms out of their own power, nevertheless, by way of a lesson, he recites the story of the cloud boat that many people in his home country believe in. This cloud vehicle is supposed to bring magicians or witches from the mysterious Magonia in order to steal the harvest and take it to their own country. Some of the local *tempestarii* collude with the cloud sailors for a profit. As it happens, Agobard disapproves of the peasants paying these storm magicians grain for guarding their fields while they are apparently loath to pay the tenth they are due to the clerical authorities. The available data about the *tempestarii* only allow us to vaguely discern the communicational techniques and spirit battles of the storm magicians who were active in reality. From the modern period, however, we have a very rich body of material. Several types of storm magicians who communicate 'in spirit' are revealed from 19th-21<sup>st</sup> century ethnographic collections or, in rare cases, from the data of direct field observation. As I have already mentioned, Ginzburg has already briefly presented some of these magicians as belonging to the close context of the *benandante*. What follows is a more complete presentation enriched with further detail, introducing several types that were unknown before and are thus not included by Ginzburg.

The supernatural communication of these magicians is characterised by the traits we mentioned in the context of communication with the dead and with fairies – the magicians themselves are of a dual, human and demon nature, while the boundaries between this world and the next are diffuse. In narratives the magicians who keep in contact with the other world of the storm demons often appear as half human, half demon beings. (This is a trait shared by magicians of the South Slavic, Hungarian and Slavic areas. Owing to scarcity of relevant data I cannot really describe Romanian magicians from this point of view.) Besides their human character they have a demonic self, as well, which is also permanently present and which identifies itself, during the communication, with the storm demons of the cloud other world.

In our examination of storm demons we proceed according to their names, which also means their distribution in space. The local terminology of magicians often highlights their most important characteristic and thus can serve as the foundation of a scholarly classification which also takes into account *emic* categories. Our sub-chapters largely follow these categories but besides the traits (sometimes) indicated in the names, we must also consider other important characteristics when drawing up the categories, such as the type of other world and spirit world that the magicians communicate with, the origin of their supernatural characteristics according to the folk belief and the functions they fulfil for the community.

### The *stuha/zduhač* as storm magician

This magician is represented by data from Western Serbian and Southern Croatian areas under names such as *stuha*, *stuva*, *zduha*, *zduva*, *zduhat*, *zduhač*, *zduhać*, *stu(h)ac* (we shall be using the most common variants, Serbian *stuha* and Croatian *zduhač*). Related beliefs describe the *stuha* as expressly 'windy' and 'stormy' in nature – which is what enables them to communicate with storm demons. They fight spirit battles for good weather, for rain or to avert hail clouds. The storm demons themselves also play a role as spirits which guard, call

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<sup>486</sup> Wassersleben 1958, 661.

<sup>487</sup> Regino von Prüm [u.otf??](#)

<sup>488</sup> Platelle 1991, 85–93; Blöcker, 123–125; Franz, II. 29; Ott-Koptschalijski 1997, 88–110.

and help magicians in their battles. In Croatia, people also speak of a different type of magician by the same name, who does battle with the magicians of the neighbouring area for a good harvest. We shall present this type in more detail later on as a ‘fertility magician’. (The supernatural qualities of this magician are to do with being born in a sac.) A separate category is constituted by *dragon men* who show a similar stormy nature as the *stuha* but also carry werewolf traits and fight in animal form. The distinction between storm magicians and fertility magicians is relative, the two categories are not sharply separated – representatives of the two types often occur in the same area under identical names.

Little is known about the common, everyday human character of the *stuha*, or their genuine activity as magicians. What is certain is that in the not very distant past they played the role of the benevolent magician of many village communities. Indeed, according to certain data from Serbia villages that had their own *stuha* were considered lucky. Much revered or popular personalities from the past were also often remembered as *stuha* by the collective memory. According to folklore collections carried out around the middle of the last century, these were remembered as fair and good people who brought good luck and prosperity to their village. Besides their role as weather magicians, certain of the *stuha* also fulfilled the other tasks of magical specialists, many of them acting as fortune-tellers and healers in one person. As I already mentioned, there were also *stuha* acting as ‘fertility magicians’. Their main function, however, as far as we can point out today, was certainly to secure good weather for their community.<sup>489</sup>

Various authors give many different descriptions of the dual, half human, half demonic character nature of *stuha*. Besides their having a human side, Đorđević also emphasises that the *stuha* guard their environment in the role of a guardian spirit against all manner of visible and invisible harm.<sup>490</sup> At the same time, in his interpretation of the human-demon duality the *stuha* also has a guardian angel. He is ‘not alone’, there is a vast soul living inside him and this is what gives him his ‘*zduhač* power’.<sup>491</sup> This way their guardian angel stands by them as a possessor and a helping spirit at the same time; but the *stuha* himself can also be a guarding spirit owing to his half-demonic nature. Going further, in their quality as human persons, such magicians are often slow, mellow and melancholic in character and sleep quite a lot even during the day. Zečević claims that *stuha* are the earthly alter egos of storm demons<sup>492</sup>, while Tolstoi and Tolstaia classify the *stuha*, using the term they often apply to other dual beings (e.g. vampires or witches), as a two-souled creature.<sup>493</sup> Various guarding spirits of places are also known by the same name. In written sources these sometimes appear as spirits independent of the *stuha* magicians and at other times as the spirit form or demon self of the magician. Some scholars simply describe the figure marked by the name *stuha* or its name variants as purely a spirit or a guarding spirit. We shall later return to this identity of names and the question of the origin of the terms *stuha*, *zduhač* etc. Even until then, however, we can point out that in his role as a weather magician, the *stuha* appears to us as a person whose demonic character allows him to become identical with storm demons and turn into a

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<sup>489</sup> For the richest source of material on the *stuha* see Đorđević’s summary work from 1953: Đorđević 1953, 237–250; see also (for these as well as other storm magicians) Moszynski, ..... Bošković-Stulli 1960, 284–286; Zečević 1981, 149–151; Tolstoi–Tolstaia 1981; Burkhart 1989, 83–84; Bošković-Stulli 1994, **angol lapszám!**); Plotnikova 1998. Wherever data sources are not marked, I am relying these summary volumes, particularly those by Moszynski and Đorđević, as well as Tolstoi and Tolstaia’s article. I also use some publications which describe the beliefs of only one village or region (Grgjic-Belkovic; .... Starović 1893, 8-10; Chloupek ....; ....).

<sup>490</sup> Đorđević 244.

<sup>491</sup> Đorđević 241–249.

<sup>492</sup> Zecevic 1983, 219.

<sup>493</sup> Tolstoi–Tolstaja

spirit temporarily.<sup>494</sup> This is interpreted in two different ways by narratives regarding the activity of the *stuha* magician.

According to one variant, when a storm is approaching, the *stuha* retreats to a hidden place and falls into a deep sleep or a trance (they are able to fall into a trance at will, without any ritual preparation). Once this is done, his soul or 'shadow' (which is said to be 'light', 'translucent' or, according to other data, similar to wind, vapour or fog) leaves his body and rises to the clouds where, becoming like the wind itself, it flies along with the wind. Several data items claim that the magician must not be woken while this is happening. According to Serbian data collected by Zečević, while the magician is in a deep sleep, his friends slash about with some sort of sharp instrument over his body, in order to protect him from evil spirits (which might come to possess the 'hollow' body, abandoned by its soul). After the battle in the air, the soul returns to the body. Somewhat contradictory to this, Zečević also claims that *stuha* from Crna Gora, while engaged in the battle in the air, cry out in their sleep from time to time, make 'warlike gestures'<sup>495</sup> and, according to several data, wake up ravaged and exhausted by the battle. This contradiction is quite characteristic: as regards 'soul journeys' to the other world in a dream or trance, abduction in body or soul and generally the various relations of body and soul, we often witness the peaceful co-existence of seemingly contradictory views. Even within one and the same community we cannot talk about a unified and crystallised belief system, instead we find fragmented belief elements or lay attempts at explanations regarding questions of the body, the soul and the other world. These persisted alongside and in spite of Christian dogma in the Central and Eastern European region, barely influenced by the dogmas that existed in parallel to them.

According to the other type of interpretation, magicians make their way to the cloud other world with the wind, the fog as it settles or the water vapour. As storms approach, a cloud descends or in the fog they physically disappear from the sight of eye-witnesses – snatched, they say, by the storm cloud. The same image also appears as a metaphor for the final death of the *stuha*. Certain of the data also betray the faint trace of a notion of a first, initiating 'journey' to the cloud other world. This, too, is related by Serbian narratives collected in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as being 'snatched' inside a cloud or fog, by a rain cloud or a stormy wind.

Most of the data show that storm battles take place in spring and autumn, where storm demons are accompanied by the *stuha* souls who had become so like them. Some data also describe individual battles, but the majority of the accounts talk about group scenes where the troops of several *stuha* united with storm demons fight the opposing *stuha*. Members of the troop of a particular area, it is said, also know each other as human person and are tied together by some sort of a spiritual tie unfathomable to other people.

The enemy consists of the troops of magicians or demons of other lands, peoples or countries. For instance, the mountain *zduha* fight the *zduha* of the planes; Serbian *zduha* against Albanian *zduha* and so on. What is at stake here is to drive approaching hail clouds over to the land of the opponent or to take revenge on a personal enemy from within the community by directing hail clouds to beat their grain or their vines. All of this is not sharply distinguished from notions which describe these storm battles taking place without involving magicians, between the 'good' and the 'evil' troops of storm demons, also describable as their own troops and those of the strangers. (In Greek data that is the only way in which spirit battles take place.) At any rate, the participation of the magician means a more stressed representation of the interests of earthly communities: the *stuha*'s most important duty was to

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<sup>494</sup> Most recently Plotnikova published a brief paper on the *stuha* and its 'wind magician' relatives. She also describes figures with names such as *stuha* etc. as human beings who easily turn into spirit creatures and also as guarding spirits who live in storm clouds.

<sup>495</sup> Zečević 152.

protect the grain fields and fruit harvest of their own village from ‘foreign’ magicians and cloud demons. According to Serbian and Bosnian data, magicians about to go into battle did on occasion summon their guarding spirits; while other data show them praying at times like this to their guardian angels. Although most of the accounts are about men, several of our data testify that women and children could also be *stuha*.<sup>496</sup>

Opponents in these battles brandished trees ripped out with the roots, tree trunks, large clubs or branches of pine trees sharpened to a point. Other data show them using wooden clubs for torches, spindles, wood shavings, burnt branches, leaves or pieces of straw as weapons. A trait that all accounts share is that the storm battles are accompanied by a hurricane-like storm, the houses are shaking in the strong wind, the spot where the battle is fought is marked by huge devastation, fallen trees and collapsed houses. People watching from beneath also hear human voices from above – shouts, sharp whistling or painful wailing sounds.

### The *stuha/zduhač* born with a caul as fertility magician

Numerous Croatian and Serbian data show that animals such as sheepdogs, oxen, barrows, sheep, rams or horses can also be *stuha*. They fight along with the magicians as an animal army. They, too, can be born with a caul, just like magicians, and they can also fall into a deep sleep when the storm approaches and their spirit flies up high into a cloud battle. External onlookers claim that in their sleep they make battle noises – they moo, neigh or bleat. According to some data the *zduhač*-animals taking part in spirit battles are alter egos of the magician and at the same time his spirit helpers in battle. (In fact one or two items show that the *stuha* himself can also kill animal figures.) Their figure merges with that of the guarding spirits that also appear in animal shape and bear the same name and which protect the villages or herds from the assaults of various demons, even regardless of human *stuha*.<sup>497</sup>

Some of our data indicate that these animals which help in spirit battles belong to the sphere of *the stuha born with a caul*; indeed, in Crna Gora it is believed that guarding spirits capable of fighting in heavenly battles come precisely from animals born that way.<sup>498</sup> The group of *dragon men* born with a caul and/or as snakes (in a snake skin) confirm that turning into animals, having animal helpers and being born in a sac are conjoined traits of magicians which mutually presuppose each other – these are precisely the traits that lend them a werewolf character.

The most emphatic trait of the *stuha* born with a caul is that he fights cloud battles to save the harvest from opposing, hostile magician souls. Being born with a caul, however, is not their only distinctive trait – in fact local belief often describes storm magician *stuha* with the related traits of being able to fight in spirit battles and being born with a caul. For instance, according to a belief recorded in Kuče, when a *stuha* has matured into a man and his mother gives him his own caul which she had kept hidden away, he buries it in the grave of his relatives and only takes it with him during the time of storm battles.<sup>499</sup> This *stuha* figure also rules the winds and the storms, while at the same time carrying the traits of werewolf-magicians who fight in order to procure the grain – they, too, fight for the fertility of the grain fields.<sup>500</sup>

Accounts describing *stuha* who had been born with a caul say that whenever a storm approaches the *stuha* will fall into a deep sleep, similarly to the related weather magicians. His spirit rises high and either fights alone, as some reports show him or, more often, joins his

<sup>496</sup> Moszinski 613

<sup>497</sup> Moszinski 613, Djordjevic 239.

<sup>498</sup> Dj 239-240; Zecevic 151.

<sup>499</sup> Dj 239

<sup>500</sup> Djord. 246–247, Mosz. **lap**

partners at an agreed meeting point which is part of the dream and they fight together to procure the harvest. They sometimes ride on the back of animals but more commonly on household utensils such as wine barrels, hemp-breakers, brooms or occasionally on pieces of straw, to the scene of the fight where, according to some data, the line up in order of battle. The battle itself against the troops of opposing *stuha* souls uses the tools of grain-growing – they take thrashers, scythes, rakes, hay brooms and mortars along to fight with, as well as bushels, buckets and tubs to catch the grain they might snatch from the enemy. Occasionally, the previously mentioned animals also take part in the battle.

As regards this variant of the *stuha*, we can clearly see two different types of mythical contexts of the magician at work, which proves that the categories of our research system are indeed diffuse and only fit by and large. It was obviously not difficult for the belief system of any village community on the Balkans, richly populated with storm magicians as well as werewolf type magicians, to accommodate the two different types of mythical framework and use as the belief attribute of any specific magician.

### *Stoikheion* and 'talisman' – magicians and guarding spirits

Let us return here to questions of terminology relating to magicians referred to by the names of *stuha/zduhač*. These magicians, as I have mentioned, often have the same name as the guarding spirits who support them, act as their patrons or occasionally behave as their alter egos. Apart from previously mentioned cases of the *zduhač* born with a caul, as described above, these magicians are what we call wind-magicians. These latter owe the skill of being able to access the cloud other world in spirit or 'their soul' not to the trait of having been born with a caul or as snakes, but, I am convinced, to their peculiar half demonic 'windy' nature. The terminology plays a considerable part in deciphering the beliefs and explanations surrounding these abilities. Along with early Byzantine linguistic data, they cast an interesting light on the broader linguistic context of *stuha* guarding spirits and magicians.

The terminology of *stuha/zduhač* is usually traced back by researchers of the question through the modern Greek words *stahia/stihia* to ancient Greek *stoikheion*. It is believed that the word migrated either directly from (mediaeval) Greek or mediated through Albanian (Albanian *stih*) to some of the languages of the Balkans (terms for magicians such as *stuva*, *stuha* etc.).<sup>501</sup> In Albanian and Greek, *stihia*, *stih* etc. refer to spirits related to certain places (and spirits guarding treasure or, in Southern Albanian, the dragon guarding the treasure – magicians are called by a different name here). Romanian *stăhia*, *stăfia* and Aromun *stihio*, which also seem to derive from the same word, refer to ghosts which appear in certain places, are of ill intent and emerged from dead persons lacking status. In Albanian, it seems, the word and its meaning are also combined with the word *stuhi*, meaning storm.<sup>502</sup> In Southern Bulgaria, Eastern Serbia and Southern Croatia, besides the previously mentioned dragons guarding treasure, these words can also refer to all kinds of other guarding spirits on land or in water – spirits attached to houses or farms and appearing in the image of snakes or hedgehogs, as well as to the guarding spirits of public buildings, bridges or entire villages of herds, which appear in the shape of various animals (dog, wild boar, ox, sheep, snakes or dragons).<sup>503</sup> The previously mentioned *zduhač*-animals (which fight alongside human *zduhač* in the battles of storm demons) are also the guarding spirits of herds who fight against the similar spirits of the opposing side in defense of their herd. In this context we refer back to the previously mentioned characteristic whereby boundaries between human *stuha* and their

<sup>501</sup> Nevekkel fogl. Abbot 1903, 249; Dukova 1970, 235; Plotnikova 1998; Elsie 2001, 241.

<sup>502</sup> Elsie 2001, 241–242; Muslea–Birlea (stafia), Pamfile (stafia)

<sup>503</sup> Greenfield 231–236; Nicoloff 1983, 60; Arnaudov ; Georgieva 107; Abbot 1903, 249–257; Plotnikova Blum–Blum; Lawson 255–287.

guarding or calling spirits are not sharp and researchers sometimes talk about one single category of guarding spirits which can appear in animal or human shape alike.<sup>504</sup> The human form is nothing other than the *stuha/zduhač* magician itself. All of this confirms what we stated previously in the context of storm magicians about categories such as body and soul, human and demon being relative and diffuse.

The category of guarding spirits includes what is known throughout Central and Eastern Europe as a ‘house snake’. It is a commonly held belief that there is a snake living in every house, which must not be killed. In this part of the Balkans we encounter not only the belief legend toposes common all over Europe (‘child feeding snake with milk’ or ‘the house snake must not be killed as that would mean the death of a family member’)<sup>505</sup>, but also actual living faith in the spirit creature which protects the family and embodies a benevolent ancestor.

Thus, derivatives of the word *stoikheion* carry the meaning of ‘spirit of the elements’ that have been known since Plato as terms referring to spirits living in the air, on earth or in water. As regards the fourth element, fire is represented by the lightning weapons of storm demons. At the same time, in the entire territory where this word appears people speak about battles that the *stoikheion* fight against each other in storm clouds or on earth by guardians of two neighboring areas, herds, villages etc., independent of the soul battles of magicians. These battles, aimed to avert assaults, are fought for good weather or the well-being of the community.<sup>506</sup>

There are two more important aspects we need to emphasize regarding this highly varied world of guarding spirits. One is that it is an existing practice in the area to call guarding spirits similar in character by words which mean ‘shadow’ (Bulgarian *sianka*, Greek *iskios*, *isklos*<sup>507</sup> etc.). This is known to be a term referring to a soul which is temporarily or finally leaving the body.

According to Djordjevic’s data, *stuha* magicians have a ‘translucent shadow’, and this is why they are able to rise to the scene of the storm battles<sup>508</sup> in their shadow, i.e. in their soul, or why they can identify with storm demons. Eva and Richard Blum repeatedly mention in the context of contemporary Greek beliefs the ‘light shadowed ones’ (*elafroiskiotis*)<sup>509</sup>: people who have the kind of inborn ability to see spirits and demons and be abducted by them, in other words are blessed with the possibility of making ‘soul journeys’. The notion we may surmise in the background to this term is that the ‘light shadowed ones’ belong, to some extent, to the other world. They half turn into spirits (and thus strive upwards, to the cloud other world).

Envisioning the soul as a shadow is also the central element in the practice of ‘building sacrifices’ known all over the Balkans, and in the practice of ‘measuring up the shadow’ which is also common in the same area. This relatively simple but supposedly lethal exercise meant that while building a house the builders measured the shadow of a passer-by without the latter’s knowledge, then projected the size onto the wall (or the shadow appeared on the wall in the first place) and ‘built it into the wall’. This way they ‘created’ the guarding spirit of the building or the family – by this operation they attached the soul of a person to the house and locked it into the building as into a talisman. As one may surmise, the person would die soon after the event and their soul, locked inside the wall, became the guarding spirit of the house – this is what is denoted by the terms *stoikheio/stahia/stuha/zduhač* etc.<sup>510</sup>

<sup>504</sup> Például Plotnikova... vagy Boskovic-Stulli ...

<sup>505</sup> Néhány mondatkatalógus-szám

<sup>506</sup> Plotnikova, görög: Schmidt, 189

<sup>507</sup> Marinov 212, Lawson 288.

<sup>508</sup> Dj. Lap

<sup>509</sup> Blum–Blum 1970, 42, 49–51, 237–239, 298–300.

<sup>510</sup> Georgieva 105, Arnaudov..., Schneeweiss ... 11. Blum–Blum 1970, 304. Rodd (1892) claims that the Greeks

As we have seen, some of the storm and fertility magicians of Serbia and Croatia also carry the same name – a derivative of the word *stoikheion*.

The previously enumerated guarding spirits (of land and water) are also associated with another type of terminology, centered around the term talisman (*telesma, tellestim, talsom, talāsam, tellesma, etc.*); used by Greeks and Bulgarians, names believed to be Greek or Turkish in origin.<sup>511</sup> From the joint occurrence of *stoikheion/stuha/zduhač* and of synonymous *telesma, tellestim* and of the 'shadow' terminology of the soul the lines can be traced to the Byzantine Neo-Platonic and Hermetic talisman magic of late antiquity. Greenfield, who enumerated all the shades and changes in the meaning of the term *stoikheion* in his great summary of Byzantine demonology, relates the original meaning of the word, 'celestial body', to talisman magic and its astrological context. Accordingly, demons living on stars, planets or celestial bodies ('star demons') or the spirits of the elements were conjured up with the help of magical prayers or amulets and locked inside objects or statues, and this way produced all the *talismans* used for a whole array of magical purposes.<sup>512</sup> The name is also retained in the name of the guarding spirits called 'talisman'. The previously mentioned magical practice of 'measuring in' someone's shadow is nothing other than creating a talisman in the original sense of the word. Greenfield, and other researchers of Byzantine magic before him, noticed the use of the words *telesma* (talisman) and *stoikheion* ('spirit of the elements') for the same meaning, and also that the word *stoikheion* had, or came to have, a secondary meaning of 'celestial body'. Lawson also detected the use of the word *stoikheion* with the double meaning of 'guarding spirit' and 'talisman'.<sup>513</sup> Dieterich and later Greenfield were also able to present data to document the stage when *stoikheion*, already meaning a talisman holding demons, also assumed the meaning of 'a person who has a demon living inside them'.<sup>514</sup> The person referred to in this way is none other than the *stuha/zduhač* magician who can rise up high 'in spirit' or even in body owing to the storm demon 'living inside them' and identified with them. Even some of the data collected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century present these magicians almost as 'human talismans'. According to Bulgarian data, magicians have 'a guarding spirit living inside them'; Serbian *zduhač* 'are not alone, they hold the power of the *zduhač*' or, as another piece of data has it, 'there is a great big soul living inside them and that helps them in all things'. This way, the spirit of magicians identifies with their guarding spirit which lives inside them, as it were, and it is with the help of this demon that they are able to rise up and fly to the clouds.

Were we to place this archaic form of communication into some known system, we would first of all think of divine possession – the phenomenon is similar to the levitation of persons possessed by heavenly beings and to their abduction to heaven. It is no accident that an informant of the Blums who was a Greek priest related the occult faculties of 'light shadowed' persons to the idea of divine possession: he claimed that such persons, possessed by a good spirit, are striving toward heaven.<sup>515</sup> It is obvious, however, that in this case the Christian idea of divine or demonic possession only partially covers the archaic notion of a living person turning into a demon.<sup>516</sup>

It was probably these strands of cultural heritage that led to this type of magician becoming associated, in the territories influenced by mediaeval Byzantine magic, with the

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most often 'measured in' the shadows of Jews or Muslims, using this as an offering to the guarding spirit called *stoikheion*.

<sup>511</sup> Arnaudov....; Dukova 1970, 235; Blum–Blum 1970, 303–304. Nicoloff 1983, 60; Troeva ...

<sup>512</sup> Greenfield....; Szőnyi 118–121; Kákosy 273–291.

<sup>513</sup> Lawson 255–257.

<sup>514</sup> Dieterich 1925; Greenfield 192.

<sup>515</sup> Blum–Blum 1970, 300–304.

<sup>516</sup> The Blums also distinguish 'becoming a demon', from 'being possessed by them' even if they do not explain the nature of this difference. Blum–Blum 1970, 55.

terminology related to the word *stoikheion*. Accounts on a more personal note about living magicians mostly talk about soul journeys made in a trance or the person turning into a demon, rising up into the air or disappearing. I believe that this means two different interpretations of one and the same phenomenon, possibly from two different periods. Both explanations, however, refer to notions of the body and the soul which are more archaic than Byzantine talisman magic and are more expansive in both time and space than the areas preserving the heritage of this kind of magic. (We have encountered them in the context of fairies, too, and shall come across them in relation to further types of storm magicians.)

It seems that in this area, the South-Western territories of the Balkans, the influence of Byzantine astrological magic became accreted over the archaic notion of demon-human beings who even borrowed their name from them. The same may well be the source of the name ‘talisman’ applied to spirits protecting houses or property and perhaps even of the method of ‘measuring in’ people’s shadow. Certain phenomena of Byzantine magic related to *stoikheion* and talisman also lived on in the elite magic of royal courts and universities in Central Europe well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, for instance, the Latin translation of a 13<sup>th</sup> century Arabic book of magic, *Picatrix*, dedicated to the creation of talismans, was still used by Hungarian magicians in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>517</sup> Mysteriously, the astrological tradition relating to the spirits of the elements which is contained in this book also found its way somehow to the magician beliefs of the Hungarian rural population. As we shall see below, certain of its aspects also appear in the beliefs related to weather magicians with dragons, whom we are about to discuss below.

#### Further Serbian and Croatian storm magicians

Areas of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina identical or almost identical with the former territory also have weather magicians capable of driving clouds who are called by names different from the *stuha/zduhač* family of names. These terms are usually related to the words meaning *cloud* or *wind* and thus refer directly to the magician’s most characteristic traits. Serbian *oblačar* means ‘cloudy’, terms from Serbia such as *vetrovnjak*, *vjetrovito*, *vetrovnjaci*, *edogonja*, *vjedogonja*,<sup>518</sup> Croatian *vremenjak*, *vjetrogonja*<sup>519</sup> from Crna Gora mean windy, while Croatian *negromant*, *legromant* vagy *oblakovoditel*<sup>520</sup> mean ‘cloud driver’ or Serbian *gradobranitel* also come into this category.<sup>521</sup> Narratives by Croatians living in Hungary along the river Dráva describe a storm magician under the name *ved* or *vedovniak*.<sup>522</sup> According to available data, these magicians are only distinguished in their name from storm magicians, but they never fight for the harvest of grain or fruit, only have to do with hail storms or other storms. Accounts which describe their nature or actions present them as magicians who fly along with the wind, drive the storm clouds and fight against hostile demons. The motif of being abducted in body also appears in their context. According to an article by Drago Chloupek, *vetrevnjaks*, when hearing the approach of a storm, hurry away (disappear ‘in body’), have a fight with the ‘cloud drivers’ of other villages and then return home tired, naked and drenched.<sup>523</sup> Magicians called *ved* and *vedovniak* have similar stories going around about them. The good-intentioned *ved* help people: they guard the fields, but each house also has a *ved*. Bad weather and storms are brought on by hostile *ved*. The gusts of

<sup>517</sup> Kákósy 273–274; Szónyi 118–121.

<sup>518</sup> Zecevic 1983: 219; Djordjevic **több helyen**; Tolstoi–Tolstaia **lap?**

<sup>519</sup> Schneeweiss 1961, 26.

<sup>520</sup> Tolstoi–Tolstaia **lap?** Boskovic-Stulli 286

<sup>521</sup> Tolstoi–Tolstaia **lap?**

<sup>522</sup> **Frankovics György gyűjtése, s.a. könyve**; collected by Tekla Dömötör and Ernő Eperjessy at Drávasztára, 1967.

<sup>523</sup> Chloupek 1953, 247.

the approaching storm lift up the *ved* guarding the field of his own village and he disappears only to return home tired and naked after wrestling with the *ved* of the other village. The battle fought in the clouds is accompanied in their case, too, by stormy winds, leaving trees and bushes ripped out after them. As regards the *legromants* of Dalmatia and the area of Dubrovnik, it is also said that members of their troops gather into a group and embark on their spirit battle together. A ‘drenched’ return may be characteristics of other ‘windy’ or ‘cloudy’ magicians, too, as we shall see below. This, together with nakedness, is a common trait in the context of half human, half demon creatures which disappear ‘in their body’.

Our data testify that each type of storm demon, but particularly the Croatian variants, occasionally also do battle with witches. Their enemies in cases like this are the previously mentioned storm witches. They bring hailstorms to the village which the magician needs to avert. This is a direct consequence of a process which took place in the early modern period where the belief figure of the witch came to absorb many different types of demonic figures from fairies all the way to dragons. The demonic figure of Slovenian, Croatian and Hungarian witches also became identified here with storm demons arising from dead persons lacking status.<sup>524</sup>

Planetnik, chmurnik, obłocznik: Polish and Ukrainian storm magicians

Southern Polish *chmurnik* and *planetnik*, the phrase *obłocznik*,<sup>525</sup> used in the Beskids in Silesia, Ukrainian *planetnik* or *planitnik* each mean ‘cloudy’, in line with the fact that magicians referred to by these names, similarly to their counterparts on the Balkans, drive clouds after rising up with the stormy winds and fight spirit battles up there to chase away hailstorms from their own area and drive them over enemy territory.<sup>526</sup> In other words, these are also similar demon-human figures. In our case, however, we are looking at narrative traditions recorded in the past, more than in the case of magicians of the Balkans. These do not really allow us to come in contact with subjective experience, eye-witness accounts and thus to draw conclusions about the real practice of magicians and their role in the community.

Nevertheless, so much is quite clear that Polish weather magicians are related to storm magicians of the Balkans in terms of their mythical context. It seems that we are seeing here the remnants of a tradition shared by all Slavic peoples. Naturally, besides common Slavic traits, this manifests in a multitude of diverging local derivatives and a common Central and Eastern European set of legends where several of the main motifs are shared in all of the magician narratives of the peoples discussed here. (Purely legendary magician figures are also known throughout the region in question – it is mostly in legends about them that we can find such ‘migrant legend’ motifs.) A topos which is known in the context of weather magicians of the Balkans, Poland and Hungary alike is the following: the community’s ‘own’, ‘good’ magician forewarns the people harvesting or gathering hay that a storm is approaching. Narratives about the *chmurnik* and the *planetnik* include a motif shared with those of Croatian, Hungarian and Romanian magician figures whereby the magician visits houses as a wanderer who had come from far away and asks for milk and/or eggs. If rejected, he takes revenge by getting a hailstorm beat the master of the house or the entire village. If granted his wish, he will protect the village and drive the storm to the neighboring village. The motif of ice-making known from legends of Romanian magicians also crops up on one occasion: in

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<sup>524</sup> Burkhart 83–84; **horvát és magyar adatok!**

<sup>525</sup> The *oblakoprogonnik* and *oblakogonitel* (cloud driving) magicians of Western Russia, mentioned in Russian sources, may be similar magicians (Tolstaia 2011), but I have no information about the details of their activity.

<sup>526</sup> Sources used, Udziela 1898; Hnatiuk 1904, **XIII. pont**; Moszynski 1967, 651–652; Tolstoj-Tolstaja 1981; personal information by courtesy of Urszula Lehr based on data collected in the Beskid region.

order to punish a village, magicians make a lake freeze over, (they beat the water with sticks), then smash the ice and use it to bring hail over the harvest.<sup>527</sup>

As regards magicians who functioned in real everyday life, their activity and role in the community, our best source of information are the data from the Krakow area published by Udziela in 1898. According to this publication, *planetniks* and *chmurniks* are peasants from the village who are hired as ‘storm guards’ for a compensation in grain. They were believed to be able to predict the weather and the harvest and drive the storm clouds away from their village. They were usually men, but sometimes young boy children were also considered *planetnik*. These were very potent and ‘pure’ persons who ‘did not work with evil’. It is clear from all publications that these magicians also used prayers, sacramentalia and magical maneuvers to avert hailstorms from their village. It was widely believed that they could also influence storm demons ‘from below’, for instance when driving them away by ringing bells, whistling, or using sticks. The following extract from an account recorded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century sheds some light on the earthly and heavenly, real or imagined activity of *planetniks*.

The power of *planetniks* extends to clouds, rain and hail. They lead them wherever they want to: they drag the clouds around on chains like a boat, or sail on them like the men on the rafts on the river Vistula, using oars. People say there was a *planetnik* in Wrzasowice who could drive the clouds by whistling and directed them the way he wanted. A woman from Skrzyznka called Wiktorja Piwowarczyk told us that if a *planetnik* wants it there will be thunder and if he wants lightening there will be just lightening. And if he waggles his finger you hear the rolling of thunder...<sup>528</sup>

Other accounts also give a similarly vivid description of the watery other world of storm demons complete with rafts or boats floating on the heavenly waters. According to Polish data, similarly to their South Slavic counterparts, these demons come from the souls of children who had died unbaptised, who had been aborted or suffocated, as well as from people who had committed suicide or drowned – in other words from dead souls who lacked status. They can become guarding spirits of their own village or hostile demons of the community of ‘strangers’, just like their counterparts on the Balkans. The community’s ‘own’, ‘good’ magician has power over these demons and so can vanquish both hostile demons and ‘evil’ magicians by driving hail clouds over the fields of the strangers.

It is commonly believed that *planetniks* and *chmurniks* rise to the cloud other world at the approach of storms or are abducted by the descending fog or cloud. They often lift the clouds onto their backs and, once up there, need to tow it over to the opposing side of the field. At other times the magicians rise up along the rainbow and ‘hurry to the aid of their partners who live in the clouds’. When the magician rises up, they disappear in the bodily sense for a while. The archaic notion of disappearing in a fog or cloud, characteristic of human-demon figures, seems quite common in these areas, too. It is also true that some descriptions by Tolstoi and Tolstaia describe the passage to the storm other world as a soul journey made in a trance or dream – probably based on personal experience of storm demons who had fallen in a deep sleep or trance. These scarce and incomplete data, however, reveal nothing more about the supernatural communication of active, real-life magicians of the past.

According to accounts of spirit battles, the *planetniks*, usually in groups, fight opposing storm souls and the hostile magician souls who had become identified with them. Some Ukrainian data speak about duels where the two participants carry the clouds on their backs or drag them on chains and that way try to get into a position over the other’s village.

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<sup>527</sup> Udziela 598.

<sup>528</sup> Udziela 1898, 595–596. (Kende Ágnes fordítása)

Their terrible howls may be heard even down on earth. Sometimes they shoot lightning at each other. The battle often takes place on cloud boats or on rafts dragged on chains – this is how they carry the storm away from their own part of the field, and people say ‘they are taking away the storm’. They ask each other to help out if they find it too hard to tow the clouds or carry them on their backs. Paddling their boats they splash water over the earth with their wooden oars. Down below the people experience this as loud storms and thunder. They also hear shouting and the splashing of water, and often even overhear the dialogue of the magicians and the demons. Ukrainian in Chełm even ‘see’ the *planetniks* during their battle in the clouds.

Beliefs surrounding Polish and Ukrainian storm demons show the same kind of gradual and diffuse transition between storm demons and magicians living on earth as we found among South Slavic magicians. It is generally believed that there are human souls in the wind and these are believed to be either the souls of dead people or living magicians, varying from place to place. In certain areas of Southern Poland people only know of storm demons who fight their battles amongst each other without the participation of living persons, but the majority of Polish data speak about spirit battles between magicians. Souls of magicians who had risen to the clouds from the earth identify with storm souls just as we experienced on the Balkans and some of them share the same name as the storm demons. In the region of Krakow people distinguish heavenly and earthly or in other cases light and dark *chmurniks*, meaning a distinction between storm demons and living magicians. Around Skawina they talk of earthly *chmurniks* and real *chmurniks*, where the latter live in the clouds.<sup>529</sup> After their heavenly battles magicians return home drenched, with their clothes dripping with water. Their ‘watery’ or ‘cloudy’ nature also manifests in their earthly life where they often turn up muddy and wet, with their clothes dripping with water, and anyway have a proclivity to walk by the water or to watch it. Although some data testify that certain *planetniks* in Southern Poland were born in with a caul or under a special constellation of the stars, it is generally held that they are born during the time of great rainfalls. This in a way marks out their ‘watery’ destiny and their attachment to the ‘waters above’ right at the time of their birth.<sup>530</sup>

In narratives of *chmurniks* and the *planetniks* the difference between the human world and the storm other world is washed away. There are innumerable narratives telling the story of magicians who live on earth for a while, like any ordinary human being, then all of a sudden, just as they were born in the rain, they die in the rain. They disappear by almost turning to fog in the bodily sense. In one example a child *planetnik* was described in the village of Tyniec to start isolating himself from his playmates, turning quiet until

...gradually the children began to separate themselves from him. A peasant went up and looked at the boy who began to turn pale and vanish, vanish, vanish, until finally he completely disappeared. Everyone said, this was a *planetnik*.<sup>531</sup>

This kind of disappearance usually also means the end of the earthly life of the magician. Others spend a good half of their lives, 20-30 years, on earth and then start ‘going up’ to the demons during the times of storms. Other people see how they are ‘snatched up by the cloud’, only to return to earth after the storm is gone. The magician is sometimes a demon and sometimes human – there are also views according to which the *chmurnik* lives permanently among the clouds and only occasionally descends to be with the people.

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<sup>529</sup> Udziela 587.

<sup>530</sup> Udziela 599; information by courtesy of Urszula Lehr.

<sup>531</sup> Udziela 586; Kende Ágnes fordítása

This type of the Polish and Ukrainian storm magician is closely related to the above described types of Southern Slavic storm magicians both as regards their demon-human double nature and their archaic communication technique. Kazimierz Moszynski, the researcher with the broadest scope on this type of magician, actually claims, based on the striking similarities, that these beliefs of Polish and Ukrainian magicians, and their supposed real-life practice, derive from the Western Balkans.<sup>532</sup> I myself am of the opinion that even if we can point out a few related traits, it is unlikely that we could unravel the actual threads of origin after all the population movements, language development and language change and the multiple cultural interactions that are characteristic of the larger Eastern European region. In the absence of historical data to give us firm points of orientation we must leave the question undecided at this point in time.

### Battling *táltos*

The twenty-six *táltos* trials among the Hungarian witch trials offer a complex picture.<sup>533</sup> A diverse array of *táltos* figures are revealed from the perspective of their activities and their belief contexts. Their main functions in the community were healing and seeing treasure, but they often took on the other roles of seers, such as fortune-telling, finding lost objects, and so on. An exception is that the task of protecting the town or village was characteristic only of the *táltos*; some Hungarian female *táltos* virtually fulfilled the role of a guardian spirit. Twentieth-century *táltos* legends often contain the motif of a shamanistic battle for rain, but this is largely absent in early Modern Age documents, with the exceptions of the *táltos* from Pécs, mentioned earlier, and three *táltos* women. According to our documents, and almost without exception, the Hungarian healing *táltos* carried out their functions within the institution of witchcraft as healers of bewitchment, or less often as the identifiers of it. Some of them belong so closely to the system of witchcraft that they even practice the double function of the malefactor-healer witch – that is, they were involved in cases of bewitching too.

The picture of *táltos* positions within the belief system is even more varied. As mentioned earlier, a significant number represent the variety of types of *mora* seers and werewolf magicians. The bulk could be defined as underworld, „black” female seers of the werewolf magicians whose mediatory abilities were determined by their werewolf characteristics. Extra body parts were a feature – an extra tooth, or two sets of teeth – as was supernatural communication through doubles. At other times, we see attributes in the foreground similar to those of *mora* seers. A general tendency was for the *táltos* to develop Christian connotations and the qualifications of holy healers who were initiated in heaven. This is often in direct opposition to the satanic nature of the enemy witches. In a peculiar way, some of our *táltos* figures represented the aforementioned types of underworld seers and the ones „battling in heaven” all in one person. First we shall discuss the „battling” *táltos* that fulfilled a double function in the sequence of dualities, and later the other types of seers.

Erzsébet (Örzse/Erzsók) Tóth, a *táltos* from Jászberény who was tried in 1728, will serve as a first detailed example. This trial record stands out in its detail and descriptiveness among *táltos* references, which are often discernible only with difficulty. Erzsébet Tóth belonged to the *táltos* figures with a twofold function, but her position as an underworld black seer is most apparent. Werewolf and other characteristics can be detected behind her ability to „see”.

Örzse Tóth communicated with the alternative world through her double. She could her alter ego far away, „and her husband thought that she lived next to him, yet she was away

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<sup>532</sup> Moszynski, 652.

<sup>533</sup> Aside from six document (one *táltos* from Pécs, one from Dés, and four from Miskolc), our documents refer to *táltos* figures from the Alföld (Hungarian Great Plain) and mainly from the eighteenth century.

over 300 miles, even farther away than Turkey.” These abilities were connected with her three „double teeth”, present from birth – that is, she was born with the double set of teeth characteristic of werewolf magicians. She gave one tooth to Christ, which could possibly be interpreted as an initiation act of extracting a bone. Her denouncers referred to this when they said that Örzse Tóth was a „half-táltos”. Insofar as it is possible to judge on the basis of other „semi-táltos”, that term referred to her seeing and healing activities. She obtained the medicine with which she healed from Jesus Christ, a feature of the „holy healer” and her guardian spirits, and her alter egos also possessed Christian characteristics. For her, being a táltos largely meant that she was „God’s daughter”, „Christ covered her with his mantle”, and that „she was a second person for God”. She also claimed that every Wednesday the Happy Virgin talked to her. So she was the terrestrial representative of the heavenly patron; she herself expressed this by saying, „I am a táltos with two heads.” Her „two heads” represented the duality of her own person and her alter ego, and at the same time God and herself – that is, guardian and the shielded.<sup>534</sup> The spiritual alter ego manifested in surplus body parts becomes identified with the guardian spirit. Erzsébet Tóth saw treasure, „she knows everything in the world that is buried in soil”, she identified thieves, and predicted fire and death. She knew all that happened in the town: „the whole night she roams the town and knows all things, how everybody is living.” As the terrestrial representative of her guardian spirit, she protected the town. In connection with a recent earthquake, she remarked, „had I not gone round this town, it would have sunk.” What is more, she claimed to be the guardian of the country: she protected a third of Hungary from an earthquake, it „wuld have been lost...were it not for me.”<sup>535</sup>

Simultaneously with this grandiose town-protection program, she also fulfilled her community role as a healer within the system of witchcraft. She healed and found maleficium, in several instances using procedures similar to those already mentioned for summoning to the house. All this was expanded by her bewitching cases. The trial minutes present her as a personality incorporating great antagonistic features. She was a charismatic woman who was initiated in heaven and who was on speaking terms with Christian mythology in its entirety, who protected a third of Hungary while involving herself in common neighborhood conflicts, and also bewitching those whom she had to bewitch in accordance with the logic of maleficium cases. She self-consciously confessed to her bewitchment: „that your daughter died is thanks” to Örzse’s not being invited to the wedding. Her confession indicates she was one of the self-aware malefactor witches. Here common revenge motivated her, while at other times rivalry with other healers prompted her actions. She once said that a patient would not recover because it was not she who had afflicted her. When she was well paid, she healed as the „daughter of God”. However, she consciously took on the status of „daughter of God” even in the context of her bewitchment: „I am the daughter of God. If somebody threatens me, I look into the eyes of that person, and they have to die.” Through this, she labeled bewitchment as heavenly justice. Thus, as we saw with the ambivalent fate-women witches, this táltos was both a bewitcher and healer, which corresponds to that archaic ambivalence.<sup>536</sup>

Her activities in bewitching, healing, and identifying went on within the same system and on the common spiritual battlefield of the various doubles, and helping and guardian spirits. These beliefs, as opposed to the previous ones, refer to her mora characteristics. The death troops known in connection with the malefactor witch appear here as hostile spirits hindering the healing of the táltos. The táltos saw these spirits around the patient: „The evils go in front of Mrs. Lénárth like buzzing ants, but she does not see them.” At other times they

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<sup>534</sup> This could be compared with the views of the Middle Ages that refer to the duality of the „two bodies” of the king, the political and the natural: that is, divine and immortal, and mortal and human. Compre Kantorowicz.

<sup>535</sup> Jászberény, 1728.

<sup>536</sup> Jászberény, 1728.

appear as a flock of birds, but again only Erzsébet Tóth could see them, and in this manner, many cases of healing that were hindered by bad spirits came to light. Beside the evil dead, fate women appeared too. They arrived as spirits who negatively influenced the fate of a patient whom she refused to heal, making reference to their judgment: „I would heal you, but one of them said 'to the bottom of hell with her,' and the other, 'do not'!”<sup>537</sup>

Let us examine her role as the protector of the town. There she had to face the town council, who „know not how much good I do to the town”. The tensions between them resembled the rivalry between competing healers. As she was quoted saying at the trial, „half of the council and Mihály scribe, who is a witch to the core, want her to die... but if they send her from the town, it will be lost. As the Jews chased Christ, so do Bartal and two others chase her.”<sup>538</sup>

On another level, with heavenly help, she fought for the town as a *táltos* patronized by her Christian guardian and calling spirits: „As the skies lighten I have to go immediately, and the holy cross will be placed on my shoulder”; „God's key”, with which the skies open, was around her neck. The cross has a double meaning here. On one hand, we are witness to a mystical identification of the *táltos* with Christ carrying the cross: she looked upon her *táltos* obligations as a cross to be borne. On the other hand, a wooden cross held high in the air has been a holy sign used against storm demons since the Middle Ages.<sup>539</sup>

Let us investigate Erzsébet Tóth as a *táltos* fighting heavenly soul battles. She left to do battle at God's beckoning, and it was a heavenly lightning battle, characteristic of both the *zmej* type of fertility magicians, where the position of the pagan thunder god was often later taken by Saint Elisha, or, in Erzsébet Tóth's case, by the Christian God himself. „As the lightning began and many *táltos* were locked in struggle, she was present, too. She went there through the air with the help of God and fought there.” Besides her divine patrons she also had a dragon helping spirit. It is documented that „she took the dragon that the *garabonciás* could not take”, which also connects her to the dragon magicians. After the battle she showed „cuts and wounds” on her arm – that is, injuries brought back from the alternative world. She protected her town from hail in the lightning battle: „I kept the seedling crop and grapes around the town safe, I protected, I fought... when the evils wanted to bewitch.” Her enemies were the same bad dead, referred to as „evils”, with whom she had to fight while she was healing. Death troops, however, appeared in a different context as her „soul companions”, who called her among them: „I am, at all times, to go out as soon as they call me out and summon me.” These are the ambivalent guardians of the ambivalent *mora* witch, the death troops known from witches' sabbats. They appeared as the enemies of her *táltos* battles as well as her summoning companions. According to a witness, Örzse Tóth once said, „We have won [the battle] there will be no rain for a while.” So her troop „took” the rain. A little maliciousness could place her on the side of the enemy: she was ambivalent even in her *táltos* character. From this perspective, she fits into the line of Eastern European werewolf magicians and witches who were rivals in the framework of own-alien opposition.

In many ways, the case of Mrs. András Bartha, née Erzsébet Balási, parallels that of Erzsébet Tóth.<sup>540</sup> She was tried in 1725, chronologically close to Tóth's 1728 trial. She was also a double *táltos*: simultaneously a seer of the underworld and a soldier of heaven. From the perspective of her concrete activities, she was primarily a healing woman. She remedied the bewitchment of witches, but there was also talk at her trial of seeing money. She foretold fire, the outcome of illness, and death, and (as several of the *táltos* from Debrecen also did) she dealt with identifying bewitchment. She was also „taught [how to be a *táltos*] by God”,

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<sup>537</sup> Jászberény, 1728.

<sup>538</sup> Jászberény, 1728.

<sup>539</sup> Compare with the sign of the cross in Church benedictions for fending off storm: Flint, 173–88.

<sup>540</sup> Andor Komáromy, 354–63; and Mrs. András Bartha's 1725 trial in Debrecen.

and she was born with teeth. She reckoned that „God formed [the *táltos*] in her mother’s womb”.<sup>541</sup> (Compare this with the fate women’s function in determining fate.)

In Mrs. Bartha’s case, it seems that a *táltos* dynasty is revealed. The dead brother of Erzsébet Balási was a *táltos*, too: „there has not been such a great *táltos* in this country.” Additionally, her twelve-year-old daughter, Erzsók, was a *táltos* who carried out a kind of helping-spirit role at her side in her night battles. As with Örzse Tóth, her calling and guardian spirit, at least in her heavenly battles, was the Christian God. The enemies of her terrestrial night battles were various spirits and spirit troops. The battles were an accompaniment to her healing and bewitching activities.

She, like her *táltos* colleague in Jászberény, bewitched if she became embroiled in inducing maleficium. The best-known case of bewitchment began with an unsuccessful attempt at seeing treasure. She should have repaid the deposit accepted for locating the treasure, but instead she apparently „sent” three fate women after the aggrieved client. (Recall the „sent” doubles of werewolf and *mora* creatures.) However, hostile spirits „came to her” also, in the form of three fate women, to hinder her while healing. Consequently, her function was also ambivalent: that of the archaic bewitching-healing witch, but with divine connotations in this case.

There is not sufficient space here to quote the numerous colorful accounts of her night battles as she warred with various individual and groups of doubles and „evil ones”. In these fights, her child helped her. Indeed, her antagonists would have beaten her, „if my sweet little daughter had not turned around next to me.” On another occasion, her young daughter fought on her side with a dagger between her teeth. The child brought home injuries from the battles: in the morning, she was visibly „scratched, sliced, and cut all over.” At the same time, a woman in a veil and black dress came to ask her whether they fought that night. On another occasion of her ministrations, „witches tortured her.” This last case is truly based upon her rivalry with another healer. There were practically no instances when her enemies would not have attempted to hinder her in her healing. They made use of almost every species from the surrounding animal world, tame and wild – dogs, cats, crows, bumble bees, and others – to appear in their image, but there is also an example of a fairylike apparition, a beautiful woman in a green dress.<sup>542</sup>

The other level was that of the heavenly soul battles. Erzsébet Balási fought in a *táltos* troop, „they fought at the hill of Szendelik,” and their chief was János Nagy. In this instance the role of collective battle was not connected to precipitation, but had a political nature linked to the Turkish and German wars, similar to that of the Balkan wars mentioned in connection with the *stuha* magician. In her „heavenly” battles, this *táltos* was closer to the *stuha* or *zduhač* „combative” werewolf magicians born in a caul, and she also had the hallmarks of a dragon or eagle *zmej* magician. Under torture she confessed that, „God took [her into the heavenly battle] under his wings, and gave her wings like birds.”<sup>543</sup> These could be most naturally interpreted as the eagle wings characteristic of the winged *táltos*. The presence of the *zmej*-type *táltos* in Hungarian popular belief can be asserted on the basis of several contemporary legends.<sup>544</sup> In the place of the heavenly thunder god, who also appeared as an eagle, the summoning spirit here is the Christian God, just as in Erzsébet Tóth’s case.

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<sup>541</sup> Komáromy 190, 360.

<sup>542</sup> Komáromy 1910, 360–362.

<sup>543</sup> Komáromy 1910, 362.

<sup>544</sup> For these relationships see Pócs, and . For documentation of the „*táltos* with wings” or contemporary *táltos* figures with eagle or dragon calling and helping spirits, see Erdész 1984, 62; and Diószegi, 77, 194, 228. Usually, the werewolf characteristics of the *táltos* were strongly present in twentieth-century legends: for example, snake, wolf, dragon figures; animal ancestor; „sending a wolf,” and others. For many references like these, see Diószegi, 191–96.

Here we mention Mrs. István Fejes, née Erzsébet Ormos, a *táltos* only briefly mentioned in the trials.<sup>545</sup> She appeared before the court accused of murdering her husband. Little is known of her except that „the dragons are her company,” a characterization that defines her, unambiguously, as a *zmej*-type *táltos* with dragon guardian spirits.

In our trials, there is one more *táltos* who fulfilled two functions in the same person: Mrs. Mihály Szaniszlai from Debrecen, who was taken to court in 1711.<sup>546</sup> She mainly dealt with seeing treasure, but she also spoke about a battle against the German *táltos* figures: „they thrust about on the meadows of Körtvélyes.” In her testimony she stated that the heavenly soul battle was „for the empire”. the battle over weather transformed into a political war, perhaps more present for that moment. Mrs. Szaniszlai’s predictions also centered around events in the war. Like Erzsébet Tóth, she proclaimed that her power as a *táltos* extended over the whole town; however, this power was connected to her most significant role, seeing money. „If she wished it, the whole town would not be able to dig up the money.” She referred to herself, considering her principal *táltos* activity, as at once „half-*táltos*” and „seer.”

The document concerning a *táltos* called Péter Vecsési possibly refers to a „heavenly” warrior and fertility magician. He testified that, at the time of his confession, „two of his companions were down in Turkey for the fat of the land.” The 1741 trial in Miskolc of three *táltos* from Borsod County – Suska Kőműves, György Tapodi, and Judit Szűcs – reflects another aspect of battling.<sup>547</sup> The three were healers, but based on the accounts of a few witnesses and Tapodi’s personal confession, the various aspects of battling were the focus of the trial. There is a reference in the text to their ability to transform into animals: they assumed the forms of doves, fish, or foxes if they wanted to, and from time to time they also „vanished.” (This latter feat could be a rationalized reference to trance.)

In this same trial we find the only documentary evidence of ritually induced trance connected with a Hungarian *táltos*. As one of the witnesses testified, on the day of Pentecost „Judith, the daughter of Mr. János Szűcs, went out into the yard at dawn on the last day of the feast and took a plate in her hands. She looked into it and turned into a fish. She vanished and was gone for three days.”<sup>548</sup> A parallel for this ritual could be found in the divinational practice of looking into water.<sup>549</sup> The *táltos* from Miskolc battled on the days of Pentecost and Saint John. Both occasions were days of the rituals and beliefs pertaining to crop stealing (see Chapter 4), and this fact alone indicates that it may have been a battle over crops. Otherwise, the text does not mention the objective of the fighting. The motif of returning with injuries from battle appeared here, too: Suska Kőműves „said herself she was a *táltos*, and she showed on her body how they had been thrusting about in that battle, and the witness saw that too, that her body was so blue all over.”<sup>550</sup>

All the characters talked about a battle in a troop, and the groups were formed of men and women separately and according to their districts in the town. There was talk of a troop of seven hundred, and about girls who were the strongest in their group, amongst whom Suska Kőműves herself belonged. These motifs connect her to the aforementioned *stuha* magicians, but another one placed these *táltos* troops in opposition as the enemies of the *stuha* and as the troops of witch souls with a black flag, which were also familiar among the trials of Borsod County. Suska Kőműves „said that they had such a flag [and] that its shine lit the whole

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<sup>545</sup> 1626, in Komáromy 1910, 91.

<sup>546</sup> Komáromy 1910, 249–54,

<sup>547</sup> Bogdál 1960.

<sup>548</sup> *ibid.*, 309.

<sup>549</sup> Compare with the procedures of mirror divination; there is reference that the reflection of water could also get a trance-inducing role. See Dodds, 216–17; Delatte.

<sup>550</sup> Bogdál 1960, 310.

world.<sup>551</sup> Could we perhaps infer a witch-táltos opposition? This would establish the táltos among the kinship of the stuha-benandante.

At her trial a swindling money seer, Mrs. Lajos Jánbor, née Jutka Virág, was said to have taken part in battles,<sup>552</sup> during which she obtained money. However, she seems only to have been aware of the beliefs around táltos battles and used the (evidently positive) reputation of the táltos in her own defense.

Ilona Borsi, a semi-táltos from Cegléd and the last in our sequence of táltos characters, was summoned to court in Munkács in 1735.<sup>553</sup> She learned healing and acquired a knowledge of herbs from a woman whom she had served for three years. As a semi-táltos, she was born with a molar tooth on the left side of her face – wisdom she got in her mother's womb from God. An interesting feature of her trial is a detailed account of a sky battle between two táltos figures who had taken her there to watch (or perhaps to study) the battle. However, she only became a semi-táltos and never a battling táltos. She claimed in court that „all the táltos from around the whole country are battling, and the half-táltos only heal and bewitch nobody, they also recognize the witches and know of their deeds.”<sup>554</sup>

We also discover from this battle that the táltos had to amass in the months of Pentecost, Saint Jacob, and Saint Michael. Once more this refers to a group battle, but with the motif of paired combat: two men rose and turned into bulls, and Ilona Borsi saw them battling in the sky „for an hour and a half with no outcome” – a vision within a vision. Flying down from the skies, they assumed human form once again. They approached on horseback, the horses clearly fulfilling the function of helping spirits. The point of the battles is not revealed, but as a group soul battle perhaps it belongs to the aforementioned stuha-benandante circle. The question of the dual battle is more problematic. As opposed to most Modern Age táltos legends, where táltos battling in pairs are dominant, this is the only documented heavenly battle fought between two males in Hungarian historical documentation. We cannot say whether this hiatus is accidental, or if paired combat really only gained preeminence in the latter part of the Modern Age, taking the place of mass combat.

This kind of paired combat may link the táltos to the Balkan *kresnik* type or werewolf magician, mentioned above, who also fought in pairs. However, we cannot draw any wide-ranging conclusions since there is only one solitary reference.<sup>555</sup> On the other hand, we have to consider that a modern táltos motif is connected to this type of dual combat. A motif, peculiar in virtually being characteristic of the modern táltos alone, is being born with teeth, but not with the double set of teeth characteristic of the werewolf magician. This is possibly a singular local characteristic of the Hungarian táltos, independent of the European werewolf magicians. However, we do not have enough room, nor indeed sufficient historical data, to go into the exciting question of the origins of the táltos. What is important in this particular trial, in this present context, is that the two types of táltos (the „táltos proper” battling in the sky, and the semi-táltos of healers and seers) definitely lived alongside each other as parts of and alternative forms within the same system.

The references to Hungarian táltos fulfilling battling functions and seeing are examples of the mythical duality discussed above which was embodied by pairs of zmej magicians and their underworld enemies. This duality was in many ways present in the rituals, beliefs, and activities of Europe's shamanistic magicians, and around both magicians with *mora* as well as werewolf characters. The system may have been very widespread: Carlo

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<sup>551</sup> Bodgál 1960, 310.

<sup>552</sup> 1767, in Schram 1982, 220–23.

<sup>553</sup> Lehoczky 1887, 304–6.

<sup>554</sup> *ibid.*, 305.

<sup>555</sup> For the connection between the Modern Age Hungarian táltos beliefs and legends and this type of werewolf and magician, see Róheim; and Klaniczay. For a more detailed presentation of these connections, along with an analysis of the werewolf features of the táltos, see Pócs, 266–68.

Ginzburg observed this same duality in Caucasian parallels. As Ginzburg also showed through the example of the *benandante*, the two systems could function simultaneously in the same community.<sup>556</sup> In Corsica, quite distant from the dual-function *táltos* figures, a parallel example of an individual carrying out the two functions at the same time existed in the *mazzeri*. Although the practical activities of our *táltos* were complex, the theoretical division between the two kinds of functions is also valid in Hungary. The terms „*táltos proper*” and „*semi-táltos*” descriptively express the duality. An inherent heaven-underworld opposition exists in their abstracted symbolism.

Connected to these dualities, we have to refer back to a kinship phenomenon: to the fiery-watery or heavenly-underworldly polarization of Hungarian *lidérc* creatures. If it is true that the *lidérc* were a kind of Hungarian werewolf variant with *mora* characteristics, then the *lidérc* dualities are closely related to the magician and *táltos* couples discussed here. In Hungarian popular belief, „fiery” and „watery” helping and guardian spirits are connected by one name: the *lidérc*. These are partly the relative of the „fiery dragon” of the *zmej* magician (we have references to fiery *lidérc* flying in the sky), and partly they are a watery underworld helping spirit variant (a helping spirit *lidérc* hatched from an egg, or procured from a puddle or a ditch in the forms of a „soaking chick,” lizard, fish, or the like). The werewolf connections of the *lidérc* are clear, although it is not clear how and why this belief figure, with its obviously shamanistic context, came to be here independently of and parallel to other werewolf creatures, or how it lives on (also independent of the *táltos*) in the system of Hungarian popular belief.

To return to the duality of our *táltos*, it seems that the Hungarian *táltos* cannot be identified solely with certain types of European shamanistic magicians, but is at home within the systems of this functional duality too. Here I deliberately avoid saying „fitted in.” The history of the Hungarian *táltos* remains opaque; we know nothing about the circumstances, time, or place of a presumed „fitting into” Europe. What we can observe accurately is the outcome of the process: the fundamentally European types of the Hungarian *táltos*. The characteristic European types are the „purely seer” *táltos* – that is, the *semi-táltos par excellence*, and the seeing specialist with a different title, examples of which appear in the next section.

## 6. CONTACT WITH THE DEAD: NECROMANCERS, CUNNING MEN, SEERS OF TREASURE

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<sup>556</sup> Ginzburg 1983.

The activities of each type of seer and magician were based on general communicational techniques. Within the general European systems, each type was divided from the others by their contexts in relation to particular local belief systems and pre-Christian mythology. The differences might manifest themselves in a number of ways: in dead, divine, or spirit creatures cropping up as guardians or the helping spirits of magicians; in characteristic otherworlds; or in the features of their so-called selection by birth. This latter instance is a key issue because it determined the relationship among the ancestors who became guardian spirits, dead alter egos, and the living magicians.

This connection is an additional characteristic of professional seers, in comparison to lay techniques. Basically, they were aided in their communication with the other world by the spirits of their ancestors. The actual varieties of seer types fitted into the system of witchcraft, more or less, but always according to its rules due to the fundamental death characteristic of witchcraft. The characteristics of witchcraft itself in any given era and location determined the roles apportioned to the characters of witchcraft, and not solely their function in the belief system. For example, where stealing rain was not attributed to witches, rain magicians could not take on the role of the enemy of witches, as in Hungary.

#### Seers of the dead and wind magicians

From several perspectives we have touched upon the fact that the ambivalent witch figures evolved from the archaic strata of the European belief systems of witchcraft. These figures are simultaneously „positive” seers and witches. In this way, by following one thread, we find they are the common ancestor of seers with shamanistic abilities and European witches. In the following pages we shall consider these types of seers and magicians from the „positive” side, as enemies of the witch that nevertheless share the same roots.

A few Hungarian witch trial documents refer to the first type of seers when talking about ritual initiation and „seeing” techniques. Collectively, the methods are called „Saint Lucy’s stool techniques” because of one type of these rituals, which was known throughout Central and Western Europe, and is still known in the area once known as Pannonia, as „making Saint Lucy’s stool.” The name is connected to the initial date of the ritual, December 13 or Saint Lucy’s Day, which was the longest night of the year in the Gregorian calendar. The rituals unambiguously adjoined with the dead returning on the winter solstice and, in Western Europe, on November 1, formerly the Celtic New Year.

Essentially, this was a ritual concerned with making connections with the dead, or of gaining knowledge from the dead through an expressly underworldly ritual by sitting on a seat, known today by the legendary term „Saint Lucy’s stool”, or with the help of other symbolic objects made between Saint Lucy’s Day and Christmas. The person carrying out the ritual, even according to some twentieth-century documents, saw spirits, demonic witches, the dead alter egos of witches who „took” and initiated the entranced seers. Sometimes the motif of bone extraction appears as well. The inauguration expands to features of the underworld: seeing the dead, seeing treasure, discovering theft, foretelling the future concerning the coming year’s dead, and, in Central Europe, recognizing witches or initiation.<sup>557</sup>

We have just one solitary reference to actually making Saint Lucy’s stool, and it is surrounded by other related rituals. A fire had to be made on Saint Lucy’s Day or at Christmas, with wood collected on the same day. Whoever came to the house after that was a

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<sup>557</sup> For a summary see the rich documentation of Géza Róheim for the whole of Central and Western Europe, in Róheim, 174–77, 229–33. See also Weber-Kellermann; and Kovács. For similar Western European methods, see M. Puhvel; and Seidl, see Pócs, 194–201; and Pócs, 325–326; or in documents about the Slovakian Germans’ Saint Lucy’s stool, see Karasek-Langer.

witch. Another example: the unwashed wooden spoon used to cook peas on Saint Lucy's Day had to be tucked into a belt and taken to church; with its aid, witches would be seen there.<sup>558</sup> Such references are relatively scarce compared to the richness of Modern Age sources, but the point is clear: Hungarians know these rituals in the early Modern Age.<sup>559</sup>

As Géza Róheim established,<sup>560</sup> these symbolic methods of seeing witches and the dead remind us of the *seid* rituals apparent in surviving Nordic sources, and presumably there is some historical connection. Religious historians usually categorize this ritual as a remnant of a presumed Nordix shamanism (besides the warrior shamanistic features related to Odin, as well as the ecstatic trance cult of the *berserker*).<sup>561</sup> The basis of the mediatory practices of the *seid*-seers was the same as that of the techniques around Saint Lucy's stool. This practice was to make connections with the dead at the time of the winter solstice through ritually induced trance, mainly with the aim of obtaining information about the following year. A characteristic part of the ritual was an ecstatic song that evoked helping spirits. However, there has been no reference to that since the saga of Eric the Red.<sup>562</sup> It seems from Modern Age documents that obtaining helping spirits must have occurred using this method of evoking the devil, which was borrowed from ritual magic, and of course it was not a shamanistic helping spirit but a helping devil. Nevertheless, in essence it did not change; its aim was to enter into contact with the dead. Heinz Meier to Bernd, for example, demonstrated the continuity of ancient Nordic techniques of seeing using many Germanic documents from the Middle Ages.<sup>563</sup> The Germanic memories of the *seid* are usually connected with the figure of the goddess Freyja. As Davidson put it, a „seeress who traveled alone or in companies and went round to farms in Norway and Iceland, may have been the final representatives of the fertility goddess in the north”.<sup>564</sup> The cults of the underworldly gods and goddesses of the dead from antiquity, like Hermes, Hecate, or Selene, can also be traced in initiation through Saint Lucy's stool techniques, besides the Nordic inheritance that is considered to be the main line of extraction.<sup>565</sup>

Remnants of other Germanic mediatory techniques for contacting the dead, other than the *seid*, have also survived from the Middle Ages. One of these was the *útisetá* („sit out,” in the Icelandic language),<sup>566</sup> which has its Modern Age equivalent in rituals for making contact with the dead in burial grounds or on actual graves. There were a number of phenomena that lived on as *mara* beliefs, such as doubles, animal alter egos, and the rapid journeys of physical alter egos over huge distances on the horizontal plane. These played a significant role in the techniques of seeing outlined above.<sup>567</sup>

In our present context, it is important to note that „black magic” also crops up in the same texts from the Middle Ages, for example, „sending out” doubles and bad spirits with

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<sup>558</sup> 1718, Kassa, the trial of Éva Orosz and Katalin Tóth; 1722, Salgótarján, in Hausel, 329. A similar reference: 1674, Gyöngyös, in Papp, 226.

<sup>559</sup> The essence of symbolic techniques was to create a symbolic other world, within the framework of feasting and spaces of the dead. „Conjuring up” the other world with a magic circle belongs in this context. Symbolic techniques did not mean a direct communication, but they could induce it; an actor could fall into trance, could experience a vision in the magic circle drawn around themselves. For this and similar symbolic divination and initiation methods, see Pócs.

<sup>560</sup> Róheim, 1920.

<sup>561</sup> The members of these societies were werewolves capable of ecstasy. See O. Höfler, 66–70.

<sup>562</sup> Eiríks Saga Rauda. For a description of divination rituals among Icelandic inhabitants of Greenland, see, for example, Davidson, 117–19.

<sup>563</sup> 1952, 134–35.

<sup>564</sup> 1964, 121.

<sup>565</sup> For example, Hecate's sacrifice at the crossroads, which is also documented in the early Modern Age; see M. Puhvel, 173; Lecouteux, 24.

<sup>566</sup> Buchholz 1968, 39.

<sup>567</sup> See Strömbäck; Ohlmarks; Ellis, 151; Vries 2:94–106; Chadwick; Buchholz; Meyer-Matheis; J. Puhvel, 96–103, 184–87; Lecouteux, 102–6.

malicious intent. Witches themselves went in the form of mara, or sent their helping spirit – that is, their mara figure – to bewitch, spy, and battle. Good and bad magicians (witches) were in opposition under the mantle of own-alien. We know of weather magicians who competed with each other, causing storms and calming them down; or of pairs of witches and their enemies who caused illnesses and healed them; and of battles among their spirits or doubles. In the same documents, the essential similarity between witches, seers, and magicians also becomes apparent.<sup>568</sup>

So Nordic shamanism and witchcraft were presumably the same systems and coexistent, which is reflected in Modern Age Central European witches and mara/mora figures. If we do not call it shamanism, then we can say the same things about the relationship between witchcraft and the techniques of seers and magicians with a „positive” and „negative” orientation. Basically, several of the aforementioned researchers of Nordic shamanism saw this question in this way and made no significant distinction between magicians, witches, or shamans, even if their research reports did not explicitly state it.

Saint Lucy’s stool, as a method of seeing witches and the dead, and as a form of initiation, corresponded to the duality of the archaic mora and werewolf witches. „Good” witches inaugurated on Saint Lucy’s stool were enemies, seers, and finders of „bad” witches who remedied their bewitchment. This witchcraft was closely connected to the dead because communication with the dead and the dead forms of witches was possible through precisely the same methods. Other documentation from the Middle Ages and the Modern Age concerned seers who were initiated while visiting the dead. They talk about a midwinter initiation of seers, usually women seers. These types of seers with mora characteristics were the „good” witches mentioned above who were closely related to the system of witchcraft due to their „archaic ancestors”. The negative „branch” is the malefactor witch with mora features that could be found in the system of village witchcraft. Having seen many revealing signs around this negative branch, we suspected the existence of a positive version and, as predicted, these shed light on a genuinely functioning mediator with positive actions.

These seers had particularly Germanic and Celtic historical roots, but they existed in the village communities of several European peoples between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age. Their principal representatives from the early Modern Age are known from witch trials in the Alpine region between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. These were women who were taken and inaugurated into the soul troops around Christmas time, and who kept regular contact with the dead.<sup>569</sup> We know of documents, mainly from Scandinavia and Finland, about the above-mentioned burial-ground rituals.<sup>570</sup> The activities of the seeing women have had a rich tradition during the present century, especially in Scandinavia, the Alps, northwestern German areas, Ireland, and Scotland.<sup>571</sup> Their most important characteristic was communication with „terrestrial otherworlds” through their doubles: seeing the dead, fortune-telling, and recognition of distant objects.

The beliefs around their initiation connect them to the midwinter dead, and beliefs around being born in the festivals of the dead were also significant. To mention only the most widespread example, a „Christmas child” would be a seer. Also frequent were the motifs of birth in a caul, wick, as a „second body”, was a sign of the existence of a double – that is, the

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<sup>568</sup> Benedikz 1964–65; Davidson 1973; Adalsteinsson 1993.

<sup>569</sup> See, for example, the trial at the Bludenz court in 1525, where the defendant was destined „from the womb” „to go with the dead”; or a trial in Lucerne in 1573 against the „Seelenmutter zu Küßnacht”: Brandstetter.

<sup>570</sup> Simpson 1977, 6; Salo 1974, 39–90.

<sup>571</sup> For important published documentation for the whole of Western and Northern Europe, see Meier To Bernd. For Scottish and Irish documentation, see Campbell. For Scandinavian documentation: Simpson, 121–28. For German and Austrian documentation: Peuckert; Schmëing; Ebermut; and Grober-Glück. For Britain: Camus, 38–40. For Serbia: Zečević. For Greece: R. and E. Blum, 48–68.

ability to use trance.<sup>572</sup> In Modern Age Hungary, references to them, or sometimes their living manifestations, could be found: in the persons of the *táltos*, seers of the dead, seers of money, finders of lost objects; in the beliefs and legends of predicting the future and seeing the dead at Christmas.<sup>573</sup>

This seer corresponds to Carlo Ginzburg's second, „female” type. In his 1990 book on the witches' *sabat*,<sup>574</sup> he distinguishes between two types of European shamanistic magicians. One type, mostly male, were the fertility magicians whose souls traveled to the otherworld, and who fought soul battles to bring good crops and weather for their community. The other type were usually female magicians, who were initiated during the procession of the dead visiting humans. Their mediatory activities did not often involve soul battles; rather, their community roles were concerned with healing, seeing the dead, and with seeing treasure. This female line lived on in the cult of Artemis and Diana up to the Middle Ages, in close relationship with the shaping of the belief system of the witches in the early Middle Ages.<sup>575</sup>

Other chthonic figures of antiquity, Celtic and Germanic goddesses, appeared as the leaders of the march of the dead and as the guardian and initiator spirits of the seeing women. They included Hecate, the Austrian and south German *Perchta*, *Holda*, the Swiss *Frau Saelde*, the Slovenian *Pehtra Baba*, and so on.<sup>576</sup> We have mentioned the relationship between the Germanic seeing women and *Freyja*, the fertility goddess who also functioned as leader of the dead. In Eastern and Central Europe, these goddess figures vacated their positions for the Pannon, Czech, and Moravian figure of Saint Lucia or Lucy. Although leading soul troops was not one of Lucia's attributes, in many ways she fulfilled the same role as the above-mentioned goddesses and as a creature who carried out initiation into seeing the dead (consider the rituals around Saint Lucy's stool). She was often given sacrifices of flour for fertility on the night of Saint Lucy.

It is important to mention here the roles of these goddesses with respect to spinning and other feminine occupations, to poultry and cows, and their attributes of distaff and spindle. Let us remember the apparitions of the night witch spinning, or the goddess of the underworld flying on a weaving loom in the Bulgarian rituals around crop conjuring. Perhaps even the house-spirit figure of the eastern Slav *mora* with spinning and distaff attributes belongs here. Carlo Ginzburg traced the cults or quasi-cults of these goddesses back to Celtic, Thracian-Illyrian, and Cretian-Asia Minor cults, as Waldemar Liungmann did a good half a century ago (1937–38). More precisely, Ginzburg thinks that through these they were of Iranian origin because of the links mentioned above, and eventually, he connects them to a Scythian fertility goddess of the dead with a snake attribute („snake goddess”).<sup>577</sup>

From the Caucasus to the Alps, motifs of sacrifice to the lady of the animals, as well as to the cow raised from its bones, ran through the beliefs that lived into the Modern Age and could be connected to the line of the mother goddesses with a snake attribute – Artemis and Diana.<sup>578</sup> We have encountered references to these in Hungarian documents. It is to be noted that male-female duality is present in the aforementioned Nordic roots of European shamanism. The same can be observed in the „varrior” werewolf shamanism related to the figure of Odin and simultaneously to the seers of the dead with *mora* characteristics who

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<sup>572</sup> For the traditions of the cauld connected to seeing or to European shamanism, see Weiser-Aall.

<sup>573</sup> For a brief summary of documents of the early Modern Age, see Bihari, 94–98; Ferenczi.

<sup>574</sup> and see Ginzburg 1983, 333–38.

<sup>575</sup> For the sources of those who joined Diana's train, see Lecouteux, 66. For these features of the Western European witch and the here-relevant documentation of sources from the Middle Ages, see Cohn, 206–20. For further significant published documentation, see Crecelius; and Zingerle.

<sup>576</sup> Waschnitius; Liungmann, 2:596–670; Kuret, and ; Rumpf, 218; Lütolf.

<sup>577</sup> For Iranian origin, see Ginzburg, Chapter 3. Ginzburg primarily relied upon the research results of Karl Meuli in his theories about an Iranian origin (see Meuli). For a refutation of these, see Closs, 87–88.

<sup>578</sup> In connection with the lady of the animals, see note 60 of Chapter 3.

belonged to the female soul leaders, such as the genuine and fictive goddess figures of Freyja, Perchta, and Holda.<sup>579</sup>

From a Hungarian perspective, a few witchlike variations among the characteristics of initiation into the troops of the dead can be mentioned. A witness from Heves County talked about a little girl from Nagykunság in 1740, „in a place called Kisujj Szálás,...even today, there is a little lass who saw the witches from the beginning and went with them, and still sees them everywhere”.<sup>580</sup> The little girl who went with the witches that appeared as a troop of the dead acquired the ability to „see”. This is the customary means of initiating European seers with *mora* characteristics. A woman from Hódmezővásárhely, Mrs. Horváth, alias Mrs. András Ontó or Olá, was also taken by the dead at Christmas in a conventional way: „[this was] a vast colossal troop...in human forms...[and] from among them one leapt out in the image of Mrs. András Olá.” Another witness, who denounced her, found her lying in trance with her eyes turned up, and „for a while she was not in this world.” Among the witnesses it was also touched upon that another person „asked for information from her” and about what she had seen in the otherworld.<sup>581</sup>

She did not enter the otherworld with an aim connected to witchcraft: that must have been mentioned in the context of the trial. Most likely she was a seer of the dead. In Central Europe, a number of those initiated through „going with the dead”, specialized in seeing the dead. Another likely reference could be detected in our documents. Several of the witnesses against Mrs. András Vezendi, a defendant from Debrecen in a 1730 trial, mentioned that she was lying unconscious for a while, „stretched out like a dead body”. As she awakened she first declared that she had been in hell, then later denied it. It is possible here that we have a seer initiated among the dead in hell in a manner similar to an eastern type of twentieth-century Hungarian seer of the dead from the Moldva area.<sup>582</sup> It can be demonstrated that certain types of Hungarian seers of the dead belong to this group of „*mora* seers”.

An important European type of shamanistic fertility magician who was active on behalf of their community is the wind magician, who was also initiated in the troop of the dead – or to be more specific, among the wind souls traveling in storm clouds. It was a generally known feature of the European mythologies, as mentioned earlier, that the ancestors – that is, the „good dead” – of the community ensured fertility. The returning dead also had a significant role in regulating the weather. These were the troops of wind souls, atoning souls who became identified with the „cloud-leading souls” and the unbaptized souls. These wind souls were the patrons of the wind magicians, who were automatically the enemies of the bad dead who stole crops and rain and the demonic creatures and witches who associated with them.

Among the types that Carlo Ginzburg established, they belong to the mostly male „battling” fertility magicians. However, Ginzburg made no subdivisions, whereas we shall divide wind magicians from the „werewolf magicians” discussed later, on the grounds of the difference between their guardian-calling spirits. Admittedly, this division is often theoretical, and several concrete examples from our documents demonstrate that some magicians and seers could possess werewolf and *mora* features simultaneously. Wind magicians are close (male) relatives of the seeing women, mentioned above. The two different seers or magicians constitute a characteristic dual system. The symbolic equivalent of this duality is the already-

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<sup>579</sup> Some researchers, without sufficient evidence, have suggested that the figure of the Scandinavian Lucy may be connected to the „women’s line”, which would be interesting for us because of Saint Lucy’s soul. See M. Höfler; Ström.

<sup>580</sup> The witches also have fairy features: the witness, who told the story, was there with the little girl, and she claims that there was hospitality and dance too. See (from 1749 in Földvár, Heves County) Schram, 1:412.

<sup>581</sup> 1750, in Schram, 1970, 1:283–85, 290–91.

<sup>582</sup> For this type, see Moldován, „Eróst fáj a fejem, ha megyek látomásba, pokolba vaj mennyországba.”

mentioned feature of southern Slavic mora beliefs: magicians were born in a white caul, and moras in a black one.

The southern Slavic *vetrovnjak* ('windy'), the type of *stuha* or *zduhač* that was *not* born in a caul, just like the Eastern European *planetnyk*, *chmurnik*, and their other fellows named after wind, belong to the circle of wind magicians that spread throughout the whole of Central Europe.<sup>583</sup> French documents speak about similar magicians. The enemies were the magician souls of alien villages or rain-stealing witches; the two are essentially the same.<sup>584</sup> It is very likely that the „cloud leaders” in sources from ancient Greece and the Middle Ages in Central and Western Europe denoted such mediators, too. The *nephodioktai*, *tempestarii*, or *tempestatum ductors*,<sup>585</sup> and the above shed light on an agrarian shamanism palpable among the ancient past of several European peoples. Hungarian documents describe the doubles of wind magicians as „wind” or „shadow”, and their initiation as flying up to the wind souls who are striding in storms. The doubles or shadows of magicians who had fallen into a trance and who flew with the wind played the central roles in shamanistic battles. Rain was the prize of group soul battles: it had to be won from the magician souls of neighboring areas or villages, or from their patrons, the „bad dead” wind souls; or hail would be chased back to those who sent it to destroy their meadows.

The functions that wind magicians fulfilled do not seem to have had a large arena within Hungary's system of early Modern Age village witchcraft, which was based upon neighborhood conflict, as we mentioned in Chapter 4. There we referred to narratives about witches' sabbats in the Szeged trials, with special reference to the motifs, relevant here, of stealing or selling rain, or picking dew. There are some trial documents that probably refer to this type of magician. Mihály Szvetics, tried in Pécs in 1752, was a *táltos*, a treasure seeker, a healer, and a weather magician who fended off hail.<sup>586</sup> He was born a seventh child, and could predict fire. The solitary piece of concrete evidence for Szvetics's summons to court on accusations of sorcery, charlatanism, theft, and carrying out *táltos* and weather-magician activities was a spell, uttered in the open air, for sending away hail. This reflected the texts and practices of Church benedictions for sending away storms that were and still are popularly invoked.<sup>587</sup> However, the fact that he used the spell against magicians who were sending lightning refers to shamanistic soul battles, that is, to the storm battles of the wind magicians that were accompanied by storms and lightning.

We can surmise that wind magicians were behind the guardian spirits who protected crops (perhaps from hail) documented in the Szeged trials. Mrs. György Hódi, a witch, portrayed a dialogue in her confession in 1737: „Have you seen that one of the rows of grape vines has a bigger crop...? The reason is that one has better protectors than the others and they do not take away so much of its profit”.<sup>588</sup> From the trial in Vas County, in 1654, we know of Kristóf Szauer, a „meadow watchman” who protected seedling crops from „stone rain” in Szalónak.<sup>589</sup> It is not out of the question that this trial documented a wind magician for posterity.

Returning once more to the European parallels, the relationship between wind magicians and the system of witchcraft is marked not only by battles against witches, but also

<sup>583</sup> For a summary, see Moszyński, 652–53. For the most important published documentation, see Dordević, 237–50; Zečević, 149–51; Udziela; and Dagmar Burkhart, 83–84. The legendary figures of the Croatian and Hungarian *garabanciás* and the Romanian *şolomonar* also have the features of wind magicians, which once carried out mediatory activities. See Jagić; Gaster; and Erdész, 1984, 114–38. For further detail and connections with one of the Modern Age Hungarian *táltos* types, see Pócs.

<sup>584</sup> Multedo 1982; Ravis-Giordani 1979; Bouteiller 1958.

<sup>585</sup> A. Franz, 2:28–29; Platelle, 87. In connection with the rain-stealing witch, see also note 26 in Chapter 4.

<sup>586</sup> Szentkirályi 1917.

<sup>587</sup> Pócs 1983.

<sup>588</sup> Reizner 1900, 519.

<sup>589</sup> Schramm 1970, 2:724.

in that these magicians dealt with finding witches (for example, in the case of the *mazzeri* in Corsica), as well as fulfilling the role of seeing the dead. This latter fact indicates that the duality of the male function of fertility magicians and the female function of seeing the dead is not absolute. Since it is all part of one system, the functions, *usually* divided, could be fulfilled by the same person in given instances. We will see this in the case of the Hungarian *táltos* women.

#### Werewolf magicians and snake seers

Several types of European shamanistic magicians could be characterized as werewolf magicians. They belong in this category as „battling” fertility magicians and „treasure seers”. According to Hungarian witch trial documents, all of these were present in Hungary, as well as in the entire Central and Eastern European area. Let us briefly examine them on the basis of our European sources in order to facilitate the interpretation of the Hungarian trial documents.

A characteristic of one of these types was that they fought battles in the otherworld in groups in order to capture or regain stolen crops. These magicians were born in a caul or with a double set of teeth. These „surplus body parts” ensured their ability to achieve trance, as well as being the symbolic manifestations of their animal doubles.<sup>590</sup> The patrons and calling spirits of these magicians were the „good” werewolf demons,<sup>591</sup> the variant of the Serbian and Croatian *stuha* an *zduhač*, born in a caul, and the *benandante* from Friuli of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century witch trials (discovered by Carlo Ginzburg) who belong to the line of fertility magicians that fought in military orders. From the witch-hunt era we know of trials of werewolf magicians in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Livonia and Latvia.<sup>592</sup> Roman Jakobson and his coauthors described related types from eastern Slavic and southern Slavic heroic epics.<sup>593</sup>

The combative nature of werewolf magicians ties them to Indo-European „warrior” shamanism.<sup>594</sup> In the case of Germanic peoples it is connected to the warrior function of Odin.<sup>595</sup> The *stuha* had an animal alter ego that fought with them, and these battles were fought with various household and agricultural tools. The enemies were alien magicians, or the dead and „dead” werewolves who were stealing crops, as well as demonic witches with werewolf characteristics. The enemies would often be identified with current military enemies of other countries; for example, we know of battles between Turks and Serbs, and Albanians and Montenegrans. Soul troops with military ranks marched on the battlefield of the otherworld in military order and with flags. As we discussed in relation to cropstealing witches, soul battles coincided with the days of Saint George, Saint John, and Saint Lucy, as well as Christmas and other death festivals and werewolf days.<sup>596</sup>

Another important type of werewolf magician is the Croatian-Slovenian magician referred to as *kresnik*, *krsnik*, or *vedomec*, first mentioned in Hungarian literature by Géza

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<sup>590</sup> For being born in a caul as a werewolf characteristic in eastern Slav heroic epics, see Jakobson and Szeftel, 345–46.

<sup>591</sup> For summaries on various types of magicians, see Moszyński, 654–55; and Pócs, 53–61, and .

<sup>592</sup> For Livonia and Latvia, see O. Höfler, 345–51; and Straubergs, 88.

<sup>593</sup> Jakobson and Ružičić 1950; Jakobson and Szeftel 1947.

<sup>594</sup> The „combative seer” with shamanistic features can also be found in Irish heroic epics. An example is Fionn Mac Cumhaill, who was born in a caul and made journeys to the otherworld as a combatant along with his combative troop. See O’Hogain, 213–23.

<sup>595</sup> Dumézil 1985.

<sup>596</sup> For a more detailed description of the various types of magicians, see Ginzburg; Bošković-Stulli, 288–89; Klaniczay; Đorđević, 237–50; Zečević, 149–51.

Róheim.<sup>597</sup> Gábor Klaniczay<sup>598</sup> called attention to these figures as a possible parallel to the *táltos* in his work following the study of Maja Bošković-Stulli.<sup>599</sup> The alter egos of these magicians fought battles in coupes with the magicians of the neighboring village, clans, and region. The prize of battle was the recovery of stolen crops. The appearance of an underworldly „snake goddess”, as mentioned earlier in connection with demons stealing crops, is in line with these.

The Serb, Bulgarian, and Macedonian *zmej*, *zmaj*, *zmija*, and *zmajevit čovek* (snake, dragon, snake man) magicians were reputedly born in cauls, and even more frequently in a snakeskin, or even as a snake. Many were said to have wings. They might be an eagle, or their fathers might have been snakes, eagles, roosters, ganders, and so on. This constitutes a form of reincarnation because the animal father was a guardian spirit embodying the ancestors of the community. A contemporary Bulgarian document speaks of a big eagle sitting at the top of an oak tree and watching out for the whole village. Sometimes the shamanistic abilities of magicians were already apparent in infancy. At times when there was a storm or approaching hail, they fell into trances, and their souls, leaving their bodies, took the form of the animal corresponding to their fathers and their birth marks. They were said to fight battles with the leadership of „fiery”, heavenly, and lightning guardian spirits against underworldly „watery” dragons and other hostile demons who brought hail. In this watery-fiery battle, the antagonists shot lightning and ice at each other, and this exchange was followed by a storm with a tremendously powerful noise. Their animal souls often fought along with them as alter egos.  
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This image of battle can be connected to the Baltic and Slavic variants of one of the reconstructed fundamental myths in Indo-European and Indo-Iranian mythology. The topic is a mythological universe, wherein the fiery heavenly gods fight with the watery monster from the underworld.<sup>601</sup> In the basic opposition of the reconstructed myth, on the side of the gods stood the Baltic Perkunas or the Slavic thunder god Perun bringing fertility. This is the predecessor of the Indo-European storm god who lives on in the figure of Saint Elisha (who also appears as the guardian spirit of the *zmej* magician). The other party was the dragon of chaos, who withheld the water or brought flood. When this creature was conquered, the waters were freed and the rain began to fall. According to another variation on the same theme, a captive cow became free from the enemy cow thieves. Compare this with the known Thracian, Old Indian, and Greek myths: it was all about liberating rain or milk.

These two aims ruled the activities of the Modern Age magicians and the soul battles of shamanistic magicians against the witches discussed here. The reconstruction draws demons who steal milk and rain, and their enemies, the heavenly and fiery gods, into the same mythical context. It can be presumed that legends of soul battles of *zmej* magicians are connected to the *sujet* of the reconstructed myth. They simultaneously point to the mythical context of shamanistic practice. The latter leads to suspicions about a certain shamanism that was connected to the figure of Perkunas or Perun,<sup>602</sup> although this has not cropped up among the research on the myth so far.

One of the mythological enemies of the thunder god was the cattle-stealing monster, which could be connected to the figures of the crop-stealing demon as well as to the Eastern

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<sup>597</sup> Róheim 1984, 191.

<sup>598</sup> Klaniczay 1984.

<sup>599</sup> Bošković-Stulli 1953. For Slovenian documents, see Kelemina, 35–40, 89–90; and for a wider context of the magician, see Pócs, 53–55, and .

<sup>600</sup> For the documentation of the *zmej* magician, see Moszyński, 654–57; Đorđević, 248; Zečević, 149–51; Marinov, 208–9; and Georgieva, 79–83. For its Albanian relative, the *drangue*, see Hahn, 163.

<sup>601</sup> Besides Germanic, Thracian, and Celtic traces, Baltic-Slav variants were reconstructed by the linguists Jakobson and Ružičić; Ivanov and Toporov; Civjan.

<sup>602</sup> For details on this assumption, see Pócs.

European witch of the Modern Age who fought with a scutcher and had cow, hemp, and spinning attributes. As cited in the discussion concerning the night witch, as well as in the previous chapter in connection with Saint Lucy's stool, it was thought that in the same creatures traces of the aforementioned Scythian, Thracian, and Greek spinning goddesses had been found, and furthermore, the figure of Mokoš, the Slavic goddess connected with hemp, spinning, water, and the dead.<sup>603</sup>

The researchers of the reconstructed myth came across literary and linguistic data referring to shamanism in the context of the Baltic and Slavic Velnias or Vells, and Volos or Veles „death” cattle god,<sup>604</sup> and not in the context of Perkunas or Perun. I connected the watery enemies from the underworld of the zmej dragon magician with a shamanism linked to the god Veles, and with the Middle Age and Modern Age Baltic and Slav snake, devil, or helping spirit incarnations of Velnias or Veles.<sup>605</sup> Following this, the traces of Veles shamanism would have survived parallel to the presumed Perun shamanism, as the „white” and „black” branches of the same mythical and ritual system.<sup>606</sup>

Contemporary belief legends, as well as the reconstructed myth, seem to underpin the presumption that the two systems are connected or identical—legends where magicians and witches associated with heaven and the underworld oppose each other, or fiery and watery guardian spirits from heaven and the underworld fight. As far as „black” shamanism goes, the witches and magicians known from eastern and southern Slavic witch beliefs who were initiated in the underworld among snakes, and also the goddess figure with the underworld characteristics of snakes and spinning, as ambivalent creatures guarding fertility, could also be considered as connected. This goddess figure is the crop-stealing enemy of shamanistic magicians ensuring fertility, and, on the other hand, the creature of Modern Age belief legends who carried initiation into knowledge. The folklore motifs of the snake belong to this latter group of motifs, which are connected to snakes and other watery animals from the underworld, and are used before Saint George's day for knowledge, „seeing”, conjuring, or „freeing” milk and cows, all within the context of the dragon (as the enemy of the heavenly conqueror) that was conquered by Saint George.

At the same time, all this again proves the common roots of European shamanism and witchcraft. It seems (also from a Slavic perspective similar to Germanic past history) that it is about two opposing aspects of the same system. Many of the researchers of Slavic witchcraft and shamanism – for example, Tolstoj and Tolstaja – handled this question in this way, even if they did not classify the phenomenon discussed here as quintessential shamanism. The Russian researcher N'ikit'inoj<sup>607</sup> talked about the relationship between shamanism and witchcraft as the „black” and „white” sides of the same system.<sup>608</sup> True, he did not, or could not, enter into the problematics of possible historical connections.

There are several reasons to stop here to give this point a little more thought. One of these is that we have already seen this duality within a system in the discussion of mora-type seers and wind magicians. Carlo Ginzburg called attention to the same phenomenon concerning all European shamanistic magicians when he talked about the duality of battling

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<sup>603</sup> For the belief figures Mokoš, Saint Paraskeva, and *kedd asszonya* (Tuesday's woman) interconnecting with each other, see note 80 of Chapter 3.

<sup>604</sup> The main point is the *vel-* stem of the term „Veles” and its relationship to words associated with the shaman Odin, such as *Valkyrja* and *Valholl* (Valkyrie and Valhalla, the realm of the dead) and with the Celtic word *fili* (poet), which also has a shamanistic context. See Schütz; Jakobson; Ivanov and Toporov; and Ward.

<sup>605</sup> For more details on these presumptions, see Pócs. For the connections of the Baltic Vells/Velnias and snake—swamp devils, see Gimbutas; and for the Latvian witch trials from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Straubergs, 88.

<sup>606</sup> Tolstoj and Tolstaja 1981.

<sup>607</sup> N'ikit'inoj 1928.

<sup>608</sup> I discuss this in more detail in my study of a presumed Slavic dual shamanism; see Pócs. On the questions of black shamanism, see, for example, Eliade, 180.

male fertility magicians and nonwarrior female seers. However, a dividing line should not be drawn between the facts of the „combatant” or „non combatant” because combat, as we have seen, could be a feature of the most underworldly of mora witches. The duality is marked by the persons of the guardian and initiating spirits, or the mythological context of the magicians. The main evidence of the duality of werewolf magicians is to be found in the figures of the *táltos* and the magicians of the Hungarian witch trials, as well as in certain beliefs referring to seeing and gaining knowledge.

Let us examine the latter first: the correspondence of the Central and Eastern European werewolf and mora seers' initiation with the Saint Lucy's stool to the initiation with a snake. According to a 1717 document from Tolna County, a snake's head had to be cut off „with Saint Elena's coin” on the day before Saint George's Day, stuffed with garlic, put onto the rim of a hat, and then worn to church the following day. The wearer would, as a consequence, see any witch leaving the church, blushing.<sup>609</sup> It is evident, both from the initiation with Saint Lucy's stool and its contemporary parallels,<sup>610</sup> that in this we witness the doubles of demonic „dead” witches and simultaneously an initiation into „seeing”.

Contemporary parallels refer to rituals for gaining knowledge carried out on the „werewolf days” around Saint George's Day and Easter. These were connected to eggs and *lidérc* chicks, and were frequent in areas of Central and Eastern Europe where witches with werewolf characters dominated.<sup>611</sup> The richest materials referring to the methods quoted from the trials of Tolna County are also known in connection with the Romanian *strigoi*. The snake-seer saw a dead *strigoi* as it was stealing milk or crops, or a cow-witch as it was going to the witches' gathering on cowback, a scutcher, or a distaff.<sup>612</sup> Interpreting the above, we could say that this witch was initiated with the help of the snake spirit by an underworld goddess with spinning or cow attributes.

The documentation about Romanian and Bulgarian magicians and witches gives a guideline for the way in which these legendary wordings were reflections of (former) genuine practices in folklore. These women got their abilities to use trance by obtaining snake or chicken helping spirits. Their tasks as seers spread from healing and things connected to giving birth, to seeing treasure, thieves, and the dead.<sup>613</sup> Through these features, the figure of a black magician, with the ability to „see” and maintain contact with the underworld, is sketched out. Based on the above analogues, the Hungarian *lidérc* witch and magician, which have chicken, lizard, or snake-helping spirits, belong here as *watery* creatures, in opposition to the *fiery* *lidérc*.<sup>614</sup> The Hungarian *lidérc* owner was a seer with underworld and nocturnal connotations, and they embody the black, watery, and mostly female variants of werewolf magicians. At the same time, they are related to the mora creature. The *lidérc*, as an incubus (*lidérc-mare*), is more of a mora creature. We shall offer further examples for the mora-werewolf relationship.<sup>615</sup> It seems that this night seer is hidden behind the satanic connotation of the witch holding a *lidérc* in Hungarian trials, as well as by the secondary process of demonologization.

Let us examine the trial documents that refer to functioning specialists rather than witch beliefs. János Somogyi, a wise shepherd from Sopron County who was a werewolf, had

<sup>609</sup> Schram 1970, 2:463, 465.

<sup>610</sup> For a more complete summary of current parallels, see Fűvessy.

<sup>611</sup> For more detail, see Pócs, 326–27. For Central and Eastern European documentation on the methods, see Róheim; and Kovács.

<sup>612</sup> Pamfile 1916.

<sup>613</sup> For the documentation of the Romanian, Bulgarian, and Serbian witch, see Marian, 3:96–97; Muşlea and Bîrlea, 174–81; Marinov, 213–14, and Zečević, 114–19.

<sup>614</sup> For more detail about this aspect of Bulgarian and Romanian witches, the Hungarian *lidérc* chick as a watery, underworldly helping spirit, see Pócs.

<sup>615</sup> For *lidérc*, wise man, and witch connections, for *lidérc* figure variations, and for Hungarian and Slavic relationships, see in more detail Pócs, *ibid.*, and 323–25.

a lidérc.<sup>616</sup> He himself was a seer and healer, saw lost horses, and identified thieves. With the help of his lidérc, he could see „by their person” whomsoever he wanted, meaning the doubles or, in certain cases, the alter ego of the thief. In his confession under torture, he admitted to a little helping devil. In this demonologized version of the lidérc, it is interesting that it kept the characteristics of the „double”. János Somogyi „and his devil know who hurt him”, and as the alter ego of its owner this devil also guarded his herd in his absence.

We have to mention a unique document referring to the positive and possibly shamanistic aspect of the lidérc. A lidérc hen that was kept at a house in Nagykároly was mentioned in a 1745 trial as the beast of burden of the witches flying to their sabbats.<sup>617</sup> Transmogrifying a shamanistic soul-animal into a beast of burden is practically the rule in epics. Nevertheless, we cannot claim that this lidérc legend is about a genuine shamanistic soul trip, or about an actual magical activity. However, even as a legendary text, it contains a significant motif: these witches from Szatmár, traveling on the back of a lidérc, were dueling with „swords shaped like scutchers” on their witches’ sabbat. This links them to the group of underworld snake goddesses who spin and are connected to werewolf magicians. This, at the same time, is the Hungarian concordance of the motif closely related to the Romanian strigoi. The object of doing battle with scutchers is clear in a Romanian context: the strigoi souls of two neighboring villages fight to prevent the demons of disease from entering their villages. This motif of a battle against diseases coming from the underworld with the tools of breaking hemp reemphasizes the relationship of the underworld goddess with hemp attributes with the underworld black werewolf magician. What is more, the motif makes all of these a part of the figures of Hungarian magicians and witches with a lidérc.

Among the *táltos* written about in our trials, several could be classified among the black werewolf magicians on the grounds of their activities, which included seeing treasure; discovering thieves, lost objects, and animals; and healing. These were the „semi-*táltos*”, who did not fight battles and only healed. The same is true of some of the treasure seers. These *táltos* and seers will be discussed in the next section.

#### Seers, semi-*táltos*, witch identifiers

Two distinct principles applied to bewitchment, identification, and healing in the village witchcraft of the early Modern Age. One was that maleficia were healed by the witches themselves; this is the system of the ambivalent witch described in the previous chapter. Independent identifiers and healers also fulfilled the functions of the enemies of the witch. As I discuss later in this chapter, it seems that there were also special witch seers and, in the Hungarian Great Plain (Alföld) at least, the function of remedying and bewitching was fulfilled by the *táltos*, along with other community tasks.

Nonetheless, diagnosing the maleficia of witches, identifying their person, and healing the injury were part of the varied community tasks of seers and magicians, which also included fortune-telling, seeing the dead, locating treasure, and so on. Almost every magician dealt with the first three tasks. Our documents describe the roles magicians played within witchcraft, but it is rare to see them in a wider context in the belief system. Consequently, our starting point with magicians is also in the roles that they fulfilled within witchcraft. References are usually brief and patchy, and often we have to rely for help in interpretation upon noncontemporaneous or non-Hungarian parallels.

Most of the specialists in the villages and small towns of early Modern Age Hungary emphasized revealing concealed objects. For example, some specialized in seeing the dead or were primarily healers, like the *táltos* discussed above. Here, we shall discuss those whose

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<sup>616</sup> Schram 1970, 2:188–93.

<sup>617</sup> Szirmay 1809, 81.

practices were primarily concerned with „seeing”. The sum and substance of their activities is also expressed in the term „seer” that refers to them. As is clear from our investigations so far, both werewolf and mora creatures had seer variants par excellence. Various types were contextualized in the belief system, including „night women” (distinguished by initiation techniques using Saint Lucy’s stool), „mora seers”; werewolf variants (characterized by underworldly „snake-initiation”); and Hungarian witches, magicians, who were in possession of lidérc, and their East European relatives, the „black” branch of the above dual systems, including the Hungarian semi-táltos.

The majority of seers and táltos in our trials were seers of money. They helped the villagers – or often, in eighteenth-century Transylvania, their noble clients – to find buried treasure and money.<sup>618</sup> This activity was not sharply divided from locating lost animals, discovering the fate of people who were away, foretelling the future, helping to catch thieves, or predicting death, birth, the outcome of illness, or fire and war in a town. In brief, their speciality was in seeing things that were distant in time or space, or that were concealed underground. In one definite and a number of less certain cases, there are also reports about seeing the dead.

Among the seers who practiced lay techniques, specialists stood out who engaged in more complex activities and embraced many areas of seeing, as we saw in the previous section with respect to the dual-function táltos. Our trial documents range from a seeing woman in Kolozsvár in 1582 to a swindling money seer in Eger in 1768, and they encompass the entire language area. Seers occurred in greater numbers in the eastern part of the country, and most frequently in Debrecen and various Transylvanian towns. Thirty-two were actually referred to as seers or were not given titles at all (documents sometimes talk about more than one seer without mentioning individual names), and eleven were dubbed as táltos excluding the reference to the aforementioned táltos with complex activities. We do not know to what extent these number represent the true proportions because references to seers and táltos independent of witchcraft only randomly became a part of the documentation of the witch hunts. Foretelling the future or looking for lost animals never became cause for an accusation of witchcraft, and in itself neither did seeing money, unless there was a swindle involved or some other impopriety. Fortunately for our purposes, many of the seers dealt with witch identification too, and consequently came to be documented in the trials.

Below I present some characteristic and highly descriptive examples of seers that include details either of techniques or of background beliefs. As a first example of a seeing táltos, Mrs. István Szathmári (née Anna Belényesi) was a woman from Hajdúszoboszló whose activities were discussed at her trial in 1715.<sup>619</sup> She was a characteristic táltos with mora features. She confined her own abilities to reading the stars, but she also had a guardianlike „táltos landlady” from whom she learnt the art of the táltos during her captivity in Turkey, and she was, as she put it, her „real landlady”. She had remained in a „double” relationship with her ever since, and her landlady knew and could hear from great distances what she was saying.

Generally her community used her knowledge to recover lost animals, and besides that she healed her patients and predicted their fate. She also „saw” money, but only in her maiden years; following marriage she was not permitted to do it. (Compare this with the southern Slavic mora, who could only remain a mora while a virgin and before marriage.)

We have three táltos from Debrecen who, according to our documents, „saw” only money. One was János Csillám;<sup>620</sup> another was Péter Kécsináló, a swindling money seer.

<sup>618</sup> For documents about money seers at witch trials as additions from the Modern Age, see Füvessy. Money seeing and the methods used for it that can be seen from the trials were widespread in the Alföld as legendary motifs even in the twentieth century.

<sup>619</sup> Balogh 1958.

<sup>620</sup> Széll 1892, 110.

Their methods were not revealed, though it is possible that Késcsináló had none at all, and simply spread his own fame for seeing money: „he claimed to be the prince of the *táltos* characters.”<sup>621</sup> The defendant of the final *táltos* trial was Erzsébet Barna, who also saw only money, using a steel mirror that she obtained from Mrs. Szatmári, whose daughter was a *táltos*.<sup>622</sup> She carried out her seeing with her female companions, and she taught them the mirror method; it seems here that generations of *táltos* bequeathed their knowledge of seeing money to each other. A third *táltos* money seer, Judit Nagy, a woman from Debrecen, mostly remedied bewitchment, and only carried on seeing money as a sideline.<sup>623</sup> Also worth mentioning is Mrs Szaniszlai, numbered among the battling *táltos*, who had a multifaceted money-seeing activity conducted at a high level.<sup>624</sup> It was not incidental that she was active in Debrecen, where it seems that this was a flourishing profession during the embattled eighteenth century. She gave advice to a large number of people and had others dig. Her methods included judging from fingernails, pouring wax, divination procedures with hanging bread, and bread put on a wooden plate, using sat and soil.

Anók Fejér, a semi-*táltos* who cropped up in many settlements around northeastern Hungary between 1716 and 1732, belongs here because of her title. She was a healer and half-*táltos*, and had been „since the tartars bewitched her”; nevertheless, there are no known specific references to her precise activities, such as whether she remedied maleficium.<sup>625</sup> The scarce material does not necessarily present this woman as a seer, although considering her label it seems likely that she was.

As for the „non-*táltos*”seers, there does not seem to be much difference in their activities or methods. For example, in 1748 Demeter (alias András) Farkas, a seer from Eger, saw money, together with his companions, from his fingernail smudged with white poppyseed oil and with the help of his book of treasure-hunting magic; additionally he saw lost animals and the dead. To find a missing animal, he had himself tied up and then he fasted; in due course he would see the lost animal in a vision.<sup>626</sup> This is rare documentary evidence from our witch trials of deliberately induced trance.

„Spontaneous seeing” and instances of direct communication were presumably not considered to be worthy of recording, and so we have no idea of their true proportion in comparison with ritual techniques. It was probably the case that it was reported only when somebody could see, as in the case of Mrs. Demeter Páskuly, a seer from Szászrégen, Maros-Torda County. She saw money and stolen animals, and moved rapidly like the wind, in the fashion of the *mora* creatures. She could bring herbal grasses from the snowy mountains within an hour, and „she was there and back from Bucharest town in a third”.<sup>627</sup> János Czigány’s aunt saw money in Kecskemét and found out about the state of health of a person away from home by reading beans, and also by using a coin swimming in water and an egg placed onto her palm.<sup>628</sup> A document recorded spontaneous seeing in Zala when a seer from Pölöske dreamt about the person of a thief.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> Komáromy 1910, 203.

<sup>622</sup> Széll 1892, 110.

<sup>623</sup> *ibid.*, 112–13.

<sup>624</sup> 1711, in Komáromy 1910, 249–54.

<sup>625</sup> 1728–29, Nagyszöllös, Ugocsa County, in Andor Komáromy 1910, 420; 1737, Kisvárd, Szabolcs County, in Schram, 2:356. For the destiny of Anók Fejér, who also appeared in Debrecen see the study that discusses the trials of Debrecen in Kristóf, 115. She was expelled from Debrecen in 1716 and later she appeared in many trials as a healer, including: Borsova, Bereg County, 1724; Tiszaújlak, Ugocsa County, 1726; Hegyközpályi, Bihar County; Apagy, Szabolcs County, 1731; and Feketeadó, Ugocsa County, 1732.

<sup>626</sup> 1748, in Sugár 1987, 174–75.

<sup>627</sup> Szászrégen, 1734.

<sup>628</sup> 1691–96, Kecskemét, in Schram 1970, 1:458–59.

<sup>629</sup> 1740, in *ibid.*, 2:594.

The methods mentioned here more or less reflect the whole. Among divinational methods, the most frequently occurring were reading a bolter sieve; turning a bolter sieve; pouring wax (predicting the future or the circumstances from the shape of hot wax pured into water); and using hanging objects, most commonly bread. Reading beans was also prevalent, especially in Transylvania. Other recurrent methods were reading the stars and various modes of cathoptromancy, that is mirror divination, which constituted an important group among the methods, such as applying mirrors or other objects used as mirrors, or seeing treasure from a fingernail covered with saliva, also used as a mirror. All of these procedures were general European divinational methods, and most had a long history. They are also known to number among the practices of elite magicians, with the exceptions of using a fingernail smeared with saliva, reading beans, and pouring wax. Reading beans spread widely in Central and Southeastern Europe, especially in the Balkans.<sup>630</sup> Pouring wax was known throughout the whole of Europe as a popular diagnostic experiment. Methods using mirrors were also part of the general early modern European practice of digging for treasure.<sup>631</sup>

Two things are striking here. One is the wide and varied use of the magical and divination techniques of elite magic, and the other is the use of spontaneous seeing, mediation techniques, and divination techniques that created only a symbolic connection to the supernatural, but were used together and were evidently considered to be equal. Beliefs surrounding the procedures underpin this idea, too. If, for example, hostile spirits hindered those who were looking for treasure through symbolic methods, then they too „battled” in their souls; therefore they could enter the alternative world through symbolic methods.<sup>632</sup>

Some of the Hungarian *táltos* and seers were active within the institution of village witchcraft in the detection of bewitchment. These figures cannot really be separated from the references to „independent” witch seers. It can be established that there were witch-seeing specialists who functioned in small numbers within the system of witchcraft. They were most frequently dubbed „seers” and „wise men” or „wise women”. It seems that their techniques were based on the spontaneous seeing of their doubles. On the other hand, they used a variety of divination procedures. There are references to identifiers within the village in roughly one-fifth of maleficium cases, whereas there is less mention of seers from alien or other villages. There is even a parish priest among them.<sup>633</sup>

Every now and then, there are seers in the trials who came from abroad. In a trial in Kisvárdá in 1742, a German soldier crops up who stayed in lodgings and who was a healer and finder.<sup>634</sup> At other times there were German, Turkish, and Romanian seers,<sup>635</sup> and even a pilgrim who dealt with recognizing witches.<sup>636</sup> In one instance, there was a foreign seer who could point out, by name, the withes in the village. However, most of the time we know nothing about the techniques of these identifying people; usually they were just referred to without names, as in: „she said who the witches in Farkas Street were.”<sup>637</sup> There were only a few of these „wandering seers,”<sup>638</sup> yet they still regularly cropped up all over the country.

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<sup>630</sup> see Wichman 1907.

<sup>631</sup> See Róheim, 217–25; Delatte; Dodds. For turning the bolter sieve and other methods connected to sieves, see Fehrle; Gunda.

<sup>632</sup> The trance-inducing function of *crystallomantia* and *cathoptromantia* procedures were known in antiquity and the Middle Ages. In these a mirror or a crystal was employed to „see” or create visions for predicting the future. See, for example, Dodds, 191–217.

<sup>633</sup> 1713, Csorna, Sopron County, in Schram 1970, 2:98; Kossuth, Pozsony County, in *ibid.*, 1:498.

<sup>634</sup> Szabolcs County, in Schram 1970, 2:353, 369.

<sup>635</sup> Schram, 1:229; 1715, Felsőbánya, Szatmár County, in Abafi, 302; 1728, Rimaszombat, the trial of Zsófia and Katalin Kenyeres; and 1723, Bagos, Bihar County, in Andor Komáromy, 314.

<sup>636</sup> Vác, in *ibid.*, 1:472.

<sup>637</sup> Komáromy 1910, 110; Kisújszállás, 1749.

<sup>638</sup> We have altogether ten references for seers who were not of foreign nationalities but came from abroad.

The bewitched went to seers themselves, or were taken if they were seriously ill; but often a relative could determine whether the root of the trouble was a maleficium, and if it was, then who the bewitcher had been. If they could ascertain only the fact of bewitchment („the harm comes from the evils”, „from a human”, and the like), even was important information because it meant that the bewitchment could not be remedied by the usual healers from the village. If the trouble „came from a human”, action had to be taken against the human and not against the illness.

According to our documents, seers from other villages naturally established only the fact of bewitchment and not the originator, although there are exceptions. From the methods apparent from the trial documents, the following is an excerpt from the aforementioned case of the parish priest's identification, a clear description of communication through an alter ego. Connected to the maleficium case of Mrs. Erdős, née Erzsébet Szekér, at her trial in 1734, there was talk of a witness who went to the holy well of Tét, and who then went to the parish priest to make her confession. All the way along a black dog followed her, „which dog the priest confessor... saw well, and... he told me that it had bewitched the fatens, that is, the woman in black from the upper neighborhood of Csorna,” meaning that her alter ego followed the bewitched. Then the priest „set trial” and summoned the woman with smoke. She came and „instantly the fatens said that it [the alter ego, i.e., the dog] had bewitched her. Then the priest answered: yes.” The priest then asked why she had come, [as part of the summoning ritual] and she answered that it was to ask for flour, to which the priest replied, „I can give you flour, but then let go of this woman.”<sup>639</sup>

The applied techniques correlate to the aforementioned divination procedure used for seeing. Among a few descriptive examples we might mention Mrs. Antal Dávid, a woman from Nagykörös, who saw the „deed” (the bewitchment buried in the ground) with a steel mirror, the instrument of money seers. She herself was also a money seer.<sup>640</sup> Another seer figured in the hearing in Gyulafehérvár in 1685. Ilona Lénárt told the future of people far away: she predicted the outcome of a war, found a thief, and saw money, and she could recognize a bewitching „tie”. She had several approaches to doing these things, including reading the stars and various ways of tying a kind of thread on her fingers.<sup>641</sup> A method involving the pouring of wax was documented in Kolozsvár in 1584; the purpose was to decide whether the trouble came from a human or from God.<sup>642</sup> A seer who came to Békés from Kecskemét in 1717 „threw withy”, which was a magical twig that twisted over treasure.<sup>643</sup> And so it goes in the thirty-five citations of non-táltos seers; a few more references mention only techniques that concern bewitchment and with identification.

Treasure seers, fortune-telling táltos, and seers who came from the „outside”, and who could find witches when necessary, were fewer in number than these perhaps independent witch seers. Nevertheless, they gained that role automatically, since their techniques of seeing were suitable only for finding supernatural witches without any further demands, and indeed they did not alter these methods, just like witch seers, using divination and symbolic techniques, and the means discussed above to summon to a house. On the other hand, divination techniques were rather expedient for selecting bewitchers, and deciding whether bewitchment had occurred. They were based on „marking out” answers from the supernatural to the identifiers' questions. To the degree that the scarce documentation allows us to draw conclusions, seers, seers of the dead, and shamanistic magicians were allocated the role of identifying witches automatically. The most detailed French analysis also points toward that.

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<sup>639</sup> Sopron County, in Schram 1970, 2:98.

<sup>640</sup> 1754, in Novák 1986, 298.

<sup>641</sup> Herner 1988b, 224–27.

<sup>642</sup> Komáromy 1910, 29.

<sup>643</sup> Csákabonyi 1960, 22–23. For a brief history of treasure hunting with a magic stick and its Hungarian references, see Pócs, 683.

There, seeing the dead and witches went on in the same system of communication with the supernatural, and through the same methods.<sup>644</sup>

The names of the Hungarian *táltos* who were simulancously witch identifiers should appear here – that is, besides the above-mentioned „battlig *táltos*”, who could also find witches. At the 1743 trial of Mrs. János Tótika is Simontornya, mention is made of a *táltos* from Dunapataj who identified bewitchment.<sup>645</sup> At Mrs. István Szűcs’ 1749 trial in Hódmezővásárhely, a „*táltos* woman” who identified a bewitcher is referred to. Péter Vecsési, a *táltos* who carried out a divination procedure in Kecskemét, observed the steam arising from a bath in order to predict the outcome of an illness. He also healed and gave advice on countering the maleficium of witches.<sup>646</sup> Mrs. János Tóth was reading (presumably bewitchment) from the stars in Turkey, but a witch hindered her.<sup>647</sup> (Compare this account with the battles of alter egos.) The roles of these seers fit the system, which is why it is striking how rarely they appeared as *táltos* identifiers. The core of their activities against witches was healing.

## 7. CONTACT WITH NIGHT-DEMONS: MORA-BEINGS AND THE WITCH

### Mora/moroi/lidérc

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 *ephiates* 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.<sup>648</sup> 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*.<sup>649</sup> 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.

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<sup>644</sup> Delcambre 1951, 27–41; Pinies 1983, 153–202.

<sup>645</sup> Schram 1970, 2:507.

<sup>646</sup> 1691, in Schram 1970, 1:459.

<sup>647</sup> Túrkeve, 1743.

<sup>648</sup> For a more detailed discussion: Pócs 2001b. For a broader overview of *mora/lidérc*-beings, see: Pócs 1988b, 145-170, Pócs 1994, 89-102, Pócs 1997a chapters 2-3 with bibliography. Some important works from this: Ranke 1933, Szendrey 1955, Peuckert 1960, Tillhagen, 1960, Strömbäck 1976/77, Lecouteux 1985b, 1987b, 1992; Lixfeld, G. 1971. In this context the recently collected *lidérc*-data of Vilmos Keszeg, and Enikő Csögör in Mezőség and Torda respectively: Keszeg 1999, 81-85, 291-306, Csögör 1998, 90-101.

<sup>649</sup> On some aspects of this question see Pócs 1999, chapters 2 and 7.

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 (*lidércsirke* 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.<sup>650</sup> 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.<sup>651</sup> Giovanni Pizza called attention to the interconnections between these motifs and drew interesting conclusions from them regarding European possession phenomena.<sup>652</sup>

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 4<sup>th</sup> century on.<sup>653</sup> (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, 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.

## Withches and their doubles

<sup>650</sup> However, as I indicated above, I have no space to discuss this question here. See: Pócs 1988b, 1994.

<sup>651</sup> Muşlea – Birlea 1970. 14.

<sup>652</sup> 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.

<sup>653</sup> Cf. 1980 chapter 6. Elsewhere Brown (1970. 31-34) writes about how by the 4<sup>th</sup> 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.”

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).<sup>654</sup> In as much as we can judge from the few studies dealing with this question, folk systems of witchcraft<sup>655</sup> were also influenced by the fact that from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the church's charges of possession became part of the persecution of witches.<sup>656</sup> It seems that the witch of folk belief systems owes its characteristics of possessor and possessed to its demonic and wizard "ancestors"<sup>657</sup> 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*, *jurodivyie* – holy fools– *ikotnitsi*, or the possessed wizards called *volchv* or *kudeshnik* who survive from the pagan past.<sup>658</sup> 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.<sup>659</sup> 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.<sup>660</sup> 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 *zmej/zmaj/zmija* wizards also had such "possessing" helping spirits.<sup>661</sup> 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.<sup>662</sup> 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").

<sup>654</sup> See in more detail on this question: Pócs 2001b; and Midelfort 1992.

<sup>655</sup> With respect to Spanish witchcraft see for example: Caro Baroja 1967. 158-166.

<sup>656</sup> On the French trials, see for example Mandrou 1968; Walker 1981; on the Salem trial: Boyer – Nissenbaum 1974.

<sup>657</sup> On the components and parallels of the belief figure of the witch, see Pócs 1997. Chapter 3.

<sup>658</sup> For data on these beings see for example Ivanits 106-107; Ryan 1999. 240; Vinogradova 1998. 131-140.

<sup>659</sup> 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 1996. 167-274.

<sup>660</sup> Edsman (1967) draws a characteristic picture of the ambivalence of the helping spirits of an 18th century Swedish healing woman.

<sup>661</sup> On this question I am preparing an overview, but I have already written about helping spirits, see: Pócs 1988b and 1991-1992.

<sup>662</sup> Siikala 1990.

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.<sup>663</sup> 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.”<sup>664</sup>) 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.<sup>665</sup> 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).<sup>666</sup>

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”).<sup>667</sup>

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).<sup>668</sup> 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.<sup>669</sup> In keeping with this, one of the distinctive names of the Russian and

<sup>663</sup> Marinov 1914. 213-215; Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970. 171; Pamfile 1916. 136; Candrea 1944. 148; Đorđević 1953. 6; Zečević 1981. 140; Krauss 1908. 57-70; Lilek 1869. 202-225; Mikac 1934. 197; Perkowski 1972. 31.

<sup>664</sup> The trial of Mrs Ferenc Deserits, née Kis Erzsébet, Vadosfalva: Klaniczay – Kristóf – Pócs 1989. 664.

<sup>665</sup> See the literature mentioned in footnote 116.

<sup>666</sup> In more detail on this question see: Pócs 1991-1992.

<sup>667</sup> Marinov 1914. 214; Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970. 173-174.

<sup>668</sup> Lackovits 1995. 125.

<sup>669</sup> In Eastern Europe werewolves not discussed in this study also play a role in these concept, they are connected to *mora* beings in several ways. See Pócs 1999. 46-49.

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.<sup>670</sup>

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.<sup>671</sup> 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.<sup>672</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>673</sup>

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.)<sup>674</sup>

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

<sup>670</sup> On South-Eastern European “dual-souled” witches and wizards, see: Tolstoi –Tolstaia 1981. 44-120.

<sup>671</sup> 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. 344; Burkhart 1989. 90-93; Marinov 1914. 215; Đorđević 1953; Boković-Stulli 1990; Zelenin 1927. 395; Kovács 1973. 51-87; Kurochkin 1990; Candrea 1944. 106-152; Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970. 244-277.

<sup>672</sup> For a summary with representative examples, see Pócs, 1999 chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>673</sup> Lecouteux 1992. 220-224. On this terminology: Lecouteux 1985a.

<sup>674</sup> For example in his South African and 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> 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. 626-627. 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. 67-76.

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<sup>675</sup> 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.<sup>676</sup>)

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,<sup>677</sup> 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.<sup>678</sup> 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.<sup>679</sup> 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.<sup>680</sup>

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.<sup>681</sup> Here again we are dealing with only one possible interpretation of a broader concept. The various techniques of causing harm (maleficium) –

<sup>675</sup>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. 78-79. L /I. IX. type.

<sup>676</sup>In greater detail on these methods, with examples see: Pócs 2001b.

<sup>677</sup>Walker 1981. 7-10.

<sup>678</sup>See for examples: Thomas 1970. 583; Mair 1980; Caro Baroja 1967. 160; Petzoldt 1964-1965. 82-93; Ivanits 1989. 106-107. The possession-illness of the Russian *klikiushi* is caused by a witch: Mansikka 1911. 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.)

<sup>679</sup>See Thomas 1971. 527-531, 626, 653, 657; Nildin-Wall – Wall 1993. On Hungarian and Central and Eastern European witch animals see also the literature noted above on *lidérc*- and *mora*-beings.

<sup>680</sup>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.

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.<sup>682</sup>

Nevertheless the witch is not necessarily a “possessing agent”. The essence of witchcraft –“the attribution of misfortune to occult human agency”<sup>683</sup>– 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.

The documentary sources come from witch trials in which the system of village witchcraft is expressed through the charge and resolution of cases of maleficium in a court of law. This is why the belief figures of witches and their adversaries can only be described through this system. In this section belief attributes will be considered sequentially through the following functions: maleficium, diagnosis and identification, and healing. Only the type C witches, the witches par excellence who occupied the role of the malefactor witch, and their enemies are considered here. They are the senders and receivers of communication between the living and the dead. I do not deal with the everyday people or so-called sorcerers who found themselves in the role – that is, the type A and B witches.

The belief figure of the type C witch can be primarily described through first-hand accounts of cases of maleficium. Witnesses speak of visions, apparitions, or dreams in which a supernatural creature or creatures appeared; or they recount how they had faced certain physical phenomena (noise, light, movement, pain), which they interpreted as the presence of the supernatural. The subject interprets the experience as an aspect of communication with the supernatural world. The receiver presumes the sender to be a witch in supernatural guise or the witch’s double

Hungarian witches had doubles. As was typical in Central and Southeastern Europe, these doubles could be either living or dead. This fact can be associated with the werewolf and *mora* characteristics of the witches. The female version of the type C witch can be generally seen as a *mora* witch. Hungarian trial records regarding *mora* doubles represent all three of the centuries examined, as well as the entire language area (but with a greater emphasis on the western part).

In numerous narratives concerning night apparitions, such phrases as „in the image of” (*képében*), „in the face or figure of” (*ábrázatjában*), and in the person of” (*személyében*) point to the image of the physical double: that is, to a second body. According to this documentation, the alter ego is imagined to be a physical reality. This means that it was not a

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<sup>681</sup>See for examples: Petzoldt 1964-1965. 79; Thomas 1971. 583; similarly in 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy: Sluhovsky 1999; Caro Baroja 1964. 159-160.

<sup>682</sup>See Walker 1981. 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.

<sup>683</sup> Thomas 1971. 436.

soul but a second body; and while it was of a spiritual nature, it also had a physical reality and was an exact double of the owner's body, face, and clothes. For example: „a woman with the face and body of this Mrs. Lakatos was sitting by the fireplace”;<sup>684</sup> she „that was throttling me was in your person and had face like yours”;<sup>685</sup> or „she had her own face, her talk, everything was hers.”<sup>686</sup> The ability of the mora witches to appear in two places simultaneously (since the physical double is an exact copy of the original) belongs here: „She was kept captive in Várad and yet she was seeping about in front of her own house in broad daylight.”<sup>687</sup> And another person was seen to have split: „She gave herself into two parts, in that way she seemed to approach.”<sup>688</sup>

Terminology clearly differentiates the spiritual body that became visible in apparitions from the physical double. The term „shadow” has been uniformly applied throughout Europe to the soul that lives on after death and the shadow-soul that becomes detached from the body. For example, „Not Mrs. Móricz herself, but her image or her shadow walked with her.”<sup>689</sup> In another case, a woman went into the room, „and there she could not be experienced in her person, she just walked as a shadow.”<sup>690</sup> Spiritual doubles could enter buildings through closed windows or keyholes, or through the ventilation holes in windows: „that night Kata Kántor came in through the ventilation in my window.”<sup>691</sup> They appeared and disappeared as phantom images, and there is even a terminology for the way the specter appeared. A woman witness says she awoke in the night, sat up, and, „Mrs. Ferenc Szabó formed herself at the fire.”<sup>692</sup> We get a uniquely precise and descriptive narration of a spiritual double in the minutes of a trial in Nagyvázsöny in 1756. The image of Mrs. Móricz, a witch who was in captivity there, haunted somebody outside; she constantly followed her and once even bumped into her.<sup>693</sup> According to another eyewitness account, the witch's double, who invisibly follows her victim, „cannot be seen [in the courtyard in the daytime] by anyone else... than the *fatens* [witness] only.”<sup>694</sup> We also encounter the medieval representation of the soul as a very tiny spirit. Witches snatched away Mrs. Marosi and put her in a swallow's nest so that she would whistle for their amusement.<sup>695</sup> „Very tiny” is symbolic wording for the soul that is nonphysical and invisible.

The double of the type C witches could carry out nighttime maleficium in two ways: they would appear either in their own image or in someone else's. When witches were said to have appeared in their own image, this meant that a double was sent out. This is borne out by data that refer to instances where somebody torments, but does so „in their own image”. For example, „two of those witches came in the night and one was the image of Mrs. Szeles.”<sup>696</sup> But what does going „in someone else's image” mean? Often, the witnesses named the person

<sup>684</sup> Kolozsvár, 1584, in Komáromy 1910, 57.

<sup>685</sup> Mrs. Mihály Zselyó's trial, Felsőtarcsa, Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County, 1744, in Schram 1970, 1:467.

<sup>686</sup> Kisvárd, Szabolcs County, 1751, in Schram, *ibid.*, 2:402. For materials further emphasizing physical similarities, see, for example, Szalonta, Bihar County, in *ibid.*, 1:44; and Miskolc, 1716, in *ibid.*, 1:187.

<sup>687</sup> Kismarja, 1715, in B. Molnár, 363-69. For a similar case of a witch in captivity, see Magdolna Rubány's trial, 1721, Puchov, Trencsén County, in Komáromy, 1910, 297. For an image double in order to deceive a husband, see the trial of Mrs. János Szűcs and companion, Kisújszállás, 1749, and three more documents. I have had to restrict myself to indicating the quantity of the materials of the documentary examples without referring to their sources.

<sup>688</sup> Éva Fasing's 1691 trial in Kőszeg, in Schram 1970, 183.

<sup>689</sup> Schram, 1970, 1:547.

<sup>690</sup> Mrs. György Bán's 1722 trial, Lédes, Sopron County, in *ibid.*, 2:30.

<sup>691</sup> Szentes, 1732, in *ibid.*, 1:238.

<sup>692</sup> Kiskomárom, Zala County, 1741, *ibid.*, 2:607.

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:547.

<sup>694</sup> Mrs. István Ördög's trial, Szentes, 1757, in Árvai, 16.

<sup>695</sup> Nagyvárad, 1766, in Komáromy, 1910, 696. For a similar recording about a „soul of a child-like form” that could slide through a keyhole, see Felsőbánya, Szatmár County, 1715, in Abafi, 311.

<sup>696</sup> Mrs. Miklós Szeles's trial, Kolozsvár, 1584, in Komáromy, 1910, 63.

whose image the witch had taken; for example: „His wife goes out in the image of Mrs. Székely András,”<sup>697</sup> or, in another case, „she hastily came out from the weeds in the image of a woman in a green jerkin, and she grabbed me by the waist.”<sup>698</sup> Some female witches appear in the image of men, even sexually harassing men: „in the evening she was mounted by the image of a man who treated her dreadfully... she had her suspicions of Mrs. Gergely Szász.”<sup>699</sup>

At trial it could be convenient to argue that it was not the accused who had caused the offense but rather someone else who went in their image. The next example refers to a confession obtained through torture, from a trial in Hódmezővásárhely. The question „Did you suck István Kozma’s navel for three whole days?” was answered: „His own wife sucked István Kozma’s navel in my image.”<sup>700</sup>

The following complete dialogue between the law court and the accused comes from a trial in Tolna County. Its subject is a descriptive, experiential explanation of the alter ego, of how witches were able to be in two places at the same time, and how instead of themselves they placed a representation of themselves in their beds to deceive their husbands:

[P]erhaps you are simply dreaming, and go to bed without prayer, that’s why you have such funny dreams...

But I don’t dream because it’s all so real. It cannot be noticed when the devil puts things into all their places like the ones who talk with him.

Neither is it Mrs. Faind who lies beside her husband on those nights but the exchanged body, which can be treated and done with just as the one in the real body.

But see, if you got a good beating up that night it would show on you, your body would get blue and I bet you’d moan too.

It would moan too just as if it were me who was beaten it would do all that it should but I’d not feel but know all that would be happening to me.<sup>701</sup>

Documentation about going in „someone else’s image” expands with references to empty bodies, masks, or puppets. Those who went in their own image left an empty body at home, and that was labeled with a word that carried the meaning of representation: „Sophi Kapta and Mrs. Csanádi carried in the image of a witch and they took [the soul of the witness] with them in a barrel, and although the body seemed like it was lying there, it was not the witness’s but only its image. They put something there that stood for it.”<sup>702</sup> Like a container, the physical double or second body fills up and becomes functional through their own personal spirit, or something else could possess it (like the devil). Demonological explanations of the alter ego, in addition to the interpretations of the accused complying with them, can be seen in the confessions of witches: and this is an interpretation of maleficium as a form of possession by the devil.

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<sup>697</sup> Ugocsa County, 1707, *ibid.*, 211.

<sup>698</sup> Debrecen, 1694, in *ibid.*, 171. For more witches appearing in the image of others, see Hódmezővásárhely, 1734, in Schram, 1970, 1:241; and Fölsőbük, Sopron County, 1730, in *ibid.*, 2:57, „in different and different figures.”

<sup>699</sup> For example, Hódmezővásárhely, 1750, in *ibid.*, 1:285; Felsőbánya, Szatmár County, 1715, in Abafi, 304–5; and another forty-three references.

<sup>700</sup> Schram 1970, 1:338.

<sup>701</sup> Mihály Szilágyi, 507.

<sup>702</sup> Keserű, Bihar County, in Schram 1970, 1:58.

It seems most likely that in the confessions of witches' sabbats, the representations left behind are also an adjunct to demonology: to deceive their husbands they placed a broom, scuttle, or a flail in the bed instead of themselves. These „to him become practically as if the forms themselves were there.”<sup>703</sup> An explanation connected to „witch ointment” also substantiates a demonological origin. One witch's confession in Szeged recounts how she smudged a broom with ointment and put it next to her husband, where it turned into a woman, „but there was a devil in it”.<sup>704</sup>

These narratives make it clear that going in someone else's image refers, primarily, to a second body independent of the true body, the *double* of another person and not another person. From this it also becomes clear that the physical alter ego is not a free soul but a body, and, what is more, if somebody walks about in something other than their own image, then they are a „vacant” or „empty” body. The expression „dressed in forms”, from Felsőbük in 1730, emphasizes a puppet or mask character.<sup>705</sup> It is worth comparing this to the term *masca* from the Middle Ages and early Modern Age, where the term refers to a mask and is connected to Central and Western European witches.<sup>706</sup> But how was a witch or someone else supposed to possess another body? Obviously, they did not do this themselves, but instead their spiritual double did. Consequently, the spiritual alter ego that became detached from the body could use the physical alter ego, „image”, or mask of another. To contemporary thought these random exchanges of bodies and souls seem rather fantastic, but witnesses at Hungarian trials talk about them as everyday experiences.

From a different perspective but still worthy of attention is the idea that here we are dealing with a particular variation on the theme of possession, that is, when the witch (a human) possesses another human. This is presumably based on the idea of being possessed by the devil: the witch, as a „devilish soul”, is capable of this.<sup>707</sup> It is possible that identifying doubles as witches, or rather, that the replica itself is named as the witch belongs to the same imagery for which there is evidence in our documentation. „Behave, appear as a witch” means to take on the image of a witch: „that Mrs. István Gál torments im in the image of a witch.”<sup>708</sup>

Let us mention here one of the few examples of doubles following humans as guardians. In a witness account at a trial in Hungary an invisible escorting spirit warned the witness that she was seated in the wrong place.<sup>709</sup> There are also spirits nagging for maleficium: according to the confession of Erzsébet Tóth, a witch from Szeged, one stood behind her in a black dress.<sup>710</sup>

Various levels of interpretation appear in law court dialogues. As for the interpretation of the alter ego, the dilemma of the law court is whether witches themselves go or if they „send” someone else as an image instead; consequently, the „original” meaning of alter ego is unknown to them.<sup>711</sup> Of course, devils in demonological explanations are souls that trigger

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<sup>703</sup> Kisvárda, Szabolcs County, 1737, in *ibid.*, 2:355. Similar accounts come from Eger, 1781, in Sugár, 214; Hódmezővásárhely, 1788, in Schram 1970, 1:345; Szeged, 1728, in Reizner, 399; and another five documents from Zemplén, Vas, Sopron, Szatmár, and Heves Counties.

<sup>704</sup> Reizner 1900, 4:420.

<sup>705</sup> Sopron County, in Schram 1970, 2:57.

<sup>706</sup> For *masca* in the sense of „witch”, see, for example, Gervasius of Tilbury in the thirteenth century: Lea, 1:173.

<sup>707</sup> There are examples for similar phenomena connected to obviously demonic „soul witches” in the Russian domain. See Mansikka, 626, the „possessed kikluži”.

<sup>708</sup> Kismacéd, Pozsony County, 1614, in Schram 1970, 1:237. A similar case occurs in Esztergom County, 1677, in Schram *ibid.*, 1:378; and three more documents.

<sup>709</sup> Mrs. István Ördög's trial, 1757, in Árva, 16.

<sup>710</sup> Reizner, 406. A similar instance occurs in Hódmezővásárhely, 1759 (Schram 1970, 343).

<sup>711</sup> See the questions of the court in Mária Linka's trial, Hódmezővásárhely, 1750, in Schram *ibid.*, 1:283, or Mrs. István Molnár's confession in Szeged, 1731, in Reizner, 490.

maleficium. In his 1728 confession in Szeged, Ferenc Katona was encouraged by devils who promised that they would help him if he did not confess.<sup>712</sup>

The voluminous documentation concerning the alter egos of the dead presents witches as a variety of „soul figures”, as individual ghosts, or as members of soul troops. Clearly the doubles of dead people are perceived when witches appear in the images of the departed, as a 1718 trial documents. It concerns an injured party from Tállya who was tormented by the image of the late Mrs. Ferenc Szabó.<sup>713</sup> Kata Pirka, a midwife, and two fellow witches went to a man in Fölsőbük, sometimes in the image of his wife, and at others of his child, and again at others as „his own dead father, or even in the image or other dead people.”<sup>714</sup> One particularly detailed document discusses a witch who transformed into a snake and haunted in the image of a snake. Upon its death, „the spirit tore out of it”, following which a flock of geese appeared on the meadow, which she – her dead soul – joined.<sup>715</sup>

Often a group of witches was identified by the most general idea of ghosts, which was the „communal” dead returning in troops under names like „evils”, „shadows”, and „ghosts”. At a trial in Lédec a „great mass of evil people” is mentioned, among whom the witch walked about „like a shadow”.<sup>716</sup> The same kind of dead groups are the „troops” of witches with flags, a mass of figures in white or black clothes. A troop that arrived at the festival of the dead, often at Epiphany, is particularly characteristic: the witches came with their „evil companions” with eight black and eight red flags on the night of Epiphany.<sup>717</sup> Sometimes the popular image of the conspirational bewitching company is associated with the appearance of the troops of spirit witches. The members of the troop, with the actual witches amongst them, are connected with each other.<sup>718</sup>

This is what the evidence indicates when a witness claims to have heard that the troop were calling the witch (with whom the witness was sharing a house) in the night.<sup>719</sup> Typically, ghosts of dead witches – the doubles of the dead people – can also be recognized among the witches seen in the troops of the dead. For example, in the trial of the witch Kata Pirka in Fölsőbük in 1730, the injured party „saw Mrs. Csonka, who had died, in that troop, but he recognized no one else among them.”<sup>720</sup> „Once a great crowd went in” to a witness, at a trial in 1627 in Nagymegyer, after the death of her husband: after a death the dead person usually „returned”, and in this period the apparition of the ghost is expected (according to our documentation from the twentieth century). It is no accident that the widow indeed „sees” a ghost troop at that point. However, since it concerns a witchcraft conflict, she saw not her husband but the actual witch, Mrs. Máté Kósa.<sup>721</sup> On the other hand, the troops of evil spirits can also remain on the level of impersonal ghosts who do not identify with the living witch. As an example, a document from Kolozsvár, dated 1733–34, states: „in the night my husband started shouting that he didn’t feel well... he said that the evils were on him, the witches.”<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>712</sup> Reizner 1900, 496, 408.

<sup>713</sup> Schram 1982, 304.

<sup>714</sup> Sopron County, 1730, in Schram 1970, 2: 54. For a death alter ego – that is, one appearing in the image of a dead person, see Sempete, Pozsony County, 1730, in *ibid.*, 1:526. „Spirit” in Felsőtarcsa, Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County, in *ibid.*, 1:468.

<sup>715</sup> Sajóvámos, Borsod County, *ibid.*, 1:153.

<sup>716</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1750, in *ibid.*, 1:285; Lédec, Sopron County, 1722, in *ibid.*, 1:30–31; Hódmezővásárhely, 1740, in *ibid.*, 1:267; and an additional ten soul troops.

<sup>717</sup> The last data: Fölsőbük, Sopron County, 1730, in *ibid.*, 2:57; also Salgótarján, 1722, in Hausel, 330; Hódmezővásárhely, 1739, in Schram, 1970, 1:253; and other data mentioned another eleven times.

<sup>718</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1739, in Schram, 1970, 2:259.

<sup>719</sup> Fölsőbük, Sopron County, 1746, in *ibid.*, 2:247, 249.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:52–53. Similar accounts come from 1739, *ibid.*, 1:259, and two additional documents (tittering spirits).

<sup>721</sup> Komárom County in Rómer, 162.

<sup>722</sup> Kata Kádás’s trial, Kolozsvár, 1733, in Komáromy 1910, 469.

Here some unique Hungarian documentation must be mentioned to show how closely the witch was associated with the dead. In a trial in Szék in 1723, the *late* Mrs. Péter Mezei was accused of witchcraft. Because there was an epidemic of plague, the accusation against her was no less than that she kept returning home and carrying away the people, who then died from plague.<sup>723</sup>

There are surprising references to ghost-witches, that is, to witches „in a sheet” or, less frequently, „in a white veil,” which reflect the perception and naming of witches or apparitions as ghost figures in white garb. This evidently points to the picturing of the dead in masks, to its archaic aspect, and to an identification with the person that appeared in the mask.<sup>724</sup> For example, from Mrs. György Kurta’s trial in Kisvárd: „one in a white sheet went up to the witness, who was dozing, hardly asleep... and she wanted to take the child away from her by force.”<sup>725</sup> Of special interest is material in which the witness said that the witch dressed up as a ghost and then bewitched as a real ghost: „the witch who tormented the fatens during the time of the previous night also had male companion and covered herself with a sheet and dragged the maiden out... [and] there injured her.”<sup>726</sup>

Identification with a mask seems evident even to the court of law. In several places court officials ask questions such as whether a certain witch is „a fright in a sheet”.<sup>727</sup> Anna Németh, an accused from Szombathely, was asked whether witches covered their heads with a cloth and carried out their frightening acts in that way. It is evident that a real mask should not automatically be assumed to be behind all of this, nor some witch ritual. Compare this with when the local witnesses also differentiated the dead with a mask from humans dressed in masks: „Once in a sheet stood at the gate,” someone says, to which comes the answer, „the sons of Mrs. Kovács frightened you in new shepherds’ felt cloaks.” She responds, „It was not that, because the one in the sheet stirred around me, too.” That is, it was not a figure of fright in a mask but a witch that appeared as a ghost.<sup>728</sup>

These apparitions of the dead indicate that there is a „dead witch” figure that, in Hungarian popular belief, is also closely related to the living witch: the double appears in the image of a dead person. In fact this is a particular form of reincarnation of ancestors, which, as I see it in the light of my current collection of data, is only characteristic of the witch. The phenomenon is, however, closely linked to the connection between the dead East European sorcerers and the (living) sorcerers: also to the opposition of the living and dead mora, werewolves, and other, as yet unmentioned, magician figures. Although there are local differences in interpretation, it is clear that the relationship with dead ancestors, as with the shamanistic magicians, is also present here. Nevertheless, as opposed to those, in the instances we offer it is often expressed that these are bad dead ghosts that attack the family with evil intent since they appear as malefactor witches.

### Witches in Animal Forms, the Mora Witch

In Hungary, as in most of the regions of the European witch hunts, the most significant variations on the living or dead, physical or spiritual doubles of witches are a variety of animal figures. Certain alter ego „subspecies” are not always obvious, and differentiation

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<sup>723</sup> Kiss 1995, 120.

<sup>724</sup> Meuli; Peuckert, 54–62. Compare the terminology of doubles as images or puppets, and the idea of an empty mask. Here this is the other way around: if the one with the mask is dead, then the dead can be represented by the mask in its entire reality.

<sup>725</sup> Komáromy 1910, 96. Further mention of sightings „with a sheet”: Felsőbánya, Szatmár County, 1715, in Schram 1970, 2:409; Abafi, 359; and eight more documents.

<sup>726</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1730, in Schram 1970, 1:235.

<sup>727</sup> Szombathely, 1768, in Bencze, 915; Eger, 1766, om Sugár, 211; and four more documents.

<sup>728</sup> Otomány, Bihar Couty, 1742, in Komáromy, 1910, 314; Borsova, Bereg County, 1714, in *ibid.*, 346.

between the mora, werewolf, or ghost animal is not easy. In many cases it seems more precise to talk about certain variants of „witch animals”. The most important of these are cats, frogs, and dogs, each of which is also an alter ego animal primarily in the sense of a physical double – that is, when the appearance of real animals is seen to be supernatural. Other animal species represented in a number of examples are horses, geese, snakes, oxen, and occasionally rams, pigs, cows, owls, jackdaws, and starlings, and more often bumblebees and wasps. I will present a few examples from the extensive material available simply to give an idea.

From the mass of data about cats in an example of sensing a real cat as supernatural, in which „a tortoiseshell cat outside the habits of nature” appeared to somebody.<sup>729</sup> Another example concerns a transformation into a double: „Mrs. Varga stood in front of her, she got frightened and turned into a cat then and there, and jumping over a plank ran away.”<sup>730</sup> In an account of „dead” cats, the injured party testifies how he began to talk to two cats perceived as night apparitions, saying, „I believe you are great spirits... but all [is] in vain, because we are not afraid of you because Lord Jesus Christ is with us,’ to which words of mine they ridiculed back in the manner of humans: ha ha ha.”<sup>731</sup> The cat in the apparition informed them itself that it was a double: „the first cat entered above the door, tormented her... then this fatens asked, ’Who are you?’ and one of the cats answered ’I am Mrs. István Galgóczi.”<sup>732</sup>

It is barely comprehensible to us today, but fairy-tale-like stories such as these were told in all seriousness by the witnesses, in matters that decided life and death. „When God would have given us this child, in the night around midnight, a large number of cats came into my house and I couldn’t sleep at all and they all nicely took their places around the table; first that middle one started wailing and then they all began to scream something horrid. I got frightened and said nothing. One of them came beside me, took the child and gave it a good shake, threw it to that other one, which threw it back under me; after that the child was always terribly sick.”<sup>733</sup> There are cats that definitively crop up as doubles when the witch appears „in the image” of a cat at another place.<sup>734</sup> We hear of owners who could not be away without their cats, who knew their whereabouts even from a distance and what they were doing. One owner „sets [a cat] onto” the cows of another farmer.<sup>735</sup> A „sent cat” appears in the questions of a judge in Vas County: „What kind of witchcraft did you use for that transformed cat that you set loose on them, I mean with which you had his cows tortured...?”<sup>736</sup> Around sixty instances of witch-cat material put the Hungarian witch before us as the Hungarian version of the Central and Western European mora creatures.

The many types of alter ego represent several levels of interpretation in terms of the above „mora trinity”. The butterfly, hen, rooster, and turkey alter egos lead us to the southern Slavic mora. They have both tormenting-mora and helping-spirit variants, and they can even be found as „sent animals” or guardians living in attics.<sup>737</sup>

A rich variety of witch animals occurs throughout Europe, with many regional differences and varying prevalence among the diverse types (personal-figure variants, the sent animal-like alter ego, helping spirits, and others).<sup>738</sup> An assumption about a helping animal of

<sup>729</sup> Fölsőbük, Sopron County, 1730, in Schram 1970, 2:58.

<sup>730</sup> Rozsnyó, 1676, the trial of Mrs Kristóf Varga and companions.

<sup>731</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1740, in Schram, 1:267.

<sup>732</sup> Balkány, Szabolcs County, 1702, the trial of Mrs. István Galgóczi and companions.

<sup>733</sup> Kolozsvár, 1584, Mrs. Ambrus Zöld’s trial, Komáromy, 1910, 68.

<sup>734</sup> Horpács, Nógrád County, 1692, in Schram, 1970, 3:206.

<sup>735</sup> Taksony, Heves County, 1727, in *ibid.*, 1:395; Hódmezővásárhely, in *ibid.*, 1:283–84; Sorkitőtfalu, Vas County, 1768, in *ibid.*, 2:542.

<sup>736</sup> Szombathely, 1768, in Bencze, 916.

<sup>737</sup> Kisdobrony, Bereg County in Lehoczky, 303–4; Debrecen, 1735, in Komáromy 1910, 497; and three more hen references.

<sup>738</sup> There is an independent study about the Scandinavian witch animals; here, the specific types of the *familiaris* clearly correspond to the various types of doubles. For physical and spiritual doubles, as well as for „sent”

devilish and „familiar” characters stretches across the literature of demonology like a red line, and it probably had a great impact on popular belief. It is all the more surprising that there are devilish helping frogs even in „trial free” Eastern Europe – for example, in Romania.<sup>739</sup> Transformation into an animal was one of the main signs of the demonological witch (and of the witches’ sabbat): this could have played a role in an assumed process in which animal alter egos turned into „witch animals”.

With all these characteristics, the supernatural alter ego types of witches are partly *mora* creatures that have both southern Slavic and Central European features. Their doubles appear to the human world as messengers from the other world, and they bring maleficium with them. So the witches’ doubles do what *mora* creatures do: they go on night trips to bewitch. There is a particular term in the trials that refers to these alter ego type witches of *mora* character: „night-goer” (*éjjeljáró*). In 1627 trial in Komárom County, one of the witnesses commented that the night visitor, the actual witch apparition, flew in through the window „in a night-going manner”, and „in a night-going state”.<sup>740</sup>

Many consider the *mora* creatures to be one of the most important predecessors of the European witch in the belief system. One example is Arne Runeberg, who first attempted a comprehensive description of the belief system of the European witch.<sup>741</sup> Claude Lecouteux devoted several studies and a book to the subject<sup>742</sup> and, based upon an extensive (Germanic, Celtic, French) data set, clearly pointed out the close relationship between the dead (fairies), the *mora* creatures, and the werewolf in Western European belief systems. Our data clearly show these relationships. The *mora* studies referred to above, as well as the witch studies to be quoted below, are so similar in certain cases of maleficium, whether the incident involves a *mora* or a witch (except in terminology, of course), that they cannot be differentiated; that is, when somebody sent out their alter ego to bewitch, or when some illness occurred, the aggrieved party attributed the misfortune to the maleficium of a *mora* or a witch.

## Werewolf Witches

The werewolf figure in the Hungarian belief system is rather heterogeneous and impoverished. No coherent werewolf images have emerged from the materials gathered that could serve as a background to the werewolf witch of the trials. It seems that only the image of the „sent wolf”, seen in shepherds’ belief systems (as a particular shepherd-guardian variant of the double), is persistently part of Hungarian popular belief. The same can be said about the werewolf data of our witch trials: we can only register traces of a few rather independent werewolf types from these. In Transylvania there was the image of the witch (born with a tail) that attacked humans in the figure of a dog more often than as a wolf, which was the relative of the Romanian werewolf – the *priculici* – and of a witch with a tail in a wider Eastern European area.<sup>743</sup> We have also found references to werewolves attacking in the form of dogs and to a dog guardian outside of Transylvania.<sup>744</sup>

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animals, see Nildin-Wall and Wall; and Grambo, 42.

<sup>739</sup> For the Romanian helping frog see Pamfile, 157. In a 1686 Hungarian trial document, Mrs. Mátyás Padis, a witch from Nyék, has a frog: Schram 1970, 2:26.

<sup>740</sup> Lak and Szakállas, Komárom County, in Rómer, 227–28. For further documentetion of „night goers”, see Kismacéd, Pozsony County, 1618, in Schram 1970, 3:234; Bornemissza, 810.

<sup>741</sup> Runeberg, 137–38. However, in the Hungarian context, Szendrey, „Hexe-Hexendruck”, dismissed it when giving a summary of the Hungarian references to tormenting demons and tormentig lidérc, even though he mentioned *mora* and lidérc in the discussion about witches.

<sup>742</sup> 1985, 57–70; 1987b, 1992.

<sup>743</sup> Dés, in Komáromy 1910, 507; Gyulafehérvár hearing, 1685, in Herner, 230; and three more documents from Transylvania.

<sup>744</sup> Kisvárdá, Szatmár County, 1709, in Schram, 1970, 2:371; Marosvásárhely, 1752, in Komáromy; and Eger, 1727, in Sugár, 110.

Documents about werewolves that attack humans in the form of a wolf<sup>745</sup> refer to images of eastern Hungary, or Transylvania; the wolf that attacked the herd can be found everywhere.<sup>746</sup> In the case of the latter werewolf type, there is often a secondary level present concerning belief in the legendary motifs of transformation into animals and of sent wolves, and not about animal doubles sent out during traces. Actually, this level obscures more archaic werewolf beliefs all over Europe. In his above-mentioned research, Claude Lecouteux considers this fact to be clearly the effect of witch-hunting demonology, at least with respect to the German and French trial documentation that he researched.<sup>747</sup>

The shepherds who could send wolves have, in some cases, a helping demon too. In these cases the original double of the helping spirit and its demonologized variants are both present. Following torture, one of them even confessed a conspiracy with the devil and reported that, with the helping company obtained through a pact, he managed to drive away seventeen pig from a neighboring herd.<sup>748</sup> In connection with the werewolf, we should also mention the figure of the lord of the animals known in the Balkans, Italy, and the Alps. This mostly appears in the context of reports about werewolves and night witch goddesses.<sup>749</sup> One type of good werewolf among out document points in this direction, since it refers to the image where the witch understands wolves, dogs, and snakes.<sup>750</sup>

The Hungarian witch is less of a werewolf than the South and East European witches. In that context werewolf witches and their enemies (that is, the werewolf magicians) constitute a more complete system.<sup>751</sup> The Hungarian system we examined is less complete, although both the positive and the negative sides are to some extent represented through the werewolf witch that attacks herd and partly through the *táltos*, which can be viewed as *mora* creatures or as werewolf magicians. As for our current subject, the most important common features of the *mora*, werewolf, and supernatural witch are that all of them can send their doubles to journey into the otherworld and they also have dead, demonic variants. As far as communication with the supernatural is concerned, in this field the werewolf characteristics of shamanistic magicians are clear. However, an evaluation of the *mora* as a mediator gives rise to further questions. From our data, a „reversed” and fictive mediatory activity of the *mora* creatures can be acknowledged. Their apparitions are perceived according to maleficium narratives, in which they appear as supernatural creatures. Underlying these is the belief that a demon that appears is the double of a living person. This living person employs their ability to use trance to send their doubles on bewitching journeys. In this sense, the fictive mediatory belief figure of the witch is, in essence, the same as that of the *mora* creatures. With these characteristics and beliefs the Hungarian witch embodies a negative, „black” variant of the shamanistic magician. In the knowledge of the werewolf variants, the question occurs, with

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<sup>745</sup> Köröstarcsa, Békés County, 1756, in Schram 1970, 3:145; Kiskunhalas, 1734, in *ibid.*, 2:430; and another six documents.

<sup>746</sup> Nógrád County, in Török, 279; Horváth, 32, 648; and eight more documents.

<sup>747</sup> 1992, 134–37.

<sup>748</sup> Vaszar, Győr County, 1758, in Komáromy, 1910, 688; Vas County, 1653, in Schram 1970, 2:718; Keresztúr, Sopron County, in Schram *ibid.*, 2:189.

<sup>749</sup> For the European references on the image of the lord of the animals, see Leopold Schmidt; Bárkányi; and Paulson. Röhrich, 150–53, notes that images originating from hunting cultures were present in the Artemis and later Diana cults in Europe in antiquity and the Middle Ages. This was a direct route to the belief system about night witches.

<sup>750</sup> Dés, 1742, in Komáromy 1910, 507; Nagykároly, 1745, in Szirmai, 80–81.

<sup>751</sup> I have no room for referencing all of the documentary sources used and mentioned at various points of the text around the European witch. A few important summarizing studies that I relied upon, besides the published documentation, are: Weiser-Aall; Künzig; Bonomo; Marinov, 215; Zelenin, 395; Kovács, 51–82; Moszyński, 344; Đurđević, 5–255; Dagmar Buckhart, 90–93; Bošković-Stulli, 494–513; Kurocskin; Candrea, 106–52; Muşlea and Bîrlea, 244–77. For a description of Eastern and Southeastern European (Serbian, Ukrainian, and Bulgarian) witches and shamanistic magicians functioning in the same system with double souls and as each other's enemies, see Tolstoj and Tolstaja, 44–120.

still further legitimacy: Was there a positive aspect to the mora and the mora witch? Or in another sense, is the image of the black magician really only fictional? We shall get a positive answer to the first part of the question from the material concerning the Hungarian *táltos* with mora characteristics.

### *Lidérc*, hungarian werewolf, and mora figures

In European belief systems, beliefs centered on the double of the supernatural witch often coincide with the *mara/mare/mora* images and also with certain werewolf beliefs, next to which independent mora and/or werewolf creatures are known in many areas. The case is similar in Hungarian popular belief (if anything, it is a bit more complicated), where there are supernatural witches with mora and werewolf characteristics, and furthermore, there is an independent belief figure: the *lidérc*. The *lidérc* are, with their triple character (human, double or guardian, and dead, demonic figures), essentially a variation of the Central and Southeastern European werewolf (along with dragon, snake, rooster, chicken, and lizard alter egos), and they also have many mora characteristics. If we wished to research the historical background of their relationships, we would have to solve an equation with two unknown quantities: both the *lidérc* and the witch are primarily related to the Central and Southeastern European mora and werewolf creatures; however, as the trials unambiguously show, they have nothing to do with each other, and only the tormenting witch and tormenting (nightmare) *lidérc* show some affinity. In the current context it is not necessary to resolve this problem, and we restrict ourselves to an acknowledgment of the variations in form of the Hungarian *lidérc* that come up in the Hungarian trials.

Our most characteristic *lidérc* material refers to the helping spirits known from Modern Age legends and to two particular variants: fiery or flying light phenomena, and birds (chicken, owl) or reptiles (lizard, snake).<sup>752</sup> They are not always connected to the figure of the witch, although there are some reports of witches holding a „bird”, meaning a *lidérc*. Here is a more complete example from a trial in Pozsony County from 1671: „she heard that Mrs. Damaszy had a *lidérc* and... the fatens found a shabby chick in front of her house with a crooked nose, and this chicken was said to be a *lidérc*”; and the same *lidérc* appears again in a fiery form: „twice fiery geese were seen to have flown to Mrs. Damaszy’s house and people said they were *lidérc*.”<sup>753</sup> However, we have some material that refers to guardians, even when they are more closely connected to a witch and a witch’s abilities. According to a trial in 1693, Kata Nagy, a witch from Debrecen, boasted that, “I have such a bird that if something is said of me I will know from it.”<sup>754</sup>

The *lidérc*, just as in the case of the werewolf and mora creatures, has „sent animal” variants, too: „Why did you torture Mrs. Rásai, in the images of your tomcat and rooster and even of a woman?”<sup>755</sup> Other helping spirits are closer to the figure of the legendary *lidérc* that enriched their owners and brought money; this version’s evolution was probably prompted by church demonology, but in any case our trial materials often qualify this aspect of the *lidérc* as „demonic”.<sup>756</sup> Transylvanian documentation mentions the demonic, „dead” *lidérc*, which, like the demonic witch, are also connected to unbaptized souls. The largest quantity of material concerning the striking living-dead witches is also from the eastern part of the

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<sup>752</sup> For a recent summary of twentieth-century documents on *lidérc*, see Pócs, 563–67, along with additional important bibliographic references.

<sup>753</sup> Sempte, in Schram 1970, 1:488, and in 1790, in *ibid.*, 1:508; and another eight documents.

<sup>754</sup> Komáromy 1910, 170. Similar accounts come from Ugoesa, 1526–27, in *ibid.*, 385; and from Debrecen, *ibid.*, 479.

<sup>755</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1750, in Schram 1970, 1:283.

<sup>756</sup> Regécvára, Abaúj County, 1683, in Majláth, 8.

language area, adding to the idea of the „dead lidérc” at the same time: the person who had a lidérc, or who was a lidérc themselves, lived on as a night vampire.<sup>757</sup>

The figure of the lidérc lover represents a sexual aspect familiar in connection with the Southeast European dragon werewolf<sup>758</sup> as well as the Central and Western European mora creatures. The basic belief is that the double of another creature can be summoned through strong thought or sexual desire. The various lidérc lovers of Hungarian popular belief (fiery, flying, with horse’s legs, and so on) are the legendary aspects of this archaic belief (already observed in the Germanic mara material). There is witch-trial documentation that outlines this belief: A young lad told a young lady that she would catch sight of him in the sky, and this was really what happened: „he flew down and talked with her a lot.”<sup>759</sup>

This is, above all, the variation of the lidérc that demonology built into its doctrines about the devilish nature of the witch (beside the lidérc that procures money for its owner): the lidérc lover unambiguously became a devil lover (even up to this day, in twentieth-century legends), and the devils that made love to witches carried many lidérc features.<sup>760</sup>

## Fairy Witches

Throughout Central and Southeastern Europe, the belief figure of the supernatural witch has many fairy characteristics. A frequently appearing character in daylight and nighttime apparitions is a fairy-like witch figure, especially in the documentation of Croatian, Slovenian, and (most of all) Hungarian witch trials. The main features of Hungarian fairy beliefs have Slavic and Romanian origins, and a particular duality is characteristic of them: they partly enrich the features of the Hungarian witch, the „beautiful woman” (*szépasszony*); and partly, in Hungary as with its southwestern neighbors, they have the characteristics of the night witch.<sup>761</sup> The fairies of the Balkans (southern Slav *vila*, *samodiva*, Greek *neraida*, Romanian *iele*, *zîna*, and so forth) appear among humans as nymphs dancing in groups or as storm demons rushing about with the wind in troops. Their mythology incorporates a shining fairy world and the figures of certain chthonic goddesses that bring both fertility and death, as well as fate goddesses<sup>762</sup> or women who had a role in determining the fate of the newborn, even in the Southern and Southeastern European belief systems of the Modern Age.

Fairies, like fate women, also fulfill roles as community and personal guardians, and – due to their godly inheritance from antiquity – they often take on the role of the lady of the forest animals. They have an important position in the current context, which is seemingly in opposition to their connection with the dead who periodically returned to the community. During the death festivals, between the orthodox Easter and Pentecost, the fairies and the dead who seek out humans are practically the same creatures, those with whom it is possible to create ritual connections at such times. On the other hand, as creatures of death, they bring illnesses and give a characteristic „fairy disease” to those who break their taboos. This variation in their features is connected to the complexity of their origins as well as with the

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<sup>757</sup> Vajna 1906–7, 311–12.

<sup>758</sup> See Chapter 7 on magicians, especially the fiery *zmej/zmaj*.

<sup>759</sup> Debrecen, 1694, in Komáromy, 1910, 171.

<sup>760</sup> See, for example, Kürt, Pozsony County, 1711, in Schram 1970, 2:495.

<sup>761</sup> From the most important literature on South Slavic, Slovenian, Austrian, and Romanian fairies, see: Candrea, 157–83; Muşlea and Bîrlea, 206–28; Zečević, 31–49; Krauss, 37–44; Kelemina, 96–97. For Celtic and English fairies, see: Wentz; Cross, 243–73; O’hOgain, 185–90. For the Central and Southeastern European relationships of the Hungarian fairies, and for the parallels between the origins of the fairy world of the Balkans and Celtic and Slavic fairy mythologies and rituals, see Pócs.

<sup>762</sup> Greek *moira*, Serbian, Croatian, and Bulgarian *urisnici*, *nerusnici*, and *sudnice* or *sudjenice*, Slovenian *rojenice*, Romanian *urstitutoare*, *ursaie*, Albanian *fatile*, of *fatije*, and others. For fate women in Southeastern European belief systems, see the relevant data and bibliography in Pócs, 32, 75. For a summary see Brednich.

manifold inheritance of the figures themselves (Greek, Thracian, Celtic, and Slav, and so forth).

The complex figure of the fairy witch appears in some fifteen percent of the apparition narratives of the Hungarian trials. Music, dance, light, and glitter are characteristic motifs of the night fairy scenes, even if they often ended up in vulgarity and injury to one party or another. A characteristic example was reported by witnesses at a trial in Bihar, who said that in the night „there was such whistling and dancing”, and then in the morning they found the spoons left behind from the feast of the fairies. In another village in Bihar, „whistle and drum” were heard under the window of the witness suddenly noticed that three maidens were dancing in the house.<sup>763</sup> Another important fairy motif was the appearance of the fate women. The night demons who carry the faces of the fate women are not real malefactor witches but rather goddesses who give utterance to the „voice of fate”. Thirty-six documented examples of their appearances refer to a very definite „fate goddess” aspect in the Hungarian witch in the whole of the language area and from all three centuries of the witch hunts.<sup>764</sup>

### Demons of the Night and Goddesses of Death

The characteristics of the demonic figures of *mora* and werewolf witches, due to their association with death, were also enriched by certain night demons from the underworld, relatives of the demonic werewolf and the *mora*. The dead doubles of witches in particular appear in varying demonic guises: as unbaptised demons; the underworldly Balkan *karakondzuli*, which have a werewolf character;<sup>765</sup> or even as the horses of Saint Theodore.<sup>766</sup> For example, the latter two guides appear in narratives of trials in Szatmár, Ugocsa, and Bihar.<sup>767</sup> Confinement demons, which entered Hungary’s belief systems from the Balkans in the form of the night witch, also have a major role. In the Balkans they are strongly connected to the supernatural witch, because these demons (*gello*, *lilit*, *striglos*, *strigla*, and others) have been identified almost entirely with the *mora* creatures in material from late antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>768</sup> The strength of this connection is demonstrated not only by the way in which the *mora* demons characteristically stole babies and injured women in labor, but also in that an important figure, the *striglos*, or *strigla*, gave the name to the European witch. Belief in and fear of such demonic nocturnal figures persists in the Balkans even today. A Latinized variation of this, the *strix* (plural *striga*), spread through Italy as the official terminology for witches in demonology and law. In Greece it remains a current term for demon.<sup>769</sup>

As a result of this chain, a notion exists in the Hungarian trial minutes of the demonic dead witch that is not necessarily connected to living humans. A demonic witch figure with such „mixed” roots appears primarily east of the River Tisza, in trials where witches were often impersonally referred to as „the bad” or „the evil ones,” in a manner similar to the evil

<sup>763</sup> Telegd, 1756, in Komáromy 1910, 635; Konyár, 1716, in Schram 1970, 1:79. I published a lot of materials on fairy apparitions in my summarizing study, Pócs. These appeared in the entire language area, but we only have a few documents from Transylvania.

<sup>764</sup> Examples are: Esztergom, 1721, in Schram, 1970, 1:356; Kóhalom, Nagykovácsos County, 1707, in Heinrich Müller, 146.

<sup>765</sup> Rizner, 376; Hódmezővásárhely, 1750, in Schram 1970, 1:291. For these demons and the most important literature on them, see Pócs, 22–3; and Dagmar Burkhart, 102–3.

<sup>766</sup> The latter were spirit horses with demonic werewolf characteristics (and with Perchta and fairy connections) known in Slavic and Romanian areas of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. See Pócs, 25, for the most important literature.

<sup>767</sup> Felsőbánya, Szatmár County, 1715, in Abafi, 358. Similar accounts come from Komádi, Bihar County, 1724, in B. Molnár, 369; and Feketeardó, Ugocsa County, 1732, in Komáromy 1910, 460.

<sup>768</sup> See the confinement demons of Hungary and the Balkans, and their connections with the *mora* and witches in Pócs, 110–30.

<sup>769</sup> See Pócs, 17, 69; Bernhard Schmidt, 136–37; Herter, 118.

dead and spirits. This name sometimes marks the demonic figure of the supernatural witch, as in the examples above, as a notion of the impersonal demon that is not brought into connection with the living witch. This of course means that, besides the social institution of village witchcraft and at the same time, a more archaic calamity explanation played a role in which a demon witch took part.

Above we mentioned a fate goddess characteristic of fairies, and indirectly of night witches. Traces of the dead night goddesses of the underworld can be found in the figure of the Central and Southeastern European witch, next to and through the various demonic creatures, and similarly in other areas of Europe, correlating with the particular inheritance of local mythologies. We know about such goddesses from data connected to church laws about witches: Diana and Hecate, then the Germanic Holda and Perchta, the Celtic Matrae and Matronae, and others.<sup>770</sup> The death aspect of the figure of the early Modern Age Hungarian witch was enriched by certain Balkan goddess figures of Slavic or mixed origin, and these are present in the night apparitions of our trials. Carlo Ginzburg came to a Thracian-Greek-Italic goddess figure, characterized by snakes and spinning, who had a role in initiating patrons to the shamanistic magicians and, as we shall later see, as patrons of the witch, too. Here we have to mention the Russian and Serbian Pjatnica, Ukrainian N'ed'el'a, Romanian Marți Seara, Hungarian *kedd asszonya*, which are considered to be the predecessors of the Slavic goddess Mokosh, as well as the Pannonian (Hungarian, Croatian, Slovenian, Slovakian, Austrian, and Moravian) Luca figures.<sup>771</sup> All of them are variants of demonic creatures that carry chthonic features of fertility goddesses and are associated with spinning.<sup>772</sup> In a wider area of Central and Eastern Europe, a mythical creature with cow and spinning attributes is known; it lived on into Modern Age Hungary in the figure of a witch with similar characteristics.<sup>773</sup>

Besides their other roles, all these goddesses and demons crop up as demonic witches in night apparitions.<sup>774</sup> Although less frequently, apparitions of witches spinning, weaving, or simply carrying a spindle in the night occur in Hungarian trial documents.<sup>775</sup> Thirty examples in our trials from eastern Hungary represent the „witch with a cow” who swoops around as a demon on saddled cows from stables. Along with the witch with a scutcher, this figure has a wealth of parallel material in the „beautiful woman” fairy material of twentieth-century Transylvania and eastern Hungary.<sup>776</sup>

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<sup>770</sup> The living on of these ancient goddess figures in the form of the night witch is discussed extensively in the literature. See Soldan and Heppe, vol.1, chaps. 1–7; Caro Baroja, 83–92; and Cohn, 162–81, for the night witch in popular imagination.

<sup>771</sup> From the vast literature on Tuesday's woman, see: Róheim, 90–95; and Imre Szabó, 167–72. For Mokoš and Paraskeva/Pjatnica, see: Haase, 83–84; and Ivanov, 237–51. The most important summaries on *Luca* are Kretzenbacher; Róheim, 29–227; and see also Chapter 7 this book.

<sup>772</sup> This striking persistence was recently pointed out by Bíró, 217–29.

<sup>773</sup> See Pócs 1993.

<sup>774</sup> For witches spinning and traveling on scutchers, spindles, or looms, as well as fighting with scutchers or spindles, see: Muşlea and Bîrlea, 251–68; Đurđević, 28.

<sup>775</sup> Szentes, 1734, in Schram 1970, 1:248; Dés, 1722, in T. A. Szabó, 579; and another two documents.

<sup>776</sup> For beautiful women with a cow or riding about on scutchers, see Salamon, 102–14.

## 8. SHAMANISM AND WITCHCRAFT: THE WITCHES SABBATH

How can we summarize the most significant lessons of our studies? We have examined the mediatory systems of the early Modern Age in the light of witchcraft, relying for documentation upon the minutes of witch trials. While this approach imposed some limitations on an investigation of the relationships of mediatory systems outside witchcraft, it also allowed an intensive scrutiny of their functions within witchcraft. Instead of the entire system of village witchcraft, we have focused on the supernatural witch, which is present in belief systems throughout Europe as an archaic fundament.

Supernatural witches were also mediators from the perspective of their mythical context and their belief attributes as moras or werewolves. They could fulfill their societal function in the institution of early Modern Age village witchcraft through this human and demonic duality. At the same time, in matters of communal cohabitation and morals, they embodied the normative role of the dead, meaning ancestors in their demonic form, and through their communication with the dead. As mediators, they were chiefly fictive belief figures with attributed features. But they cannot be viewed as simply that because their ambivalent characters have another aspect, that of positive magicians, the healing witches and mediators. Their belief system has many archaic and mythical marks. The witches' historical relationship within village witchcraft with seers and magicians is palpable on this mythical level. Both parties are the mediators of the dead. Magicians and seers who are initiated by the „good dead” appear as the enemies of the witch, who is fictive and initiated by the „bad dead.” This mythical antagonism, evidence of common historical roots, is present in the images of the various soul and spirit battles.

An archaic, fundamental stratum of European witchcraft, also significant to Hungarian interests, proved to share many of its origins and stands connected with the kind of European shamanism we reluctantly refer to as peripheral shamanism. Every deciphered mediatory system, each type of Hungarian magician, seer, and *táltos* is, in some form, related to witchcraft. These connections are partly the consequence of a common past. For example, *mara* seers and *mara* witches, or wind magicians battling against crop-stealing demons and witches can be associated with Nordic shamanism. On the other hand, they are certainly the result of secondary adaptation and interlacement; examples are the roles of crop or fairy magicians in remedying bewitchment or identifying witches.

Of course, there is a great deal of uncertainty in this area due to the distorting mirror of the witch trials. We cannot be sure, but we presume that there were shamanistic kinds of magicians who originally had nothing to do with witchcraft. Perhaps the Hungarian *táltos* of the Middle Ages was one such, and the „holy” seers and healers, along with fairy magicians, may also belong here (although there is a thread in the past of the latter that leads to witchcraft). However, in the known context of the trials, they all emerge incorporated into the system of witchcraft. Here they are not the shamanistic forerunners of witchcraft but shamanistic accomplices. Consequently, the belief systems of European shamanism and witchcraft developed as twin siblings from common parentage and were closely bound to each other. This is how we see things in the light of both German and Slav documentation.

In the meantime, elements (such as the fairy mythologies) entered the system from alien schemes or from a presumably uniquely Hungarian shamanism with eastern (perhaps Turkic) origins. Nonetheless, from the sources that we do have, we cannot disentangle anything from these alien systems beyond and before witchcraft. As a result, and in the current stage of our research, we cannot see what all this means in terms of the past of certain unique types of mediators, like the Hungarian magicians and *táltos* figures. Nor can we see where we stand with the uniquely Hungarian mediatory techniques in this almost entirely European environment. What, for example, was the role of the Hungarian *táltos* or seer before it intersected with European witchcraft, or with European mediatory techniques in general? Our quest in source analysis could not answer these questions. Instead they necessitate further research with a historical approach, and most of all, other source materials beyond witchcraft.

### The Alternative World of the Witches' Sabbat.

In the witch trial narratives that concern visions, the terms „enchantment” and „abduction” have a range of meanings. In their primary senses they refer to an altered state of consciousness in which the supernatural is perceived, apparitions are experienced, and occasionally a journey is made to the alternative world. Bewitched individuals lived through experiences such as demonic witches entering houses and holding their merriments there, injuring their victims, or taking them to the witches' sabbat.

The enchanted person lying in trance may be observed by others, at the same time that both the injured party and the witches can travel on soul journeys. In the account of a 1747 witch trial in Kiskunhalas, Anna Hős reported seeing her husband in bed, „lying there stiff, barely drawing breath, and she called to her husband '...what happened to you, are you asleep?' For a long while she and her stepdaughter tried to awaken him... and after a long time he awoke and cried out, 'My Lord Jesus help me! Oh! fiery witches took me to Máramaros and they put six hundredweight of salt on me'”.<sup>777</sup>

At other times, enchantment and abduction are described as concrete physical acts, as a real disappearance, or as „being taken out of bed.” For example, „the witches took him from his bed during the night and took him to the Danube”.<sup>778</sup> Simultaneously, symbols of the otherworld refer to stepping into the alternative world. Parallelism between the two interpretations, that is, soul travel and supposed actual physical experiences, is a characteristic to which the rationalizing and demonologizing view of the court is a third aspect. In reading multilayered narratives with a range of meanings, it is impossible to determine precisely who interpreted a given narrative in what way – that is, who had a 'genuine' otherworldly experience, or whose soul indeed took part in witch merriments or witches' sabbats. However, it can be stated that in early modern Hungarian witchcraft, the popular witches' sabbat, uninfluenced by demonology, was generally a gathering, merriment, or other social activity of the spirit witches, their doubles, and their bewitched victims, and it took place in the alternative world. The witches' sabbats that began with enchantment and abduction are primarily communicative events between the two worlds. The witches themselves confirmed this because it was very rare in Hungary, as elsewhere, that the question of participation in the witches' sabbat would be neglected at court hearings. The accounts of witnesses who had been taken by witches, or of accused who had been taken by the devil or the society of witches, speak about a multitude of traditions at a variety of levels.

Those accused of witchcraft also had the common faculty for trance, as mentioned earlier in connection with the visionary experiences of injured parties. A significant

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<sup>777</sup> Schram 1970, 2:48.

<sup>778</sup> Schram 1970, 1:455. A similar report comes in 1712, from Bányog, Bihar County, in Schram 1970, 1:52; and (for being picked out of bed) another six documents.

proportion of the documented confessions referring to trance or visionary experience concerns witches who spoke about the way they came to be a part of the company or to be present at the gatherings. In her confession in 1721, Kata Barta, a witch from Madar, mentioned „being seized in her heart and soul as if for a couple of days and nights, her body being as a piece of wood, but who had taken her away and where she had been taken she did not confess”.<sup>779</sup> A witch from Bereg County „threw herself on the floor all of a sudden and became like a corpse... [then the soles of her feet were beaten with a cane, following which, after a long while] she jumped up and I said to her, 'Was your soul on a walkabout, you so-and-so witch,' to which she answered, 'Oh, my husband, I died.'”<sup>780</sup>

As I stated earlier, the narratives of witches' confessions were strongly influenced by the expectations of the court: witches had to confess to „witches' companies,” or even to a pact with the devil, which obviously meant that their testimonies included the traditional demonological witches' sabbat doctrines along with any relevant personal experiences (for example, of the other world). A varied and multilayered relationship between experience and narration is characteristic of both types of confession. The narrations of the witches' sabbat report on a terrestrial world placed in a different dimension. They typically contain symbols of an archetypal otherworld or of death and rebirth. The types and actions of the narrative are characterized by various forms of duality, which are found in the parallel existence of elements of the terrestrial, realistic world and the symbols of the otherworld; the combination of experience and narration; legends that contain only symbolic references and the narration of experiences (that is, symbolic and realistic otherworlds); and the adventures of the soul and the body. It is as if, in the steps of virtual development of the narratives that distanced the experiences, a simultaneous process had been going on making the experiences more tangible as well as producing the opposite effect. In this respect the continual influence of elite culture has to be taken into account because not only the particular witches' sabbat doctrines of the demonologists would have had an effect but also the visionary literature in which similar processes of simultaneous shifts towards the tangible and the abstract occurred within the duality of experience and narration, as well as narration and literacy.<sup>781</sup>

We can presume that, through the medium of sermons, the literature of visions substantially influenced local traditions concerning witnesses and the accused, and the visual experience of church frescoes also probably played a role. It is possible to trace Christian visionary imagery of heaven and hell in several themes in the terrestrial otherworlds of witches, although this is a subject that cannot be explored in depth here. While visionary literature lent Christian motifs of the other world to narratives on the witches' sabbat, witchhunting demonology gained its place and influence over the participants in the trials through the court's questions to the accused. This mainly had the effect of making experiences tangible, rational, and „terrestrial.” All this is because the alternative of experience, a „real” adventure in the otherworld or a narrative, was always present for the people at the trial, whereas looking at it through the eyes of the court, one form of witches' sabbat alone was what certainly existed: an authentic terrestrial gathering of heretic God deniers who actually and physically participated. If they flew, it was accomplished with the help of the devil, but they flew in a physical sense. The other demonological alternative was that the adventure of the witches' sabbat was nothing other than devilish illusion.

The fundamental problems with the images of the witches' sabbat that are raised both by demonologists and by modern research into witchcraft concern whether these were genuine rituals, a fantasy suggested by the devil, or whether the accusations of attending

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<sup>779</sup> Alapi 1914, 13.

<sup>780</sup> Hete, 1766, Mrs. Péter György's trial, in Komáromy, 1910, 714. Similar accounts come from 1731 in Megyaszó, Zemplén County, in Kazinczy, 373; and two other documents.

<sup>781</sup> For elite connections and for the processes in visionary literature, see Le Goff; Petschel; Patch, 147; Dinzelbacher, 30, 122–23; Benz, 353–75, 506; Zaleski, 89–90; Gurevič, Chapter 4.

witches' sabbats were the pure invention and calumny of the demonologists. In light of the documentation pertaining to Hungarian witches' sabbats, we can unambiguously refute the assumptions that lie behind these questions. The sabbat experiences in witches' confessions bear a marked similarity to those offered by witnesses without torture: they could be the same personal visionary experiences. The references to maleficium or to evil acts carried out with the help of the devil generally followed leading questioning by a court accompanied by torture. The devil enters these narratives only at the instigation of the interrogators. The following passages deal with the most important motifs of the sabbat.

According to hundreds of Hungarian witness accounts, one of the common scenes of witches' sabbats and merriments was in the house or yard of the injured party, where the bewitched was compelled to take part in the merriments of the witches. On other occasions the victims were transported farther away – they were dragged or carried – but only in a few instances were they taken beyond the borders of the village. „Carrying” (*hordozás*) is a particular form of abduction and a term that appears frequently in the trials. It refers to a rapid horizontal flight by the abducted to actual terrestrial sites, such as „Laposdomb” (Flat Hill), „the stove of János Vas,” „Antal's pear tree,” and so on.<sup>782</sup> This flight in pairs does not constitute the real witches' sabbat, but its essence is the same. The abducted party arrives in an alternative world with the witches; the narratives also refer to a parallel world existing in terrestrial scenes. References to breaking away from earth are often attached to narratives about more „realistic” carrying; for example, „her feet could not touch the ground”;<sup>783</sup> and „she walked on the tree tops.”<sup>784</sup> Another example, from Kisvárd, Szabolcs County, speaks of rapid horizontal flight: „with a speed like the wind's she was rushing down the road... Mrs. Mihály Sándor passed her at speed on a brownish horse”.<sup>785</sup>

The scenes of group witches' sabbats, if not in or around the house of the injured party, mostly occurred on a hillock, a hill, or a mountain top.<sup>786</sup> Presumably this is no accident, given that these are the symbols of the universal „sacred center of the earth”.<sup>787</sup> Specified hills, such as Gellért and Tokaj, as well as unnamed surrounding hillocks were commonly mentioned examples.<sup>788</sup> Going to Gellért Hill would probably have been a legendary topos in those days; even in Hungary's Modern Age legends, it is the most frequent scene of the witches' merriments. Every kind of landscape surrounding the village was represented: vineyards, meadows, gardens,<sup>789</sup> forests, field, valleys, and waters.<sup>790</sup> References to cities and palaces are striking among village scenes.<sup>791</sup> It is not out of the question that the „vast, monstrous cities and vaulting arches,” the „palaces and churches”<sup>792</sup> raise the heavenly city of Christian visions through a series of linked stages of transmission.<sup>793</sup>

<sup>782</sup> Kiskunhalas, Mrs. Gergely Bosér's trial, 1734, in Schram 1970, 2:431; 1724, Eger, in Sugár, 120. For other similar rural places a further fifteen documents are available. Usually they are „carried” without mention of a specific place. For this there are a further fifteen documents.

<sup>783</sup> From Otomány, Bihar County 1735; Komáromy, 1910, 478.

<sup>784</sup> This was a frequent remark in connection with carrying. See, for example, 1715, Kismarja, Bihar County, in Balázs Molnár, 367; and six additional documents.

<sup>785</sup> Kisvárd, Szabolcs County, in Schram 1970, 2:352.

<sup>786</sup> In twenty-three cases, hills, mountains, etc., are unspecified. For example, see 1766, Kiskunlacháza, in Schram 1970, 1:486; 1724, Eger, in Sugár, 101.

<sup>787</sup> Eliade 1958, 307–87.

<sup>788</sup> For a summary of the documents on Saint Gellért's Hill, see Sándor Dömötör. Some of the twenty-five documents that contain references to Saint Gellért's Hill are in Schram 1970: 1735, Kisvárd, Szabolcs County, 2:344; and 1734, Kiskunhalas, 2:431.

<sup>789</sup> 1734, Szentes, in Schram 1970, 1:248; 1715, Mád, Zemplén County, in *ibid.*, 3:298, and ten additional documents.

<sup>790</sup> Kolozsvár, in Komáromy, 1910, 60; 1724, Eger, in Sugár, 101; and fifteen additional documents.

<sup>791</sup> Between 1745 and 1750, Hódmezővásárhely, in Schram 1970, 1:279.

<sup>792</sup> Lehoczky 1887, 303.

<sup>793</sup> See McDannell and Lang 1988, 69-89.

Faraway places, foreign cities and countries, were also brought into narratives through actual international events, especially wars: „Erdélyország” (Transylvania) and Turkey were the recurring scenes of witches’ sabbats.<sup>794</sup> At these, people who migrated into the country at the end of the eighteenth century, after the Turkish occupation, could nurture their relationship with those at home in the motherland. A witch from Bátaszék confessed that their society was at a witches’ sabbat „in Germany at the relatives of Mrs. Kolbert”.<sup>795</sup> The court sought to confirm the fact of a Turkish witches’ sabbat through the confession of Erzsók Pandit, a nine-year-old girl questioned during the trial of her mother: „The court asked, ‘How did you know it was Turkey?’ ‘Because we saw a Turk,’ the child answered, to which the confirming question: ‘What kind of robe did the Turk wear?’ ‘A long sheepskin tunic like the Poles,’ replied the little girl.”<sup>796</sup>

Flying was one of the most general symbolic expressions of a journey to the alternative world.<sup>797</sup> Its interpretation at various levels runs throughout the narratives about witches’ sabbats. With the help of the devil, and through the use of flying ointment or magic, it was possible to fly „in soul” as well as physically, upon some animal or object and even on people. „Carrying” was also a particular metaphor for flying whereby rapid horizontal flight referred to a journey into the terrestrial, „parallel” (that is, an alternative) world. European trial documents indicate that this kind of horizontal flight of the souls of witches above the ground and „across the landscape” would have been a general phenomenon.<sup>798</sup> Being torn out of the terrestrial framework of time and space and entering the alternative world was marked by supernatural speed. This speed was a characteristic attribute of many of our witches; for example, witches from Otomány, Bihar County, purported to reach Eszék<sup>799</sup> in an hour.<sup>800</sup> Or an accused person from Csurgó in 1729 „went all over to Turkey in one night”.<sup>801</sup> Witch doubles flew like the wind or as birds and were related to their fairy and wind-soul attributes. One witch from Abaúj „put on wings” and flew out to the witches’ sabbat through the shingles,<sup>802</sup> witches from Simontornya in 1741 turned into eagles,<sup>803</sup> and the witches’ company of Tállya was carried by the wind.<sup>804</sup>

In the eyes of the interrogator, who knew nothing about „soul trips,” witches could not possibly fly except with the help of the devil. Therefore, admitting to flying constituted an admission of witchcraft and indirectly indicated participation in the witches’ sabbat. So it was not accidental that, in Hungarian trial minutes as elsewhere, a question about flying followed an accusation of witchcraft: „Did you fly about the rooftops?” was the question to the above-mentioned witch from Feketeadó in 1732.

The subject of flying ointment occasionally came up in Hungarian interrogations,<sup>805</sup> nonetheless, it played no real role in precipitating trance. In our trials no evidence underpins the assumption of some European research that witches, including the Hungarian witches,

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<sup>794</sup> Eger, in Sugár, 116; 1728, Mád, Zemplén County, in Schram 1970, 3:303.

<sup>795</sup> 1782, in Szilágyi 1987, 507.

<sup>796</sup> Schram 1982, 303.

<sup>797</sup> See Eliade 1956.

<sup>798</sup> Flying witches from the Middle Ages were clearly identified with the demons that lived in proximity to the earth. These demons glided about with supernatural speed. For this, see Flint, 125.

<sup>799</sup> Today Osijek, Croatia.

<sup>800</sup> 1724, in Komáromy, 1910, 332.

<sup>801</sup> Schram 1970, 1:533.

<sup>802</sup> Regécvára, 1683, in Majláth, 11. Similar examples come from 1732, Feketeadó, Ugocsa County, in Komáromy, 1910, 455, and five additional documents.

<sup>803</sup> Schram 1970, 2:485.

<sup>804</sup> Zemplén County, in Hódossy, 221; or 1619, Nagyszombat, Mrs. Ádám Wrablo’s trial; and four additional documents.

<sup>805</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, a confession under torture in Schram 1970, 1:337; 1755, Borosjenő, Arad County, in Komáromy, 1910, 574; 1727, Bagota, in Alapi, 45; and twelve other references.

made journeys with the help of drugs.<sup>806</sup> Documents referring to altered states of consciousness clearly talk about spontaneous trance. References to flying ointment are generally traceable only in responses given to questions of the court and even then principally in confessions following torture. Flying ointment appears in the narratives as a metaphor for creating trance, in the context of flying with wings – that is, „really” flying – or in the legendary motif of turning into an animal. In Hódmezővásárhely, Mária Oláh confessed under torture, „if we wish to be dogs, we become dogs... we were in the images of cats, we smeared [ourselves] with certain ointment... and climbed through the window”.<sup>807</sup>

There is documentation of a kind of spontaneous flight – that is, soul journey – with a symbolic, otherworldly means of transport familiar throughout Europe, the miniature vehicle. My assumption is that this legendary motif is connected to the invisibly tiny figure of the soul. Several Hungarian witches traveled to a gathering in a walnut shell on the Danube or the Tisza rivers;<sup>808</sup> others could squeeze into even smaller places like the husks of millet.<sup>809</sup> Bushel, bolter sieve, fish basket, and withy were also mentioned.<sup>810</sup> Among all these, the most common are the bolter sieve and the sieve: the mara witches of Western Europe traveled in them (as they do in Shakespeare’s *Machbeth*), and they floated on water and did not sink.<sup>811</sup> It is possible that the demonological view on the weightlessness of witches is rooted in this image, and perhaps even the practice of trial by water. We have some nondemonological documentation that refers to witches that „walked on water” and did not sink.<sup>812</sup>

The characteristics of certain species of supernatural witch can also be traced in their methods of „abduction” or „traveling.” Fairy witches took possession of the living through music and dance; those who were abducted „went with them” for a longer period of time, joined the company, flew, danced, and made merry with them.<sup>813</sup> „Troops” of „groups” of dead also took the victims to whom they appeared or with whom they „met.” What is more, we have documentation<sup>814</sup> in which the precise meaning of the expression also becomes clear: ‘a big black troop went to her with flags, among whom the flag holder was... Gergely Jankus, ... torturing this woman and taking away her soul.’

Those who were abducted became demons themselves, like their abductors. This is true of Hungarian demonic night witches too. In one descriptive example, Mrs. Márton Virágos, a witch from Bihar County, spoke to the women of the village about „whether [her illness] was caused by a human” – that is, whether or not it was maleficium. One of the women told her, „You bumped your head into the roof beams when you were a fairy,” meaning that she had become ill when she was a fairy, and she was a fairy when the fairies visiting her house had enchanted her to dance (and caused her to bump her head against the roof beams).<sup>815</sup>

The most likely original interpretation of turning into an animal was that the double of those abducted entered the alternative world. Assuming an animal form signaled this transfer

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<sup>806</sup> Harner. This view, which came from witch-hunting demonology, was a commonplace of Western European interrogations. With his series of experiments questioning the existence of the witches’ sabbat, Alonzo de Salazar Frias, an inquisitor sent to Pays Basque, refuted the use of flying ointment as early as 1609 (Henningesen).

<sup>807</sup> 1758, in Schram 1970, 1:341.

<sup>808</sup> 1758, Hódmezővásárhely, in Schram 1970, 1:345; *ibid.*, 1:343, 345; 1769, Halmi, Ugocsa County, *ibid.*; and six more documents.

<sup>809</sup> Diósgeg, Bihar county, 1723, in Schram 1970, 1:105.

<sup>810</sup> Nagyszombat, Mrs. Ádám Wrablo’s trial; 1619, Pannonhalma, in Szulpicz Molnár, 237, and five more documents.

<sup>811</sup> For the mara in the sieve, see, for example, Peuckert. For the floating of the mara, see Strömbäck.

<sup>812</sup> Kisvárd, Szabolcs County, in Schram 1970, 2:392. See also 1709, Miskolc, in Szendrei, 642, 644.

<sup>813</sup> 1679, Némétújvár, Vas County, in Schram 1970, 2:725, 1715; Hencida, Bihar County, in *ibid.*, 1:75; 1734, Szentes County in *ibid.*, 1:244.

<sup>814</sup> From Katalin Barha’s trial in Madar, Komárom County in 1721.

<sup>815</sup> Derecske, 1699, in Schram 1970, 1:46.

between levels of existence, and it was one of the most important physical-double variations of the demonic witches. Certain cases of transformation into animals could be connected to werewolf-like witches in the forms of dogs or horses. For example, according to a document from Szeghalom, witches appearing as dogs took away the witness at the Christmas festival, a werewolf period.<sup>816</sup> At other times they would turn into dogs or cats while tumbling,<sup>817</sup> like the *prikulics* of the twentieth-century eastern Hungarian legends.<sup>818</sup> Assuming the form of cats also occurred,<sup>819</sup> but in Hungary people who were turned into animals most frequently became horses; the victim would be bridled or stuck with a bridle. We have numerous documents referring to victims who were turned into horses,<sup>820</sup> and it must have been a popular legendary motif throughout Central Europe in this era. Riding or galloping on the animal alter ego of a transformed human was a characteristic attribute of European witch beliefs, and remained one of the most characteristic motifs of witch legends.<sup>821</sup>

The record of the 1747 trial of Mrs. András Gulyás, in Kassa, contains unique elements that suggest a probable visionary experience. Appearing in the text are spirit horses, victims who are turned into horses, and witches that saddled them, as well as a rather ghoulish company of riding witches. The other world is signified by the symbolism of encircling of losing one's way, and on another level there is a reference to the abducted victim's trance state. Mrs. Gulyás enters the house in the night, the witch form Göncz

saying „Do you know what I asked from you? You dog! Come here, dog!” „With this she threw the bridle over her head and turned her into a horse there and then. Leaving the place with a mighty noise, she tied her to the door post, ... then she mounted the horse, and by which time there were three waiting outside in front of the gate on black horses ... thus they went to Szina. A black horse in fancy decoration preceded them everywhere, [and] it was glittering with light.

Then later the witch

just threw the bridle over her neck, [and] sat on the back of the fatens. Going toward the fiels of Rosál the fatens saw a powerful steed and with grand preparations it glittered with light. Following this steed while they were going to the fields of Rosál, the fatens still had her senses, but after that where the fatens was carried she did not know. Only as she finally came home to town did she come round once more, [as] Mrs. Gulyás made the fatens circle her own house three times.<sup>822</sup>

A totally different way of traveling to the witches' sabbat was to fly on magical objects. The basis for this motif of legends was the demonological idea of „satanic help”. The topoi of the literature of magic, as well as motifs from tales that referred to maggical objects,

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<sup>816</sup> Békés County, 1724, in Oláh 1886–87, 115. For further references on dogs, see Pályi, Bihar County, *ibid.*, 1:69. For witches who abducted in the images of horses and dogs, see 1750, Hódmezővásárhely, in *ibid.*, 1:271; and 1722, Miskolc, Éva Balog's trial.

<sup>817</sup> 1731, in Kazinczy 1885, 3:374. For additional dog-werewolf references, see 1748, Hódmezővásárhely, in Schram 1970, 1:343; and 1756, Borosjenő, Arad County, in Komáromy, 1910, 595, 597.

<sup>818</sup> *Prikulics* is the Transylvanian term for „werewolf”, compare the Romanian *priculici*.

<sup>819</sup> For documentation on people who were transformed into dogs or cats, see, for example, 1731, Megyaszó, Zemplén County, in Kazinczy, 372; and 1728, Szeged, in Reizner, 402. We have about ten references to turning into a cat.

<sup>820</sup> 1731, Kisvárda, Szabolcs County, in Schram 1970, 2:338–340; 1734, Szentes in *ibid.*, 2:237; and thirty-five additional documents.

<sup>821</sup> Bihari 1980, 78–79. IX. 1/6.

<sup>822</sup> The trial of Mrs. András Gulyás and company, Kassa, 1747.

magical spells, and magical transformations, constituted a rich source of ideas for such help.<sup>823</sup> Flying on objects created through illusion was a recurring motif of court narratives. Witches claimed (although mostly in confessions following torture) to have traveled on carpets with the help of the wind, a cannonball, or carts that rose into the air through magic, as in Erzsébet Hampa's 1737 trial in Sümeg: „The six horses mentioned previously were naught but cats in truth, two black cats belonging to Ilona, ... the carriage was only a sieve and a bolter sieve thrown to the air, which were put together like wheels and were started with a whiplash... they traveled like the wind.”<sup>824</sup>

Other symbolic motifs went with traveling to the witches' sabbat. Traveling on narrow paths, crossing bridges, and passing through small gaps are all universal symbols of entering the otherworld.<sup>825</sup> A company of witches from Kisvárdá that appeared at a trial in 1737 went on narrow planks.<sup>826</sup> Others passed „through many small holes”<sup>827</sup> while some squeezed through wax grids<sup>828</sup> to reach the witches's sabbat. Tiny soul figures could press through small openings. Witches evidently went to house merriments in their „spiritual body” if they came through closed doors,<sup>829</sup> they could also press through small panes of glass, smoke holes,<sup>830</sup> or through closed holes and keyholes.<sup>831</sup>

The court interpreted these acts rationally, such as pressing through a keyhole or many other metaphors of transfer between levels of existence. „Where and through what kind of holes could you pass?” they asked Ilona Vörös, a witch from Simontornya in 1741. She answered, helpfully attending to the point of view of the investigator, „I even went through drilled holes and gaps around doors.”<sup>832</sup> To a question about pressing through a keyhole, a witch from Megyaszó answered that they could pass through the keyhole because they „stretched out like a rope.”<sup>833</sup> Trial participants had to rationalize these symbols of the otherworld not only to the court but also to themselves because it would seem at times that they did not make sense to them anymore. Mrs. Mihály Tóth, a witch from Körösladány in 1723, wanted to enter a house one night along with her company, but initially they did not succeed because the inhabitants pushed the door from inside. Then they decided to attempt an entry through a drilled hole, which they somehow succeeded in, and they sat on the chest of the person sleeping inside like true mora demons.<sup>834</sup>

Sudden blindness could also be a sign of being abducted to the otherworld (a symbolic death),<sup>835</sup> just as the motif of a time lapse: the witches' sabbat „is over very fast [like] a whirlwind” or is like „shadow images.”<sup>836</sup> It is interesting that in the two examples above, the

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<sup>823</sup> See, for example, magic words in 1576, Simontornya, Tolna County, in Mihály Szilágyi, 512; and 1728, Szeged, in Reizner, 417. For the motif of the magical flight of magicians and witches, see Herold.

<sup>824</sup> Schram 1970, 1:541. For similar motifs of magic flying carriages and magic animals, see, for example, 1653, Szalónak, Vas County, in Schram 1970, 2:716–17; 1726, Eger, in Sugár, 107; and nine other references to flying carriages.

<sup>825</sup> It is familiar from both visionary literature and near-death experiences. See Zaleski, 61–62.

<sup>826</sup> Schram 1970, 2:354–55.

<sup>827</sup> Schram 1970, 1:533.

<sup>828</sup> Schram 1970, 1:244–45.

<sup>829</sup> 1627, Nagymegyer, Komárom County, in Rómer, 77; 1722, Lédec, Sopron County, in Schram 1970, 2:30, 1752, Marosváráshely, in Friedrich Müller, 50.

<sup>830</sup> 1715, Felsőbánya, Szatmár County, in Abafi, 354; 1700, Debrecen, in Komáromy, 1910, 191; 1724, Eger, in Sugár, 102; and elven other documents.

<sup>831</sup> 1782, Bátaszék, Tolna County, in Mihály Szilágyi, 506; 1745, Nagykároly, in Szirmay, 82, and eight more documents from Pozsony, to Küküllő.

<sup>832</sup> Schram 1970, 2:483.

<sup>833</sup> 1731, in Kazinczy 1885, 375.

<sup>834</sup> Komáromy 1910, 320.

<sup>835</sup> See, for example, a case in 1729, in Csurgó, Somogy County, in Schram 1970, 1:535, and another in 1733, in Csorna, Sopron County, *ibid.*, 1:239.

<sup>836</sup> 1741, Simontornya, Tolna County, in *ibid.*, 2:485, and 1732, Szentes, in *ibid.*, 1:239.

differing quality of supernatural time was compared to the supernatural nature of two typical soul figures, that is, the wind soul and shadow soul.

The transitory death of those abducted into an alternative existence was, in one sense, an initiation. Being there meant belonging there. From that point on, using the knowledge acquired in the supernatural world, initiates commuted between the two worlds as authorized parties; the alternative was to die and never return.<sup>837</sup> This interpretation of the act of abduction by the dead can be traced to every known demonic creature in the Central European area.<sup>838</sup> These initiations had a common negative variant whereby the victims returned from the otherworld devastated or sick, and bringing illness instead of knowledge. In such cases, initiation was incomplete in that symbolic death was not followed by the rebirth. Bringing illness from the realm of death is an idea that appears in a number of ways in the archaic strata of European belief systems, and it is a fundamental characteristic of the bipolar dead.<sup>839</sup> An example is where illnesses were brought by disease demons who had belonged to that world from the outset. The positive attributes of the dead were that they initiated mediators, and the knowledge of enchanted seers, magicians, or healers came from them.

Nevertheless, the negative traits of the dead are most salient in the belief in abduction by supernatural witches. Those who were abducted returned with illnesses from the world of the dead – that is, they became victims of maleficium, basically the maleficium of the type C witch perceived in apparitions and visions. Numerous trial documents refer to this negative aspect of abduction, although there are examples of its other face. The dual characteristic of the dead is present in the figure of the supernatural witch, although in an uneven way. It is marked by themes in which either initiation or torture, illness, and death appear. The theme of the summons to a witches' sabbat, or coercion into the company of witches, would have carried these alternatives, and narratives always mention threats of destruction should the abducted person refuse to join. One abducted party testified to a threat of impaling during a 1733 trial in Csorna.<sup>840</sup> In the same context another initiation theme appears, the obligation to keep secrets.<sup>841</sup> The witches' society promised „Muscovy leather and material for bodices” to an abducted person from Kisvárda in 1735 if she told no one;<sup>842</sup> in another account the victim was warned that he would die if he let the secret out.<sup>843</sup>

Removal of bones appears in some narratives as an act of initiation, or as initiation interpreted as maleficium.<sup>844</sup> In the maleficium narratives this concluded the act of abduction. It occurs most typically in the abduction apparitions of fate women. An alternative to triple

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<sup>837</sup> Basically, after the example of the examined demonic world, they remained forever in the march of the dead which they had joined, meaning that they become permanently dead. See, for example, in connection with the „Nachtvolk,” Meier To Bernd, 91–92. This view is familiar especially in connection with the fairies as an explanation for death. They became fairies for good, therefore they died. For this see Pócs, 38–39; or O'hOgain, 185.

<sup>838</sup> Connected to this, see the references to the *táltos* and their documentation in Central and Southeastern Europe in, for example, Pócs, 39–44, and Pócs.

<sup>839</sup> It is especially characteristic of fairies to cause their abducted victims to fall ill or to destroy them; „fairy illnesses” were punishment for those who had broken taboos. Compare Pócs, 20–21. For the death symbolism of initiation rituals, see, for example, Eliade, 162–80, for dying for good as an act of rebirth in the ritual of initiation, see Eliade, 162–63.

<sup>840</sup> Schram 1970, 2:97. Comparable references occur, for example, in Schram 1970, 2:25 (from 1676); Ulmic, Moson County, in *ibid.*, 1:438 (for 1665); and twelve similar documents.

<sup>841</sup> See Turner 1972.

<sup>842</sup> Schram 1970, 2:344.

<sup>843</sup> Schram 1970, 1:248.

<sup>844</sup> Compare with the series of motifs of Eurasian shamanism: cutting into pieces, extracting bones, and resurrection. This is known from the context of initiating a shaman. See Eliade, 43–76. However, it has to be noted that cutting up and putting together also occur in Christian visions, as infernal punishment. Of course, the roots of that can also lead us to the images discussed here. See, for example, Mikházy Szécsi János's vision in 1645, in Sándor V. Kovács ed., 295.

judgment could be a sentence to the removal of bones: instead of death, „they voted for extracing his bones.”<sup>845</sup>

As creatures determining the fate of werewolves or the shamanistic abilities of werewolf magicians, fate women also play a role in a wider European context. It seems likely that the motif of extracting bones is connected to these figures through that context. This theme is part of several European demonic creature belief systems, and is primarily associated with fairies, or the „Perchta”<sup>846</sup> that lead troops of the dead, all creatures with the attributes of fate women. Presumably this motif is a remnant of the Central Southeastern European imagery of the lady of the animals.<sup>847</sup> It runs through all the areas where initiation beliefs featuring demonic creatures are found; these creatures, like fate women or fairies, had the characteristics of „lord of the animals.” A more frequent variation of removing the bones was that a single bone or body part – for example, the little finger – had to be surrendered in exchange for initiation into witchcraft. At other times, the missing bone was simply interpreted as a sign or symptom of maleficium when identifying an illness.<sup>848</sup> Removing a bone could be cross-interpreted at a demonological level as the devil’s mark, which also denoted initiation. In this the devil removed a bone as a symbol of the pact, or bit the finger of the individual forced into the company of the witches.<sup>849</sup>

Being torn to pieces or devoured can also be seen as motifs of initiation belonging with the same imagery. In Patak, Nógrád County, in 1759, for example, an abducted person was „torn pieces” at the top of a tree and had to pledge to keep it secret.<sup>850</sup> The Balkanic context of the documents reinforces this as a reference to an act of initiation. The series of motifs of cook-devour-regurgitate are known there in the context of the initiation of heroes in heroic epics as well as of magicians.<sup>851</sup> A very close replica of the documents from the Balkans with a clear meaning can be seen in a trial in Szentes in 1734, where, according to the narration of the witch, a suckling baby was cut into pieces, cooked in an iron cauldron, and eaten, following which the bones were collected and mixed with chaff.<sup>852</sup> This is not only initiation but also the leitmotif of the aforementioned imagery of the lady of the animals. Carlo Ginzburg connected these motifs with the once-chthonic figures of goddesses who initiated shamanistic magicians;<sup>853</sup> we will return to these in the discussion of fairy magicians. What were the abducted actually initiated into? Into witchcraft? Did they win the power of maleficium, as demonologists thought? As we shall see, it was actually about shamanistic initiation: the initiation of an archaic „seer witch.”

Abduction of entering the alternative world also had its demonological variation. Being summoned by the devil and „making a pledge” can be read in each interrogated witch’s words. Making a pledge basically meant entering into a pact. This, as I mentioned, was not elicited in each interrogation of the accused in this precise way. However, such questions as „when did you join them?” „how long have you been with them?” and „when did you pledge yourself?” reveal that the interrogating judges imagined the gathering of witches, under the mantle of a provincial Hungarian demonology, as some kind of organized evil company that formed pacts for maleficium rather than devil worshipping. Documents of such „summoning in” or „pledging”, sometimes referring to companies of witches or sometimes to the devil,

<sup>845</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1739, in Schram 1970, 1:254. A similar account appears in Fekete, 165.

<sup>846</sup> See Waschnitius; the motif of removing a bone is present in the whole work. See also Pócs, 42.

<sup>847</sup> Pócs 1986, 218–19.

<sup>848</sup> 1743, Simontornya, in Schram 1970, 2:500; 1756, Borosjenő, Arad County, in Komáromy, 1910, 586; and fifteen additional documents.

<sup>849</sup> 1676, Oszlop, Sopron County, in Eckhardt, 135, 1643, Szalónak, Vas County, in Schram 1970, 2:718.

<sup>850</sup> Schram 1982, 325. For children being torn into two at a crossroad, see Mrs. András Gulyás’s 1747 trial in Kassa.

<sup>851</sup> Stojanović 1996, Chapter 4. See it as initiation of a witch in Bošković-stulli, 501. Compare Eliade, 118–26.

<sup>852</sup> Schram 1970, 1:247.

<sup>853</sup> „Knochen und Häute,” in Ginzburg 1990.

originated from the mouths of both witnesses and the accused. The party summoned was usually coerced, threatened with destruction or death, or promised money.<sup>854</sup> It is useful to examine the chronological spread of those seventy-seven documents about being summoned by the devil. This theme appeared in the seventeenth century in Pozsony, Sopron, and Vas counties in western Hungary, from where it slowly spread toward the east. It never reached as far as Transylvania, then the easternmost part of Hungary, except for a few towns inhabited by Saxons.<sup>855</sup> It seems certain that the idea was spread by the demonology of the witch hunters arriving from the West, and became less a part of the popular imagery of the witches' sabbat. In about half of all cases the pact was actually made in different ways and on different levels; however, the details of these motifs fall outside our current subject. Merriments, dance, and fornication with the devil were frequently a feature of the confessions of witches. Nonetheless, it was also characteristic that the supernatural lover was not the prescribed „demonological” devil, but rather emerged from the familiar, colorful, and popular devil figures: devils in the shape of dogs or ravens who served witches, or at other times the demon Elisha wearing a pelisse, or a lad with horse's legs in a soldier's outfit (which was the previously mentioned *lidérc* lover), and so on.<sup>856</sup> Here it seems as if the witches who were forced through torture to confess to having entered into a pact drew upon familiar devil figures based on guardians in fabricating their confessions, or even on their personal experience of desire or love.

The figure of the devil, particularly in the making of pacts, appeared only occasionally in narratives about witches' merriments or witches' sabbats. What was an indispensable part of the narratives was being together as a group, the actual society of witches. We can read about the society of witches in contexts at different levels, from narratives on experiences of death troops to confessions following torture where guilty partners were enumerated. We know that participation in the sabbat was a key focus of interrogation, in order to expose the assumed conspiracy.<sup>857</sup> The company of witches, like other features of the witches' sabbat, was not invented by demonologists to serve the aims of interrogation. This society, just like the devil making a pact, had a popular basis. As we saw earlier, in the first century of the hunts there was no mention of the devil at all in the narratives about the witches' sabbat. Apparently, the conspiring society of witches organized by devils did not exist then, not even in the minds of Hungarian judges. It seems probable that the peasant witnesses conceptualized only one type of company: the gathering of the dead with supernatural witches and their demonic relatives, fairies, and werewolves.

The ghoulish nature of these troops can often be traced to witches' sabbats: these witches are „the evils,” „the evil souls,” or children with fiery eyes in „the troop.”<sup>858</sup> What was really connected to the dead was the troop's black or white flag, which grew to extraordinary supernatural proportions at night. That was a repetitive motif: witches came to the house at night carrying a flag, and as the „troop of the dead” they called their victims to them with flags.<sup>859</sup> The troop flags disappeared upon the dispersal of the group, but they were

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<sup>854</sup> We have about thirty documents where this „midly demonologized” version of abducting the witnesses is present. Examples are: 1734, Szentes, in Schram 1970, 1:248; and 1721, Réde, Fejér County, in Schneider, 11.

<sup>855</sup> For Saxon references, see: 1671, Segesvár, in Komáromy, 1910, 122, and 1707, Köhalom, Nagyküküllő County, in Heinrich Müller 147.

<sup>856</sup> 1619, Nagyszombat, Mrs. Ádám Wrabło's trial, and 1665, Darázsfalva, Sopron County, in Schram 1970, 2:485, 1728, Bicske, in Komáromy, 1910, 506, and ten similar documents. Gábor Klaniczay also dealt with these devil figures; see his 252–53. Also compare Tekla Dömötör.

<sup>857</sup> Trevor-Roper 1969, 41–42, Cohn 1975, 97–98.

<sup>858</sup> 1728, Szeged, in Reizner, 376, 379; 1744, Egyházásfalva, Sopron County, in Schram 1970, 2:203–4.

<sup>859</sup> Szilsárkány, Sopron County, 1737, in Schram 1970, 2:105; Hódmezővásárhely, 1739, in *ibid.*, 1:256.

of great size and are described as „very beautiful and shiny” or „scarlet silk with golden dots,” and as being made of silk, gold, copper, or embroidery.<sup>860</sup>

Like other accessories of the witches’ sabbat, the flag may be understood through the eyes of the interrogators and the words of the tortured confessors as magical objects created through illusion. One, for example, „reached from the Hill of Tokaj as far as the River Tisza when it was unraveled”<sup>861</sup> The flag is an emphatic object rich in meaning, the positive symbol of the alternative world with its simultaneous connotation of death and heaven. The latter examples suggest that it had some connection with the fairylike „heavenly” joys of the otherworld. Its parallels were the flag of Southeastern European fairy troops, or the heavenly flags of religious visions.

The flag had military character too: the „flag holder” of the group was often referred to among the military officials of the company next to the „superiors” and the „head of the witches.”<sup>862</sup> Otherwise, a detailed enumeration of military ranks was only characteristic of the confessions of witches;<sup>863</sup> the confessions of witnesses contained no mention of rank. Nevertheless, it is not highly likely that this fact would have had a demonological aspect. Military ranks are unknown in Europe within the companies of witches; thus unknown are the threads that have led to the groups of fairy mythology in the Balkans, often with military ranking,<sup>864</sup> as well as to the *zduhač*, a type of shamanistic magician who fought in groups over the otherworld.

*Zduhač* troops fought in military hierarchy against hostile magician troops, apparently in the manner of the Turkish wars. In that region a common pool of motifs around *zduhač*, fairies, and witches is also conceivable from the military-ranking perspective – and even more so, since there were frequently bagpipers and especially drummers among the military rankings, and drums were magical fairy objects similar to the flag.<sup>865</sup> This thread also leads toward the fairy musician troops of the Balkans, and the carefully guarded magic drum and toward the *rusalia* rituals of the fairy cult; and all of these enrich the stock of the fairy motifs of the Hungarian popular witches’ sabbat.

Above we mentioned the battling soul of the *zduhač* magician in connection with the military rankings of witches’ companies. A characteristic motif on many levels and in manifold belief contexts, the motif of battles and fights in the otherworld extends further than that and is connected to shamanistic magicians and witches. Generally speaking, the conflict is about good and evil, about the opposition between one’s own and alien guardians. Battles to defend one’s own interests against the aliens arose in connection with practically all the guardians studied here. The individual battles between one’s own guardian and the spirit of an alien – that is, the „bad” guardian<sup>866</sup> – do not fit the context of the witches’ sabbat. The

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<sup>860</sup> The references show a spread in northern Hungary from Pozsony to Zemplén, except for one document from Szeged, which is different from the others in that it refers to a flag with the image of the devil Dromo. See 1619, Nagyszombat, Mrs. Ádám Wrablo’s trial; 1727, Bagota, Komárom County, in Alapi, 46; 1714, Tállya, Zemplén County, in Hódossy, 222; 1728, Szeged, in Reizner, 410, and six further documents from northern Hungary.

<sup>861</sup> Eger, 1711, in Sugár 1987, 49. For an illusory flag made of a great burdock leaf, see a 1737 account from Sümeg, Somogy County, in Schram 1970, 1:542, and three additional documents.

<sup>862</sup> We have ten references to a flag holder. See, for example, 1711, Kürt, Pozsony County, in *ibid.*, 1:49, and 1727, Kamocsa, Katalin Bessenyei’s trial. For superiors and captains we have nine references. See, for example, 1638, Pozsony, in Komáromy, 641, and 1728, Hajdunánás, in Schram 1970, 1:384.

<sup>863</sup> In sixteen cases. See, for more depth, Körner. In one troop, according to the confession of an accused in 1724, in Otomány, Bihar County, they had a flag holder, a violinist, a second lieutenant, a captain, and a male devil. See Komáromy, 1910, 346.

<sup>864</sup> See Pócs 1989b, 50–51.

<sup>865</sup> For references to drums and drummers, see (in 1741, in simontornya) Schram 1970, 2:485, 494. For pipers with fairy attributes, see (in 1734, in Hódmezővásárhely) *ibid.*, 1:255, 256. An accused person from Hencida whom the witches’ troop abducted to be a whistler in order to make music for their merriments in the form of a „small soul”. See (in 1715, in Bihar County) *ibid.*, 1:75.

<sup>866</sup> See Chapter 6.

group battles of witch or spirit troops naturally do involve the society of witches. However, these battles are essentially the same kinds of conflicts as the paired battles between one's own and alien guardians or doubles. The most grandiose versions occurred between the souls of magicians or spirit patrons of two neighboring communities over rain or crops. In our region, these are also recorded in the mythical frameworks of narratives of witches' sabbats, although not to a great extent in the Hungarian trial narratives.

Battles for stealing and recovering crops only appear in the trials in Szeged: the gatherings of the demonic witches there stole the fertility, or „fat of the land,” from the neighboring people and settlements, through „picking dew.”<sup>867</sup> A substantially richer set of examples can be found in the witches' sabbat imagery of the Serbians, Croatians, Slovenians, Ukrainians, and especially the Romanians. The Romanian *strigoi* figures stole the milk and crops of neighboring villages, or recaptured them, in the context of soul battles. The doubles of witches in trance took part in these battles with agricultural tools and scutchers, distaffs, or shuttles (harking back to the fertility goddesses associated with spinning). In other cases the point of the battle was to ward off disease demons, for disease would strike the villages of the losing party while the villages of the winner would escape unscathed.

The image of the scutcher battles occurs sometimes in Hungarian sabbat narratives, too. The participants of the witches' sabbat in the trial in Nagykároly in 1745 „had wooden scutcher-shaped swords [like the witches of Romanian battles] and they were brandishing them and calling out the following words: 'I cut and parry but do not injure you.'”<sup>868</sup> In 1743, in Kisvárd, the witch Mrs. Mihály Sándor confessed that „I went with my grandmother to Halastó hegy [Fish Pond Hill] on the blue dog of István Hegedüs, and we brandished our scutcher branch in the night, and sometimes we went to Encsencs [a village] on the treetops, too.”<sup>869</sup> Another example comes from the confession of Kata Pásztor, a witch from Biharugra, at her 1755 trial in Borosjenő. A company of witches from Ugra flew out to the witches' sabbat and, on meeting the witches of Szalonta, as she put it, „we brandished some pieces of wood.”<sup>870</sup> All these are quite precise descriptions of *strigoi* battles, but the objectives of the battles themselves are never mentioned in Hungarian trials. Referring to another type of battle, István Lengyel, a witch with werewolf characteristics, stated in his trial in Örvénd, Bihar County, in 1716, that they „were brandishing” their weapons in panther skins in the night on Saint Gellért's Hill, where they were battling with devils.<sup>871</sup> Presumably, documentation of own and alien troops also belongs here.<sup>872</sup>

Documentation is sparse, and these group soul battles are not particularly characteristic of the Hungarian witch. However, each battle motif is in some way the negative complement to the battles of shamanistic magicians. Witches were the enemy who stole crops and rain, and the magicians had to recover the crop or rain for their own villages. On the other hand, when the witches' troops gain something for their own community from the neighboring village, they brandish their weapons as magicians. Whether in a positive or a negative role, witches doing battle „in their souls” fulfill the same mediatory roles as shamanistic magicians. Of course, the usual question arises here too: was it a genuine or fictive mediatory activity?

Witches with fairy attributes are mentioned several times in the trial records. They brought glittering beauty to the houses in which they appeared, and they abducted their

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<sup>867</sup> For Hungarian (especially Szeged) references to this, as well as the appropriate Romanian, Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian parallels, see Pócs, 332–33.

<sup>868</sup> Szirmay 1809, 82.

<sup>869</sup> Schram 1970, 2:352.

<sup>870</sup> Komáromy 1910, 578.

<sup>871</sup> Schram 1970, 1:49.

<sup>872</sup> „Those from Palánk go in a different troop and occasionally face conflict” (1728, Szeged, in Reizner, 401). Similar accounts appear in *ibid.*, 395, and Schram 1970, 2:486.

victims into their companies and their fairylike witches' sabbats by making music and dancing. Negative witch characteristics are totally absent from some of these source narratives, which depict an alternative world full of beauty and joy that contrasts with the miseries of the terrestrial world. So, fairylike witches' sabbats also belong in the world of desire. One account from Hódmezővásárhely reports, „in the group they all seemed of beautiful and gentle colors, and even if they are in rags at home, there their clothes are all of straight beauty.”<sup>873</sup>

The most important motif of the fairy sabbats was the merriment with dance. Around sixty naratives concerning fairy merriments emerged from Hungarian trials across the counry (excluding Transylvania), where, as in Romania, it was the witches with a werewolf or unbaptized demonic character who attended sabbats.<sup>874</sup> The heart of fairy merriments was the feast, and the stories about it refer to cooking and baking, food and beverages, cooks and servants. At times we are witness to a wonderful range of dishes and drinks from ten seeds of millet they feed „the entire company” as guests, or three thousand of them drink form a single drilled vine root. The mythological topos of magic food from antiquity and the Middle Ages was often broadened with the motif of the magically timed harvest (for example, wheat harvested before Pentecost or grapes harvested at Christmas time). These themes are known from the elite literature of magic, as well as from village crop magic<sup>875</sup> (once the motif of conjuring grain appears).<sup>876</sup> The accessories of a fairylike witch feast were golden and decorative, as in southeast European or Celtic fairy heavens. According to confessions made in a 1728 trial in Komárom, the company of Mrs. Mihály Oláh enjoyed themselves with silver and golden glasses while they traveled over water on a bolter sieve. On another occasion, „they comforted [the injured party] with an extraordinarily sumptuous feast.”<sup>877</sup>

This fairy world of desire realized in dreams and apparitions was characteristic of the fairy beliefs of the Central Southeastern Europeans – it also has close parallels in the Celtic, Italian, and Scandinavian regions<sup>878</sup> – and it lent parricular fairy attributes to the witches' sabbat in many areas.<sup>879</sup> Somehhing fairylike is always closely linked with the archaic and demonic withes' world of the dead – so much so that at times the shiny, heavenly features are missing from the image of the feast, and a „black” fairy world of the dead appears before us. The following example concerns a „black” troop of fairies with whom, however, it was possible to have a good time. From Mrs. György Gémes's 1739 trial in Hódmezővásárhely, we learn that her husband, when she fell ill, asked that she „take me in that black troop, how long is it since I was there? ... my dear dove, it is an age since I drank from that good old wine of Tokaj, that we drank in the black troop, give me a glass of that.”<sup>880</sup>

The alternative world of fairies can, to some extent, be identified with the Christian heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem of visions, and at the same time with a terrestrial paradise – all of which bear a resemblance to the narratives about fairylike witches' sabbats.<sup>881</sup> The topos

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<sup>873</sup> 1739, in Schram 1970, 1:254. Witnesses and accused alike spoke about a good life, beautiful clothes, and joy. Another example: Dániel Rósa, an accused from Szeged in 1728, in Reizner, 407. Similar accounts come, for example, from 1640, Lipót, Trencsén County, in R. Kiss, 212; and from 1753, Halas, in Schram 1970, 2:444.

<sup>874</sup> For a few examples see 1755, in Borosjenő, Arad County, in Komáromy, 1910, 567, 1730, Hódezővásárhely, in Schram 1970, 1:232, and 1724, Eger, in Sugár, 102,

<sup>875</sup> For magical food and drinks at a feast, see, for example, 1758, Hódmezővásárhely, in Schram 1970, 1:338; 1724, Csesznek, Fejér County, in Schneider, 11; 1747, Simontornya, Tolna County, in Schram 1970, 2:519, and six additional documents. See also note 80 of this chapter.

<sup>876</sup> 1707, Köhalom, in Müller 1910, 148.

<sup>877</sup> Schram 1970, 1:253.

<sup>878</sup> See Wall 1989; Henningsen 1990.

<sup>879</sup> See Pócs 1986.

<sup>880</sup> Schram 1970, 1:259.

<sup>881</sup> These narratives could arrive there through many different sources, such as visionary literature, or as a motif of legends or tales. Or compare the terrestrial otherworlds of the sagas, filled with joys and strange feasts, and

of the Schlaraffenland legend (the land of plenty), known from the fifth century, could also be significant in the development of the fairy witches' world of desire. This topos became very popular in the late Middle Ages and early Modern Age.<sup>882</sup> It seems likely that the figures of fairy guardians ensuring fertility could also hide behind the narratives about feasts of plenty. However, the literature of magic may have played a more important role since it could have had a direct as well as an indirect effect through demonological doctrines. Several narratives of witches' sabbats contain the topos of „feast of illusory plenty,” known from contemporaneous literature of magic.<sup>883</sup> In these narratives, the palace and magic table brought about through magical trickery were simply illusions, which turned into nothing after a little while. At her 1782 trial in Bátaszék, Tolna County, Éva Frekkin, an accused gypsy girl, described the creation of a fairy world through magic. She explained that Mrs. Faind, a witch, beguiled and enticed her companions into attending the witches' sabbat: „throwing out her arms and shaking her body, she formed a very beautiful house, then there came all kinds of beauty, and joy... it appealed to me too and that is how I came to join myself with them.”<sup>884</sup>

In the Hungarian trial narratives, the theme of objects created through magic appears in this context, such as conjuring up a silver goblet from an ankle bone, a drum from a horse's hoof, cutlery from a cow's leg, and so on.<sup>885</sup> Regardless of whether the magic objects returned to their original form at the end of the feast, their appearance was always the result of magic. Demonologists and preachers also often used this motif of „satanic illusion”: demonologists thought that the fairylike otherworld was, of course, the invention of the devil to tempt away believers.<sup>886</sup> The devil often enticed those who hesitated to join him with such words as, „you see... we have a nice life, come and join us.”<sup>887</sup>

The worlds of fairies and witches are connected organically and practically in the context of witch trials. However, in the narratives concerning witches' sabbats, they were increasingly polarized as witchcraft became more and more demonologized during the hunts. The worlds of fairies and witches are interwoven with each other due to their archaic death characteristics, but they came into opposition: the satanic, hellish, and witchlike faced the godly, heavenly, and fairylike. Witches generally stood on the dark, satanic side, although this was never exclusively so, as documentation about „good” witches proves. More examples are offered below.

This process of polarization in the fairy world is effectively reflected in scenes of unmasking in the narratives about feasts. The motif of illusory plenty created through magic put the narratives about fairylike witches' sabbats into quotation marks. It deprived them of their reality and identified them as satanic deceit. Let us quote one example of this unmasking from the 1711 confession of Mrs. János Csizmadia, a witness in Sempste. This woman went to

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similar images of the otherworld in Celtic literature from the Middle Ages. See H. R. Patch, 102–49; and Delumeau. For the heavenly characteristics and the roots of the otherworld of the Balkan fairies, see Pócs, 39–44. For twentieth-century visions by seers of the dead in Hungary, where a beautiful terrestrial garden heaven also occurred, see, for example, Fekete, 293; Grynaeus, 65.

<sup>882</sup> Wunderlich 1986.

<sup>883</sup> For the feast of „illusory plenty,” which is well known in the Hellenistic literature on magic, see, for example, Kákósy, 286–87, and Kákósy, 78–80. European magical literature from the sixteenth century and Eastern and Western European legends both reflect the ancient topos. See, for example, the Theophilus legend, where a desired feast is the subject of the temptation of the devil, in Palmer and More, 80–109. It is also known in Orthodox visionary literature. see Lettenbauer, 403.

<sup>884</sup> Szilágyi 1987, 505. A similar floating table was evoked in a glittering palace. See 1715, Tállya, in Hódossy, 221.

<sup>885</sup> Eger, in Sugár, 49; 1728, Hódmezővásárhely, in Schram 1970, 1:344–45; and 1728, Bicske, Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County, in Komáromy, 1910, 410.

<sup>886</sup> See Alsheimer 1974, 502, 508.

<sup>887</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1758, in Schram 1970, 1:341.

the mill, „lay upon the hopper [most likely she fell asleep too, and in her dream she saw that] soon enough all kinds of food appeared on the table, the glasses were mere stars, their table was white like snow, and as the fatens noticed that it was not a table, she wanted to cross herself.”<sup>888</sup> The reference to crossing herself indicates that she perceives the illusory table as a satanic trick.

In certain sabbat narratives, the fairy feasts are not simply revealed as illusory but as something infernal. Demonologists imagined the feast of the desired world to be naught but a dinner in hell with lizards, snakes, and frogs, as the French demonologist Pierre de Lancre described the end of an illusory feast.<sup>889</sup> In narratives about witches' sabbats, the glistening table became „a tussock in the meadows,” the golden glass turned into a shinbone, and the girl who had been taken to dance was transformed into a boat.<sup>890</sup> These are motifs from legends about witches and fairies known throughout the region. They are presumed to have been very popular in the early Modern Age, and have had their enduring formulation in legends dated as early as the trial documents.<sup>891</sup>

Hell appeared in narratives about witches' sabbats as a consequence of these processes – for example, in the demonological context of the illusory feasts of plenty, if the fairy banquet had an infernal ending. On the other hand, there was also a „popular” hell present in the texts, which was on earth (as were all the other worlds of the witches), and only certain symbols of hell referred to its connection to the underworld or the devil. From these symbols the most frequently occurring were the scenes of the feasts: mill, cellar, wine cellar, pub, stable, pigpen, oven, or cauldron.<sup>892</sup> These symbolic terrestrial hells are known mainly from the narratives that refer to the hellish merriment of the Balkan and Central European underworld demons – werewolf demon variants – mentioned earlier. Presumably they entered the narratives about witches' sabbats through those demons.<sup>893</sup> Chimneys and chimney flues also represent hell; witches of the underworld used them as a passageway to reach the sabbat.<sup>894</sup>

Certain food types could also signal the satanic, infernal nature of the feasts. Examples are the stone bread and stone pears that witches ate at their merriment in wine cellars.<sup>895</sup> Animal bones, stones, and animal or human excrement, which appeared as the transformed food and trappings of illusory feasts, are the antithesis of the appetizing dishes of golden banquets. Repugnant actions occurring in the context of witches' sabbats could also denote the underworld or the devil: for example, the serving of slurry or manure dinners, defecating into

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<sup>888</sup> Schram 1970, 1:490.

<sup>889</sup> De Lancre 1613, 171.

<sup>890</sup> 1727, Bagota, Komárom County, in Alapi, 511; 1734, Szentes, in Schram 1970, 1:246–47; and ten additional documents.

<sup>891</sup> Bihari, 35, 80–81; For Serbian and Croatian legends about witches and fairies, see Krauss, 37–55; Đorđević, 42; Bošcović-Stulli, 449. For Austrian and German legends, see Weiser-Aall; and Wittmann, 22–23. For Slovakian legends, see Krupa, 313.

<sup>892</sup> 1612, Kolozsvár, in Komáromy, 1910, 77; Kocs, Komárom County, in Schram 1970, 3:191; 1734, Halas, in Schram, *ibid.*, 2:430; 1711, Eger, in Sugár, 49; and seventeen additional documents.

<sup>893</sup> For Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian demon beliefs, see Marinov, 211–12; Lawson, 193–200; Richard Blum and Eva Blum, 121–22; and Zečević, 169–70. For example, according to Slovenian and Croatian trials, the witches of the underworld made merry in cellars and mills, ate raw meat, snails, and snakes, and urinated into the barrels and dishes similarly to demons. See the 1743 trial in Tkalčić, 23. For trials between 1531 and 1546, see Pajek, 25; and Bošcović-Stulli, 499–500.

<sup>894</sup> 1745, Körispatak, Udvarhely County, in Vass, 161; 1732, Szentes, in Schram 1970, 1:240; and nine additional documents.

<sup>895</sup> For the connotation of death carried by stone food, see Pócs. For stone bread that appeared in the scenes in hell in religious visions, see, for example, Mikházy Szécsy János visiting hell in 1645, in V. Kovács, 293, 297. For the trial documents, see 1714, Mocsá, Komárom County, in Alapi, 4; 1715, Tállya, Zemplén County, in Hódossy, 222; and 1709, Sajóvámos, Borsod County, in Schram 1970, 1:151.

dishes, or urinating or vomiting into barrels at the end of feasts.<sup>896</sup> A great number of the dishes possessed the character of the underworld, consisting of such things as water animals or creatures that slither and slide – that is, hellish animals and concoctions from visions and demonological literature. Examples include references to a „sliding animal” and the „inside of a snail.” and to frogs and turtles.<sup>897</sup>

References that explicitly connote death also appear in testimony. These include mention of malodorous or putrid food, murky liquids, „black slop,” and forcing someone to drink from a „black mug”<sup>898</sup> or to consume raw meat and eggs.<sup>899</sup> Sometimes the abducted parties were forcibly fed, but at other times victims were simply offered an undefined „bewitching meal” or „bewitching water” instead of medicine.<sup>900</sup> Documentation of the death of victims due to forced feeding, or by „being called to them” – that is, to a symbolic death resulting from it – illuminate the symbolic significance of forced feeding.<sup>901</sup> Messages from the dead bore even more importance if they were said aloud. „Eat because you must fall ill!” was the voice of fate expressed through „food language”.<sup>902</sup>

Physical evidence – whether carried into and left in the otherworld, or brought back into the terrestrial world – was used as proof that the borders of the two worlds had been crossed. These motifs from visionary narratives were known internationally. Such evidence could, for example, be injuries brought back from the other side: wounds on the mouths of those who had been „behorsed” and „saddled” were traces of the bit; blue marks, blueness in the face, tiredness, dizziness, or sweat were signs of having been „carried.” In Bágyog, Bihar County, „there came János Váradi, pale and trembling to his bones. He said to the fatens that he had been taken... and carried up to the treetops.”<sup>903</sup> Objects also ended up in the other world: a few witnesses offered the court proof of maleficium in that their tethers had been left in the otherworld after galloping over there.<sup>904</sup>

Objects brought back from the alternative world were most likely to be a general legendary topos known from the religious visions of the Middle Ages and from authors of the church who mentioned the night journeys of witches.<sup>905</sup> Witnesses often talked about such things in the framework of retrospective allusions; these were voiced when the victim encountered the witch in normal life and were expressed as if both parties held the mutual adventure to be a reality. In one narrative example, a witch apparently forced the witness to drink wine in the night and then later asked if he had vomited up that drink in Czenk.<sup>906</sup>

Once again this confirms that the alternative world that appeared in visions or dreams was part of „normal” existence and that there was a path between the two. The smooth continuity of events and the web of cause and effect interwove between the two worlds, and

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<sup>896</sup> 1619, Nagyszombat, Mrs. Ádám Wrablo’s trial, 1714, Mocsá, Komárom County, in Alapi 1914, 4.

<sup>897</sup> 1707, Tivadar, Ugocsa County, in Komáromy, 1910, 211; 1715, Balogszeg, Bihar County, in *ibid.*, 264; 1737, Sümeg, Somogy County, in Schram 1970, 1:542.

<sup>898</sup> 1734, Szentes, in Schram 1970, 1:247; 1584, Kolozsvár, in Komáromy, 1910, 49; 1707, Tivadar, Ugocsa County, in Komáromy, *ibid.*, 212; 1712, Eger, in Sugár, 62. The reference to the black soup in Kolozsvár is clearly connected to the mora witch or the „night woman”.

<sup>899</sup> 1753, Horpács, Nógrád, in Schram 1970, 1:446; 1715, Felsőbánya, Szatmár County, in Abafi, 361.

<sup>900</sup> 1602, Pozsony, in Horna, 35; 1712, Eger, in Sugár, 62; 1618, Sempete, Pozsony County, in Schram 1970, 3:234.

<sup>901</sup> 1584, Kolozsvár, in Komáromy, 1910, 51; 1723, Ladány, Bihar County, in *ibid.*, 321. He was taken and forced to drink; in 1758, Vaszar, Győr County, in *ibid.*, 679.

<sup>902</sup> Borsova, Bereg County, 1724, Komáromy 1897, 351. Here, as a parallel to the „death message,” attention should be called to the mealtime taboos in the otherworld of the fairies. Food should not be „carried over” to the human world, and people who ate there were not able to return. These are apparent in legends of Ireland (e.g., Lehmacher, 128; O’hOgain, 189).

<sup>903</sup> 1712, in Schram 1970, 1:52.

<sup>904</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1758, in Schram 1970, 1:338; Doboz, 1717, in Oláh 1886–87, 145.

<sup>905</sup> See Lea 1957, 1:182–83; Flint 1991, 195.

<sup>906</sup> Vaszar, Győr County, 1758, in Komáromy 1897, 677.

the motions of both were seen as the same reality. Here is one example of the other world being embedded in everyday life: a behorsed man „pulling his head out of the bridle, instantly became human again, and remembering that dawn was almost there and that the pigs would have to be put out immediately, he set out to Gacsáj”.<sup>907</sup> The presence of the supernatural, and the otherworld, at one level of their perception, were physical realities and part of everyday life, and arenas for the manifestation of physical alter egos. In this context, it was just as likely that somebody would enter the otherworld in their physical reality (that is, with the use of a physical double) as it was for the „manifested” dead to come here. What is more, objects were carried over in their physical reality, since existence could be perceived at several different levels in both worlds.

In narratives about witches’ sabbats, all supernatural phenomena had a more rational level of meaning. The two levels interchanged in dialogues conducted with the court, as various quoted examples have shown above. However, rationalizing explanations did not only serve as clarifications for the judge, who had no understanding of the supernatural. For the village community of the accused and the witnesses, both levels were simultaneously real; therefore their rational selves also sought an explanation. Because of our focal subject, we have concentrated our presentation of Hungarian witches’ sabbats on the motifs of the otherworld, possibly too much so. The colorful motions of everyday life in villages or small towns were missing from this sketch. Those pulled the actions of the night witch into the daylight of reality and are fully present in our narratives about the sabbats. Harvest, hunt, market, war, common fruit picking, or trade with the Turks are all there, even though generally only to the extent of one or two motifs; nonetheless, those few motifs seem to be in their natural settings.<sup>908</sup>

„Real” devil worship, which was created and sought by demonologists, did not leave many traces in Hungarian narratives about witches’ sabbats. Neither do we find such traces among the indispensable motifs of witches’ sabbats that were laid down in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which include such elements as the devil-worshipping antimass, nocturnal flight, transformation into an animal, copulation with the devil, sexual orgies, feasting to satanic music, and others. Flying and turning into an animal were exceptions: both are evidently motifs with their roots in popular belief systems. There is no devil worship, with the exception of the famous scene of the great trial in Szeged in 1728;<sup>909</sup> there is no reference to group sex with devils or to the antimass. At most there were a few small sins of sacrilege, such as spitting on the calvary or playin with a ball above the church.<sup>910</sup>

As we saw, the process of entering into a pact did not fit the „expectations” of demonology because the various popular devil images of contemporary belief systems served as a referential framework for the court’s inquiries. There were also popular ideas about pacts with the devil, which were more to be thanked for these popular legends than the demonological doctrines, which in Hungary had most of their impact through the channel of sermons. Hungarian versions of the Faust cycle were widespread,<sup>911</sup> which would have been the case in the centuries of the hunts. The Faust chapbooks were very popular in the Central and Western Europe of the early Modern Age, and there were many ways for their contents to filter into Hungarian oral traditions.<sup>912</sup>

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<sup>907</sup> Nagykároly, 1745, in Szirmay 1809, 80.

<sup>908</sup> 1679, Némétújvár, in Schram 1970, 2:725; 1739, Hódmezővásárhely, *ibid.*, 1:252–53; 1735, Kisvárd, Szabolcs County, in *ibid.*, 2:347.

<sup>909</sup> Reizner 1900, 205.

<sup>910</sup> Eger, 1724, in Sugár 1987, 102; Kassa 1736, Mária Balogi Kis’ trial.

<sup>911</sup> Erdész 1992.

<sup>912</sup> Erdész (1992) called attention to the store of legends that were brought by students from Debrecen who then studied in the West. Compare these with one of the central figures of Hungarian Faust legends, Professor Hatvani of Debrecen, who lived between 1718 and 1788.

Attention also has to be called to the Theophilos and Cyprianus legends, which are (as, for example, Frank Baron, Palmer and More, and Leopold Kretzenbacher found in their research) the eastern Byzantine forerunners of the Faust legends. These legends lived on in popular Eastern and Southeastern European oral traditions and have remained popular into the modern era.<sup>913</sup> Legends about *garabonciás*, *fahrende Schüler*, *şolomonar*, and other Hungarian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Croatian, German, and Romanian legend are widespread even today. They are evidence of the many different legends about pacts with the devil in circulation in the Carpathian basin.<sup>914</sup>

The witch entering into a pact with the devil was only one among the many magicians, traveling students, and wise men to do so. It seems that the witch has much more to do with these legendary figures than with the sacrilegious, God-denying heretics of demonology. Besides the pact, Eastern and Central European sabbat motifs are connected to the Faust cycle in many other ways. Common themes include illusory feasts, which, as mentioned before, are also present in legend; flying with magical means or the help of devils; or the rapid transport of fruit from one side of the Earth to the other, an elite version of a crop ripening before its time; and the roles of magic and magical objects in general.<sup>915</sup>

Tracing the origins of the witches' sabbat in all their complexity would be an impossible task. The few connections between the texts mentioned only hint at the linkages that interwove around Europe in the Middle Ages and the early Modern Age. However, the search for the foundations of the witches' sabbat in popular belief is more promising ground since these elementary images are astonishingly homogeneous throughout Europe, as we have emphasized several times. The sabbat was in essence a visionary experience, an „alternative adventure.” Carlo Ginzburg, in tracing the origins of images of European witches' sabbats, came to the conclusion that the ancient European basis of these was the journey to the realm of the dead.<sup>916</sup> His findings were confirmed by our detailed research in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as by Gustav Henningsen with his research on fairy cults in Sicily,<sup>917</sup> and later by Wolfgang Behringer in his book about the Stoecklin fairy magicians.<sup>918</sup> Visions of the dead and witches (Ginzburg did not emphasize the latter, since he focused on the precursors) offered the common European fundamentals of images of the witches' sabbat. The most important basis for these was European belief in doubles, mahr/mara/mora, and werewolves. All of this of course refers to the undemonologized popular witches' sabbat. That can be much more clearly understood from the Eastern and Central European documentation than elsewhere in Europe because in this region theological doctrines did not overshadow that sabbat to such a great extent, and consequently the doctrines are easier to peel away from the „original” images, as mentioned earlier. I think that the references here constitute enough evidence to assert that the following phenomena, among the general European elements of the sabbat, had a strong „predemonologic” foundation in this region: flying, turning into an animal, gathering of the dead and demons, and the sabbat itself as a trance and dream experience.

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<sup>913</sup> Baron 1982; Palmer and More 1966; Kretzenbacher 1968a.

<sup>914</sup> For popular legends about the *garabonciás*, see Pócs. (See as well the sources cited in this article.) For legends about pacts with the devil in Central Eastern European folklore, see Zelenin, 395–96; Hnatjuk, 1:96, 199; Grohmann, 18–19; and especially the summary of Kretzenbacher, where every type of act, including that of the Hungarian *garabonciás*, is described in detail. Woods (, 76–88) published the legends about pacts independent of witchcraft, which were made with „obtained” aiding devils; compare the devil versions of *lidérc* chickens hatched from eggs.

<sup>915</sup> Palmer and More 1966, 80–109, 218–19.

<sup>916</sup> Ginzburg 1990. In his work on Basque witch hunts, Gustav Henningsen analyzed experiences of witches' sabbats and emphasized the role of stereotyped dreams. See Henningsen, 119, 172–96, 280.

<sup>917</sup> 1990.

<sup>918</sup> 1994.

The main question of demonologists was whether the witches' sabbat was a reality or a fantasy, the devil's mockery.<sup>919</sup> The dilemma that has haunted research is whether it was an experience or narrative, communication with the dead or literary topos? We have to assume a permanent duality and interrelationship between the two possibilities, as researchers of religious visions have done for a long time in connection with visionary literature.<sup>920</sup> The basis of the maleficium of the type C witch, as well as the images of the witches' sabbat, was communication with the otherworld. As we have seen, the basis of that communication could be of different natures: receivers – ordinary people or witches – communicated with the witchlike otherworld of the dead. In light of the Hungarian narratives on witches' sabbats, the question we have raised several times is whether or not the witch as a sender existed – that is, a witch as a quasi-shamanistic „black” mediator, or one who experienced „bewitching” nocturnal journeys. Were the night witches' „night-going soul flights” during their bewitching journeys just calumny – that is, one of the many witch accusations lacking any basis in reality?

Although in the witches' confessions under torture demonological motifs are plentiful, a few witches confess about the soul trips of the night witch. A witch from Bátaszék felt that she was turned into the „smallest worm”,<sup>921</sup> and another from Tolna believed that „we could squeeze through even a gap.”<sup>922</sup> In 1737, Erzsébet Hampa in Iharosberény confessed to bewitching a cow in „the form of a soul”: „they changed into the images of very tiny people” when they milked the cow.<sup>923</sup> All of these could conceivably be interpreted as out-of-body experiences. In 1756, Katalin Szabó from Nagyvázsony talked about her bewitching nocturnal round trips and „being totally deprived of my senses, I became an exile... during the night, to the will of destiny I should have set fire to the houses of four inhabitants: István Már, Cseke, Széderi, and Baranyai.” Squeezing through the smoke hole, she set fire to two of them, but then she felt bitterly sorry. Why had God allowed her to „carry out such evil deeds?”<sup>924</sup> This amount of documentation is not sufficient to prove self-conscious bewitching soul journeys, but it is enough for us to assume that they were not utterly unknown, at least as belief motifs or topoi of court narratives.

Demonology envisioned a journey made in physical reality with the aid of the devil and using witch's ointment prepared at the devil's behest. Mária Oláh confessed under torture, „We smudged [ourselves] with ointment... we went in the images of cats, we cast a big dream on her... and took out her side bone.”<sup>925</sup> According to another witch's confession, witches „blew [a child] up by pushing a bobbin of straw up [the child's] arse.”<sup>926</sup> Documentation of this type was almost without exception the result of confession through torture, and always referred to concrete terrestrial journeys, where the otherworld with all its usual elements – like flying, turning into an animal, traveling as a double, squeezing through a small gap – and maleficium itself were related in their „rationalized” form.

In these confessions, according to the usual practices of court narratives, the witches explained the supernatural to the court (or indeed to themselves). They certainly did not travel in the way they reported. How they did it, if they did it at all, we cannot know. What we can certainly register as a self-conscious activity are the techniques of the positive versions of

<sup>919</sup> For a recent summary of the views of demonologists and the questions of historical research, see Préaud.

<sup>920</sup> The issue is not whether it is an experience or a topos, but that the experience was narrated as a stereotype. See Gurvič, 226. For similar viewpoints, see Benz, 267–77, 313–21 468–72. For similar interpretations of the Hungarian Sabbat narratives, see: Klaniczay.

<sup>921</sup> 1782, in Szilágyi 1987, 507.

<sup>922</sup> 1741, in Schram 1970, 2:481.

<sup>923</sup> Sopron County, in *ibid.*, 1:541.

<sup>924</sup> Veszprém County, in *ibid.*, 2:551.

<sup>925</sup> Hódmezővásárhely, 1758, in Schram 1970, 1:342.

<sup>926</sup> 1756, Rőjtök, Sopron County, in Schram 1970, 2:256. For similar documentation, see 1728, Szeged, in Reizner, 406, 408. Eight additional references discuss this kind of „rationalized” method of maleficium.

mora and werewolf creatures, the seers of mora and werewolf character, and the *táltos* – that is, the activities of the „good” magician, or if you like, the „good” witch. The dilemma is caused by the relationship between the creatures conducting positive and negative activities. This relationship is there, due to a common ancestor or an archaic witch, even if we understand that all known characteristics of the negative creatures amount only to calumny or denunciation. This creature exists in the context of Hungarian trials, too, as an antagonistic good-bad, malefactor-healer witch. It is evident that the attributes ascribed to this creature can only be evaluated through a simultaneous study of both sides.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE CHRISTIAN OTHER WORLD.  
DREAMS, VISIONS, HOLY SEERS

In the mediaeval and early modern period of Europe, supernatural communication was most commonly addressed to the dead and to figures of Christian mythology. Christian visions and apparitions enlist the entire range of Christian mythology – Christ and the Virgin Mary, saints, angels, devils or God himself. These holy figures also appear in the everyday earthly setting of the recipients (these are the cases when religious historians speak, in the context of mediaeval visions, about *apparitions*<sup>927</sup>). From a different point of view, encounters with deities or demons can also be classified as possession (as in the case of spirit or fairy communication – this is a further example of partially overlapping categories applied from different perspectives). At other times, if the recipient manages to access the other world in the spiritual sense (having been abducted, making a soul journey or simply dreaming), he or she will see them in hell or purgatory. (This is what certain categorizations call *vision*, but we need to add here that it is not very fortunate to make such a sharp distinction between the different locations of such encounters. Time and space frames often become fused or merge into each other.) It is at places like this that the visionary can encounter, besides the deities, souls which are undergoing suffering, damnation or salvation, and can also communicate with the dead, as we have already mentioned in connection with seers of the dead. Beyond all this, elements of mystical union with the deity may also be present, embedded in the visions. As we have repeatedly indicated, communication with the figures of Christian mythology is linked at several points with communication with the dead, particularly as regards the practice of seers and the common, syncretic, pagan-Christian other world shared by the dead and the Christian deities.

The cases of supernatural communication discussed here fall into the usual psycho-biological categories. They may be visions experienced in some altered state of consciousness (trance); they may be dreams and they may be purely imaginary encounter experiences. In Lauri Honko's system of categories these latter are casual encounters (*kasuale Begegnung*) with the spirit world<sup>928</sup> which entail no hallucinatory phenomenon, and are mere plays of the imagination. We can say the same here as we had emphasized in the context of communication with the dead. From the perspective of the communicator it is indifferent which psycho-biological category happens to serve as a frame for the direct encounter with the supernatural. The only requirement is that the person should interpret it as a case of divine presence or revelation, in other words a case of communication with the supernatural. In their own conviction the subjects see and perceive the presence of the sacred, they touch it and talk to it. These transcendent experiences are described by the *emic* categories which may be interpreted in terms of dream, trance and vision. (As we have already noticed in connection with communication with the dead, the two sets of terminologies correspond to each other to a very large extent.) In such cases we must treat the supposed or real experience, whatever it may have been, as a vision. It appears that in most cases we are talking about dream communication.

Ancient and mediaeval dream theories often discussed dreams and visions in the same category. However, within this diffuse category they clearly distinguished what they called *significant dreams* or *dreams sent by God* (Augustine calls them dreams inspired by God). These dreams are where a deity, a saint or one of the forebears appears<sup>929</sup> and these form the category of communication with the supernatural in this chapter.)

Lisa Bitel examines the dream data of hagiographies and warns that according to mediaeval dream theories dreams are not the manifestations of the libido but 'entrées to other worlds and realities'.<sup>930</sup> These are precisely the categories of supernatural communication

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<sup>927</sup> See the relevant categories, e.g. Benz, ....

<sup>928</sup> On the possible circumstances for the emergence of spirit visions see Honko 1962, 91–126.

<sup>929</sup> Dodds (1951: 107–109); Bitel (1991: 52). On ancient and mediaeval dream theories in general see...

<sup>930</sup> Bitel 1991, 39.

which appear in this chapter (dreams of visiting ancestors are discussed in the chapter on communication with the dead). The literature of the subject and my own field experiences both seem to show that the majority of 'private visions' are actually cases of communication in a dream. The literature errs, however, when it draws the conclusion, mostly from 19th-20th century Western European case studies, whereby visions experienced in a trance, of being abducted to the Christian other world, are the privilege of specialists and holy seers only, while lay persons have mostly only dreams.

The existence of Christian visions and holy seers was a general European phenomenon in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, as is testified to by a great amount of research in anthropology and comparative religion, as well as the vast vision literature itself.<sup>931</sup> The multitude of mediaeval records (and their interference with the most varied literary genres) partly indicate the role they play in religious life, showing how widespread and significant they were, and is partly the consequence of the important position of the mediaeval visionaries. We are talking mostly about the sacral communication of living saints and chosen holy persons and about visions that took place amidst holy congregations and monastic communities which survived in the written documentation of elite culture. Important visions by important persons were carefully noted down. (Although we know that vision phenomena mostly fell outside of the value categories of the official clergy and mainstream liturgical practice. They were no more than features of individual religiosity only just tolerated by the official clergy.) Acquaintance with and deeper study of mediaeval and early modern data can be extremely fruitful for investigations of the modern period, too, as it seems that manifestations of the protective and normative functions shown by the deities and saints in these visions have not changed much over the centuries. The textual motifs of the other worlds which appear here also persist with amazing resilience through centuries or even millennia.<sup>932</sup> In this context we may grasp a shared European wealth of Christian **toposes** **topoi?** and motifs which remains common to this day (occasionally diverging into different Latin and Byzantine branches) and may be present even in highly subjective accounts of personal experiences or dreams. These motifs and toposes mostly have to do with the spatial and temporal structures of the other world, with ways leading to that other world and obstacles on the way and with the different types of punishment and suffering in hell and purgatory.

This extremely rich and varied domain of visions is still alive today. What we are talking about is a tradition which is still extant in its original function, still changing and shaping itself all over Christian Europe, even if local variations and differences in intensity are significant.

Studying the historical past of latter-day visions owes much to research efforts processing the vast mass of vision literature from late antiquity, the Middle Ages and the early modern period.<sup>933</sup> The multitude of mediaeval records of Christian visions (and the penetration of visions into the most varied literary genres) partly indicates their role, frequency, prevalence in the religious life of the mediaeval and early modern period. On the other hand, this volume of recorded material follows from the important position filled by mediaeval visionaries. These are mostly the visions of living saints, selected holy seers which took place in the context of sacred congregations and monastic communities and which

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<sup>931</sup> Seminal works on mediaeval visions and vision literature include Benz, Dinzeltbacher, Le Goff, Gurevics, Kopt kötet, ...

<sup>932</sup> On the functions of mediaeval visions see e.g. Benz 1964, 140; Dinzeltbacher 1981, 216; chapter 15. An important summary of 'private visions' in the Spanish context is William Christian's book of 1981 which clearly shows the continuity in the functions of visions in Catholic thinking and world view (Christian 1981).

<sup>933</sup> A few seminal works on vision literature are... For the most important research trends and some important summaries see **Vizióirodalom néhány alapvető műve... --- a legfontosabb trendek, néhány fontos összefoglalás.**

survived in the written documentation of the elite culture. In other words: the important visions of important people were carefully noted down. (At the same time, we are aware that vision phenomena usually stayed outside the official value categories and liturgical practice of the church and fell into the merely tolerated category of religious phenomena from the perspective of the official clergy.) The available textual material of mediaeval visions is only occasionally based on direct recording of experiences shortly after they took place. E.g. in the records of shrines we find descriptions of visions experienced at that location, such as St. Patrick's visions of purgatory<sup>934</sup>. It is more common for variants to survive in indirect, mutated forms in the hagiography of saints, minutes of canonization processes, or diverse genres of vision literature such as sermons, fables, devotional literature or chapbooks.

By contrast, the folklore collector or anthropologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century explores dreams and visions, more accurately the narratives relating them, within the folkloristic narrative culture of so-called traditional communities, which survive mostly by oral tradition. In such cases, visions are still only made accessible through texts which are alienated from the original experience to varying extents. Who could possibly know what are the exact experiences behind the stereotyped narratives? At any rate, the contemporary anthropologist can strive to grasp the experience as directly as possible, and even if the dreams of the informants cannot be reconstructed the researcher can gain plenty of information about the role these dreams played in the life, everyday religious experience and broader community of the person. This kind of material constitutes the majority of our 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century material, as opposed to historical sources.

The protective and the normative function of the deities and saints of dreams and visions (helping, defending, healing, receiving revelations, teaching about the pious life, admonitions about the everyday affairs of individuals, decisions about the future and history of the community, warnings about and sanctions of breach of norm and taboo) are highly similar in mediaeval and early modern visions.<sup>935</sup> Comparing the motifs of mediaeval and modern texts is most fruitful if applied to otherworldly images and journeys. We can identify a shared European wealth of **toposes** and motifs which have been common since the early Middle Ages (occasionally diverging between Latin and Byzantine Christianity). This can also make its appearance in highly subjective accounts of experiences and dreams (particularly as regards the spatial and temporal structures of the other world, roads to the other world and obstacles, punishment and suffering in hell and purgatory).

Phenomena of communication with the supernatural discussed in this chapter have been documented in all Christian denominations of every Central and Eastern European country. (Let us add: non-Christian denominations show the same, but this falls outside of our subject area.) The existence of Christian visions and holy seers was a pan-European trait in the mediaeval and early modern period, as is proven by a great amount of research in historical anthropology and history of religion, as well as the vast body of vision literature itself. Contemporary studies seem to indicate that the phenomena are perhaps more dominant in Eastern than in Western Europe, particularly as regards the operation of holy seers.<sup>936</sup> In contemporary research, at least in Central and Eastern Europe, the attention is mostly focused on visions surrounding new shrines to Mary and on the role that holy seers and other holy persons play in their religious communities, in the religious movements which arose in times of hardship. It seems that 'vision epidemics' which surge up from time to time around Mary's

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<sup>934</sup> **Szent Patrik-látomások**

<sup>935</sup> On the functions of mediaeval visions see e.g. Benz 1964, 140; Dinzelbacher 1981, 216.

<sup>936</sup> On the most important contemporary research efforts see, Valchinova on Bulgaria, Campagne on Spain and Italy etc. For a summary of Hungarian vision literature see Katona 1907, Posonyi 1942; V. Kovács 1985; Voigt 1996. For research into visions in the modern age see Jádi – Tüskés 1986; Molnár--Szigeti 1984; Grynaeus 1991; etc.

shrines and spread partly via the internet are attracting the ever keener attention of researchers and the phenomenon itself is also on the increase among the super-national communities of a globalised Europe. In some of the new, charismatic religious movements and alternative Christian trends visions may be present as part of the central liturgy instead of mere peripheral phenomena as they do in traditional European cultures. These new phenomena of Europe in the age of globalization, however, fall outside of the scope of the present book.

Disregarding these latest religious developments, vision phenomena are far more common at present in Catholic communities than among the Protestant denominations. Nevertheless, the presence of sacred communication in a local society depends not so much on the denomination as the depth and extent of the religiosity of that community. In the Central and Eastern European region which provides the narrower subject of our examination, there are some deeply religious (Roman Catholic or Orthodox) communities where until very recent times religion was an important normative system of everyday life. In these communities, besides other highly mystical attitudes, visions and religious dreams were very common over a wide spectrum of people. In terms of Whitehouse's categories these communities are characterized by trends of so-called imagistic religiosity.<sup>937</sup> It is important to note that this system existed not as a religion independent of the folkloristic magical world view and the world of traditional beliefs, but in close conjunction with it. The two mutually presuppose each other as constituents of a magical world view of which the 'sacred' is an integral part. This latter notion of a world view comes from Jürgen Beyer<sup>938</sup> who talks about it in the context of Lutheran holy men and rural prophets of 17<sup>th</sup> century Lübeck, conjuring up in his paper a bygone world of the distant past. Peter Dinzeltbacher, in his summary of mediaeval beliefs of the other world, talks of relevant phenomena or popular belief as a *parallel belief* to religious phenomena, and thus replaces the term *Aberglaube* with the phrase *Parallel Glaube*.<sup>939</sup> This is a most appropriate formulation, as there is no other area of religion where we find such close conjunction between religion and phenomena of folk belief, only separated as a result of a scholarly construct, as we do in the case of death, the belief in the other world, and related Christian visions.

Hungarian researchers have studied the religion of these communities in many projects in Székelyföld/Szekler Land, Gyimes/Ghymeş, Moldova<sup>940</sup> and Northern Hungary.<sup>941</sup> At places like these the normative role of religion, the system which regulates the everyday life of communities, is still extremely powerful. Members of these communities, at least the deeply religious of them, live in a world in which face to face contact with the transcendent, i.e. direct communication with the supernatural through dreams, visions and apparitions, has been quite natural for themselves and the rest of the community. Thus it was possible to examine the role and specific function of these phenomena in the religious practice and everyday life of these people. Hungarian (Csángó) communities of Moldova are particularly often mentioned for their quasi 'mediaeval' religiosity and mentality. As Lehel Peti wrote about his own investigations, he analyzes those areas of the religious life of the Csángó of

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<sup>937</sup> Whitehouse

<sup>938</sup> Beyer ....

<sup>939</sup> Dinzeltbacher, *Letzte Dinge* 180.

<sup>940</sup> Communities in Moldova were studied by Ferenc Pozsony and later by Lehel Peti. The latter also wrote a number of papers and eventually a book on vision phenomena. (Peti...). József Gagyi devoted several papers to holy seers and prophets of the Székelyföld region: Gagyi,...., I did fieldwork myself along with students from Pécs University in Székelyföld/Szekler Land (Csíkkarcfalva and Csíkjenőfalva [Cîrța and Ineu], Harghita County, Romania) between 1996–1998. Another research effort at Gyimesközéplak (Lunca de Jos, Harghita County, Romania) and Gyimesbükk (Ghimeş-Făget, Bákó County, Romania) also involving university students and lecturers has been ongoing since 2002. (Pócs 2001, 2008, 2012, Hesz 2012). Vilmos Keszeg, Lehel Peti and I have also compiled a two volume collection of vision narratives which place a particularly heavy emphasis on Christian seers and visions collected over the total Hungarian speaking area (Keszeg – Peti – Pócs).

<sup>941</sup> Limbacher.... Limbacher-Lengyel ....

Moldova, 'where traditional religious explanatory systems are still active. ... The supposedly traditional cultural code system promotes the emergence of individual or mass scale transcendent experiences and vision. Thus the analysis is centered around exploring the cultural and social setting in which the visions emerge.'<sup>942</sup>

Although I do have in my possession some folklore material collected regarding dream and vision narratives from the entire area under examination, as well as from certain more remote points of Europe, I have grounded the main message of this chapter on detailed analyses by Hungarian researchers concerning the role which Christian visions play in various local communities. Although the picture that emerges cannot be considered equally valid for all parts of the entire Central and Eastern European region, the main trends and characteristic features may be discerned quite clearly.

## VISIONS OF LAY PERSONS

### Healing and comforting saints

There is a multitude of folklore narratives collected recently in the Hungarian communities we are presently examining which highlight that there is a powerful need for communication with the sacred in ways which are more direct and subjective than the liturgical forms dispensed by the priests. People who revere the Virgin Mary and the saints have a profound desire to partake of the emotionally highly charged personal experience, as well as the official liturgy. These take place at occasions of individual religious practice secluded from publicity, when prayers addressed to the abstract figure or its likeness are supplemented by 'real vision, touch and speech which activate the senses.

The majority of our data are to do with dreams. Collectors frequently had the chance to record the expectation to encounter the saints in dreams or the joy when spontaneous visions managed to take place. A woman in Karancskeszzi told a collector with delight, 'I talked to the Virgin Mary in my sleep. I sat opposite her just like this, like you and me here, and I had a perfectly nice talk with her... I saw the Virgin Mother.'<sup>943</sup> Our own field work seems to reveal that in this sense trance is more the privilege of professionals, holy persons or seers, although there are also sporadic data about spontaneous trance, witnessed by outsiders, among ordinary persons (by this we mean an unexpected state of ecstasy upon return from which the person reports an encounter with the saint).

In these societies, creatures of Christian mythology have been ubiquitous figures of everyday life right until the recent past, and people cultivate a 'familiar relationship' with them.<sup>944</sup> Their presence was permanently felt or sensed, at least by the more religious members of the community, and so perceiving this did not require an 'altered state of mind'. Another portion of the narratives refers only to imaginary visions, instances of the previously mentioned *casual encounters*. In cases like this a person who possesses all the traditional knowledge about the spirit world (e.g. images of Christ, memories of the statues of Mary) who is in a suitably attuned situation, e.g. ill, overcome with a fear of death, at home alone, waiting for the comforting Virgin Mary, will perceive a real phenomenon or object such as a small noise light or object, which is then augmented in their imagination, as the presence of the spirit world.

Reality, imagination, dream and vision all play an equivalent role here and act as diffuse categories which easily merge into one another. We must also reckon with the constant

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<sup>942</sup> Peti-idézet

<sup>943</sup> Woman of approximately 70, Nógrád County; Fejős 1985, II. 8.

<sup>944</sup> Peti 2012, 202.

presence of the images of the saints: pictures seen in churches, crosses by the roadside, pictures hung inside houses or the illustrations of prayer books featuring the saints, Christ or scenes from the lives of saints all acted to bring these abstract otherworldly figures close to the people, rendering them concrete, plausible and accessible. These images triggered people's imagination and provided models for the images of Christ or Mary in visions and dreams.<sup>945</sup>

Spontaneous visions are not necessarily unexpected, indeed, one often hears of various kinds of preparation in body and soul. Prayers play by far the most important role in this respect. Immersing oneself in prayer and conjuring up a vision image (or imagining it, which may have the same practical value) may be helped by a spontaneous prayer uttered in a sudden emergency as much as by an individual or collective routine prayer recited at a set time, such as the repetitive chains of the rosary (although the two obviously activate different psychological and physiological mechanisms). Below we quote a truly characteristic narrative according to which children herding geese saw the Virgin Mary and later the entire Holy Family after they jointly performed their morning rosary ritual. The common prayer clearly contributed to the emergence or imagination of the vision.

...we all looked there and lo, what did we see? The Virgin Mary, in her real stature, wearing her crown. Then she just passed by, so beautiful... We saw her for a long time after, as we watched from the side of the rift... Then after she disappeared we saw the Lord Jesus, all crowned and full size. He, too, walked so slowly and was walking toward us so we could see him clearly. Then the third time what did we see? The holy family! Saint Joseph, leading his donkey... (Szanda, Nógrád county)<sup>946</sup>

...and so on. Next, the story will be told all over the village as a great event, with people 'psyching up' each other into ever more colorful stories. This kind of transmission of religious experience in a profoundly religious community can easily find its way into 'children folklore'. Visions induced by the (monotonous or highly emotionally charged) repetition of the rosary are commonly known phenomena at modern Mary shrines. Some seers were able to arrange an apparition of Mary for a set time even in front of a major audience.<sup>947</sup> This is no different in personal piety, particularly as methods used by the seers of shrines for inducing visions (e.g. the figure of the Virgin Mary wrathful, crying, smiling or comforting people) could be learnt and emulated by anyone through the mediation of pilgrims who visited the shrine from the village and the indulgence publications they brought with them.

Another accepted form of personal piety is when prayers are recited by people with their eyes on the images of the saints. Besides looking at the images held in their hand or suspended on the wall opposite, it was important that believers should touch them or, occasionally, stroke them or kiss them repeatedly (just as it is important for pilgrims visiting a shrine to touch the picture or sculpture of Mary). Our next text shows that deep common prayer, meditation, concentrating on the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ (in prayer books and devotional pictures) can also provoke visions. Our example also highlights that in profoundly religious Catholic communities female religious belief is particularly characterized by emotional identification with Jesus and with the sufferings of Mary which may often also provoke *Imitatio Christi* type phenomena.

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<sup>945</sup> Besides my own field experience I rely in this respect on research by Lehel Peti who repeatedly emphasizes and illustrates with examples the role that pictures play in the emergence of the visions of Moldavian Csángó people. Peti 2012, 202. He also draws important conclusions regarding the role of prayers in inducing visions. Ibid. 188–199.

<sup>946</sup> Man of 86, Limbacher 1991, 262.

<sup>947</sup> On the 'founding' visions of Lourdes, La Salette and Fatima see Z-Schartz,,.,.,.

... what am I doing crying and complaining like this to the Lord Jesus, his image was right in front of me, I said, I had better pray, but I said what prayer should I say when I am so upset? ... So I started praying the painful rosary. When I got to the bead where we say 'who carried the cross for us', there were so many people saying it along with me, you wouldn't believe it. As if our whole house were full of people. When we got to saying 'Oh, Jesus, forgive our sins and save us from the fires of hell', I was lying in the bed propped up on one elbow like this and from over there came the Lord Jesus. He was carrying that great big cross. It was terrible even to remember. The blood was running down him. He looked at me so painfully. He said, I carried the cross for you and you don't want to carry it for me. And I started shouting all in ecstasy, 'I will, my sweet Jesus, I will!' ... I'll even give my son to be priest. I will do everything just the way it pleases you. So I jumped off the bed to embrace him but by that time he had vanished. (Szurdokpüspöki, Nógrád megye)<sup>948</sup>

In these milieus of profound religious belief an evening prayer addressed to the protective and helping saints in times of hardship is very well suited to bring on visions of these healing and comforting beings. In a recent example a young woman from Gyimesközéplak was praying for her mother who was very ill and, as she said, she 'put all her strength into it'. At one point during her prayer she looked up and saw Jesus who put his hand on her back from behind and, as the woman said, 'there was a special strength coming from above which filled me right up'.<sup>949</sup>

Texts about saints appearing in dreams or visions manifest the emotive function of sacred communication – emotions of sympathy, appeal for help and fear call into existence the helping and protective figures of religion. These sacred figures mostly 'appear' in the situations of affliction or conflict, illness, troubled childbirth, or fear of death experienced at night alone by people in need of help. Naturally at this point we need to bear in mind the more general role of dreams in articulating individual crises or anxieties.<sup>950</sup> In these communities, which have such a strong belief in Christ and Mary, such articulation easily takes the form of the appearance of helping Mary or comforting Christ in a dream. Female informants particularly speak with great emotional investment and profound identification about their encounters with the saints, their visions of the comforting and helpful Virgin Mary or Christ. Jesus or Mary comfort the patients in their dream, predict the outcome of the illness, heal the patient or at least offer some sort of help or guidance for recovery.

You know what I am going to tell you and I am not a liar... I was so sick with typhoid [...] I was terribly ill and I was staying in my father and mother's house. And then I got so poorly I was not even conscious and then when I came to, there was a little oil lamp, it was alight on the table and then I saw Mary, except she was not facing me but with her back like this, but she was so beautiful, and after I saw her every day all the time I just grew better and better and this is how I finally recovered...<sup>951</sup>

What we see appearing in these narratives are the imitations of earthly healing methods with an idealized 'good doctor' in the centre who concentrates on the person of the patient rather than the illness. They cure people, give medication or recommend remedies. In healing dreams the kind behavior and comforting words of the saint, the psychologically beneficial effect of stroking and the laying on of hands are at least as important as the rational methods.

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<sup>948</sup> Woman of 68, Limbacher 1998. 203–204.

<sup>949</sup> Woman of 40, collected by Éva Pócs, 2003.

<sup>950</sup> For more on this see Stewart 1997.

<sup>951</sup> Woman of 70, my own collection, Gyimesközéplak, 2005.

The laying on of hands with a remedial intention is particularly important – the touch as a ‘physical’ remedy being a reification, as it were, of an emotionally present attitude. Consequences of the touch of heavenly saints are often glaringly obvious. According to a data from Tordatúr, a healing saint appears in a dream as a man in a grey hat and lays his hand on the head of the patient who is struggling with headaches. Next, the patient is told to go into the church, further behind the altar, get healing water and ‘wash your head there, from that well and you will never have a headache again.’ The narrative ends, ‘and for a long time afterwards I could feel his hand on the top of my head where he had laid it.’<sup>952</sup>

It often happens that in their dreams the patients are advised to perform some rite, e.g. in service to the saint in relation to the shrine, in order to promote their recovery. At other times, dreaming about the saints is connected with rites of atonement, such as a fast, performed after an instruction received in a dream. Our contemporary East and Southeast European data outline a similar picture – narratives with similar motifs are known from Greek, Lithuanian, Latvian and Bulgarian data. It is common that in dreams the appearing saints give advice about remedial methods or medication. In sickness, saints offer comfort and touch, their instructions about ritual and other pious actions promote atonement in exchange for recovery. (These include placing a tearful icon on the body of the patient, cleansing the statue of Jesus, lighting a candle in the chapel<sup>953</sup> and so on).

#### Normative dreams and visions: teaching, predictions, sanctions

Dreams and visions expressing divine revelation, divination, judgment or punishment reveal the normative function of religion. The individual in communication with a sacred person may receive teaching, as well as information about their lifestyle here on earth, answers to problems in this context or may be given divine judgment or punishment about breaking the norm in earthly life.<sup>954</sup> Let us see some examples about these roles. One record made in Moldova shows the Virgin Mary warning the individual about the pious life.

I saw the Virgin Mary fourteen times over, just like I see you. I also saw the Lord Jesus many times in my dream but only in my soul. The first time I saw the Virgin Mother I saw her crying, she was crying, the rosary was in her hand and she said ‘how much I pray to god for this people, how bad these people are, how sinful, how they curse and will not come to the ways of the Lord. So it is only through her mercy that God still retains us. (Lésped, Bákó County, Romania)<sup>955</sup>

Divination by the deity appears in varied forms in the Gyimes community we examined – a sacred figure may predict the coming of a baby, a guardian angel or Christ may identify the bewitchment or the bewitching person; the gods may define a sanction when taboos that regulate behavior are broken, or reprimand individuals who transgress the norms of the community. These stories reflect that the concepts of vice and sin, and the related systems of norms and sanctions, are determined by religion even in the structuring of the weekly activities of agricultural and housework (e.g. many dreams we know speak about divine

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<sup>952</sup> Csógör (1998: 212).

<sup>953</sup> Višinskait (2007–2008: 233).

<sup>954</sup> Research of this category has focused mostly on dreams: Dodds 1971: 217; Zuesse 1987. Divination in dreams has been known all over Europe, for more on this see e.g. Ronald Grambo’s summary (1973); in fact it is a category which seems universal even outside of Europe (e.g. Róna-Tas 1972 claim that it is quite common among the Altaic peoples). On the other hand, it has also been studied by researchers of mediaeval visions. On pro domo visions etc. see Benz.

<sup>955</sup> Man of 54, Bosnyák 1980, 114.

punishment for working on a Sunday). In Gyimes and Moldova a particularly common vision narrative talks about Christ or the Virgin Mary prohibiting or penalizing abortion. Narratives about meeting these two figures in a dream or vision tend to be particularly personal in character. Often we hear of the Virgin Mother's admonition to the woman who is preparing to have an abortion, at other times the mothers or family members see the baby who is to be born in a dream of warning. For instance, a pregnant woman's father would dream of a little girl appearing, 'Grandfather, why do you want to kill me?' (The family are joining forces to dissuade the young mother from keeping the pregnancy.)<sup>956</sup> The most widespread variant of these narratives in this area dwells on the punishment in hell which awaits people who commit abortions and family members who prompted the murder of the foetus. For instance, the aunt of a pregnant woman saw the Virgin Mary in her dream, who took her by the hand, led her to hell and showed her the terrible punishment of women who had aborted their babies – they were forced to eat their babies. After crossing the ornate gates of heaven, on the left they saw these mothers and on their right they saw pious women dressed in white, rosary in hand.

In dreams and visions of healing and comforting saints we witness the archaic characteristics of contact with the other world. The otherworldly existence is similar to 'normal' life, the traits of the two worlds are perceived as equally real, and healing in a dream remains valid in the daytime. The two are interconnected, the continuity of events and the network of causal relations permeates both worlds.<sup>957</sup> The bodily traces of encounters in a dream world survive into earthly existence, a recovery made in dreamtime remains valid during the day. Medication received in a vision and used continually in earthly life is a very common and well-known topic of healing visions. There is no sharp dividing line between the otherworld of visions and this world of human life.

### Otherworldly journeys

Similarly to divine revelation and divination, the dreams and visions of *otherworldly journeys* and the descriptions of different manners of *suffering in hell* all play an important normative role in these communities. Mediaeval visions seem to show that soul journeys to heaven or hell are usually believed to be the privileges of holy people or seers. Our data testify that lay individuals may also enjoy this special privilege but mostly in dreams, as opposed to seers who make their otherworldly journeys in a trance. Clearly they have dreams born out of the fear of death dominated by the symbolism of dying and entering that other world. On other occasions they see someone else (their enemy or ill-wisher) being punished in hell. In the largest group of visions of hell we see the sufferings of sinners in general or of perpetrators of one particular sin, as in the above quoted stories of women who had abortions. These educational stories usually serve with a moral, and admonition about the pious life. Narratives of trips to another world exist in parallel with and show a close connection to commonly known chap books about *Mary's Visit to Hell* and the MSs that had been copied from these publications.<sup>958</sup> The dreamer is guided by the archangel Michael or the Virgin Mary into the

<sup>956</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs at Gyimesközéplak, 2002-2006.

<sup>957</sup> Ágnes Hesz made similar observations during her dream research in Gyimes: the realities of dreaming and waking exist together, overlapping each other and in interaction with each other. Hesz (2005: 355). The overlap or merging of waking and dreaming conditions has been described with regard to several societies with varying emphases, see e.g. O'Flaherty (1984); Tedlock (1987); Burke (1997).

<sup>958</sup> The sight of sinners in hell presented by a guide first appears in the Apocalypse of Peter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Gardiner 1989, 6-7) and then in a vision by Tundal/Tungdal/Tundalus recorded in 1149 (Gardiner 1989, 252-253; Dinzelbacher 1999, 202) the various sins and their drastic punishments appear with the degree of detail customary today. This vision has been quite popular throughout late mediaeval Europe and was translated into at

different pockets of hell where the soul sees people suffering the most varied punishments for a wide array of sins. Often these dreamers see members of their own family suffering and this also warns them about duties they had neglected regarding the dead. People waking from their sleep convert and discontinue their sins under the influence of what they had seen. For instance one person who had ‘slept for three days’ (lain in a trance), András Péter,

...came to and ... told his wife all about it, what he had seen and how it all was and he said hell was terrible and that they are tormented and burned there and they can never be free. And after that his wife stopped scolding him.<sup>959</sup>

Lehel Peti quotes the dream of a Moldavian drunkard about a fiery other world where he spoke to God and the Virgin Mary and pledged, even in his dream, never to drink alcohol again if they let him return from the other world.<sup>960</sup> Another man from Ciuc,<sup>961</sup> who is said to have slept for three days,

...then woke up on the third day and related how much he had been roaming about and where. And all the things he had seen. There was a man there who had stolen cows. He took them to Gyergyó and sold them. So he said, this Laji Suszter is leading around a silly grey cow all over hell, or how shall I put it. In the other world. But nobody is willing to buy it off him... And he said that people who had not prayed properly were now kneeling so much that moss had grown to hold them in place. These are the kinds of things I heard them say.<sup>962</sup>

International textual motifs and *toposes* *topoi*? of journeys to the other world (accessing the other world by a bridge, ladder, stairs, tunnel, through obstacles as unique punishments for individual sins<sup>963</sup>) appear alongside entirely subjective elements referential to the individual, their family or community, in a varied constellation of stereotypes and individual variants. Besides all of this, these narratives also include images of specific other worlds, the otherworldly topography known from mediaeval vision literature, as well as the most abstract symbolism of death, the other world or the road that leads all that way (crossing a river, catching a train to the other world, a cave, bush or blackness in hell, a flowery meadow, fruit trees and lush pasture in heaven.) The following quote is an extract from a dream narrative collected from a Hungarian informant from Szekler Land where the narrator includes, among other motifs, the image of the thorny path which has been known in this context for more than 800 years, since the vision of Godeschalus<sup>964</sup>:

I remember it still! I was walking along the road and at first there was a thorny lane on both sides, a line of thorn bushes this side and one on the far side. It was an ordinary road and I was walking along. Well, at one point I came upon a huge iron door, opening two ways, with a great big padlock on it. Well, this must be hell, I thought. I

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least 15 languages including several languages of the Balkans. In the Byzantine-Orthodox variant entitled *The Mother of God Visits Hell* known from what is called the Theotokos-Apocalypse (ÉV??), the purpose of Mary's visit to hell is to win pardon for the sinners (Zenkovsky 1963, Lambakis 1982).

<sup>959</sup> Gyimesközéplak/Lunca de Joș, County Harghita, Romania, woman of 84, collected by Éva Pócs, 2003.

<sup>960</sup> Peti 2012, 198–199.

<sup>961</sup> County Harghita, Romania

<sup>962</sup> *Látomáskötetből hely*

<sup>963</sup> Bousset 1901, Davidson 1943, Dinzelbacher 1984, 1986.

<sup>964</sup> A vision of the other world by a peasant called Gottschalk (Godeschalus) was recorded in 1189, this is the first known written record of a peasant's vision (Dinzelbacher 1999, 104).

walked on and then there came a proper door, an ordinary painted door. Well, this is the cleansing place. But then as I walked on, now there were roses dotted along the road quite scarcely on both sides. So I went on. After a while I noticed there were now beautiful roses on both sides, quite high up, so the whole road was just so lovely. I walked along and walked on right until I came to a... new, unpainted door, and the road did not go any further. I knocked, and the gate was opened by St. Peter himself...

<sup>965</sup>

Research regarding various other worlds and their topography (which analyze mediaeval vision narratives and literature)<sup>966</sup> seem to show that the other world had first a general Christian dualistic structure and later, after the mediaeval emergence of purgatory, a triple structure.<sup>967</sup> These narratives include both. It cannot be decided whether the dualistic structuring is an archaic characteristic or an Orthodox influence (according to Orthodox teaching there is no 'third place'). Hell is somewhere down below, they often walk down stairs, while according to one narrative from Lészped<sup>968</sup> the ground opened underneath the coffin of a dead person lying in state and a path was opened down into purgatory. On other occasions there are 'wide roads' leading to different 'places of suffering'. Characteristics of the spatial structure of the other world were studied, amongst others, by Aron Gurevich who describes an early mediaeval type topography based on Tungdal's vision from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and other, earlier visions. This is characterized primarily by a lack of unified space – it is intermittent and fragmented. Visions from Gyimes/Ghymeş, Szekler Land and Moldova project something similar: an ensemble of several small spaces conjoined in a loose and irregular fashion where the soul wanders with its guide from room to room as if in a labyrinth. The topography of heaven is not as pronounced as this, but here, too, the churches raised in honor of the various saints, the heart of Jesus or Mary and the chambers of the apostles, martyrs and virgins seem to appear in a kind of irregular, disjointed space. In hell we again see that every sin has its own room and in each room the sinners suffer different punishments.

Presentations of such dreadful suffering must have played a considerable role in the norm-following behavior of these communities and the way in which breach of norm was handled. As far as sins are concerned, images of hell reflect that assaults against families, children and fertility are seen as the gravest, along with theft. Swearing and smoking (particularly by women) are also seen as serious offences, followed by a long line of minor offences or breaches of norm, such as being mean with money, laziness, drunkenness and neglect of churchgoing, giving alms and other pious duties etc. In the background to the vivid images of the visions we may surmise, besides the previously mentioned chapbook readings, the influence of the frescoes of churches and monasteries with their richness of realistic detail in depicting punishment in hell.<sup>969</sup> Although the latter is mostly an Orthodox characteristic (it is far less common in churches of Latin Christianity to depict the other world or the last judgment), occasionally Roman Catholic believers also had access to these images or were at least acquainted with the folkloristic narratives of the other world inspired by the frescoes of monasteries.

Finally let us quote here a dream narrative collected half a century ago, about the cruel punishment awaiting smokers. This vision of hell recalls the times more than 200 years ago

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<sup>965</sup> - Mărfa, Harghita County, Romania, collected by József Gagy, 1995.

<sup>966</sup> Besides the already mentioned works by Dinzelbacher and Benz see e.g. Bousset 1901, 137–143, 234, 258, Patch 1950, Kappler 1987.

<sup>967</sup> On the development of notions of purgatory see Le Goff 1981.

<sup>968</sup> Lespezi, County Băcau, Romania

<sup>969</sup> Lásd a pokol-ikonográfia e szerepéről: Worobec 42-45; az ukrán templomi, kolostori freskók bűnöket és büntetéseket bemutató képeiről lásd Himka ...

when sermons and teachings from all Christian denominations looked on smokers as victims of the devil's temptation.<sup>970</sup>

That man used to smoke a lot. He went to bed one night to sleep. Well, he lay down, I don't know if he had prayed or not, and then in his dream came a man dressed in white down to the ground. He said to him, 'Come with me, my man, and I will show you something.' He took him into a place under a great lot of soil. It was under a massive great hillside really. When he went in there, what did he see? Well nothing other than a great many cauldrons in which they were all cooking tobacco, and there were a great many men and women sitting around it in armchairs, but they were all tied down there. And what they did was take these people's necks, break them back and pour the hot tobacco juice down their throats. And then the man in white said, 'Take a good look at what they are doing here.' But all of this was in such a great big hall like a waiting hall at a station. They were all screaming. Then the man said, 'You see all these people? Well, if you are going to carry on smoking your pipe the way you do, you will also end up here, just the same as these people. Because smoking is a great sin.' And so he woke up. This whole thing scared him so much that he never again put his pipe to his lips.<sup>971</sup>

At the same time, topical issues of modern politics also tend to appear in visions of the other world. I could quote a number of examples from my own fieldwork to show how in Gyimesközéplak<sup>972</sup> the members of the political police (Securitate) appeared in visions of hell as devilish figures participating at a Witches' Sabbath. In yet another vision of hell the local communist party secretary was seen suffering the torments of eternal fire. After relating the story of this vision, the person who had visited hell was sent to prison for weeks and suffered very earthly tortures at the hands of the Securitate.<sup>973</sup>

## Visions of the devil

In the profoundly religious Hungarian Catholic communities which are the privileged focus of this chapter, belief in the Christian devil played a similarly important normative role in people's subjective religiosity and everyday life as faith in the other world. Field work has shown that in these villages the devil is seen to be present as a living creature and a constant threat to people's everyday life. One has to dread his assaults, avoid him cautiously and keep employing strategies to counter him in order to guarantee a good life and a good death. Satan as a tempter who lures people into sins is a constant presence in the spiritual life of Hungarians in Csík, Gyimes and Moldova, and a recurring figure of beliefs, stories and spontaneous visions. The devil becomes implicated in sacred communication in the same way as sacred heavenly beings. While spontaneous visions of the saints and the Virgin Mary are provoked mostly by subjective attitudes of the desire for encounter with the sacred or even for mystical union, as well as the longing or need for help and protection, spontaneous visions and dreams about the devil are the embodiments of the moral fear of sin and damnation. Such an intense and living faith in the devil and related visionary activity is, as far as we know, no longer a part of the culture of Western Europe, particularly of the protestant countries<sup>974</sup>.

<sup>970</sup> Dohányzásról szóló prédikációk

<sup>971</sup> Woman of 48, collection by Vilmos Diószegi from Moldova Chango people who had moved to Hungary, Egyházaskozár, Baranya county, 1953.

<sup>972</sup> Lunca de Jos, county Harghita, Romania

<sup>973</sup> Collected by Éva Pócs between 2002-2008.

<sup>974</sup> Lutz Röhrich's summary makes it quite clear that these are little more than narratives by now.

However, there is no doubt that these phenomena were a ubiquitous element of the mentality and world view of mediaeval Europe.<sup>975</sup>

Within the mentality of the traditional village communities of Central and Eastern Europe, the devil is a variant of the Christian Satan, enriched with a number of unofficial lay features. Besides the Judeo-Christian (Old and New Testament) beliefs which were themselves never homogenous and also changed considerably over time, local popular belief added to this figure several traits of their demonic figures, most prominent among them being notions of the dead atoning for their sins in 'bad places' of transition, as well as of characters from non-Christian myths, tales and legends, within the frame of popular religiosity. Even during the Middle Ages, the figure of the Christian Satan began to absorb the traits of several non-Christian demonic figures which had become obsolete or at least obscure, enriched with different folkloristic traits in local variation.<sup>976</sup> The devils of these visions appear in the most varied constellations. The 'folkloristic' devil is someone who assaults, startles and torments his victim similarly to all types of demonic creatures of folk belief. The following is one example of a common everyday devil story of the kind which was frequently told in this area even in recent times.

My mother told me that she had a relative who was going out to the pasture when the devil suddenly faced him in the shape of a pig. He struck right and he struck left, but he could not hit it. And then he began to strike with his left hand and then he could hit it at last. And as he did so he also said, 'Holy cross, chase him away!'. And so he struck him with his stick and he disappeared.<sup>977</sup>

On other occasions, devils abduct people to some sort of a symbolic earthly other world, for a journey in hell, very similarly to the abduction experiences of visions of ghosts and fairies.

... at twelve o'clock someone stood at his window and said to him, 'Sándor! Sándor!' [Alexander! Alexander!] three times over. So he ran out and walked all over the meadow wearing nothing but his shirt and underpants, and when the cocks crowed, Sándor finally went home. But he was all covered in filth. People said the devil had carried him all over the meadows.<sup>978</sup>

The figure of a devil fused with notions of the *evil dead* and folklore images of *mora/nightmare* and *witch* type figures also appears as a sexual tempter or partner. A great number of subjective, personal accounts have been recorded from women speaking of the devil pressing them down or sexually assaulting them. One middle aged woman said, 'I was lying on my back and a great big black thing was on top of me... something pressed me down...' Then she crossed herself, prayed, and the devil removed itself from her.<sup>979</sup> A

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<sup>975</sup> See mediaeval records of visions of the devil in which Satan appears as a tempter of the saints. These accounts surely do not reflect the realistic proportions whereby the devil only very rarely occurs as a communicational partner who tempts the saints. The communication of ordinary people, which the literati did not record for our edification, allows us to suspect a far richer wealth of visions of the devil, and minutes of witchcraft trials give us something of a taster of all of this. Violet McDermot's rich collection presents and analyses data of Christian visions from the Middle East of late antiquity; in the chapter Demonic visits she offers a most varied array of material about apparitions of the devil, including data about 'folkloristic' devils appearing and tempting monks and hermits in the shape of snakes, dragons or foreigners (Nubians). MacDermot, 1971, 383-410.

<sup>976</sup> On the role of the devil in European folklore see Röhrich 1966. **és?**

<sup>977</sup> Magyarfalu, Moldva, Bosnyák 1980, 102.

<sup>978</sup> Tordatúr, Csögör 1998, 109.

<sup>979</sup> **Hely?**

Hungarian seer called Ilona Jánó from the village of Lészped/Lespezi<sup>980</sup> described that the ‘satans’ who tempt her sexually, appear during her prayers or inconvenience her while fasting and even try to divert her attention at church. At night when she is sleeping they lie on top of her and torment and titillate her in varied ways, which she interprets as an assault against her virginity. She used particularly colorful and illustrative scenes to describe the ‘satans’ who appear in the form of animals and invade her room in troupes at night, play tempting games, engage in orgies and rampages, producing scenes verging on those of a Witches’ Sabbath. On one occasion Satan came out of the television to tempt her in the shape of a gorilla. In another example:

...He danced on top of me in the shape of a bear... he was big, I could feel his weight... he kept sticking his nose to me and wanted me to kiss him, just like that, in a bear shape... And then... my guardian angel told him to get off of me...<sup>981</sup>

The idea of the devil as a sexual partner is known to have accompanied the cultural history of Christian Europe and was also related to several folkloristic devil figures, characters of popular belief which had turned into devils or ‘devil lovers’ (e.g. the previously mentioned *mara/nightmare* figures) in other locations, too.<sup>982</sup>

Assaults from the devil also realize themselves in the form of possession. Notions of possession by the devil are also boosted in this area by the living practice of exorcism of the Orthodox church still pursued in monasteries of Moldova. Romanian monks are willing to offer their services as exorcists to members of any denomination or nationality. As far as we know, other areas of the Roman church have not yielded subjective reports by people who suffered possession by the devil. Here, in this Eastern boundary zone of the Roman church the figure of the possessing devil is present even as a subjective, lived experience. Those possessed hardly ever manifest the classic symptoms prescribed by doctrine – instead they offer highly individual accounts of possession with emotionally charged symptoms of horror, disgust and depression.<sup>983</sup> A Catholic Hungarian woman from Csík claimed that the devil possessed her in the shape of a ball lightning [sic!], sent to her by way of bewitchment from a woman next door. She experienced a headache and could only see blackness all around her and felt that she wanted to commit suicide. Advised by a Romanian orthodox priest she began to carry a devotional picture in her headscarf and drank a few mouthfuls every day of the holy water that the priest had given her. As a result, the devil eventually left her, in the form of a snake. After the time she was freed she repeatedly had bouts of heavenly ecstasy by the Virgin Mary, who abducted her and made her fly over the treetops.<sup>984</sup>

In the communities we are examining, the devil as sexual tempter appears as a character of visions embedded in sacred communication, as an adversary of the saints. The devil frequently, indeed typically, appears in the visions in opposition to the saints who protect and heal, moreover, they are pictured in battles for human souls. This is a reflection of the dualistic mediaeval world view, the juxtaposition of *Civitas Dei* and *Civitas Diaboli* and again an archaic trait of the region which preserves a mediaeval mentality. This struggle appears in the visions in the context of death and dying, modeled upon legends that have been known in the area of the Roman Church since mediaeval times. The themes are the devil tempting man to commit suicide, and the struggle of the angel and the devil for the soul by the

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<sup>980</sup> County Băcau, Moldova, Romania

<sup>981</sup> Moldován, 1384.

<sup>982</sup> From the rich wealth of relevant literature I only mention here Walter Stephen’s book on devil lovers as the richest summary of the topic: Stephens 1949.

<sup>983</sup> We suspect that these popular interpretations of possession are the characteristics of a wider Eastern European, Orthodox region. (See Worobec’s investigations)...

<sup>984</sup> Csíkszenttamás, collected by the author in 1996.

deathbed.<sup>985</sup> Informants from Gyimes, Csík, Moldova and Bukovina relate these struggles in highly vivid vision narratives based on personal experiences of their own or of friends or family. (We must add that this legend also figures in prayer books and in depictions of the good death known from Orthodox churches.) According to one account, the devil wants to carry away the soul of the dying person, but the guardian angel is protecting it.

I heard from my mother that a man was dying and he was in great despair. All the people who were there could see that there were devils next to the dying man and they also noticed that the soul wanted to depart but then it kept retreating, because it was so scared of the devils. Then they heard a voice say, ‘Jump on his breast and squeeze his soul out!’ And then one of the people who were there noticed that on top of the stove there was an angel who was really sad.<sup>986</sup>

In another example the motif of the struggle between the angel and the devil appear in a narrative about a troupe of devils who bring a temptation for suicide, making music and dancing. The informant is talking about his own wife who wanted to hang herself in despair over her hard life. She...

...heard that they were making such beautiful music that it was really incredibly lovely. She heard it and then the music came closer and closer... and as she lay there she watched them come close. She says *they looked exactly as they were painted in the pictures. Just like goats, they had two feet and hooves and tails...* she saw how they were making merry and she said she had never, ever heard such lovely music. Then something struck her shoulder. She looked over that way and there was a tiny girl in white crouched down – she was dressed all in white and she was crying. That was her guardian angel. She turned round and again started watching those other ones. Then she was struck even harder. And then she said, ‘Dear good Lord, don’t leave me’. And so that was how she stayed alive. But if her guardian angel had not looked after her there, she would have gone away with those other ones.<sup>987</sup>

The varied representations of the devil in dreams and visions was probably inspired by a number of different representations seen in reality. Besides frescoes and icons in (mostly Orthodox) churches and monasteries which depict the lives of saints, the devil also appeared in Roman Catholic prayer books in the company of the saints. We must also bear in mind that in many places mystery plays were performed during Good Week right into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in areas with a Franciscan monastery, by students of the Franciscan schools. Indeed, in some places like Csíksomlyó, this practice went on well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most colorful sections of these plays are precisely the scenes taking place in hell and featuring masked figures as devils.<sup>988</sup> Furthermore, the mask plays performed by village schoolchildren or adults at New Year or Carnival featured a full arsenal of the various forms of appearance of local ‘folkloristic’ devils. (These mask plays are still practiced today at a number of places.) The viewers of the plays comprised the audience of an entire area who went on to carry the whole rich visual world of the local traditional depictions of the devil ‘in their blood’ or, more accurately perhaps, in front of ‘their minds’ eyes’.

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<sup>985</sup> A két legenda irodalma.

<sup>986</sup> Istensegíts, Bukovina, Bosnyák, 1977, 139–140.

<sup>987</sup> Gyimes, Magyar 2005, 435. (My emphases, É. P.)

<sup>988</sup> On the role of mystery plays in images of the devil appearing in archaic prayers and visions see Szilárdfy

## Ritually induced visions, incubation

The simplest forms of ritually induced visions about Christian gods and saints are associated with sacred places where mortals may receive heavenly visions. The centre of the human world is the sacred place where the deity makes itself visible – and indeed where it has its dwelling place. This is also where humans can enter contact with the other world through ritual.<sup>989</sup> As Little also describes, the patron saint of the church is also a permanent presence (according to the mentality of mediaeval Europe), even if represented only by a minuscule or a likeness, while the constant presence of Christ may be captured in the consecrated bread and wine.<sup>990</sup>

Visions experienced in churches and visions of the Holy Sacrament connected to the sacrificial bread were characteristic in the whole of Europe, with varying intensity and many local variations. Certain forms of these visions are still active and growing in our time: new shrines give rise to new formations. In Gyimes and Csík many old women spoke about their own visions by the holy sacrament which were provoked by profound concentration on the sacred during the extraordinary moments of the elevation. Ilona Jánó from the village of Lészped described how she falls into ‘a special state of mind’ at times like this, saying that when she looks at the people in the church she can distinguish those who are pure of heart from the sinners.<sup>991</sup> Visions of this kind experienced during mass may also be characterized by *imitatio Christi* phenomena as a consequence of profound identification with the sufferings of Jesus. The following is a vision by a woman from Northern Hungary.

It was the day of Peter and Paul in 1967 and I was sitting in church. Then a flight of stairs built up in front of me and I walked up these steps. There was a big door there. There was this big door, on it a golden lock and on the lock a handle. And there stood St. Peter. It happened on St. Peter’s day. So I said to him, to St. Peter, to let me in. He said he wouldn’t. I couldn’t go in... He said, ‘Go back, you have to go on living.’ Down below they were singing ‘Oh deep and secret sanctity of the Lord.’ Just after the elevation of the Host. And when they sang this song I [came right back] and my soul was there in my body again.<sup>992</sup>

Festive times enhance the impact of the sacred place, but we often hear reports of spontaneous visions induced purely by the sacred spot. As an example, let us quote here an account of a church vision which was recorded at many locations within 20<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic Europe. It is quite characteristic that the narrator achieves the visionary state of consciousness through various preparatory rituals, mostly by repeating the prayers of the rosary as a kind of magic. A further trait we frequently hear of in different vision situations is the image of saints represented in statues or pictures coming to life as the sacred figure of the vision.

Well, we were at a wedding, and I was thinking that I had never seen anything like ecstasy or whatever and had no idea what it looked like. And then we were saying the rosary, around the third section [...] And then what happened was that all of a sudden I could see nothing but a great big brightness and only the head of the Virgin Mother, that was all I could see of the whole altar, neither the candles, nor the sculptures, but I felt as if I was not even alive... [...] At first I felt such a strange smell [...] and then,

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<sup>989</sup> Eliade 1958. 367-379; Szőnyi 1995. 508-511

<sup>990</sup> Little, 1997. 26.

<sup>991</sup> Lészped/Lespezi, Bákó County, Romania; Pozsony, Kriza-évk. 5, 253.

<sup>992</sup> Szurdokpüspöki, Nógrád megye, Limbacher 1998, 164. lásd még pl. Gyöngyössy..., Peti 2012,....

right afterwards it seemed as if the image of the Lord Jesus came to life, there was such an infinite power coming out of it right through into my heart. I instantly thought to myself, it would be so great to stay this way, but, I said, if you still need me, Sweet Jesus... There was such a strength coming out of it all...<sup>993</sup>

Of the ritual formations of holy visions, the oldest tradition in Central and Eastern Europe surrounds the phenomenon of incubation associated with churches. In practice, the term *incubation* (Latin *incubatio*, German *Tempelschlaf*) is used by the majority of scholars, as well as the vernacular, to denote ‘procuring recovery from a deity who appears to the individual while sleeping in the church’ (incubation literally means sleeping inside). It is more accurate to define it, however, as Gollnick does who emphasizes functions other than recovery. ‘To go to a sacred place in order to receive solutions to problems or recovery from illness in sleep’.<sup>994</sup>

Ethnographic and anthropological collecting work has mostly ignored this important phenomenon of village life in the modern period. Contemporary data about incubation have been scarcely collected, but whatever is available is mostly significant in the Orthodox context. However, the Mediaeval material allows us to conclude that incubation was an extensive phenomenon in the modern period and probably remains so to this day. Contemporary data about incubation mostly speak about images that create miracles and about Mary, as depicted in the images, appearing in dreams at the shrines which sick people mostly visit during the feast of the saint. Data of my own collection mostly relate to instances of incubation in Hungary and Romania (Csíksomlyó, Mátraverebély, Máriagyöd).<sup>995</sup>

Incubation is a phenomenon the present of which we know far less about than its rich past. This is due to the fact that these sacred places kept records of instances of recovery in sleep both in antiquity and in mediaeval times, which serve as rich and detailed sources for deciphering the past.<sup>996</sup> These serve as a rich and detailed source of information for deciphering the past and, at the same time, for the ‘lay’ visions of ordinary people of the modern period. This is particularly true as the illiterate ordinary people used to visit the shrines, too, and their visions were as significant to the prestige of the shrines as were those of the elite. This is the only subject area where clerical practice made regular records of the dreams of peasants, more accurately certain of their aspects (the types of illness cured or the kind of trouble in which the saint afforded help).

Examples testify that in early Christianity there was a co-existence and mingling of official clerical forms both of pagan and Christian origin, as well as the more ‘popular’ forms (e.g. to do with the healing dead) which we talked about in the chapter on communication with the dead.<sup>997</sup> Data on mediaeval (and early modern) Christian incubation follow the changes in character which the shrines and other sacred locations underwent and the temporal sequence of these modifications. ‘Sleeping inside’ and experiencing recovery in sleep have been possible by the graves of martyrs, by relics and likenesses displayed in shrines.<sup>998</sup> Relics, images, sculptures and the magical potency of the sacred location itself, the powerful ‘reality’ of all of this in dreams, were at work in recoveries in sleep as much as in the miraculous ‘daytime’ recovery of pilgrims. Although the majority of data have not been processed and

<sup>993</sup> Falu, adatközlő hiányzik! Limbacher Gábor gyűjtése, 2005.

<sup>994</sup> Gollnick (1999: 32).

<sup>995</sup> Megyék, idő

<sup>996</sup> It is also commonly known that a whole body of material truly amazing in quantity and quality survived in the shrine of Asklepios at Epidauros, containing records of no fewer than 70 miracles etched onto tablets. These provide us with ample comparative material from antiquity. Meier (1985, Chapter V.); Cox Miller (1994: 107–109); Gollnick (1999: 32–33).

<sup>997</sup> On mixed and transitory pagan-Christian forms see Dodds 1951, 110.

<sup>998</sup> On the processes and stages of the emergence of Christian shrines a summary is offered by Brown (1993).

thus we cannot have an entirely clear notion of the prevalence of recovery in sleep in the Middle Ages, we may assume that it was fairly widespread. In his comprehensive summary of the French mediaeval material, for instance, Pierre-André Sigal analyses 2050 miraculous recoveries by 76 saints and sacred locations, amongst which 259 took place in sleep.<sup>999</sup> Miracle records treat dreams of all social strata, thus we have many records of peasants' dreams. It was usually on the days of the saint in question or the celebration of the patron saint of the church that people hoping to recover in their sleep visited the shrines, along with all others seeking remedy of some sort. It was common for invalids to persist in 'sleeping inside' until they get some sort of a response – some spent months at the sacred spot hoping for the saint to manifest in their dreams.<sup>1000</sup> Some churches also had an incubation room, although this was not a compulsory element. It was quite common for ill people to persist in 'sleeping in' until they got some sort of a response. Quite a few of them spent months at the sacred place, hoping that the saint would manifest in a dream.<sup>1001</sup>

As regards Hungarian historical data, miracle records have not been fully processed from this perspective. Gábor Klaniczay and Ildikó Csepregi have collected material from the canonization processes and mediaeval legends of Hungarian saints. Klaniczay mentions instances of recovery in sleep among the miracles which took place by the grave of St. Elisabeth.<sup>1002</sup> Gábor Tüskés explores miracle records from the baroque period and speaks of dreams which encourage the individual to visit a shrine as a very common occurrence.<sup>1003</sup> Contemporary data on incubation have only very partially been collected. They offer a particularly rich range of Orthodox material, but perhaps the mediaeval material itself also allows us to conclude that incubation was probably widely prevalent in the modern period and may even continue to be so today.

The essence of dreams of recovery, in both their ancient or mediaeval and their contemporary formations, is that the figure who appears the dream cures the sleeping invalid by varied methods (the laying on of hands, operation, administering medicine) or gives them instructions or a recipe. For instance, the physician saints, St. Cosmas and St. Damian, who appear by the sick person's bed in their dream discuss the remedy to be applied, then proceed to amputate the invalid's leg and replace it with a dead person's leg.<sup>1004</sup> Just as in the case of spontaneous visions of recovery, in these instances we witness that the two worlds are of an equal grade of reality, they merge and their boundaries are permeated by objective evidence retrieved from the other world. E.g. the invalid receives some medicament at night while asleep and finds it in the bed in the morning (e.g. they are given a fig to eat, and in the morning the fig is in the bed and the invalid eats it).<sup>1005</sup> While in Roman Catholic areas the most prominent sacred figure to cure people in their sleep is the Virgin Mary, in Orthodox areas alongside the former we also find St. George, St. Theodore, St. Cosmas and St. Damian. They cure, they recommend various remedies and often practice dream divination, too: they predict the outcome of illnesses (whether the invalid will live or die) or possibly identify the perpetrator of the bewitchment. The practice of 'sleeping inside' is particularly widespread in Bulgarian monasteries, some of them have a special room dedicated to incubation. According

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<sup>999</sup> See Sigal (1985). Gábor Klaniczay also refers to these statistics (2008, 54–55) in his summary of papers from the international literature describing instances of recovery in dream, complete with examples of recovery accounts.

<sup>1000</sup> Mary Hamilton offers something of a review of these methods Hamilton 1906, 114–128.

<sup>1001</sup> Mary Hamilton offers something of an overview of these methods, Hamilton 1906, 114–128.

<sup>1002</sup> Klaniczay 2008, 54; Csepregi-Vardabasso 2003, 2008.

<sup>1003</sup> Tüskés 1993, 122-123.

<sup>1004</sup> Hamilton 1906, 124.

<sup>1005</sup> Hamilton 1906, 152.

to data published by Albena Georgieva, in one monastery to St. George they even offered a lamb sacrifice in honor of the saint as ritual preparation for incubation.<sup>1006</sup>

It remains characteristic in all ages that the categories of ritual and spontaneous forms of vision are not sharply delineated, there are many fluid, in-between instances, where visions of recovery are not arranged into sharp categories. Similar dreams could also be provoked by ascetic preparations of the soul, such as staying awake at night, praying or fasting, without making a pilgrimage to one of the sacred places. There are many data about visions experienced spontaneously near the sacred spot without ‘sleeping inside’. The motif of receiving a previous calling is also ubiquitous – the sick person has a dream telling him or her which monastery or church to visit. Saints appearing in dreams send the person to the sacred spot and the invalid’s condition often begins to improve even while traveling, before even reaching their destination<sup>1007</sup>. In contemporary times it is similar. According to the diary of István Orosz, holy man of Jászberény, a patient possessed by the devil was sent to Mátraverebély by the Virgin Mary who appeared in a dream to a member of the family. She advised them to visit Mátraverebély at Whitsun and see the holy likeness which performs miracles, since that was where the sick member of the family would recover.<sup>1008</sup>

Certain common traits of incubation dreams manifest in the universal characteristics of attachment to the sacred place. In this context we are witnessing a kind of archaic – essentially non-Christian – materialization of the supernatural world. The sacred becomes manifested wherever the supernatural has some specific material relevance, in the presence of bodily remains and relics of saints who had moved to heaven, or the bones or body of a dead person who has now departed to the other world. In the same way, the likeness of the saint is meant to represent his or her genuine material existence.

## HOLY SEERS, LIVING SAINTS

Of all European seers, special attention must be paid to ‘professional visionaries’ who maintain regular contact with the other world through visions and dreams. Their roles in the community may partially overlap with those of lay seers who also have holy attributes. The most prominent distinctive trait of holy seers, as opposed to their lay counterparts, is the central task of permanent contact with the Christian heaven. Lay seers seek heavenly assistance and legitimization for worldly matters, while holy seers consult the other world in existential affairs of Christianity. More generally, they place their direct communication with the supernatural in service of such religious needs of their community as are not met by official ritual. Seers who have become holy men or women of their community don’t only have visions – they are also able to interpret and transmit them and thus become depositories of the religious and moral systems of norms within their community. Since they cultivate their contact with heaven through visions, bypassing as it were the official communicational channels of the church, they have rarely received official recognition from the churches – indeed, in some cases they met with full resistance and prohibition.

Again we are talking about a phenomenon which is characteristic of the whole of Christian Europe – there is evidence of the continued existence of holy persons and living saints going back to the early Middle Ages and right up to the present time, often amounting to rich written documentation. The *living saints* known from mediaeval and early modern sources were charismatic personalities who either showed some of the characteristic traits of

<sup>1006</sup> Lawson 1910, 302; Blum–Blum 1965, 213; 1970, 59; Georgieva...

<sup>1007</sup> See examples by Wittmer-Butsch 1990, 203–209.

<sup>1008</sup> Bálint 1942, 95.

saints and won the reputation of such even in their lifetime or were accorded attributes of sainthood after death in folklore narratives or, for instance, in the course of canonization procedures.<sup>1009</sup> No matter whether we are talking about a genuine role played in reality, a true 'holy activity' or posthumously created legend motifs, *miracles* and *visions* constitute a central factor of their sainthood. Deliberations by the church regarding what are the legitimate, the unacceptable and the false categories of visions and dreams and doubts about their authenticity continued throughout the Middle Ages. In this respect there was a significant, widely held view whereby only saints deserve to have significant dreams and visions.<sup>1010</sup> This way it is natural that the hagiographies of saints records many visions characteristic of several 'living saints' even as a retrospective justification. In their heavenly ecstasy they gained admission into divine knowledge, received teachings to be transmitted to their earthly environment, in visions of the devil they vanquished the tempting devil, etc.

Holy men and women of this kind have been known ever since the Middle Ages in rural, urban and monastic communities alike, within congregations of old and new denominations. It is hard to decide how varied and significant their role was in various areas of Europe. The healing activity of these holy seers is of privileged importance in practically all cases, but there are also references to them fulfilling other profane visionary tasks, particularly that of cultivating the relationship between the living and the dead, as we expressed in the chapter on communication with the dead.<sup>1011</sup>

Similarly to the totality of vision culture, the existence of holy seers is mostly associated with the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox denominations, but it was never exclusive at any of the affected locations: the circles of the protestant population of Northern, Western and Central Europe all produced protestant seers, prophets and visionaries at the head of lay congregations.

The varied constellations of their roles and activities do not allow us to outline a single type of holy seers which could be called universally valid. Even less so, as the data available are highly incomplete. Living saints and holy persons, despite their importance in the community, have not been much in the focus of anthropological examinations of religious practice. As regards the area we are exploring, besides Hungarian research, which has been active for over half a century<sup>1012</sup>, we can mostly rely on Croatian and Bulgarian results. Outstanding among these are Galia Valtchinova's analyses which offer a whole range of perspectives and her comprehensive work on the famous Bulgarian seers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1013</sup>

The wide variety of different types of holy persons known to us may be retraced mostly to the need to fulfill a varied, ever changing and adapting range of functions in the community. At the same time, the forms of sacred communication they pursue, and the mythology and beliefs that surround them, are quite unified and very similar to what we know from the historical sources. In certain respects there is a continuity stretching from the Middle Ages to the present day and there also appears to be no significant difference in the practice of Western and Eastern Christianity.

The holy men and women of villages in the modern period communicate directly with God, Christ, the saints and the Virgin Mary, bypassing, as it were, the official channels. They mediate the divine revelations to their community as charismatic spiritual leaders and

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<sup>1009</sup> Burkart, Dinzlacher, Kleinberg 1990 (nem 92?), 6

Kieckhefer (1988: 12) Kiegészíteni!

<sup>1010</sup> Bitel (1991, 42-52).

<sup>1011</sup> See e.g. Bouteiller 1950, 201-235; or Delcambre's work on the sacred healers of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Lorraine (Delcambre 1951, Chapter 3), or the case of Swedish Catherina Fagenberg (Edsman 1967); on communication with the dead see e.g. Burkart; Dinzlacher (1995: 261-262).

<sup>1012</sup> See e.g. the latest summary collection of papers: Barna (Szentemberek)

<sup>1013</sup> Valtchinova, Baeva-Valrtchinova, Spanicek

advisors. They often safeguard adherence to religious and moral norms and occasionally act as rivals to the official rituals and the church. In communities which lack priests they also take a lay pastoral role (cf. the institution of the licentiate, the lay priest, in Latin Christianity). Our Croatian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Macedonian and Greek data likewise testify that these men and women often come from the peripheries of society (as poor peasants, shepherds or village craftsmen) and reach the status of an appreciated functionary of their community, often receiving the epithet of ‘saint’ even in their lifetime. Data from Slovenia show that the divine nature of sacred healers is indicated in the word which refers to them (*bogina*, *bogovati*).<sup>1014</sup> Similarly to the historical figures of the living saints, they mainly play a spiritual pastoral function, but healing, divining and communicating with the dead can be similarly important functions. These missions were fulfilled in line with local needs in varied individual constellations. In the case of necromancers, as we already mentioned in the context of communication with the dead, it is particularly difficult to separate the lay and the ‘holy’ seers and to put the active seers into any of the categories. There is one more form of communication which is clearly and specially a mission of holy seers, manifested in data from the Middle Ages and the modern period alike, which we have referred to in the chapter about the dead, and this is to support the souls suffering in purgatory.<sup>1015</sup>

Let us look at some concrete data about the varied activity of holy seers. One of the leaders of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian lay Franciscan movement, a man referred to as St. Miska who received the epithet of saint in his lifetime (Mihály Frankovics by his real name) was a miraculous healer and treated his patients with his prayers and his saliva.<sup>1016</sup> István Orosz was a spiritual advisor and head of church processions in his community who also acted as a diviner and a healer.<sup>1017</sup> Lay priest Vince Engi Tüdő, served ‘masses’ by his prayers and treated his patients in a hospital he set up next to his own chapel. After his death his community gave him the epithets and attributes not only of a saint but also of a *táltos*.<sup>1018</sup> The holy woman of Szurdokpüspöki, active at the present time,<sup>1019</sup> is receiving and transmitting heavenly messages in a chapel she set up herself, and offers treatments using the remedy she receives from heaven (‘heavenly manna’) to her admirers who come to her from far and wide. Besides, she offers divination and transmits messages from the dead to family members.<sup>1020</sup> Ilona Jánó, seer in Moldova, mostly defines herself as having a vocation as a spiritual leader, substantiated by her personal accounts of her initiation journey to heaven. One stratum of her functions is to educate and convert the community of the living, to encourage them in prayer, fasting, the pious life and atonement. As a guardian of moral and ethical norms, she prays for sinners, for women who refused to give birth to children they were expecting, for parents bringing up children in the wrong way, for people who misbehave during mass, and so on. Not all of this is the kind of task which requires supernatural communication from a seer, but the ability ‘to see’ which monitors and controls sound morality in the community can also help. Characteristic moments are when ‘in spirit’ they reach the churches of other villages and report to their priests how many people prayed ‘with a pure heart’ or monitor who are the ‘bad confessors’. Supposedly Jesus ‘goes out of’ people who do not confess in the right way, the devil enters them instead, and the seer can see this. (Seers can even watch people while sitting on a train and actually see the tempter jumping around their heads, perched on their shoulders or possessing them.) An important part of their life strategy, similarly to many

<sup>1014</sup> Kotnik

<sup>1015</sup> Spanicek, 368-369; Valtchinova, Pócs **összefoglaló bolgár, magyar és horvát látótanulmányok. Macedón, görög: Valtchinova-hivatkozások – eredetét megkeresni!**

<sup>1016</sup> Szent Miska

<sup>1017</sup> Bálint 1942.

<sup>1018</sup> Grynaeus 1974.

<sup>1019</sup> Nógrád County, Northern Hungary

<sup>1020</sup> Limbacher 1998

mediaeval living saints, is to fight against temptation by the devil. One of the functions of the living saint's guardian angels is to protect these persons from their own devilish temptations. However, more recently their activity has focused on engagement with the dead, primarily by supporting souls suffering in purgatory and those who died unbaptised.<sup>1021</sup>

Accepting the role of the lay priest is general among all the holy seers of the Central and Eastern European region. One example is the 'traveling priestess' Julka Brkić whose activity was studied by Spanicek. In her sermons she reprimanded sinners, gave spiritual advice, and disseminated a 15 page text entitled *History of a Soul* about heaven, heavily laden with apocalyptic motifs.<sup>1022</sup> Galia Valtchinova analyses several Bulgarian lay priests and priestesses. The most famous of them, Vanga Petricka had a long and successful career as a seer, to the point of having a cult.<sup>1023</sup> Previously mentioned Ilona Jánó from Moldova used to receive heavenly instructions related to specifically priestly or clerical tasks (e.g. to have a monastery built). It is no wonder she justifies this role by describing in a number of vision narratives how she was ordained a heavenly priest. The holy women of Székelyföld who operated in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were accorded even more prestige, according to József Gagyi's description, than the official priests as spiritual leaders and advisors of their community. They preached on the basis of heavenly inspiration (citing apocalyptic prophecies to urge their audience to convert). Indeed the 'preaching rock' of the famous holy woman of Máréfalva became a place of pilgrimage after her death.<sup>1024</sup> This is the almost predictable common destiny of holy persons.

Some lay priests and congregation leaders championed various alternative movements and societies within the church or induced the emergence of such. Often, indeed typically, these alternative movements also received a political relevance. As Sándor Bálint describes, the previously mentioned St. Miksa was a participant and inspirational figure of the new lay movement which emerged as a counterpoint to Josephinist rationalism. Eventually he was charged of subversive activity, then charges were dropped but Miksa was detained as one given to religious frenzy.<sup>1025</sup> The Bulgarian and Greek religious societies of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century described by Baeva and Valtchinova (such as the famous 'Annunciation' society of Asenovgrad in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century or the Greek 'Angels' [Angeloudia, Angeloudes]) were moral societies which emerged among circumstances of ethnic tension (even though their main function, as we mentioned above, was communication with the dead).<sup>1026</sup>

In the Sub-Carpathian area of contemporary Ukraine, during the decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Hungarian communities lacked priests and religion was persecuted, a number of persons became active as lay priests. The written legacy of two Hungarian peasant women who played a role of this kind was analyzed by Imola Küllös and Ildikó Sándor, including a text entitled *The Emerged Testament* (a paraphrase of the Bible intended as a third holy book in line after the Old and the New Testament). At the two villages, quite close to each other, a congregation became organized around these two women.<sup>1027</sup> They did not function alongside the official clergy, but replaced it as self-appointed and self-made spiritual leaders of the community. They played a complex role as leaders of their congregation, mainly organizing this role around the previously mentioned sacred text. In their case, partly as a result of their Calvinist religion, the visionary form of sacred communication played very little part if at all. A secondary, justifying and legitimizing function, however, can clearly be seen to have

<sup>1021</sup> Pozsony, Pócs, Peti (Jánó)

<sup>1022</sup> Spanicek

<sup>1023</sup> Valtchinova könyv, Vanga-cikk i

<sup>1024</sup> Gagyi 1998, a többi Gagyi tanulmány

<sup>1025</sup> Bálint 1991 [1942] 17

<sup>1026</sup> Baeva-Valtchinova, Valtchinova Chapter 3. a Naumescu által vizsgált ukrán közösségeket beírni pótlásként!!!

<sup>1027</sup> Borku Mariska és Szanyi Mikó Borbála, a falvak neve

existed. Every chapter of the previously mentioned sacred texts is embedded in the written frame of a heavenly vision. Every chapter began with the word 'Láték...'/I saw', and the biblical contents are surrounded by the textual motifs of heavenly journeys of the soul as they have been known since the Middle Ages. The following section shows how one of these peasant priestesses, Mariska Borku, described her vision in the 1960's.<sup>1028</sup>

In my soul I was carried from river to river and from lake to lake. And the angel spake and pointed at the lake and the river, 'Behold, there are poisoned waters in these.' ... and the murderous angel descended and took me to the dried-out river and there were many dead fish there. And then to a marshy lake that was teeming. And finally he took me to a hill – this is a well that was dug by Noah, and in there I saw a multitude of living fish and he said, 'The living water is the one that springs from the inside of the mountain which you were given by Jesus to keep. This is the water these fish drink and they feed upon manna under the palm trees.'

As regards the connection between these holy persons and the church, the latter's degree of tolerance varies from stiff hostility to lenience and even, in some cases, co-operation. While, for instance, in the first half of the last century, a healer active in the village of Ósi in Western Hungary<sup>1029</sup> provoked the disapproval of the local clergy simply by offering healing through prayers and religious gestures, some of our Eastern Hungarian or Bulgarian data indicate not merely tolerance but active co-operation between the priest and the local living saint, for instance in the area of identifying bewitchment.<sup>1030</sup>

### The mythology of seers

An important focal point in the shared attributes of European holy persons and village seers and lay priest of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century within their wide variety of roles is the motif of heavenly knowledge or initiation. This constitutes the backbone of the mythology that surrounds them, placed in the centre of all the traditional stories told about these characters. As Dinzelbacher emphasizes in connection with the living saints of the Middle Ages, this is a pool of certain negative and positive stereotypes<sup>1031</sup> which show a very persistent tendency to be transmitted with great constancy in areas of both the Western and the Oriental church. Using their own narrative traditions, village communities have invested their holy persons and seers, more accurately the stories about them, with the known textual stereotypes of the holy seer. These were closely related to the motifs of the written sources which are omnipresent in the visionary literature of the whole of European cultural history and the fictional genres which have sprung from them.<sup>1032</sup> The mythology and orally transmitted folklore of holy persons, on the level of narrative, is very similarly to the mythology of seers presented in the chapter on communication with the dead, which surrounded all the religious and magical specialists of the traditional communities of even the recent past.

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<sup>1028</sup> Küllős 1998, 134.

<sup>1029</sup> Veszprém megye, Vajkai 1939.

<sup>1030</sup> Ilona Jánó, seer from Moldova discussed the meaning of her visions with her confessor (Kóka...).

Valtchinova's book presents, alongside documents of hostility, also some data about the tolerant relationship of seers, priests and monks.(Valtchinova...)

<sup>1031</sup> Dinzelbacher 1995, 213

<sup>1032</sup> Látomásirodalom látó-toposzairól gBenz, Dinzelbacher; mondakatalógusok; beavatás magyarhoz hasonló motívumai: Frijhoff, egyéb tört. adatok

With holy seers, too, the most central motif is to do with being *selected* and with the origin of their knowledge as initiates. On the other hand, the narratives regularly highlight the sacred communication that these people engage in.<sup>1033</sup> The selected status of certain well-known Hungarian saints is underlined, for instance, by legend motifs such as special birth traits or bodily features, the motif of the ‘puer senex’ (holiness manifesting in early childhood, the ability to speak as a baby), supernatural traits (performing miracles, levitation, or the ability to fly, to tell the future or to see distant things or persons, or find treasure hidden underground).<sup>1034</sup> The legendary toposes of lay magicians such as a duel with the priest (the legend of Simon Magus), or the motif of a wager with the devil in the Theophilus or Faust legend can also form a part of the orally transmitted folklore.<sup>1035</sup>

Of all of these traits one of the primary consequences and proofs of the holiness of holy persons is, just as in the case of mediaeval living saints, the ability to *perform miracles*. In the case of miracles we are talking mostly about stereotypical textual motifs (e.g. the motif of a fruit tree which blossoms in their yard in the winter which recurs in the narratives of all holy persons in Hungary in the 20<sup>th</sup> century), and partly about everyday events which are brought in relation with these sacred persons and interpreted as miracles. Examples of this latter are narratives surrounding many living saints in Hungary who are said to have salvaged their village from hailstorms, floods or an earthquake, or instances of everyday recoveries interpreted as miracles in the context of their healing activity.<sup>1036</sup>

The *initiation* of these sacred persons takes place by the ministrations of a holy figure in heaven where their soul, departing from the body, travels in a dream or trance, often accompanied by the guiding angel, saint or possibly one of their dead forebears. Initiation is often preceded by illness and takes place at a definite age (often at the ages of 3 or 7, 12 and 21, similarly to lay seers). The candidate for initiation reaches heaven by a ladder, a bridge or a road intersected by obstacles, in line with the mediaeval **toposes** **nem topoi?** known from the literature of heavenly journeys.<sup>1037</sup> Looking back on earth, the candidate sees not only his/her own deserted and hollow body, often in a coffin, because their cataleptic state is interpreted by family members as death, but also gets an overview of the world or, in some cases, of the entire, luminous cosmos. In heaven they receive a vocation from one of the divine figures to practice their trade and the person is often reluctant to accept this calling. Motifs of overcoming obstacles, being re-born and acquiring knowledge are almost permanent attributes of both fictional and folkloristic initiation narratives.

Hungarian data available about holy persons in villages testify that, similarly to lay seers and necromancers, a journey of the soul with the purpose of initiation experienced in a lasting state of unconsciousness forms a central and privileged part of the mythology. The living saint of a village in the Mezőség<sup>1038</sup> was described to have been ‘A nice enough man, but very pious. ... He lived hidden away, putting himself to the test up there in heaven. Then he would tell people where he had been and give them examples...’<sup>1039</sup> The holy woman of Szurdokpüspöki related that she had her first vision when she was 12, and then at the age of 37 she received a ‘calling’ from the Virgin Mary. ‘I was dead. And then I was given back [to

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<sup>1033</sup> Limbacher 1994, 1998, Barna 1998, Harangozó 2001. Pócs **Látomások, vagy Hiedelemszövegek megfelelő fejezete**

<sup>1034</sup> Kieckhefer (1988).

<sup>1035</sup> Magyar adatok; Faust, Simon mágus (Gagyí, Máréfalvi asszony). Korai keresztény adatok varázslók-papok viadala, korai keresztény adatok (Brown: Rise of Christianity?)

<sup>1036</sup> hivatkozás, M.R. gyimesi példái

<sup>1037</sup> **Látomás-kötet megfelelő helyei.** The constancy of *toposes* and stereotypical textual motifs on initiation has already been emphasised by researchers of mediaeval vision literature. See e.g. Dinzelbacher 1981, 216 on the first, initiatory experience of holy visionaries.

<sup>1038</sup> Data from Transylvanian Hungarians, Keszeg

<sup>1039</sup> Keszeg 2002, 136.

life].<sup>1040</sup> Another holy person, a man named Pista Tápai who lived in Southern Hungary in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century went into ‘hiding’ (a term meaning a trance in Hungarian), in which state he learnt prayers and healing, and was given instructions to have a chapel erected.

<sup>1041</sup> We could go on quoting a whole row of similar Hungarian and Croatian data. Some holy persons related their heavenly journey themselves. Ilona Jánó, seer of Moldova, was ‘called’ by the Virgin Mary and Christ at the ages of three and then twelve, teaching her about her vocation and the pious life. They showed her heaven and hell and also taught her about the topography of the other world as she would be a regular visitor there after initiation. Her angel would guide her through the temples of heaven, introduce to her all of their titles, then the layers and chambers of hell and the sinners who are suffering their punishment.<sup>1042</sup>

As a parallel to the data on village people, we quote here a mediaeval ‘initiation vision’ from the hagiography of St. Colomba. These notes by Adomnan reveal a ‘world vision’ which the living saint will come in possession of after overcoming certain obstacles. This way they gain a universal knowledge of things from the beginning to the end. In the union with light ‘the brain became wonderfully expanded’, as Adomnan describes. In his lifetime he played the role not only of the holy mediator partaking of heavenly journeys but also that of the earthly ‘seer’.<sup>1043</sup>

An important part of this rich mythology of seers is that they legitimize the activity of holy persons and confirm their functions as lay priest as against the official clergy, particularly by the motifs of divine selection and heavenly initiation. It is no accident that in the narrative tradition surrounding famous seers there is always a very special emphasis on the instruction from God, which the seers often receive during their journey in the form of a *holy letter* or a *holy book*. They may even hold concrete earthly copies of these, or at least be able to talk about such a physical copy. This is what the holy woman of Máréfalva, Ágnes Ilonka did a few decades ago. Her activity was researched by József Gagyí. The woman who is said to have ‘God speak through her tongue’, although illiterate, claimed that she was sent the divine message on stone tablets, like Moses, so she can read her sermons from these.<sup>1044</sup>

Holy seers win not only legitimization in heaven for their activity, not merely instructions on how to fulfill their mission as spiritual leaders, but also knowledge and abilities. Thus, for instance, the holy healer of Karancshegy keeps emphasizing the heavenly origin of these acts of healing (She follows a divine voice when healing and ‘dealing out heavenly manna’)<sup>1045</sup>. Seers involved in healing often hear in heaven about springs of water to be used for healing.<sup>1046</sup> Ilona Jánó from Moldova found out from her angel during her heavenly journeys how to question the soul which is suffering in purgatory. ‘She told me what was bound to happen because of the corrupted state of Christianity’, says Ilona Jánó about a vision in which God gave her a very important mission.<sup>1047</sup> Klára Csépe, the famous seer of Northern Hungary was taught by the Virgin Mother what to use for her prayers. The holy woman of Máréfalva ‘was visited on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February... by the Virgin Mother who said to her, from now on, for thirty days, keep preaching the words of the Lord every day’.<sup>1048</sup>

## Visions by seers, techniques of communication

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<sup>1040</sup> Limbacher

<sup>1041</sup> **Bálint: Orosz 18, más forrást!**

<sup>1042</sup> Kóka

<sup>1043</sup> MacQueen 1989: 47-48.

<sup>1044</sup> Gagyí 1998, 147.

<sup>1045</sup> Limbacher

<sup>1046</sup> Jádi-Tüskés; Kóka

<sup>1047</sup> Jánó Ilona: Kóka Rozália

<sup>1048</sup> Gagyí

The mythology which surrounds seers and the declarations of these persons themselves both focus on *visions* as the central factor of the related pragmatic ideology which they themselves also use to legitimize and justify their activity and at the same time demarcate it from the central cult and the official forms of sacred communication.<sup>1049</sup> These holy people are persons with a predisposition for visions and for permanent communication with the other world, who are in a state of constant physical and psychological readiness to receive visions – as famous medieval visionaries are described, and as the contemporary holy persons and their communities are also aware of. A widely, in fact generally known motif of the characterization of holy seers was put in the following words by the admirers of Mariska Borku, holy woman of some 30 years ago. ‘She was in personal contact with the Lord Jesus... She had even been transported up to heaven. She was unconscious down here on earth, lying in her bed, but her soul was up there...’<sup>1050</sup>

As regards the personal predisposition to see visions, quite a lot is known about the ways in which (in the background of seemingly spontaneous cases) mediaeval religious visionaries consciously prepared and sustained this state of alert through techniques where asceticism, fasting, meditation and contemplation played an important role.<sup>1051</sup> Our latter-day ethnographic data confirm this: peasant women who are profoundly religious, prone to meditation and solitude, and who also keep in touch with the other world through different channels (prayer, meditation) have a higher number of visions.<sup>1052</sup> However one crucial question may still arise about these holy men and women, namely, *what did they see?* Although it is undeniable that the vision narratives of the individual seers allow us to draw conclusions about their divergent subjective attitudes, doubts and questions always persisted in the background: had the informant actually ‘seen’?

Techniques of sacred communication which are actually known and practiced are highly varied, just like the relevant beliefs and mythical elements in the mythology surrounding seers. It is very hard to decipher the reality behind all this or at least the specific *emic* categories of the community of seers. One can never establish from a vision narrative whether the informant is relating an event that s/he had actually ‘seen’ or s/he believes to have seen or, alternately, s/he just knows what s/he is *supposed* to have seen, what they usually see, and is able to remember this or imagine it, while the suitably attuned state of mind, particularly in the loneliness of the night, will heighten the power of the imagination. Narratives about holy persons, often spread by the persons themselves, reveal at any rate that in theory they are supposed to see visions on a routine basis, as a part of their profession, their duty to the community. The seers themselves often comment on their subjective vision experiences which reveal the varied array of ways in which they tried to meet collective expectations. If they did not have a vision, they were acquainted with the commonly known narrative *toposes* of visions which they could incorporate in their visions. If we want to establish the likelihood that we are hearing an account of a genuine vision experience, there are a number of external and internal criteria we can use. There may be external witnesses who talk about the unconscious, cataleptic state of the visionary from which he or she will wake up and relate the vision. However, even this meta-narrative can be merely fictional. In luckier cases we even hear something about the conditions and preparations to falling in a trance, even to the extent of details such as how the soul departs from the body and sees itself from above in a state of apparent death. However, these ‘experiences of the soul’, such as

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<sup>1049</sup> Sándor Bálint (1942), later Tamás Grynaeus (1974), Ferenc Pozsony (1991), and most recently Imola Küllös, Ildikó Sándor, Gábor Limbacher, Lehel Peti and Éva Pócs have studied the communal role and sacral communication of Hungarian holy persons. (bibl.)

<sup>1050</sup> Küllös 1998, 135.

<sup>1051</sup> Benz 1969, 35–37, 225–230; MacDermot 1971, I. fejezet, “Withdrawal from the environment of the senses”.

Newman 2005: látomások látásának „tanulása” kolostorokban (megnézni!!!)

<sup>1052</sup> Dinzlbacher (1981, 146–154) writes about this in connection with mediaeval visionaries.

varied forms of being outside of the body, are actually also literary *toposestopoi?* and probably became incorporated in the visions of the early mediaeval visionaries in as such.<sup>1053</sup> Ilona Jánó, for instance, can be proven to know and accurately use the terminology of mediaeval Western European visionary literature as regards experiences of being outside the body, the soul leaving the body and journeys of the soul. One may assume that she acquired this knowledge from clerical sources, religious reading material and whatever visionary literature was available in a chapbook format. Thus it is not impossible that these terms of ecstasy and soul journey are absorbed ready-made, together with the texts, since her visions show close connections, even in terms of content, with late mediaeval Western European visions (and also, on the other hand, with Byzantine orthodox stories where ‘The Mother of God Visits Hell’ which is known around these parts from clerical chapbook publications). She uses terms like ‘the first departure of my soul’, ‘you need to go out in your soul’, ‘I saw my soul, so that I was walking in front and Satan, the devil behind me’. In one of her most beautiful mystical visions, in which she goes to heaven and sits on the lap of the Lord who kisses her, she says that while her soul was outside of her body, the latter was inhabited by the Baby Jesus. During her first journey to hell her soul was ‘carried’, just like her body, except that it was lighter and shiny. That she may occasionally have undergone some genuine experiences of soul journey may be suspected from detailed and plausible accounts of how her soul departed and how it returned to her cooled-out body. She described how after her ‘return’ she sets about warming up her cold, rigid body once again by moving her tongue and fingers, rubbing her arms and legs. While in heaven, she was afraid, she said, that she might be late back. She had to hurry, because ‘her body had had too long without the soul’. Thus her narratives contain stereotypical textual motifs of several thousand years’ standing (!) in close combination with the most heated and subjective mystical experiences. Thus if we ask the question once more whether Ilona Jánó actually had experiences of the departure of the soul from the body or of the journey of the soul and whether she really did ‘meet’ the heavenly deities, we can only reply again – we will never know this with complete certainty, but can only consider it probably in certain cases. The same is probably true of seers and vision narratives in general from the Middle Ages till the present day.

There is more to be known about the physical and psychological conditions of the visions in the case of the various seers and about the practical ways of attaining them. To use Ilona Jánó’s detailed narratives once more as points of reference, some of her visions seem to have occurred spontaneously, but her accounts also often display the condition of anticipation and the mental state of being prepared for receiving a vision. There are many data to show that she experienced her visions during intense prayer. (On one occasion, for instance, while praying, she felt that she was flying – this is probably the joint effect of meditation and auto-suggestion.) Data show that very often she has her visions at night in her bed – these are equally likely to be fantasies or dream visions. According to her own accounts, her guardian angel often comes and wakes her up, telling her ‘to come into a vision’ with her. At other times, she clearly has visions in a waking or semi-waking state. (Very rarely she even talks about auditory phenomena. ‘Pronouncements entered my soul.’) As I mentioned before, the texts also contain references to deep trance, unconscious states or her body cooling out. Quite obviously, as a practiced seer, she was in command of several techniques but, for the same reason, she was also good at using her imagination. The location and object of her visions, the church, the Holy Sacrament or the alter image, may also be stimulating. Visions experienced

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<sup>1053</sup> “Extra corpus suum raptus”, e.g. in Drythelm’s Scottish vision or in the 7<sup>th</sup> century vision by Firseus; or on being sent back into the body see Dinzelbacher (1981, 216), Gurevics (1987, 253), Benz (1964, 267, 274, 225). The departure of the external soul from the body appears as a legend motif in the dialogues of St. Gregory the Great in 594 when someone is seen talking to the alter ego of St. Benedict. For more on this motif see Schmitt (1987: 259).

in the latter context might also be explicable by auto-suggestion induced by focusing the vision on a single point.

A common type of contemporary seers tends not to have visions as much as experience heavenly inspirations, which they sense or narrate not as a vision of images but as heavenly pronouncements. This kind of sensation usually characterizes persons who play the role of the lay priest and preach to the public. One example is 19<sup>th</sup> century holy man Mihály Frankovics, a. k. a. ‘Szent Miska’, who kept in contact with heaven, particularly with St. Anne, through apparitions and heavenly pronouncements. The lay priestesses of Székelyföld described by József Gagyí also mediate heavenly voices which they perceive in the presence of their admirers in an unconscious state for hours at a time. Ágnes Ilonka, the holy woman of Máréfalva, is said to have been in a state of grace, according to data by József Gagyí. At times like this she would lie in a trance for a while, then come to and sing, pray and preach.<sup>1054</sup> In the Bulgarian and Greek religious societies described by Baeva and Valtchinova collective forms of sacral communication occur, e.g. they may enter contact with heaven in a trance induced by singing together.<sup>1055</sup>

Some seers appear to be in a practically permanent *unio mystica* with the heavenly beings<sup>1056</sup> and thus can have as attributes the motifs of *imitatio Christi* in relation to the birth, baptism or crucifixion of Christ or in some cases they may have stigmas. The Eucharistic visions of Ilona Jánó, seer from Moldova, are mystical visions or, as she expresses, ‘offerings of the soul so I can unite with Christ’ who ‘came into me’. On one occasion she related that she united with Jesus, Jesus was inside her and she in Jesus and they were on the crucifix together. István Orosz, a holy man who lived in Jászberény in the early part of the previous century, emphasizes in his autobiography that he came to enjoy the ‘rapturous sweetness’ of the sight of heaven even on earth.<sup>1057</sup>

All of the lastly mentioned phenomena, including *divine inspiration* (‘God is speaking from Ágnes’ – people would say about the holy woman of Transylvania), *collective trance* and *mystical union* with the deity can be seen as so many special forms of divine possession. Certain seers, particularly in Orthodox areas, themselves experienced their heavenly vocation as divine possession. As Galia Valtchinova mentions in her book on Bulgarian seers, they become empowered by the saint who takes possession of them.<sup>1058</sup> This phenomenon is akin to something commonly practiced within the possession cults of the Balkans, including Bulgaria, and discussed here in the context of communication with the dead and with fairies: healers of ritual societies become possessed by saints, spirits of the dead, or fairies of divine character and are thus empowered to heal people suffering from possession. Data from Csík County about Hungarian saints and seers indicate that in these parts the belief survives in sporadic instances that seers are selected by spontaneously becoming possessed by God or the Holy Ghost. We also know of sacred healers in Southern Hungary or Serbia who behave as though in divine (fairy) possession and heal demonic illnesses through the ‘power’ they receive this way.<sup>1059</sup> A few data also indicate the existence of people who show the kind of ambivalence of divine possession registered in the context of mediaeval mystics – whereby

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<sup>1054</sup> Bálint, Gagyí 2001.

<sup>1055</sup> Baeva-Valtchinova, Valtchinova, Chapter 3.

<sup>1056</sup> According to the definition of the theological category of the *mystical*, the ego expands and unites (*unio mystica*) with the cosmos or the deity (saints). Furthermore, the individual partakes of a knowledge of the essence of the universe in an unusual and intense fashion, the visionary embraces the whole world in an ecstatic experience, while at the highest grade the individual merges entirely with the deity and the universe. Edsman 1970, 7:10; Holm 1987, 56.

<sup>1057</sup> Bálint – ez nem a b. kifejezése?

<sup>1058</sup> Valtchinova, isteni megszállottság

<sup>1059</sup> Megszállott szent gyógyítók adatai.

they were possessed by God or the Holy Ghost and/or Satan.<sup>1060</sup> Certain holy attributes that have been recorded ever since the Middle Ages (e.g. speaking foreign languages, knowing secrets, rising into the air) and have customarily been regarded with ambivalence are occasionally noted in the context of contemporary South-East European holy persons, too. For instance, Greek and Bulgarian data show that epilepsy, the sacred disease, and the related states of loss of consciousness were regarded as possession and interpreted as devilish or divine depending on the momentary context.<sup>1061</sup> Flying and rising into the air are often express symptoms of possession:<sup>1062</sup> the divine soul which has come to possess the body strives upward and lifts the body along with it (so that the possessed person flies or is snatched ‘in his/her body’. Contemporary anthropological research, however, has not covered the ambivalence noticeable regarding those in divine possession or the phenomenon of possessing even in terms of holy persons, so there is not much we can say about these phenomena in the present context. What is certain is that possession as a possible ‘technique’ for sacral communication must be noted with regard to Christian seers, too. Ecstatic visions or heavenly soul journeys as well as divine possession and complete union with the divine (*unio mystica*) are not equal ranking categories in this respect but approaches, instead, of the same phenomenon from different research perspectives, partially overlapping categories. Examinations of mediaeval or early modern mystics and living saints reveal that divine possession is an umbrella category of different forms of union and communication/mediation with the deity. It is no accident that certain researchers of the Middle Ages handle the two as one category. Most recently Moshe Sluhovsky used the term ‘identification with God’, as contrasted to all other kindred phenomena (e.g. illusions induced by the devil [?])<sup>1063</sup>. Recently mentioned symptoms of possession, such as rising in the air, flying or levitation have been seen as evidence of man turning divine, the manifestation of very pious persons ever since the theurgists of late antiquity.<sup>1064</sup> On the other hand, flying may form a part of any type of supernatural communication, mystical union or ecstatic soul journey in relation to Christian visions (or so-called shamanistic soul journeys), whereby human are snatched by their guarding spirit, guardian angel or a heavenly saint into the upper, divine regions of heaven.

#### Visions in times of crisis, collective visions, vision epidemics

There are periods when members of a community start to exhibit visions on a similar theme, conceived in similar situations, amounting to something almost like an epidemic. The vision topics become a common theme – masses of people seem to see ‘the same thing’. Sacral communication steps out of the private sphere and begins to constitute a theme for an entire community. Vision accounts occupy the focus of communication in the community – they feature in conversations, rumors, gossip and folklore narratives. The proliferation of visions and the emergence of ‘vision epidemics’ may be a sign presaging a crisis to the community, or something that threatens its identity and integrity, as József Gagyí explained in his paper on visions induced by the crisis situations in the Szekler Land.<sup>1065</sup> A classic example of how

<sup>1060</sup> For research on the ambivalence of divine and diabolic possession and *discerning of spirits* see e.g. Kleinberg 1990; Dinzlacher 1995; Klaniczay 1997, Sluhovsky 1999; Caciola [könyv](#).

<sup>1061</sup> Blum–Blum 1965, 52-54 and by courtesy of personal information from Benovska-Sabkova.

<sup>1062</sup> Dinzlacher 1997, 111-138.

<sup>1063</sup> Sluhovsky 1999. Ernst Benz (1972, 125) also uses a more general category, that of snatching or abduction (*Ergriffenheit*), which covers the categories both of *unio mystica* and *circumsessio* or, *possessio* – it is a religious experience which is the passive perception of a greater power acting from outside or above.

<sup>1064</sup> Indian, Muslim, Jewish and Christian saints have all been claimed to rise above the ground, levitate or fly: Eliade 1999, 152; Dodds 1971, 232-233.

<sup>1065</sup> Gagyí 1998: 118.

collective visions appear in situations of public and political crisis was the 'vision epidemic' of Basque Land in the 1930's which is described in William Christian's relevant work<sup>1066</sup>, complete with its political, public and social background. New religious movements related to the social and political crises of the end of the millennium also provide a frame for the mass scale, collective manifestations of imagistic religiosity.<sup>1067</sup> In the past two to three decades there has been a whole line of books analyzing the vision epidemics, including Otto Minardus's exploration of the social and psychological background of the massive wave of visions of Mary which took place after the Arab-Israeli Six Day War of 1967.<sup>1068</sup> That we are talking about more than just a characteristic attribute of the new types of conflict in the modern era (and the modern age boom of Mary visions) may also be suspected from a paper by Ottavia Niccoli who analyzed what was referred to as 'epidemics' of visions in Italy between 1480 and 1530. The paper also looks at the crises of public affairs (e.g. tension and fear associated with Turkish invasion) which induced visions of divergent motivations but related content in different social strata.<sup>1069</sup> We could just as well refer to the Basque villages mentioned in Christian's previously mentioned book as 'epidemic zones' active several centuries ago. We need only to think of the massive wave of witness statements made in the anti-witchcraft purges of 1610, when children and adults described in great numbers to the courts of the inquisition their very similar visions (or dreams or fantasies?) centered around the same subject – their soul journeys to the Witches' Sabbath.<sup>1070</sup> The way in which purges of this kind are likely to give rise to a crisis and how this may in turn lead to a vision epidemic is also described by Gábor Klaniczay in the context of the documents of 18th century witchcraft trials held in Southern Hungary.<sup>1071</sup> In this latter case the motivations were quite different than at the time of the Mary visions of 1931. What the two situations have in common is that religious, political and social tensions were vented through a mass scale experience of heavenly or devilish visions by a profoundly religious society.

Practically all of the religious communities we examined had at some time experienced some form of collective vision in a situation of crisis. In the Moldva, Gyimes and Székelyföld areas this was researched by József Gagyí, Ferenc Pozsony and, most intensely, by Lehel Peti. Their examinations reveal how an increase in economic, social and religious tension, the confiscation of landed property, the threat against the use of the Hungarian mother tongue, the banning of the pilgrimage at Csíksomlyó (Șumuleu, County Harghita, Romania) and the cruellest years of Ceaușescu's dictatorship were followed by an explosive spreading of individual visions (e.g. people seeing the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ on the window glass, in a number of villages in the Szekler area). In Moldavia in 1890 the Virgin Mary appeared 'to innocent, untouched children' 'on the tops of trees'.<sup>1072</sup> Our data allow us to trace the way in which each type of vision became widespread. Anyone who has heard about the appearance of the Virgin Mary on the window pane will want to see it, and when the community becomes appropriately attuned, they *will* see what they *want* to see.

People at Szenttamás were running around telling everyone that they could see something like the holy family on the window pane... All the people ran together and then my sister said, Dear Lord show me Jesus of Bethlehem with his family and let me see Mary. And so she did. The tiny little stable, the Lord Jesus, Mary, St. Joseph, the

<sup>1066</sup> Christian, baszk

<sup>1067</sup> Hamilton 1998. 113–123.

<sup>1068</sup> Minardus, .... ; see also: ....

<sup>1069</sup> A fortunate constellation of sources enables him to examine sources other than oral tradition regarding the spreading of the 'epidemic', such as sermons and letters; see Niccoli 1984.

<sup>1070</sup> Henningsen, látomásjárvány

<sup>1071</sup> Klaniczay: Bosz.látomás

<sup>1072</sup> Gagyí 1998: 101–124.

whole family.<sup>1073</sup>

Apparitions of this kind were usually seen as warning signals presaging disaster, while in retrospect they were interpreted as heralding crises in the smaller community, political crises or natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes). Thus, e. g. the appearance of Jesus to women in Moldavia in 1989 was interpreted in retrospect as an event foreshadowing the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

When collective visions take place in situations of crisis, the normative function of religion comes to dominate. The desire to enter into direct contact with the sacred is not as prominent in these cases. A vision is, in this case, a sign and a message, falling within the same frame of reference as other miraculous signs from the supernatural sphere. It is commonly known that comets and other ‘heavenly signs’, and also distorted living organisms (monsters, misshapen births), are seen all over the region as signs presaging war or natural disaster. Lehel Peti and Ferenc Pozsony report several such ‘signs’ in their above mentioned papers, as encountered either in reality or in vision. For instance, a mass disaster that happened in a village in Moldavia when a bus turned over also came to be associated with a ‘sign’ seen by a person previously (the sky lined with black cloth). In another case a bright star appeared in the sky and this was followed by a great flood; or on the day before Ceausescu’s fall the setting sun glowed on special golden colors.<sup>1074</sup>

#### Holy seers in public roles – prophets in times of crisis

If we review the history of the known religious movements of Europe from the Middle Ages to this day it becomes quite clear that various crises in the public, political or ideological sphere produced collective needs which diverged from the normal lifestyle and often called for new types of religious leaders, too. Holy persons of this kind included those visionary personalities who were referred to as prophets (using an Old Testament term which alludes to a similar context). These people became mediators of the collective needs dictated by the age and the situation in public affairs, transmitting the messages to the world of the gods. ‘Collective’ visions induced by crises in public affairs went hand in hand with the appearance of these seers/prophets who were in direct visionary contact with the heavenly beings. They helped by providing a framework or explanation to things that induced uncertainty and threat. By nature, these were religious explanations. The customary role of spiritual leader played by holy persons became reversed in their case. Instead of the sins of the local communities, they chastised the sinful ruling classes, the political enemy, often going as far as incitement and fuelling social unrest or rebellion. Indeed, certain of them became vocal in national peasant revolt movements or even in national freedom fights.

This phenomenon is far from new: pre-formations of the end-of-the-millennium seer/prophets who raised their voice in the crisis situations have been known ever since the first centuries of Christianity. Research by Jacques Le Goff or Norman Cohn shows that seer/prophets supposedly in direct contact with God played an important public role as far back as some of the Gnostic sects labeled heretic by the Christians. Such figures also came to act at the head of millenarist movements that started up in the centuries of the early modern period in order to preach their occasionally militant eschatological teachings about the coming of the just and fair reign of Christ to the urban and rural poor living on the peripheries of

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<sup>1073</sup> Collected by Éa Pócs, 1996, Csíkszenttamás, Harghita County, Romania

<sup>1074</sup> Pozsony 1991: 255. Peti 1912, ... Many authors have written about such a role of supernatural signs in this context, it is not our job here to analyze these. See e.g. ....

society.<sup>1075</sup> They gained their inspiration from Sibylline or Johannite prophecies.<sup>1076</sup>

Lay prophets have been known in all parts of the area under examination, in Orthodox, Roman and Greek Catholic, and even in Protestant contexts alike. Thus, for instance, Galia Valtchinova reports about visions which were experienced among nations that were on the losing side in the War and which in a way served the symbolic politics of Bulgarian national rejuvenation and nationalism within the framework of the lay religious society of the Good Samaritans.<sup>1077</sup> Vlad Naumescu reports about a lay prophetess who began to operate within the underground Ukrainian sect of the Penitents persecuted by the state-driven atheism of the Soviet era and who mediated the radical messages of the Mother of God in service of Western Ukrainian nationalism.<sup>1078</sup>

In Hungary, traditions of such prophets may be traced back as far as the 16th-18th century. These persons usually made their appearance in times of economic crisis, natural disasters, war or religious hostilities (e.g., Miklós Drábik, András Órás, György Schultz). They mediated heavenly messages and preached sermons calling on sinners to reform.<sup>1079</sup> As regards contemporary prophets, József Gagyi and Ferenc Pozsony report how preachers proclaiming messianic, millenarist beliefs emerged amidst the 1949 crisis of the Székelyföld communities, the persecution of the Catholic church and its bishops by the state and later during the economic and public crises of the Ceaușescu era. Researchers watched how under their very eyes these predominantly female prophets began to operate, following the traditional patterns of holy seers, mediating heavenly messages and preaching about the end of the world and the coming reign of evil to the people who gathered in secret at these sacred spots. József Gagyi collected data from newspapers and journals about such prophets and prophecies from 17 villages of the Szekler area (in counties Harghita and Covasna, Romania) from the 1940's and 50's.<sup>1080</sup> The most famous prophetess was Ágnes Ilonka from Máréfalva whose cult has only recently been revived, decades after her death, focused around the holy rock where she used to preach. News about her started spreading in early February 1949. She had received her vocation in a state of trance in the form of a divine inspiration and the same is true of her later visions. She preached about the future of humanity, inspired by a heavenly command from the Virgin Mary. She said '...we are already there at the last point. Any minute there can be earthquakes, lightning... During all this time the Lord Jesus will come and judge us, both the living and the dead...' 'there will be a liberation and a coming of Anti-Christ's'.<sup>1081</sup>

Certain specialists who had previously worked as healers and seers assumed new roles, a new 'heavenly vocation,' thus becoming prophets, holy men or women sermonizing in some natural spot (at a rock or spring) or migrating and performing miracles. Amidst the range of dramatic phenomena, Ilona Jánó, previously discussed holy seer of Moldva gradually assumed the role of lay prophet, similarly to other seers of the region. At first she would herald only floods and earthquakes which served to warn or punish a sinful world. Later she came to include wars and the 1989 Romanian revolution in her repertoire of visions. She 'traveled' mentally to the venue of these political events, this way she could trace without a television, as she says, the events in Bucharest. She also traveled 'in her soul' to France in pursuit of some international affairs. Ceaușescu's fall and execution were also 'reported' to her and she traveled to watch the events. She also witnessed Ceaușescu's punishment in the

<sup>1075</sup> Le Goff 1992, 206, 212. Cohn 1961: 19-70; Hobsbawm 1974??

<sup>1076</sup> Sybilla és Johannita jóslatok magyarázata és irod. HDA

<sup>1077</sup> Valtchinova 1910 (V-kötetben)

<sup>1078</sup> Naumescu V-kötetben?

<sup>1079</sup> The most important items from the rich literature of Hungarian prophets in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries are Molnár – Szigeti 1984; Harsányi 1985; Molnár 1998; Voigt 1998, 1999; Szigeti 2006.

<sup>1080</sup> Pozsony 1998, Gagyi 2004.

<sup>1081</sup> Gagyi 1998: 21–38.

other world, watching him carry sacks of flour from the mills of hell without end.<sup>1082</sup> Her guardian angel also announced to her the 'American towers' (9/11) but she overslept on the morning when she was supposed to pray for the third time to prevent the disaster.

Occasional instances of people adopting such a universal communal role were not unknown in the past, either. The documentation of 18<sup>th</sup>-century witchcraft trials allows one to track how *táltos* women, normally occupied with the daily affairs of witchcraft, aversion of bewitchment cases or treasure seeking, would take on the role of war prophets in times of conflict, voicing Sybilline prophecies about the impending doom of their towns.<sup>1083</sup>

The sermons given by these people represented a characteristic apocalyptic eschatology; they prophesied the end of the world, the Second Coming, the coming of equality, and the fair punishment of sinners at the last judgement.<sup>1084</sup> As József Gagyí emphasises, these eschatological prophecies present the disasters as a universal punishment and as such offer an excellent interpretational frame for processing and understanding the crises.<sup>1085</sup> Nuclear or terrorist threat is also often talked of in these frames. Probably owing to globalised media influences, apocalyptic visions of Ilona Jánó also came to include all of this. She believed that world wars, terrorism and the nuclear bomb had been and will continue to act as punishment in a sinful world – she envisioned an even greater war for the future and also an end-of-the-world darkness lasting for three days as encountered in Sybilla prophecies. Such Sybilla prophecies circulated all over Transylvania as 'Mary's messages' in a chapbook version which remains popular to this day in the Szekler and Gyimes areas.<sup>1086</sup>

A person does not need to command visionary techniques in order to act in the role of prophet. Nevertheless, once we get to a closer knowledge of the circumstances of well-known past personalities or present day prophets, we find that visions and direct communication with heaven are constantly present as a real or symbolic part of their activity and an important inspiring and legitimizing factor, almost in the same way as we have been accustomed to see the same in the case of seers who act as pastoral leaders of their closest community. This is all the more true since, at least in the present, the holy seers of local communities were usually the persons to stand at the head of mass movements as prophets. They follow the same traditions in constituting their identity as holy seers and their community also follows the same pattern in creating the mythical figure of their own prophet. This means that their mythology also assumes the traditional characteristics of holy seers such as birth traits or the motifs of heavenly initiation. Even if there is evidence that a prophet does *not* have real visions, they still use in their texts and perhaps even in their practice of sacral communication the traditional language of visions and the toposes of heavenly journeys which, it seems, are known to all social strata and form part of public parlance and are also disseminated in writing. This means that in the case of these two types of seers we are talking not about radically different but about more or less fused categories of holy persons.

Be that as it may, the existence and activity of prophets also proves the tough resistance and vitality of the European Christian cult of visions that has been prevalent in its traditions continually since the Middle Ages.

## SHRINES

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<sup>1082</sup> Vő. ...monda

<sup>1083</sup> debreceni jós-táltosok adatai!

<sup>1084</sup> Gagyí 2004.

<sup>1085</sup> Gagyí 1998: 101–124; 2004.

<sup>1086</sup> Gyimes/Ghymes area: three villages – including the above mentioned Gyimesközéplek (Lunca de Jos) – with Roman Catholic and Hungarian majority in Counties Harghita and Bacău, Romania.

Christian shrines of the modern era are the engines that generate and sustain the operation of individual and collective visions, venues where the activity of such individual and collective seers becomes condensed. A pilgrimage, explains Sigal, is the believer's journey to a spot sanctified by divine manifestation or the activity of one of the great figures of the religion.<sup>1087</sup> The desire to have direct encounter with the deity is the thread which runs through all the varied and temporally shifting motivations of the individuals and mass processions heading toward the shrine (atonement, penance, votive oaths, gaining forgiveness for oneself or another person to grant salvation, procuring special favors from the saint, becoming purged, purified, cured, expressing gratitude etc.)<sup>1088</sup>. People long to go to the place where Christ or the Virgin Mary appears to them. To quote the Turners, one of the pilgrim's central motivations is to access 'the feeling that a saint's shrine has a sort of „hot line” to the Almighty'.<sup>1089</sup> As Zimdars-Swartz emphasized,<sup>1090</sup> gaining indulgence is only possible by visiting a shrine endorsed by the pope, but even so, tens of thousands of people flood to shrines unrecognized by the church such as Medjugorje, Garabandal, Marpingen or, most recently, Szökefalva.<sup>1091</sup> Our own field experience also shows that the chief attraction of latter-day Mary shrines consists in the visions of Mary, in other words the chance of meeting the Virgin Mary in person. Even if unable to meet her personally, the pilgrims hope to partake of the blessing of direct sacral communication through the chosen seer of the sacred place. During research at the nascent shrine of Szökefalva we often heard people, even in villages several hundred kilometers removed, saying 'it is said that the Virgin Mary appeared at Szökefalva' and they invariably go on to conclude, 'I'll go see her myself one day'.

It is commonly known that in the earliest period pilgrimages used to be focused on the direct bodily relics of the deities and saints. As the centuries passed, likenesses increasingly came to play the part of representing the saints living on in the other world (contrary to relics, images and sculptures can be replicated without limitation). 'Representing' is not exactly the best term, since according to an archaic but still prevailing view concerning images, these are not merely a *likeness* of the saint but are in a certain sense a local *manifestation* which is present simultaneously in heaven and on earth, alternately it is an object in which the saint dwells permanently, as we mentioned above, in connection with incubation rites. If a person makes a pilgrimage to the relic or the image, he or she stands a chance of meeting the saint in person; anyone who touches them can win their direct blessing. *Visions* give rise to a different type of direct encounter, but the essence is the same – an occasion to touch the sacred and hold direct communication with it. These two aspects of sacral communication are referential not to the duality of the spiritual versus the bodily/objective, or of the heavenly and the earthly, but, quite the contrary, to the diffuse connections or the fusion between body – soul, this world – other world; spiritual – physical or, if you like, objective and subjective. In this archaic context, different forms of communication practiced at various shrines seem to be of equal standing with each other; they can occur together or separately, and one can provoke or strengthen the other. Thus, for instance, 'sleeping in' within the direct physical proximity of the relic provokes the appearance of the saint in a dream (as we have seen above in the context of incubation dreams), or touching the devotional sculpture can be of as much help to the pilgrim hoping for recovery as the vision of Mary seen in the temple of the shrine, while the combination of the two can be even more effective in the eyes of the people visiting the shrine in the hope of miraculous recovery or spiritual comfort. Seeing the heavenly Virgin Mary in a dream or a daytime reality of a devotional image of Mary are, even in the eyes of latter-day believers, both *the* real Virgin Mary promising help or recovery. Components of the

<sup>1087</sup> Sigal

<sup>1088</sup> Finucane 40-53, Sigal, Dubish 117, stb.

<sup>1089</sup> Turner,,,

<sup>1090</sup> Zimdarts-Swartz???

<sup>1091</sup> Medjugorje, Marpingen, Garabandal, Szökefalva Földr. adatok, év, bibl.

vision cult at these shrines includes the seers, the lay audiences expecting the ‘visions’ (pilgrims visiting the shrine) and their occasional individual or mass scale visions. These elements have been present in different variants throughout the nearly 1500-year-long history of the Christian shrine. Visions of the professional and the layman, the individual seer and the masses are often simultaneous phenomena existing and operating in parallel. At other times they alternate (e.g. there have been several cases when in the first period of emergence an individual or professional seer acted as mediator, then in the second stage of the shrine when it was becoming legitimized and assumed a routine character, the original visionary activity discontinued but the crowds of visiting pilgrims continued or recommenced the experience of miraculous phenomena).

In our age visions have become public currency, they spread fast and are becoming uniform throughout Europe.<sup>1092</sup> In a characteristic trend, shrines themselves are also increasing in number – more and more often we hear of ‘founding visions’ which then trigger the customary process of ‘nascent shrine’. Hearing news of the wondrous event, growing masses of pilgrims visit the place in question. Some of them fade away after a short boom, but by the time that happens, a new one springs up in its place. Latter-day shrines, the history of which is usually said to have begun with the visions of La Salette in 1846,<sup>1093</sup> have two more characteristics which appear to be the result of new development. One is the distinguished role of seers in the emergence and later development of the shrine, particularly in the first, non-routine phase, to use the Turners’ terminology.<sup>1094</sup> The visionary functions as a mediator between the believers who are anticipating miracles and visions and the deity, usually transmitting the heavenly messages verbally. The other modern phenomenon is that lay, ‘non-professional’ seers join the visionaries in a similar role. In certain cases visions assume an almost mass scale, there are more and more lay persons who can ‘see’, and vision epidemics often occur, as we have mentioned before, in the vicinity of one of the holy places. This is what happened in 1931 at Esquioga, a Basque place studied by William Christian; or at Oliveto Citra in 1985, where hundreds of people reported having visions of Mary.<sup>1095</sup>

Many researchers attribute the increase in the number of Mary shrines to a general upsurge in crises of public and political affairs. They seem to be surmising some sort of a social, political, public or even foreign political crisis or war in the background to the emergence of almost all shrines to Mary. Originally a form of individual sacral communication, visions have now become a phenomenon of broader social, public and political relevance. As Edith Turner put it, the Virgin Mary comes to help out in matters economic and political.<sup>1096</sup> Besides Marpingen, Oliveto Citra, or the mass visions of Esquioga we might also refer to the Central and Eastern European shrines functioning in illegality in the Ukraine, Transylvania or Hungary.<sup>1097</sup> In the background of the series of visions on which the Medjugorje shrine was founded, for instance, one could discern all along the social and political tensions which persist to this day, the hostilities between Serbians, Croatians and Bosnians, between Catholics and the Orthodox, the remnants of war or the problems around ethnic and religious identity.<sup>1098</sup>

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<sup>1092</sup> This is revealed in ZS’s book summarizing and comparing visions of Mary in the modern period. (ZS 12-19; for more on this, see: Claverie: Medjugorje)

<sup>1093</sup> For a summary on the most important visions of Mary in the modern period see e.g.

Zimdars- -Swartz (La Salette után: Lourdes 1856,,,, stb. felsorolni évszámmal)

<sup>1094</sup> Turner–Turner: alakulás két fázisa

<sup>1095</sup> For a detailed report of the events at Oliveto Citra from the location itself and an analysis of the world of mass visions we have Paolo Apolito to thank. (Apolito 1993).

<sup>1096</sup> E. Turner 1982.

<sup>1097</sup> Markus 1989a, Bociurkiw 1993, Mód-Simon (Radamos), .....(Csíksomlyó)

<sup>1098</sup> Markle–McCrea 1994, Valtchinova 393.

We have no reason to believe that visions at mediaeval or early modern European shrines did not manifest the same kind of versatility. Records, however, are very meager on this head – incubation and the related miraculous recoveries in sleep constitute practically the only theme which is relatively well documented. We are slightly better off regarding modern age pilgrimages - these have been researched by many scholars, even from the point of view of vision phenomena. The results of these explorations, and the most recent field work of Hungarian researchers allow us to offer a brief outline of the tendencies at work and the functioning and development of visions at modern shrines. Even in this brief survey we can take a look at a few important European shrines which clearly illustrate some crucial questions. For this we refer to the shrines known from our own field work. Besides traits which appear as mostly universal within Western Christianity, we can also point out certain individual developmental paths tied in with local characteristics.

Christian shrines founded in the modern period are almost exclusively related to the cult of Mary which has been powerful ever since the Baroque and has only grown even more powerful recently. The emergence of these shrines is usually connected with an image (picture or sculpture) of Mary and a ‘founding’ vision also figuring Mary. Naturally, the later appearances and visions were also centered around the Virgin Mary. Just like the person of the holy seer, the emergence of the shrines themselves also betrays a striving to mythologize. They, too, are surrounded by legend formation based on the folklore which circulates both in the oral tradition and in the popular products of the press. These mythological emergence narratives also focus on the miraculous images and sculptures of the shrines. These play the main role even in the origin myths of shrines founded in the early modern period, e.g. Csíksomlyó which had won papal privileges in 1444. Its devotional sculpture was miraculously rescued, according to one of the origin myths, from the Turkish and Tatar invasions of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In many Roman and Greek Catholic churches of Central and Eastern Europe the central object of pilgrimages is a likeness of Mary which has been seen to shed tears or to perspire.<sup>1099</sup> Other, Western European, visual miracles refer to portraits or statues that have been reported to move.

Instances featuring images are far outnumbered, however, by shrines founded upon visions which are characteristic of the modern age. This fact is clearly related to the expansion and intensification of vision culture in the modern period. Later mythologizing comes to play an important part in the context of founding visions, too. Narratives which become common currency usually refer to a shrine, identified in a vision, which is supposed to have been founded by the visionary himself or herself. According to a very common narrative type, the Virgin Mary reveals to a person, in a dream, the location of a miraculous water spring. This leads on to people setting off to go and find the spring<sup>1100</sup>, next a succession of miraculous recoveries begins and this leads us from the world of legend to that of reality – a shrine is established around the medical spring. The “founder” of such a place becomes a holy person who may be recognized, after a lengthy legitimization process, by the official clerical establishment or not, but in any case will play an important role as a seer in the community surrounding the holy place. Below we quote from the founding vision of a much frequented Northern Hungarian shrine, Hasznos (Nógrád County), described by the seer Klára Csépe herself in her notes. The retrospective myth formation is as evident, this time affecting herself, as is the self-justifying and legitimizing role of the founding vision.

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<sup>1099</sup> E. g. Máriapócs, the famous Greek Catholic shrine in Eastern Hungary or the shrine of Fűzesmikola, Transylvania, shared by Orthodox and Roman Catholic believers are famous for their miraculous pictures. (Barna 2001; Jung)

<sup>1100</sup> For all Hungarian and Transylvanian shrines founded in the 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century the founding vision has been recorded and is related in practically identical form to a remedial water spring. See e.g. Keszeg–Peti–Pócs.

On the day before the Visitation of Our Lady we had been out harvesting and at 11 o'clock at night I was sitting at the table. I was praying the angelus and as I said it for the third time, a landscape appeared in front of my eyes which showed a little spring at the bottom of a hill. The Virgin Mother was in a pink dress and said, 'This is a healing spring.' I told my husband about the vision and on July 8, 1947, we set out to find the location I had been shown. During the journey I completed three rosaries and indeed I found the spring. I recognised what I had seen. I was overcome by a great joy. I cried and prayed the angelus three times. The spring, the surroundings, the trees, the entire landscape agreed with the vision. ... Then I asked the Virgin Mother that if it is truly a healing well she should show it to me somehow and make it apparent. After Mary Magdalene I fell into an unconscious state. In my soul I was there by the healing spring. I saw a snake as thick as a man's waist... (Copied by Mrs. András Berényi)

Putting legend to one side, in reality the founding of shrines is rarely associated with professional seers who function as specialists. The 'first' seers of new shrines are typically lay persons – poor people coming from the peripheries of society, shepherds who do not fully belong to the village community, or children. This is in line with the overall tendency of the activity of Christian seers going *against* the clerical establishment or at least striving to bypass it, staying on the periphery of institutional religion. The first seer, in other words the initiator of the visions, was a child or a group of children in La Salette, 1846; in Lourdes 1858; in Fatima, 1917, in Medjugorje in 1981 and finally also in Oliveto Citra in 1985.<sup>1101</sup> In Hungary, all known new shrines are associated with the visions of poor and marginalized persons, such as shepherdesses, starting from the visions experienced near the farmsteads around Széged<sup>1102</sup> all the way to the shrine which began to emerge in this century at Szőkefalva. At the latter place, in Maros county, Transylvania, we were able to gain field experience of the activity of a seer and the process how through a succession of occasions the visions at a vision-based shrine become gradually consolidated and routine.<sup>1103</sup> In a village where the population belongs to three different nationalities and follows five different denominations, a blind Gypsy woman called Rózsika Marián mediated the messages of the Virgin Mary to pilgrims of various nationalities and faiths through nine years (until her death following a serious illness).

As we have said, it is quite commonly observed that pilgrims who flood the new shrines tend to experience apparitions of the Virgin Mary similar to those of the 'main' or first seer(s), or, alternately, they align their own experiences to the perceptions or interpretations of the latter. Visions of the modern period easily reached a mass scale by being recorded and disseminated in writing. These messages always include the promise of continued visions, including an announcement of the place and time when Mary is going to appear again. We know from our own field experience how eagerly the groups of pilgrims prepare themselves in Gyimes, several hundred kilometers away, to visit the shrine, and how they look forward to the appearance of the Virgin Mary at the appointed hour.

We are convinced, and this is supported by William Christian and Paolo Apolito's detailed studies<sup>1104</sup>, that there are very different types of seers ranging from more autonomous, independent personalities who have their own visions, whom Apolito calls strong seers, all the way to *weak* seers<sup>1105</sup> who are uncertain about their own vision experiences and require

<sup>1101</sup> La Salette: ZS 27-43, Fatima: ZS 67-100--, OC: 24.... Medjugorje: Claverie...

<sup>1102</sup> Szegedi tanyák

<sup>1103</sup> Pócs 2008.

<sup>1104</sup> Christian managed to process a very rich array or archive and other written source material (letters, etc.) to study the 'vision epidemic' at Ezquioga. Apolito was present at the events of Oliveto Citra and interviewed numerous seers and other witnesses. (Christian,,, Apolito....)

<sup>1105</sup> Apolito: erős-gyenge

interpretation by others. Our own field experience has also shown that there are people who really do ‘see’ and there are others just caught up by the dynamism of mass suggestion who simply imagine that they are seeing or at least try to see what there is to be seen. The psychobiological background of the visions of seers, and the possible related genuine vision experiences are mainly known from the field experience of the previously mentioned researchers. William Christian relied on 400 written and photographic data items to establish the patterns and general model of seers in Ezquioga, ‘how to have visions and what kinds of things to see’.<sup>1106</sup> His documentation contains data on instances of genuine and pretended, deeper and more superficial, trance, just as on visions and fantasies experienced awake or in a half dizzy state. Forms of behaviour, gesticulation and eye movements connected with trance can also have been controlled, suggested or pretended. Christian takes account of the factors that induce visions (such as waiting or defining and knowing the time of the vision in advance, or the monotonous repetition of the rosary), as well as of the role of emulation. All of this seems generally valid also as regards mass scale visits to shrines. Besides data by others<sup>1107</sup> my own field experience also confirms the varied multiplicity of ‘genuine’ and learnt, pretended trance and visions and converge with what we established above in connection with individual seers. Besides the experiences of the ‘chief’ seer, specialist visions of lay seers also emerge at the shrine. At other places the believers hold conversations with Mary through the seer as a public medium, or send her messages or objects to bless. At other times, through the seer, they receive letters and messages from Mary.<sup>1108</sup> As regards the experiences of those doing research at Szőkefalva, pilgrims here ‘merely’ listened to the messages of Mary mediated by the seer. It was not so much with the Virgin Mary but the seer they wanted to come in direct contact with, by touching the medium of bliss, cure and strength. After Rózsika’s death this was replaced by touching the image.

The visions documented Christian agree in terms of content, visuals, with the general experiences and the previously explored vision experiences of individual seers. Of all the heavenly beings, as we mentioned, the seers primarily ‘see’ the Virgin Mary either smiling or crying, happy or sad, and in terms of costume and poise she usually displays the traits seen on commonly known devotional images and statues. *Christ* and the *devils* are also depicted, the latter using elements of devil iconography popular in modern Europe, such as hooves, tails, horns and a pitchfork, sometimes complemented with other local folklore traits. *Soul journeys* to heaven, hell or purgatory, scenes with *the holy family*, *heavenly battles* and the *fight between the devil and angels* are as likely to form part of the vision culture of shrines as they were to occur with individual seers. There are reports from several shrines stating that certain seers experience the sufferings of Christ, other informants speak about *stigmas* and other signs of *imitatio Christi*.<sup>1109</sup>

Seers are never single-handedly responsible for interpreting their visions. Besides the seer or seers, the entire lay community make their contribution since, consciously or unconsciously, seers aim to meet the expectations of the pilgrims. The general experience distilled from researching Christian shrines is that visions turn into apparitions of Mary *as a result of a co-creative process involving the seer and the believers*, in a work of collective interpretation. The most detailed account of this process of vision construction, the formation of what the author calls a *collective narrative* is offered by Paolo Apolito’s description of his field experience in Oliveto Citra.<sup>1110</sup> It can easily be traced in the history of all shrines the emergence of which has been sufficiently well documented how the figure of the Virgin Mary

<sup>1106</sup> Christian...

<sup>1107</sup> Cf. Apolito 74-100

<sup>1108</sup> Christian 29-37, 273–296;

<sup>1109</sup> Cristian .... Apolito 185-202. Szőkefalva: Peti, Pócs

<sup>1110</sup> OC 100 körül, 228-234, stb.; ZS 67—100--- (Fatima – Lucia) Claverie (Megdjugorje)

‘emerges’ at a point of the open natural environment (on a rock, among the trees, in a cave) from the sight of a bright light, a pink cloud, a ‘fair woman’ etc. In La Salette, for instance, the shepherd boys first saw a woman in a white robe with curly hair, smiling,<sup>1111</sup> others saw vague lights before anything else. No one knows exactly what were the vision experiences of Rózsika Marián, founder of the shrine, but this case also allows us to trace the emergence of her visions from the first appearance of the Virgin Mary in mere light and sounds, all the way to the haloed figure dressed in blue with a crown on her head which appears in the routine visions of the later stage. As the seer herself described it to Lehet Peti,

And then came December 8<sup>th</sup>, 11 o’clock at night, as the Virgin Mother had said, but by that time she appeared clad in light, a great light, an oval shape put together from lots and lots of stars and in the middle of it the statue, the Virgin Mary’s statue, with her hands folded. The statue is about 70-75 cm tall. This is how she always appeared. She was clad in white, rosary in her hand, her hands folded for prayer, and a great crown which consisted of 12 stars. Over her head there was a very large star which shone its light on her. And this is how the conversation with the Virgin Mary began.<sup>1112</sup>

The Virgin Mary who appears in the visions is not a mere image – for seers and pilgrims she is living reality who talks to them and sends ‘messages’. Wherever the emergence of the shrine is accompanied by the activity of a *strong seer* as one of the co-ordinators of events, the identity and self-legitimization of the seer also becomes established in parallel with the likeness of Mary. This is what we experienced at Szőkefalva. Rózsika Marian’s conscious efforts were also directed at gradually assuming the role of the ‘holy seer of the shrine’. Alongside the ability and practice of seeing, Rózsika, following the well-known models, gradually took on the role of the living saint who mediates for the people. In her heavenly visions she was given the gift of healing and went on to heal pilgrims and practiced the laying on of hands and, occasionally, even exorcism. The water in the well in her courtyard has gained healing potential, again, through a heavenly vision, and is distributed by the village priest, among others. She gives advice on the pious life (prescribes prayers and fasts) and offers counselling in family crises. In all of this, inner inspiration played as much of a part as the ambition to follow well-known models. The identity of a living saint entails incorporating some motifs of the local folklore into her mythology, but models from internationally famous shrines, visions and holy seers are also highly relevant.<sup>1113</sup>

We need to consider visions of the shrines as more than just the co-creation of the community and the seers. As a third party, the regulatory role of the official church usually also contributes to its formation. As Christian has pointed out in his research at Ezquioga, the emergence of the ‘vision epidemic’ there was a common procedure of trial and error during which the local elites, the press and the general public selected and rewarded certain vision messages. (Apolito experienced something very similar in the context of the events at Oliveto Citra.)<sup>1114</sup> This way we are also talking about a selection process, not merely through the seers themselves, which acts through the clergy’s attitude – acknowledging or not, accepting or not, possibly encouraging or prohibiting. This is in line with the generally ambivalent behavior of the churches regarding the culture of visions: not recognizing and not taking cognizance were soon replaced, in the case of most shrines, by a tendency to try and domesticate these phenomena of imagistic religiosity. After all, once a new shrine has been established

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<sup>1111</sup> ZS 62, Christian....

<sup>1112</sup> Peti 2012.

<sup>1113</sup> For a detailed analysis of these processes see: Pócs 2008; 2010; Peti .... Györfy

<sup>1114</sup> Christ 96, 2-8; and elsewhere, at several points of his book ... Apolito 116-125, At Medjugorje: ... Fatima: ZS 70-90 körül La Salette (1846): ZS 27-43... OC 50 . ZS 190-245,–

independently of or even in opposition to the clerical establishment, the vested interest of the church is to lay its hands on it, take over control from the seer and the spontaneous masses and canalize events in a direction acceptable for the establishment. After a certain turning point, which was brought along by recognizing their own interests, the churches usually did a great deal to get the highest clerical authorities to procure recognition and endorsement from the pope – a slow and often futile process. (In the period beginning in 1830, 6 shrines to Mary were officially recognized as authentic. The most important Catholic shrines of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, such internationally significant places as Medjugorje, have not been acknowledged and might never come to be so.)

The most important criterion for official clerical recognition is the authenticity of the visions. The church does everything in its power to filter out visions which cannot be authenticated, e.g. because they were ‘learnt’ from the local oral tradition and appear suspiciously ‘folkloristic’. The most important means for this, besides building relationships with the seers, engaging in dialogue with them and ordering committees to conduct investigations, is to write down, print and disseminate the visions at the shrine and beyond it. This entails that the official version overlays the *vision narrative* shaped by the seers and their audience and the latter become involved in the international circulation which now goes beyond mere church festival print-offs and clerical publications but becomes circulated and turns increasingly uniform through the internet. The church’s activity in creating official versions to the visions reaches its peak in the context of *Mary’s messages*, which join the wider stream of apocalyptic prophecies by the prophets transmitted by oral tradition ever since the Middle Ages. The first such messages emerged in La Salette in 1846 containing certain motifs<sup>1115</sup> of Sybille prophecies mentioned in the context of prophetic movements, speaking about the period before ‘the end of time’, priests who live a wicked life, or the coming of the anti-Christ. By being placed in the mouth of Mary, they gained a special emphasis as opposing the clerical elite. Below is an example – a message from the Szőkefalva shrine, *verbatim*, as it was spoken by the seer during the *apparition* of December 11<sup>th</sup> 2004 and printed and disseminated by the local church.

- My dear children, thank you for hearing my call through this daughter of mine.
- My dear children, I have asked you many times to pray. I ask you again to pray. Pray for my intention. I ask you and my holy son is also asking you
- to pray
- to keep vigil
- to practice love.
- Love each other my dear children! I have come to you to guide you to my holy son, but you can only get there through love. My dear children, during the time of advent you should practice even more love and forgiveness and love your enemies. Love and forgive! I shall come to you again on 10<sup>th</sup> March next year, in the same hour.<sup>1116</sup>

It is fair to assume that by interfering with Mary’s messages the priesthood was trying to re-channel the anti-priest sentiments of popular ideology toward the whole sinful world. Methods for manipulating the messages from above include what are called *the secrets*, uncovering which always required the direction and approval of the church. Related manipulated political messages have been widely known ever since the emergence of the

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<sup>1115</sup> The tradition of Sybilla prophecies, spread in written forms, in sermons and later in chapbooks, has been known in Europe since the Middle Ages. similar prophecies have also been heard of in the oral tradition of several point in Transylvania and Hungary. On the shared European tradition from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards see Edsman (1973: 66–104); regarding the same in Hungary from the early modern period onwards: Voigt (1996. 11–31).

<sup>1116</sup> Györfy

shrine at La Salette.<sup>1117</sup> At Szőkefalva, in 2005 ‘the Virgin Mary permitted’ disclosure of four of the Szőkefalva secrets. The fifth secret, only divulged later, ran as follows,

The time will come when the Church is going to be weighed. The time will come when the priests will go astray. They will find a way which leads to their undoing. The time when all seems to collapse will be when the church finally triumphs, because a pope named Peter will come and lead the church to the road to triumph.<sup>1118</sup>

In the process of the emergence of new shrines the visions of the seers usually became collective property, often assuming a mass scale, and quite frequently the believers themselves also experienced visions similar to those of the first seers or at least had the chance to hear Mary’s messages aimed at the entire community. A phenomenon recorded at the emergence of practically all new shrines to Mary is that at the same time the entire community also partakes of a kind of vision experience which is easily and spontaneously perceived without any bio-psychological pre-requisites – this is the *miracle of the sun*. Visions of the sun, such as seeing the Virgin Mary or other symbols and miraculous signs inside the sun, have been a common trait of latter-day shrines ever since the emergence of Fatima. This has certain folkloristic roots, as has been pointed out by Apolito in the context of the sun visions around the shrine of Oliveto Citra.<sup>1119</sup> In the past, Europe’s rural population often used to ‘see’ such heavenly signs,<sup>1120</sup> in various forms, at times such as Eastern or Whitsun. Such traditions are alive at several old, legitimized shrines, such as Csíksomlyó, Transylvania, at the time of the great church procession at Whitsun.

This way, visions of the sun may be considered as something that feeds the need of the broader mass of pilgrims for visions. Even if visions of Mary experienced by the seer(s) of the shrine are not accessible to all people (or if such activity by the seer has actually ceased), in the sun everyone wants to, and is thus ‘able to’ see something.

‘...Some see this and some see that – everyone sees something according to their faith’, as a pilgrim at the Szőkefalva shrine said to Eszter Györfy in 2010. On the other hand, the signs visible in the sun can play the role of ‘heavenly sign’ or ‘message’ even for the worldly tourist/pilgrim. The local churches, as we experienced at Szőkefalva, do actually take advantage of these easily accessible means of persuading ‘the faithless’. Visions of the sun and their interpretations have followed the same scheme ever since Fatima and Medjugorje, as the common treasure of the broadest community of pilgrims, following the regularities of transmission shown by folklore texts. Below we include two typical accounts about the vision of the sun from Eszter Györfy’s collection who, together with Lehel Peti, has studied the question in great detail among the pilgrims of Szőkefalva.<sup>1121</sup>

O, everybody watched it, out in the courtyard, the miracle of the sun. When you can look into it, you can do that in Medjugorje, too. You just look right into it and the middle of it is like a white wafer and the rays of the sun revolve round and round.<sup>1122</sup>

... here I saw it several times [...] after the public apparition, for about quarter of an hour or half an hour the sun first walked horizontally to and fro, and then vertically up and down again, I saw it for at least quarter of an hour in all sorts of colors. [...] There

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<sup>1117</sup> Kürti 1998: 174–190. Titkokról: ...

<sup>1118</sup> Györfy

<sup>1119</sup> Apolito 90–91.

<sup>1120</sup> Nap-látomások magyar és német folklór-adatai

<sup>1121</sup> ...

<sup>1122</sup> Györfy.....

were people who said that the Lord Jesus was on the Virgin Mary's arm and that was what they saw. Others said they saw the Holy Sacrament.<sup>1123</sup>

The ritual frames around the visions begin to take shape right from the first moment, even at shrines which start to emerge in the most spontaneous way possible. Time becomes structured at the sacred spot. The dates and times of the visions become fixed and repeated, para-liturgical rituals emerge around the seer at repetitive points in time. These processes have been noted at several nascent shrines in Hungary. The holy woman of Karancshegy, Northern Hungary, got repeated calls soon after her first, founding visions to start healing people by medical herbs – something she has been doing ever since. Later she was called upon to build a chapel and to carry out certain rituals. At repeated festive occasions held on the same date, her supporters act out Mary's death, burial and ascension.<sup>1124</sup> These ceremonies are in this case the ritual representations of the seer's *imitatio Christi* experiences, collective rituals which may in turn induce further visions.

The clergy's efforts to legitimize and absorb these phenomena usually go hand in hand with the emergence of new ritual formations. The local church also consciously creates such occasions and strives to gain increasing control over them. The same processes may be traced at Szőkefalva. At first, the Virgin Mary used the private visions of the seer (pro domo visions, as it were), to dictate the major steps of the establishment of the shrine, the emergence of new, ritualized formations. The devotional image was also painted following to the 'heavenly instructions' mediated by Rózsika Marián. New rituals (such as *Christian piety* or the *adoration of the sacrament*) were first practiced at the venue itself on the days of the visions, then, after the visions ceased, they were repeated on the date of the vision in the form of memorial rites. An important stage in the efforts of the church to absorb the visionary phenomena was when the scene of the visions was shifted from the home of seer Rózsika Marián to the church garden. A marquee was erected for the duration of the visions where local priests of the Roman and Greek Catholic church served masses (and took confessions in the church garden), on the mornings when vision were announced to occur. At Szőkefalva several churches claimed the visions of Rózsika Marián and tried to expropriate the phenomenon. The struggle finally ended with the victory of the Roman Catholics as against their main rival, the Greek Catholics. Ritualizing and legitimizing also entailed and led to assuming contact with other shrines within an international network. This in turn brings about the globalization of the miracles, visions and local vision narratives of European shrines. Even as far back as the Mediaeval records of incubation dreams recorded in Hungary we may note the similarity between the dream and visions narratives disseminated at collective pilgrimages through oral transmission and later through pious readings and occasional publications at church processions.<sup>1125</sup> Similar instances are often encountered at latter-day shrines, too. For instance, fliers about the miraculous events which took place at La Salette in 1846 spread fast and played an important role in the early stage of the emergence of the shrine at Lourdes. Hearing about the miraculous water spring at La Salette played a part in Bernadette Soubirous finding a spring of thermal water (the visions of Mary experienced by this young girl in 1856 brought about the emergence of the shrine).<sup>1126</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century these processes became accelerated. In Hungary, for instance, János Manga draws attention to similar traits in the visions at Hasznos in 1940 and Mátraverebély<sup>1127</sup> shortly afterwards (finding a thermal spring was the object of the 'founding vision' at both locations). Throughout the 1940's, accounts of the typical founding visions of shrines from

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<sup>1123</sup> Györfy...

<sup>1124</sup> Hetény 2006, 58-63

<sup>1125</sup> For more on this see, e.g. Moreira 2000, 131.

<sup>1126</sup> ZS 57-59

<sup>1127</sup> Both are unofficial shrines founded in the 1940's in Nógrád Country, Northern Hungary.

the 20th century were disseminated at all venues of church festivals, associated with ever newer shrines. (The two most typical being finding a water spring following the prompting of a dream and a fruit tree blossoming in the winter.)<sup>1128</sup> William Christian has also drawn some important conclusions regarding the role of memories stored in the collective memory of the community, as well as of sermons and written accounts of old and more recent vision miracles of other shrines. Zimdars-Swartz quotes a number of most illustrative examples from all parts of the world and talks about the increasing trend of 'visions' of moving sculptures at 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish shrines. Miracles of shrines which spread in both written and oral forms, also constitute important points of reference and a basis for the legitimization of new shrines. Those that emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and still await recognition (such as San Damiano, San Sebastian de Garabandal, Medjugorje) usually look to the three 'major' recognized instances (La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima) in their quest for recognition. The Basque of Ezquioga also looked to Lourdes as their chief model.<sup>1129</sup> Szőkefalva, too, has entered the international race for recognition. This shrine mostly followed the example of Medjugorje, geographically very close to it, in terms of the content and text of visions and their Mary messages.

The seers themselves also take an active part in shaping the international network of relationships. They contact other seers, keep track of each other's vision and learn from each other. In Hungary we experienced this in the context both of Szőkefalva, and of a new shrine which began to emerge at the beginning of the millennium at Sükösd.<sup>1130</sup>

In our day and age these phenomena seem to occur more and more frequently, the chain becomes ever more extended. The visions of Mary spreading on the internet, or the virtual pilgrimages to pseudo-relics of various web places show how technology helps sacral communication become routine and democratized, as part of the general globalization processes of culture. The multitude of internet commentaries by lay analysts cause the 'real' seers to be perceived as more profane. Common visions emerge for the total Catholic community which are not so much narrative as visual in nature and their emergence no longer has to cope with the language barrier that used to separate and distinguish local narrative types from each other.<sup>1131</sup>

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<sup>1128</sup> Manga 1962

<sup>1129</sup> ZS: 12-19.

<sup>1130</sup> Sükösd is a village in Southern Hungary, Bács-Kiskun County, where a female seer has by now established her alternative congregation and experiences the sufferings of Christ at 'performances' held on the first Friday of every month.

<sup>1131</sup> For more on this see Apolito's book which presents a rich internet-base analysis of the 'technical connection established between heaven and earth'. Apolito 2005.

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