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A Quantitative Approach to Comparative Mythology

PÁDRAIG MAC CARRON AND RALPH KENNA

ABSTRACT. A new, quantitative approach to comparative mythology is introduced using methods developed in theoretical physics. The broad concept of universality has long been relevant to comparative mythology, in a qualitative sense, and it has been claimed that narratives from a variety of cultures may share certain similarities in terms of structure. A notion of universality also lies at the heart of network theory, a relatively new branch of statistical physics with wide applicability. Network theory permits quantitative comparisons of the interconnectedness underlying a multitude of structures relevant to many disciplines, from biology, chemistry and physics to sociology, economics and the computer sciences. Here we apply this theory to comparative mythology and study interrelationships of characters appearing in three iconic epic narratives: Beowulf, the Iliad and the Táin Bó Cúailnge. By comparing these amongst each other, as well as to real, fictitious and random networks, we seek to introduce a new, quantitative approach to the humanities. We show that each of the three epics has, to varying degrees, properties akin to those of real social networks.

KEYWORDS: networks, epics, Beowulf, Iliad, Táin Bó Cúailnge, statistical physics, universality

INTRODUCTION

In statistical mechanics, one studies how the large-scale, macroscopic properties of materials emerge from the interactions of basic components through the laws of physics. As such, it is a discipline which initially appears remote from the humanities in general and from comparative mythology in particular. However, in recent years interdisciplinary approaches have been become popular, especially as physicists turn their attention from fundamental to complex problems.

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Such ventures have led to mutual benefits in the pursuit of new insights, perspectives and knowledge in a variety of fields (see, e.g., Ausburg 2006). Techniques of statistical physics, in particular, have increased quantitative understanding of multitudes of issues, including many of non-physical nature, especially where properties of complex systems emerge from the interactions between component parts in a non-trivial manner. In recent decades, applications of such techniques to social and economic systems have led to the emergence of new sub-disciplines, including sociophysics (Galam 2004) and econophysics (Mantegna and Stanley 2000).

In physics, one often has to deal with systems comprising large numbers of mutually interacting basic components such as the atoms or molecules in a material or fluid. Since it is impracticable to simultaneously track the location and movement of each individual component, physicists have developed a statistical approach (hence the term "statistical physics"). Such a methodology delivers average, global properties of macroscopic systems. Analogously, quantitative approaches to sociology frequently involve statistical investigations of entire societies rather than of the individuals they comprise. In recent decades, the emergent discipline of sociophysics has matured into an established academic area, which offers new perspectives on some aspects of such collective behaviour. Sociophysics is not intended as a replacement for traditional approaches to sociology; although sociophysics may bring a certain degree of mathematical robustness in answering specific questions, it cannot capture all of the broader dimensions of more holistic, traditional, qualitative approaches.

In a similar spirit, here we report an attempt to develop a new, quantitative approach to comparative mythology using network theory (Mac Carron and Kenna 2012). We attempt to bring to the field a new way to capture statistical information about how characters are interconnected in epic narratives. Because these characteristics are recorded through sets of numbers, quantitative comparisons are possible, and these may yield meaningful answers to certain questions. We stress that this approach cannot deliver information on events, emotions, meanings or other qualitative and holistic features which form the focus of traditional studies. The new
approach can therefore at best be complementary to existing techniques and certainly cannot replace them.

Any pioneering application of a new method across disciplinary boundaries may be expected to entail caveats and limitations and these should be obvious in the present instance too. For example, a mathematical approach cannot hope to accurately or completely capture the subtleties of the interactions between characters. Therefore, for the bulk of the analysis presented here, we restrict our attention to whether or not an interaction or relationship between a given pair of characters exists without addressing the intensity of such interactions. Such a "crude" approach is quite common and quite successful, in the physical sciences, where ones and zeros may be used to represent the presence or absence of a given feature. We consider this reasonable as a first approximation. We may attempt to represent the intensity of relationships between individuals by recording how often they interact in the narrative. Although an improvement on our first approximation, this too lacks the subtleties of traditional approaches. However, since our approach is statistical, one may hope that the errors and inaccuracies inherent in this approach do not accumulate, as overestimations in some instances are balanced by underestimations in others. The reliability and accuracy of any statistical analysis is also dependent on the sample size, with smaller samples necessarily leading to less reliable results. Experience suggests that the statistical approach is most suitable if the narratives are extensive, with large numbers of characters and interactions between them.

One also has to be cautious about any attempt to interpret the quantitative outcomes of such an analysis. While we can certainly compare the statistical properties of the networks depicted in such narratives, both to random and real social networks, interpretations regarding the degree of historical reality behind mythological epics can only be speculative. These are obviously tempered by distortive political and religious forces which influenced their construction, as well as by the obvious enormous lapses in time between the creations of the medieval tracts in which they are recorded and the societies they purport to describe. Even the use of modern texts as proxies for, and translations of, the originals, presents another layer between this study and the ancient stories. Thus there are layers of obfuscation
covering the material to be analysed. Nonetheless, speculation based
upon sound scientific analysis is not unreasonable.

The reader should therefore keep in mind that any such analysis
cannot offer proofs – only evidence and comparisons from new
perspectives, which need to be combined with other approaches. With
the above caveats in mind, and fully aware that we can only analyse
the material which has come down to us in the form it has, and that
we can only apply the techniques which we possess, we considered it
worthwhile to examine what modern mathematical network
techniques have to say on the matter on comparative mythology. The
conclusions we draw here and speculations we offer, are "from a
network-theoretic" point of view. A more complete picture would
necessitate expertise from traditional comparative mythology and
other fields (such as archaeology) to inform further. In non-exact
disciplines, it is up to scholars to make informed judgements of their
own. Our purpose is to help inform such judgements from a wholly
new perspective.

This is, of course, not the first application of quantitative
techniques in the humanities. For example, in the early part of the last
century, Meillet (1925) pointed to the primarily statistical nature of
linguistic reconstruction (in this instance in the Indo-European
languages) while, at its end, Colarusso (1998) presented a
probabilistic analysis of comparative techniques in linguistics and
mythology.

For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the mathematical
technology, we begin our exposition with a brief picture of complex
network theory. Then, following a reminder of the texts we seek to
analyse, we report on the network analyses of Beowulf, the Iliad and
the Táin Bó Cúailnge and a quantitative comparison between them. A
more technical presentation, geared towards a mathematics/physics
audience is contained in (Mac Carron and Kenna 2012).

COMPLEX NETWORKS

In recent years, many complexity theorists and statistical physicists
have turned their attention and mathematical expertise to non-
physical complex systems in attempts to understand how their
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Macroscopic properties emerge from relatively simple interactions between component parts at a microscopic level. Applications include studies of complex networks in the natural, technological and social sciences as well as in the humanities. New impetus to network-theoretic, interdisciplinary studies came when similarities were noticed between the structure of an electrical grid, the neural wiring systems of nematode worms and social networks. Using network theory, one can classify and compare these (Watts and Strogatz 1998). The theory has since been extended to multitudes of areas including transport networks (von Ferber et al. 2012), food-webs (Dunne 2004), power grids (Buldyrev et al. 2010), the study of the structure of the internet (Cheswick and Burch 1999), and many more areas. Network theory is now a well-developed and useful tool to describe the interconnectivities of a vast variety of real-world systems (da F. Costa et al. 2007; Albert and Barabási 2001; Newman 2003).

Universality is an important notion in both comparative mythology and in statistical physics. In the former instance, Campbell (1949) maintained that mythological narratives from a variety of cultures share similar fundamental structures, a notion referred to as the monomyth. This is clearly a qualitative notion of universality. A quantitative version of a similar notion is of great importance in statistical physics.

There, the categorisation of different critical phenomena into so-called universality classes is an important theme. Such universality classes have the same or similar essential characteristics and, since these are quantified through numbers, it is relatively straightforward to gain an understanding of how similar or dissimilar different physical systems are. Our objective here is to use network theory to compare the statistics describing the interconnectedness underlying mythological narratives from three different cultures to each other as well as to real and imaginary networks.

A network (see figure 1) is a set or collection of nodes which are interconnected by links (also called edges in the technical literature). A social network is simply a network in which the nodes represent people and the links represent interactions between them (Wasserman and Faust 1994). Over the past years, a set of statistical tools has been developed to quantify various properties of networks. It has been observed that social networks have certain characteristics which
distinguish them from other types of complex networks (Newman and Park 2003). We briefly outline some of the tools used in this type of analysis. The interested reader is referred to Mac Carron and Kenna (2012) and references therein for a greater level of mathematical detail.

Social networks are usually highly connected often referred to as being "small world" (Watts and Strogatz 1998). Connectivity is measured quantitatively in at least two ways. The first measure is the mean path length, the average minimal number of steps linking pairs of individuals in the network. In figure 1 for example, while there are various routes by which individuals G and D may be connected (e.g., G to E to H to D), the shortest has only two steps (namely G to H to D). We say that the path length between G and D is 2 units long. If we then measure the (shortest) path lengths between all other pairs of nodes (e.g. A to B; A to C; ...; G to H), and then take the average of all of the resulting numbers, we obtain the mean path length of the network. This idea of mean path length was famously demonstrated in sociology through the notion of six degrees of separation (Milgram 1967), wherein, despite the world's population of over seven billion,
everyone is, on average, only about six steps away from any other person when links are formed through chains comprising of "a friend of a friend of a friend of...".

Our second measure of connectivity is the clustering coefficient, which captures how cliqued a network is; if an individual knows two others, there is normally a relatively high probability that they are also acquainted. The clustering coefficient tends to be high in social networks compared to other networks. An example of how to calculate the clustering coefficient of an individual node is given in figure 2. The clustering coefficient for the entire network is determined simply by averaging over all nodes. In summary, real social networks tend to be characterised by small path length and a high clustering coefficient.

The degree of a node is simply its number of links. In a social network the degree of a node is the number of acquaintances of that individual. Different individuals in the network have different numbers of acquaintances, so the degree varies from node to node. The degree distribution quantifies the spread of degrees across nodes throughout the entire network and its shape or mathematical form depends upon the type of network under discussion. Figure 3 contains schematic illustrations typifying three types of network. The first is a
random network in the sense that the probability that any two nodes are joined by a link is random. This is very different in appearance to the regular, ordered network of the second figure (called a lattice). The third illustration is of a complex network, and is different to both previous types. Social networks are of this third, complex type. For such networks, the degree distribution tends to follow a so-called \textit{power law} and is often called \textit{scale free} (Amaral et al. 2000). The latter term implies that only a few people tend to form links with a large number of others.

Removal of the most connected nodes from the three networks depicted in figure 3 gives insight into the differences between them. In the random network and the lattice, removal of such a node has little effect – the remaining structure remains intact (connected). In the complex network, however, targeted elimination of the most important nodes quickly causes the network to fragment (become disconnected). However, for all structures depicted, random removal of nodes tends not to have a strong affect on the networks integrity.

In short, then, social networks usually have power-law degree distributions and are scale free. They are robust to random attacks and vulnerable to targeted attacks, and in the latter property they differ from random and regular networks (Albert et al. 2000).

In reality, people tend to have friends who are similar to themselves in the sense that popular people tend to be acquainted with other popular people. Networks in which this property features for most nodes are called \textit{assortative} (Newman 2002). The opposite feature is called \textit{disassortativity}. Figure 4 illustrates small networks with these characteristics. Assortativity is an important property which helps distinguish social networks from other networks. It is
Fig. 4. The network on the left illustrates assortativity because nodes of similar degree tend to be linked to each other. E.g., the three highest-degree nodes are themselves linked. The network on the right, which has the same distribution of nodes, illustrates disassortativity and the three most linked nodes are not intra-connected.

now known that most non-social networks are disassortative (Newman and Park 2003). For our analysis of mythological networks, assortativity will also play a key role. The assortativity properties of a network are studied by comparing the degrees of nodes to the degrees of their neighbours. Assortativity is the tendency for similar nodes to be connected (as in the maxim "birds of a feather flock together") and social networks tend to be assortative, while most other networks tend not to have this property.

In the past decade, many different types of social networks have been studied and many of their properties have been catalogued. Examples of real social networks include those formed by actors appearing in the same movies (Amaral 2000), musicians in Jazz bands (Gleiser and Danon 2003), users of online forums (Kujawski and Abell 2011), scientific co-authors collaborating on research papers (Newman 2001) and directors of companies (Davis et al. 2003). In each of these, a "link" or relationship may have different meanings. For example, Newman (2001) argues that the link between two scientists who collaborate on an academic paper together may be stronger than the link deemed to exist between two actors who appear together on a film set. Notwithstanding these differences, the general
properties of a variety of real-life social networks are by now well established.

The Marvel Universe is the collection of characters which have appeared in Marvel comics throughout the years. The relationships between them form an obvious example of a fictional social network and this has been studied by Alberich et al. (2002) and by Gleiser (2007). In the Marvel network, characters are considered linked if they appear in the same comic book. Unsurprisingly, the analyses showed that although the Marvel Universe does have some aspects of a real social network, it has tell-tale sign of artificiality. In particular, although it is highly connected, it is also highly disassortative – the superheroes are too highly connected to be realistic.

Besides Marvel Comics, there are few analyses of other artificial or fictional networks, and for this reason we also examined a selection. These included Larsson's Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, Rowling's Harry Potter, Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, Shakespeare's Richard III and Hugo's Les Misérables. We certainly do not claim that this limited set of narratives embody all of the features of the network structures of the entire corpus of world fiction. Rather, some of these are chosen because they are examples of clear works of fiction – works involving fabulous characters, which make no attempt to emulate reality. For others, the data were readily available, facilitating a speedy study. We hope that, in the future, other researchers will analyse other works of fiction, so that an extensive list of typical features of fictional social networks will ultimately be built, just as has been achieved for real social networks. We found that each of the admittedly limited number of fictional networks analysed are small world - just like real social networks. However, none of their degree distributions are well described by power laws and they are all disassortative. Moreover, unlike real social networks, the fictional ones are very robust upon targeted removal of the most connected nodes.

This initial research indicates that degree distributions, disassortativity and robustness may be suitable indicators to distinguish some fictional social networks from real ones.
THREE EPIC NARRATIVES

*Beowulf* is an Old English heroic epic, set in Scandinavia, which has survived as a single codex estimated to date from between the 8th and 11th centuries. The story tells of the coming of the Gaetish hero Beowulf to the assistance of Hrothgar, king of the Danes. After slaying two monsters, Beowulf returns to Sweden and becomes king of the Geats. Following another fabulous encounter many years later, he is fatally wounded. Although the poem is embellished with obvious fiction and fantasy, archaeological excavations in Denmark and Sweden offer support for historicity associated with some of the human characters in the tale (Anderson 1999). The character Beowulf himself is, however, mostly believed not to have existed (Klaeber 1950; Chambers 1959). We base our analysis on Heaney's translation (1999).

The *Iliad* is an epic poem attributed to Homer and is dated to the 8th century BC. It takes place during the final year of the Trojan War and tells of a quarrel between Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and leader of the Greeks, and Achilles, their greatest hero. Whether or not it is based upon real events has been much debated (Wood 1998). While some evidence suggests the story may be based on a historical conflict around the 12th century BC, interwoven with elements of fiction (Kraft et al. 2003; Korfmann 2004; Papamarinopoulos et al. 2012), some maintain that the *Iliad* is entirely fictional (Finley 1954). Our analysis is based upon the translation by Rieu (2003).

The *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Cattle Raid of Cooley) is the most well-known epic of Irish mythology. It describes the invasion of Ulster in the north of Ireland by the armies of queen Medb of Connacht in the west and feats and exploits of Cúchulainn, Ireland's most famous hero. Related to the Táin itself are a number of pre-tales and tangential tales (*remscéla*) which give the backgrounds and exploits of the main characters. The Táin survives in three recensions. The first has been reconstructed from partial texts contained in *Lebor na hUidre* (the Book of the Dun Cow, dating from the 11th or 12th century) and *Lebor Buide Lecáin* (the Yellow Book of Lecan, a 14th century manuscript) and other sources. The second, later recension is found in *Lebor Laignech* (the Book of Leinster, a 12th century manuscript formerly known as the *Lebor na Nuachongbála* or Book
A third recension comes from fragments of later manuscripts and is incomplete. Two popular English translations of the Táin (Kinsella 1969; Carson 2007) are mainly based on the first recension, although they each include some passages from the second. While the analysis which we present here is based on the Kinsella version, we also examined Carson's to check that the two translations give similar networks. For the purposes of this analysis then, Kinsella's translation serves as a proxy for what is commonly understood as the Táin Bó Cúailnge.

The Táin was dated by medieval scholars to the first centuries BC, but this may have been an attempt by Christian monks to artificially synchronise oral traditions with biblical and classical history. Of the three narratives we study, the historicity of the Táin is most questioned. O'Rahilly (1946) asserts that it has no historical basis whatsoever. While Jackson (1964) argues that, such narratives corroborate Greek and Roman accounts of the Celts and offer us a "window on the iron age", he states that "the characters Conchobar and Cúchulainn, Ailill and Medb and the rest, and the events of the Cattle Raid of Cooley, are themselves entirely legendary and purely un-historical". On the other hand, Lynn (2003) has claimed some evidence that the landscape reflected in the story may be based on reality.

Network analyses of the three narratives

Instead of using a computer to "read" the texts and generate the networks, we constructed the databases "by hand". We carefully read each of the three narratives and entered each character's name into databases, meticulously listing interactions between them. In an attempt to increase consistency, we separately built the Beowulf network first. Comparing our individual interpretations allowed us to formulate a set of rules for network construction and to satisfy ourselves that this could be done in a reasonably objective manner. Heaney's Beowulf has 165 links linking 74 unique characters; Kinsella's Táin has 1,233 links between 404 characters; and Rieu's version of the Iliad has 2,650 links between 716 characters. Two distinct types of interactions were defined, with links designated as
"friendly" if they know each other, are related to each other, speak to one another, or appear in a small congregation together. If two characters meet in combat, the corresponding links were deemed "hostile". The number of encounters between characters constitutes a "weight". For example, in the Táin, the relationship between the king and queen of Connaught (Ailill and Medb) is more strongly weighted than that between Ailill, for example, and the Ulster hero Cúchulainn.

The friendly network for the Táin is depicted in figure 5. Groups of characters clustering into communities is obvious, reflecting the fact that characters from Ulster more frequently associate in a friendly manner with other characters from Ulster, and similar for Connaught. The opposite occurs for the hostile network (not shown) as the conflict is between the two provinces. This suggests that only in the friendly networks may disassortativity be a potential signal of artificiality.

Each of the three networks has a low average path length and high clustering coefficients relative to random networks of the same size and mean degree. This means that each of them is small world. When the most connected 5% of characters in each epic are removed the
corresponding networks become disconnected. However, if 5% of nodes are removed at random, the networks remain intact. Of the three narratives, only the Iliad turns out to be assortative. Beowulf was found to be mildly disassortative and the Táin very much so. These results indicate that only the social-network properties of the Iliad are similar to those of real social networks. Moreover, its properties are dissimilar to random networks and to the fictitious social networks listed above. This is what one may expect if the Iliad contains a reasonable portrayal of a realistic societal network. As cautioned in the introduction, this certainly does not prove that the Iliad is based on reality. It merely supports the case for historicity (Kraft et al. 2003; Korfmann 2004; Papamarinopoulos et al. 2012).

Beowulf has many of the properties of real social networks, but its disassortativity could be interpreted as a signal of artificiality (Gleiser 2007). However, widespread belief amongst experts is that, while the society in Beowulf may be based on reality, the eponymous character is believed fictitious. To make use of this information we remove the character Beowulf from the network and redo the entire analysis. It turns out that the remaining network is assortative. So the social network depicted in Beowulf (without the character Beowulf) has all of the features which characterise real social networks.

The initial analysis indicates that the Táin Bó Cúailnge is strongly disassortative, a feature which may signal artificiality (Gleiser 2007). With the mathematical and statistical tools at hand, it is relatively easy to investigate wherein this artificiality lies. We ask: does the social network depicted in the Táin appear fictional in its entirety or is its apparent artificiality localised in a few characters, as we found in the Beowulf case? To gain insight into how to answer this question, we first analyse the degree distributions of all three networks. Each is reasonably well described by a power law, which is manifest as a straight line on a double-logarithmic scale, as used in figure 6. (As with many statistical approaches, one cannot expect the data to be perfectly aligned. At best, the fitted curve captures an essence or average feature of the underlying distribution.) In this regard, the narrative societies are quite like real social networks. The degree distributions for Beowulf and the Táin are given in figure 6 and one observes a remarkable similarity between them. This similarity extends up to, but not including, the six rightmost data points coming
Fig. 6. The degree distributions of Beowulf and the Táin on a double logarithmic scale. Notice the strong overlap except for the six characters with the highest degree for the Táin offsetting the best-fit line (dashed line). Here, P(k) represents the cumulative probability of a character having a specific degree k (number of people a character knows).

from the Irish narrative, data which correspond to the six most connected characters in The Táin.

The two lines depicted in figure 6 represent power laws fitted to the Beowulf data (yielding the solid line) and the Táin (dashed line). The six rightmost data points of the latter are offset relative to the rest. This means that the degrees of these Táin characters are out of sync with the remaining characters of both the Táin and Beowulf. Indeed, the dashed Táin line is "pulled" upwards on the right relative to the solid Beowulf line by these anomalous six characters. The overall impression is that the network structure of the Táin may be rather similar to that of Beowulf, but for the six anomalous characters in the Irish narrative. We interpret this as a potential indicator that the artificiality of the Táin is located in these six characters. The six anomalous Táin characters in figure 6 are, in order of decreasing degree, Conchobor Mac Nessa (king of Ulster), Cúchulainn (Ulster warrior), Ailill Mac Mágach (king of Connacht), Medb (queen of Connacht), Finnchad Fer Benn (son of Conchobor) and Fergus Mac Roich (a former king of Ulster exiled to Connacht). The first four of
these were identified by Jackson (1964) as unhistorical.

Unlike in the Beowulf case, we have no basis to remove these six characters from the Táin network. Instead, we recognise that their anomalous nature is due to them being over-connected or "exaggerated" relative to the remaining characters in the narrative and relative to the characters of Beowulf. Therefore, reduction in their degrees should be sufficient to synchronise them with the remaining Táin society. To achieve this in a simple manner, we bring weighting into the analysis. We first define a weak link as one that occurs when two characters meet only once in the entire narrative. We next remove the weak links associated with the six anomalous Táin characters. This process of reducing their degrees does not remove them from the tale and preserves their important relationships. It is as if we are reducing some of the elements of exaggeration associated with these individuals. The degree distribution for the adjusted Táin network is depicted in figure 7. As expected, the top six data points are no longer

Fig. 7. The degree distribution of the adjusted Táin network, the dashed line is the best-fit line. Note the top six characters no longer offset the fit.
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strongly offset and all the data points are reasonably close to the best-fit line.

A remarkable outcome of this adjustment is that the resulting Táin social network is assortative. This means that it has all of the characteristics of a real social network. This observation reaffirms our hypothesis that the bulk of the artificiality of the network is localised, in the sense that it is associated with just six of the 404 characters. We may speculate that these six characters may be amalgams of numbers of entities and proxies whose collective degrees are large but whose individual degrees are reduced. For example, the many single encounters described in the text between queen Medb of Connacht and her warriors may instead represent encounters between Medb and a small number of proxies, and subsequent interactions between the proxies and those warriors. This new interpretation would render the network properties of the Táin society similar to that of real social networks, while maintaining the integrity of the narrative.

CONCLUSIONS

We have introduced a new quantitative approach to comparative mythology by borrowing modern mathematical tools from theoretical physics. Instead of focusing on individual characters or events depicted in epic narratives, the new methodology is appropriate to investigate the totality of relationships that underpin the societies depicted in such stories. The statistical approach allows us to capture certain aspects of the structures of these societal networks and to make numerical comparisons between them.

We chose to analyse three iconic European narratives in this initial investigation. Each of the networks underlying the societies depicted is dissimilar from random and regular networks. Of the three, the society depicted in the Iliad has properties most similar to those of real social networks. One may speculate that the source of this similarity may be a degree of historicity underlying the narrative. This speculation is corroborated by recent evidence suggesting a historical basis for the story while acknowledging it is interwoven with elements of fiction (Kraft et al. 2003; Korfmann 2004; Papamarinopoulos et al. 2012).
There is even stronger material evidence suggesting some of the characters in Beowulf may be historically based (Anderson 1999; Chambers 1959; Klaeber 1950) although the events described contain obvious elements of fantasy associated with the eponymous protagonist. Indeed, although the social network in Beowulf has many of the properties of real social networks, it is disassortative – a feature also exhibited by fictional narratives studied. However, removal of the main character from the network renders the remaining society assortative. Therefore the speculation that assortativity is a signal of artificiality aligns our network analysis with conclusions of independent approaches for both the Iliad and Beowulf. In other words, both societies (with the main character excluded from Beowulf) have properties akin to real social networks.

The analyses of Iliad and Beowulf provide a guide to the quantitative study of the Táin, for which there is the least amount of material evidence and which is mostly believed to be fanciful. Although the Táin network initially appears disassortative (and hence indeed artificial), one may legitimately inquire what it would take to render that social network realistic. In particular, would it necessitate dramatic alteration of the entire society or would local adjustment to a small number of characters suffice? Our analysis indicates that the apparent artificiality in the Táin network is essentially contained within its six most connected characters. Similar to the heroes of Marvel Comics, they are too highly connected (in a sense, too superhuman) to be realistic. We think it is remarkable that a minimal alteration – removal of their direct weak social ties – is sufficient to render the network assortative. On the basis of this observation we speculate that the six anomalous Táin characters may be based on amalgams of a number of entities and proxies. The adjusted Táin network is similar to that of Beowulf, the Iliad and to real social networks and very different to random networks and those of certain works of fiction. On this basis we suggest that, if one believes that the social network depicted in the Táin has some basis in reality, then one should consider that the six most interactive characters are amalgams that likely became fused as the narrative was passed down orally through the generations.

Finally, we re-emphasise that our new approach is no substitute for traditional approaches to comparative mythology. Rather, it is hoped
that this quantitative approach may complement qualitative ones e.g., it is encouraging that four of the six characters which we identified in the Táin as being anomalous were also identified by the Celticist Kenneth Jackson through traditional, qualitative studies. Indeed, while cautioning against interpretations in terms of historicity of persons and events, Jackson also indicates that mythological narratives may offer a window on ancient societies.

_Pádraig Mac Carron is a Leverhulme Research Fellow at Coventry University's Applied Mathematics Research Centre (AMRC). Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB, England; maccarrp@uni.coventry.ac.uk;

Ralph Kenna is a Professor of Theoretical Physics and Deputy Director of the AMRC, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB, England; R.Kenna@coventry.ac.uk_

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Directions, Seasons, and Alterities: Notes on the Early History of Chinese Political Cosmology

WANG MINGMING

ABSTRACT. This article deals with the transformations of political cosmology in early China. The author argues that long before Han, the model of "round Heaven, square Earth" – previously seen by many as a 2nd century BCE imperial invention – had existed as "stone age cosmos". By Zhou, it had transformed from a kingly cosmos (the absolute and pragmatic Shang rule) to a "civilizational cosmos" (the "confederational" Zhou rule); and in the age of contests (the 6th to the 3rd centuries BCE), such archaic cosmic patterns were further diversified into different theories of the correspondence, relatedness, or oneness between nature and society. Throughout the article, the author makes it clear that all the cosmological perspectives were not only historically prolific but also geographically so, being integral to the worlds of the regional kingdoms (fangguo) which were constituted with the geo-cosmic concept of fang (quarters in space-time, directions, and alterities). The author concludes that the Han cosmos, intended to encompass all of the previous systems, made what Marcel Granet (1930) called "the synthetic theory" – a hybrid of the kingly verticality and confederational horizontality, a civilizational configuration varied from its counterpart in the other end of Eurasia.

KEYWORDS: cosmology, China, comparative civilizations, anthropology

INTRODUCTION

Here I put together a selection of readings of existing archaeological and historical studies and make effort to consider the changes on the "cosmological front" in the historical periods prior to the time of Wudi (Emperor Wu, in his reign between 156 and 87 BCE).

As early as in 1929, Marcel Granet – a major member of Année sociologique – had argued that Wudi took good advantage of the classical traditions to pave the road for the arrival of the synthetic theory, characteristic of the traditional Chinese ways of cosmos-society. By the
synthetic theory, Granet referred to two things: on the one hand, the peculiar shortage of singularized religiosity that curiously enabled the inhabitants of the "extreme east" to live with a great mixture of religions, and, as it also happened, allowed the Son of Heaven to extend, most effectively, the efficacy of world inclusion (Granet 1930: 378-89). On the other hand, he referred to the "fundamental principle" that "the action of Heaven and that of the Emperor on the people were exercised on parallel lines, and both in a beneficent way – the first in maintaining the order of the world, the second in maintaining the order of society" (Granet 1930: 400).

In defining the synthetic theory, seemingly, Granet was only modestly comparing the despotic First Emperor and the "moralized" Wudi. However, he was in fact profoundly ambitious. With the smaller comparison, he was creating a greater contrast between two expansive civilizations. In Granet's eyes, all the cosmological formations and reformations that had taken place prior to the 2nd century BCE had determined the fate of China. They directed the Chinese way of universalism towards the orientation of what we now call relationism, and, in the end, they achieved what made the Chinese world distinct from the Roman way of the state.

Although this article represents only certain extremely partial "historical realities", it has stemmed from an endeavour to develop a perspective of historical comparative cosmology. We are concerned with the role of a whole sequence of transforming cosmologies in a "civilizing process", patterned by the religious grammar which relates the inside with the outside by virtue of a native vocabulary of geo-cosmic and sociological concepts – the directions, seasons, and human or non-human others. By means of reconstructing the complexity of the cultural precedents that made history, I seek to determine the extent to which we follow Granet in perceiving Chinese – and, by implication, other – political cosmologies as forming a contrast of the "western end" of Eurasia. Our project is not limited to its reciprocity with Granet's comparative civilizations. Rather, it is opened to further ethnographic theoretical speculations related with such "social morphologies" (Mauss 1999: 389-475) as Amerindian perspectivisms (Descola 1992; Viveiros de Castro 1998) and "non-modern" hybridism (Lartour 1993). However, because what I intend to do in the present context is "negotiating" with Granet over the issue of the uniqueness of "the Chinese world", I have
chosen to reserve the elaboration of the relevance of our effort to the above-mentioned achievements for a future effort.

ROUND HEAVEN, SQUARE EARTH

The cosmic framework within which the so-called synthetic theory was conceptualized was the "round Heaven, square Earth" model, familiar to all the dynasties throughout imperial times, and, by now, well-established in modern sinological circles.

Briefly, according to the round Heaven, square Earth model, Earth (di) is a square with its corners in the four directions, and is covered by Heaven (tian). While Earth is low, female (yin) and dark, Heaven is high, male (yang), and light. Both Heaven and Earth move, but they move at different speeds: Heaven flies, Earth walks. Earth and the four directions form a pentology, a community of the Five Elements (wuxing): wood, fire, metal, water, and soil, correlative with that of the five directions (including Earth as centre). The directions and the quarters were commanded by four local guardian deities or mythical animals (sixiang, including Green Dragon, Red Peacock, White Tiger, and Black Turtle)\(^1\). In the world, Earth is the centre, but the substances of it come from the outside and beyond. The directions, deities, and seasons, together with the cardinal points of the great mountains and rivers (shanchuan) and the ethnic others and divinities inhabiting nearby, form an intermediary circle between Earth and Heaven. The patterns of Earth reflect those of Heaven. As Tianxia, or the whole world under Heaven (Wang 2012), these patterns, found on Earth and in the intermediate surroundings, are situated in the flying Sun and Moon and other planets. The planets are numerous, but the main ones are located in twenty-eight lodges (xiu), headquartered in the five celestial palaces (tianguan), or the five planets of wood (Jupiter), fire (Mars), earth (Saturn), metal (Venus), water (Mercury).

In the Heaven-Earth perspective, the beginning of time is the beginning of the year, located in the space between the north and the east or in the east. The year is a cycle of time, with beginning and end as well as transitions; and it consists of four seasons, whose boundaries are chronotopic, associated not only with time but also with spatial orientations and directions (Figure 1). The two fundamental seasons are
Fig. 1. Heaven and Earth conflated in Making of Time. The overall image is similar to Mandala but the contents emphasize the important role of the intermediaries between Heaven and Earth – the quarters of directions, holy mountains, cosmic sounds, seasons, and climate features – in the making of time (Lai 1988 [1599]: 534)

defined by the celestial equator; but these are multiplied into four by the breaking effect of the ecliptic².

Likewise, the directions, east (dong), west (xi), south (nan), and north (bei), are derivatives of the "crossing" of two pairs of binary oppositions: east and west originally meant two places of sunrise and sunset, whereas south and north those of heat and cold. In the synthetic theory, the cosmic patterns are conceptualized as the main characteristics of the order of the world, and they become also the order of society once a specific category of human agency is inserted. We can call the category the third aspect.

In philosophy, the third aspect is equalized with Man (ren). Let us note the fact that the Chinese character for this word is the foundation for both the character for Greatness (da) and for Heaven (tian), or more precisely, the Great Man (daren) (for an analysis of an example, see
Wang 2010: 236-339). In such an interpretation, Man becomes the mediator between Earth and Heaven. As a traditional phrase (*dingtian lidi*) suggests, the Great Man is the one who firmly stands on Earth with his head reaching Heaven.

However, in other interpretations, Man is not isolated from other things. Though Man stands on Earth below Heaven, he only becomes the true Great Man when he becomes a microcosm of the cosmic patterns. The Great Man, himself the intermediary between Heaven and Earth and between civilization (*wen*) and wildness (*zhi*), moves in accordance with the regularity of the seasons; at different stages of the year, he orients himself towards different directions, acting as if he himself contains all the qualities of the surroundings (other persons, divinities, and things).

**HISTORY**

Systematic inscriptions of the cosmology did not appear until the 2nd century BCE, during the reign of Wudi of Han (for good studies of Han political cosmology, see Major 1993; Loewe 2005). Since the 20th century, modern Western (e.g. Granet 1930) and Chinese (e.g. Gu 1998 [1955]) historians have concluded that it was invented by the emperor with the assistance of the official scholars, particularly the astrologers and necromancers, and it was imperial in nature, being the means by which the emperor cultivated his own manhood.

However, more recent archaeological findings have indicated that most of the parts of the whole of the Han cosmology had been present long before Han (Li 1994), and the Han cosmology, whose influence was the most lasting, was nothing more than a later synthesis formulated to incorporate a broad range of pre-existing traditions, most of which were post-stone-age extensions of the late Neolithic cosmos.

**STONE AGE COSMOS**

During the "Jade Age" (Yang 2005; Demattè 2006), a lengthy period of civilization (5000-2000 BCE) before the Bronze Age, in the surrounding areas beyond the core or the so-called Central Plain (*zhongyuan*), several archaic kingdoms developed their own sacrificial systems. In the sacred
Fig. 2. Sacrificial enclosure at Dongshanzui, Hongshan Culture (4000-3000BCE), Liaoning (Lu and Li 2005: 39).

sites uncovered in the lands of these kingdoms, it has been found that the sacrificial enclosures are planned in accordance with the round Heaven, square Earth model. A good example is a Hongshan culture sacrificial enclosure (in northeast China). It is sixty meters long and forty meters wide, constructed with stone materials and situated in the open space backed by two mountains and facing a river\(^4\). The two prime altars are a square altar and a round shaped altar. These two altars are respectively located in the north and the south, the two directions in which Earth and Heaven were imagined to be. Between the two larger altars, there are three other small round shaped altars, possibly symbolizing the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars. Overall, the sacrificial enclosure is made of three zones, the inner zone of square Earth, the intermediate zone of the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, and the outer zone of round Heaven (Feng 2001: 343-55; Lu and Li 2005: 37-52)\(^5\). Among the three kinds of altars, the square central stage – which is higher than other altars – can be seen as forming one of the early versions of "the architectonic symbolism of the Centre", a man-made "sacred mountain" (Eliade 1971: 12). On the occasions of sacrifices, the square became the stage on which a chief, a
King, or a magician-king mediated between Heaven and Earth. But as has been seen by Chinese astronomic archaeologists, such a sacrificial enclosure is also an archaic model of the cosmos, plotted both for yearly sacrificial purposes and for astronomic calculations. The square-earth altar has four sides, representing four directions and four seasons. On the altars, three small clusters of rocks are found to be shaped like mountains (Figure 2).

In the excavated sacrificial platforms, numerous jade items are found. Among them, some are shaped round and square. The round and square shaped jade artefacts appeared in 3,000 years BCE in the southeast and a few centuries later, they also appeared in the northwest. The round artefacts are known in Chinese archaeology as bi, and the square ones cong (Figure 3). In later stages, these two kinds of jade artefacts are said in the Record of Technology (Kaogongji, completed latest by the 3rd century BCE) to be what the feudal lords put to use either as tributes to the Son of Heaven (the king) or as symbols of their own aristocratic statuses in their tributary ceremonies (Dai 2003: 111-13). However, during late Neolithic times, these were used as offerings to the divinities in petitions for the celestial "refund" of a world order. They were initially "magical jade", applied in the ritual of "communicating between Heaven and Earth" (tong tiandi), and were later regarded as "kingly jade",...
symbolizing the role of the king in the forging of a relationship between Heaven and Earth (Yang 2005: 30-9). From the archaeological evidence three conclusions can be drawn. First, the cosmic model of square Earth, round Heaven existed in the late Neolithic age. Secondly, they were geometrical. Thirdly, in different cultural areas, they were conceptualized or interpreted in different ways.

The cosmology of quarters surrounding the centre, as we have seen in the examples of sacrificial enclosures and jade artefacts, is a Mandala-like map of the world. Like Mandala, it emphasizes the ordering capacities of the centre (Eliade 1971), be it the square platform enclosed by the constructed circles or the embracing tunnel of jade cong. Nonetheless, it also entertained the perspective of seeing the centre, the one surrounded by four, and the four surrounded by many layers of other fours, as merely the place to reach the beyond, the outer but more superior nonhumans or, if we may, "alterities" in the broad and non-negative sense of the term – including the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, mountains and rivers, divinities, and things in the intermediary zone between the supreme level of Heaven and Earth.

BRONZE AGE ALTERNATIONS: SHANG AND ZHOU

Xia (2200-1750 BCE), Shang (1750-1100 BCE), and Zhou (1100-256 BCE) following the Neolithic Age were the three dynasties (sandai) narrated in traditional history as the "central polities" of early China. In fact, as the Chinese archaeologist Su Bingqi has pointed out, these were several fang-guo, or larger regional kingdoms, that had conquered or incorporated several gu-guo, or the smaller, older, archaic kingdoms (Su 1999: 129-68).

The word fang-guo is composed of two characters, fang and guo, literally meaning regional kingdoms. But fang in fact also denotes the quarters that surround the centre, and fang-guo thus also refers to the kingdoms that extended their powers from the exteriors in different directions, or different ethnic home places, into the Central Plain.

Some of the fang-guo took turns to occupy the central place of the Chinese world, and each of these developed an elaborate civilization that distinguished itself from the tribal worlds to which it had previously belonged. Because each was faced with challenges from different
directions, once having seized power, each made efforts to pacify and/or incorporate surrounding kingdoms and tribes.

While archaeology has told us little regarding Xia\(^7\); it has accumulated a great amount of information regarding Shang, especially the late Shang (the reigns between the 21\(^{st}\) and the 29\(^{th}\) Shang Kings in the period between 1200 and 1045 BCE).

Shang combined the two independent series of counters later known as heavenly stems (\textit{tiangan}) and earthly branches (\textit{dizhi}) to form the sixty-day cycle, and applied the ten-day "week" (\textit{xun}) in dividing each month into three. It situated the first moon in the turning point of the new moon that followed the Winter Solstice. Shang's year was primarily constituted with four seasons correlative with the four directions where Powers or Gods were the divinities of the equinoxes and solstices. The year was projected like the spatial patterns of the kingly residence, the square-shape capital that had four sides (Keightley 2000: 37-54).

In the Shang cosmology, a strong emphasis was placed upon the four winds (\textit{sifang feng}) which, blowing into the kingly residences from the four different directions in different seasons reflected the phenologic signs at the equinoxes and solstices (Feng 2001: 167-90).

Shang projected its sacred cosmos with a high sense of verticality. It saw supremacy (\textit{di}), or the supreme God (\textit{shangdi}), as above the world and what was approached by the kings, princes, and aristocrats who asserted their own linkages to it through their ancestors (\textit{zu}) (Keightley 2000; Fu 2006 [1940]: 71-81). Seemingly, the concepts of the divine – supremacy and ancestors – meant the same as the religious connotations of fate and justice, which according to anthropologist Meyer Fortes (1969), form a certain universal theory of society. However, unlike Tallensi ancestors who, as Fortes argues, "manifest themselves in different ways for men and women and with different effects at the successive stages of the individual life" (Fortes 1969: 14), Shang ancestors were accessible only to the royal descent, being certain benign forces that assisted the kings and aristocrats in their efforts to approach supremacy.

Shang rituals worked from the bottom up: the lower ancestors were seen to be more amenable to the blandishments of human rituals, whereas the higher powers were perceived as stronger but less malleable, and the goal of ritual was thus to work one's way up the pantheon (Puett 2002: 44-53)\(^8\).
The Shang kings, their names all containing the character *ri*, for a part of the counters used in the calculation of days and years, were both divinities and men, and they led members of the noble class who held the exclusive right to make sacrifices and wage war (Chang 1980: 190-8). They divided their society into the royal family, the lords, the supervisors, the masses (*zhong*), and captives of Qiang origin. Externally, they led their army to conquer the potential captives. But they willingly surrendered themselves to the divinities (Chang 1980: 190-211). Living in a vertical continuum of divinities, the Shang kings treated the communities in the outer quarters beyond their own residences as ambiguous others. Cosmologically, they grouped these communities into the fang-Powers, and located them in the four directions they designated, and treated them more or less as the four winds which could bring life (as in the case of the Spring Wind) or destroy it (as in the case of the Autumn Wind). The kings were served by an extensive group of diviners (*zhenren*) who told the kings their fortunes in the uncertain situations of the surrounding powers of the Winds and the fang-Powers.

The kingdom of Shang was partly maintained by means of sacrifices, including human sacrifices (Figure 4), which worked to ensure the vertical linkage between the "this world" below and the "other world" above at the cost of the "barbarians" (Wang and Kubin 2007). The
sacrifices formed a system that expressed "a belief in the benevolent intentions of the divine powers, and a desire to adjust to the world as given, sacrificial practice in the Shang was aimed at a radical transformation of the divine world, a transformation undertaken precisely so that humanity could appropriate and domesticate nature for its purposes" (Puett 2002: 78).

The absolutist and pragmatist politics of Shang came into crisis when an alliance closely related to the lowest class – the Qiang captives – emerged from the west and established a new regime in the early 11th century BCE.

The founding father of the new regime, Zhou, was King Wen, who commanded one of the major fiefs under the rule of Shang. Legendarily, before Shang rulers were overthrown, King Wen had devised a cultural politic – rule of virtue (de). He admitted that in initiating its dynastic rule Shang obtained the fate of being the monarch from Heaven, but he also argued as Shang's own dynastic end approached that the King "neglects the sacrifice to Heaven and Earth" and "discontinued the offerings in the ancestral temple" (Legge 1879: 174).
King Wen proclaimed himself a re-installer of tradition, and propagated the social efficacy of the human respect for both Heaven and ancestors, and he demanded civility (li) among the peoples he led.

After overthrowing Shang, Zhou continued King Wen's line and established a system of aristocratic cities in accordance with a set of reformulated cosmological principles. The fiefs, or in fact, the re-constituted fang-Powers, were united within a hierarchical order of kinship and privileges and, ideally, they were related in terms of a refined ceremonial culture. Peasants who helped go against the archaic Shang royalty became a strong class in the Zhou society.

The Zhou revolution was not the substitution of an egalitarian ideology for hierarchism. Rather, it was an old hierarchy's replacement by a new one.

As noted earlier, by taking names related with certain specific "compartments" of Heaven, the Shang kings represented themselves as "partial heavens". The Zhou kings started to take the title of Son of Heaven (tianzi). Though the new cosmic position of the king has impressed many as what upgraded the king's position of the "vertical continuum of divinities", it virtually lowered down the position of the king from the level of Heaven to the level between Heaven and Earth.

In assuming that role of Son of Heaven, the Zhou kings developed an altered cosmology and afforded themselves a new kind of legitimacy. They defined themselves as inadequate unless they fulfilled certain cosmic-moral duties:

The King should examine the (character of the whole) year; the high ministers and officers (that of) the month; and the inferior officers (that of) the day. If throughout the year, the month, the day, there will be an unchanging seasonableness, all the grains will be matures; the measures of government will be wise; heroic men will stand forth distinguished; and in the families (of the people) there will be peace and prosperity. (Legge 1879: 148)

In a similar way to gardening, the Son of Heaven cultivated in himself world order – the Mandate of Heaven. And the methods with which he achieved his world, as expounded by Confucius in his endeavours to revitalize the Zhou's constitution, should all derived from the way in which natural order and human order were thought of as being one.
As the fifth principle of the Zhou "Great Plan" also indicates:

The Sovereign, having established (in himself) the highest degree and pattern of excellence, concentrates in his person the five (sources of) happiness, and proceeds to diffuse them, and give them to the multitudes of the people. Then they, on their part, embodying your perfection, will give it (back) to you, and secure the preservation of it. Among all the multitudes of the people there will be no unlawful confederacies, and among men (in office) there will be no bad and selfish combinations. (Legge 1879: 143-4)

Among the various cosmological reinventions aimed at producing a perfect union between Heaven, Earth, and Man in the prominent intermediate realm of principalities (Gernet 1982: 32-56), the most important was the remaking of the late Neolithic pentology of quarters surrounding the centre, reformulated in Shang in terms of fang (directions and quarters) (Keightley 2000: 81-96). The zones were modelled on the patterns of Earth, "a disc-shaped world" with its celestial constituencies (Needham 1981: 238-9). They centred in the Capital of the King (didu) (Figure 5). Though it seemed a world-scape that encompassed levels of culture oriented in a centripetal manner towards the centre, it was not simply an ego-centred civilizing order. Undoubtedly, the Capital of the King was understood as "civilizational": it was shaped into a perfect cosmos, a model of virtue for the inhabitants of the zones outside it to follow, and it was also a designated destination for tribute-paying journeys from the outer zones. However, Wufu precisely also meant certain geographic zonings of different ranks and different "civilizations". In different zones of Wufu, different ceremonial patterns were designated as appropriate; each of the patterns had its own kind of worship known as Wufu – the five concentric zones, a legendary Xia legacy revitalized in Zhou (Yang 1999: 395-425).

In addition to the politics of the human order, Zhou also achieved in making the cosmology of change (yi). As expounded later in both Confucian and Daoist philosophies, the boundaries of the concept of yi was extended to the whole circle of natural and human domains, which made the system of Wufu a perfect reflection of Yin and Yang and the
Fig. 6. The Ideal Plan of Ming Tang (reconstructed with reference to Hu Wei's version of the Nine Chambers of Ming Tang in his Yi Tu Mingbian (Analyses of the Illustrations in Yi Ching [Qing]) (Zhang 2005: 344-5).

Five Elements. As exposed in the "religion of the literati", in the cosmology of Yin and Yang and the Five Elements, "Space and Time were seen as the result of the interaction among these concrete categories. Their play was explained by different laws." (Granet 1975: 105).

The world-scape of Zhou was devised with the teleology of making a hybrid of centres and margins, and they were thus at the same time centripetal and centrifugal.

On the basis of the magical square model, in the King's palace a ceremonial hall was constructed to mark the brightness of Heaven (Mingtang)\(^19\). Built upon the model of the magic square, Mingtang had four sides, symbolizing not only the four seasons, but also the four directions. Within its enclosures, the vassals were placed according to the ranking of the levels of peopled or un-peopled spaces in the directions other than the north which is where the Son of Heaven should be (Figure 6).

The structuring of Mingtang depended upon its inside-outside distinction. However, unlike the axial mundi under Eliade's depiction (it placed an overwhelming emphasis upon the distinction between inside and outside, equalized the distinction to the contrast between order and
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Fig. 7. Map of the Great Mountains, Rivers, Lakes, and the "Barbarians" in Yu Gong (Tributaries of Yu), replica made in A.D 1209 kept in Beijing Library.

chaos, and honoured the consecrating potency of the centre), Mingtang was oriented toward the activities mediating inside and outside, order and chaos, sacred and profane.

Outside the enclosure of Mingtang, the peoples, divinities, and things of the frontiers, mountains, and seas were supposed to form the four squares which had reciprocal relationships with the centre. The building itself had a square design, containing nine square rooms, representing the nine divine prefectures making the confederation. To promulgate the calendar, in the months in the middle of each season, the Son of Heaven would act in accordance with the propensities of Heaven. He would stand in the central rooms facing the four directions, move as if he was himself the rhythms of the universe which were believed to be of great efficacy in bringing the divided world together (Figure 7)\textsuperscript{20}. In solving problems stemming from the "others" in the quarter-regions, different kings of Zhou adopted different strategies. Apart from military
expeditions, they often resorted to certain ways of "travel" – inspecting tours (zheng).

The Book of Rites (Li Ji), one of the later editions of Zhou's sacred books, has a description of zheng. It suggests that zheng means the events in which the King went out for his five yearly inspecting tours. Such inspecting tours of the king's were related to a certain official set of space-time regularities. When he went on the tours, the king moved in accordance with the seasons corresponding to the four directions. He performed different ceremonies at different times and places all year round. As Li Ji tells us:

The son of Heaven, every five years, made a tour of Inspection (zheng) through the fiefs. In the second month of the year, he visited those on the East, going to the honoured mountain of Tai. There he burnt a great pile of wood, and announced his arrival to Heaven; and with looks directed to them, sacrificed to the hills and rivers. He gave audience to the prince; inquired out those who were 100 years old, and went to see them: ordered the Grand music-master to bring him the poem (current in the different states), that he might see the manners of the people; ordered the superintendents of markets to present (list of prices), that he might see what the people liked and disliked, and whether they were set on the extravagance and loved what was bad; he ordered the superintendents of rites to examine the seasons and months, and fix the days, and to make uniform the standard tubes, the various ceremonies, the (instrument of) music, all measures, and (the fashion of) clothes. (Whatever was wrong in these) was rectified. Where any of the spirits of the hills and rivers had been unattended to, it was held to be an act of irreverence, and the irreverent ruler was deprived of a part of his territory. Where there had been neglect of the proper order in the observance of ancestral temple, it was held to show a want of filial piety and the rank of the unfilial ruler was reduced. Where any ceremony had been altered, or any instrument of music changed, it was held to be an instance of disobedience, and the disobedient ruler was banished. Where the statutory measures and the (fashion of) clothes had been changed, it was held to be rebellion, and the rebellious ruler was taken off. The ruler who
had done good service for the people, and shown them an example of virtue, received an addition to his territory and rank. In the seventh month, (the son of Heaven) continued his tour, going to the South, to the mountain of that quarter, observing the same ceremonies as in the East. In the eight month, he went on to the West, to the mountain of that quarter, observing the same ceremonies as in the South. In the eleventh month, he went on to the North, to the mountain of that quarter, observing the same ceremonies as in the West. (When all was done), he returned (to the capital), repaired (to the ancestral temple) and offered a bull in each of fanes, from that of his (high) ancestors to that of his father. (Legge 1885: 216-18)

Obviously, what was known as zheng was a set of rituals, involving sacrifices to God, to the earth, and to royal ancestors, held in a temporal and spatial sequence. The chief ritual performer was the King who, through making the sacrifice, observing customs, and performing as the model of virtue became more or less like the "pendulum of time" that related the parts and rhythmically worked them into a whole.

Evidently, in Shang-Zhou periods, political cosmology in the agrarian parts of East Asia experienced a transition. Apart from the above, this can be most clearly seen in the fact that whereas in Shang sacrifices of human victims were extensive, in Zhou they dramatically declined. The human victims used in Shang sacrifices were from three sources, the captives from non-Shang quarters, the tributes from such quarters, and the human prey that the kings hunted in the "fields" in the quarters. They were mostly sacrificed to the ancestors in exchange for their blessings for the kings (Wang and Kubin 2007). In Zhou the quarters ceased to be seen as sources of sacrificial victims (Wang 2000: 245). The ethnic others living in them were cherished as tribute-paying fang. No longer seen as inferior captives, tributes, and prey, the ethnic others were at times respected as "superior nonhumans" situated in the intermediaries between Heaven and Earth; with their local products (such as herbs, mysterious animals, magic, and divinities) rarely seen in the centres of the Central Kingdom, they were seen as beneficial to the "civilization" of Tianxia, now understood as a fine linkage between culture and nature.

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A more subtle aspect of the transition was the prohibition of drunkenness during everyday life:

King Wan (Wen) admonished and instructed the young nobles, who were charged with office or in any employment, that they should not ordinarily use spirits; and throughout all the states, he required that such should drink spirits only on occasion of sacrifices, and that then virtue should preside so that there might be no drunkenness. (Legge 1879: 175)

The regulation of drunkenness was a part of a great political reform projected and implemented in the name of rites (li).

The Chinese character for li (rites) was composed of two parts: that meaning divinity and that meaning the vessel containing offerings including jade and spirits. During Shang, while li had already meant sacrifice (ji or si), which later usages followed, it was also used interchangeably with another character pronounced also as li but conveying simply alcohol. It was from Zhou onwards that the two characters of li were separated to mean different things – sacrifice and spirits (Wang 2001 [1921], vol.1: 177).

Evidently, whereas in Shang, li meant sacrificial acts involving not only offering "foods" (including humans and models of this world such as the jade artefacts) and spirits to the divinities but also the consumption of the "foods" and spirits believed to make possible the physical and spiritual ascension of the sacrifice-makers in either ceremonial or ordinary time, in Zhou, the same character of li referred only to the rituals occurring in the "regulated occasions" of the year. Though these still involved "foods" and wine offerings (Poo 1999)22, not only was the number of such occasions greatly reduced but also the lavishness of sacrifice was restricted23. Moreover, whereas in Shang, rituals were chiefly sacrifices, in Zhou, they obtained the meaning of "courtesy" or more precisely, being "polite" to the others, and appropriate to the selves (especially their social ranks).
IRON AGE THEORIES OF THE WORLD

In Zhou, the stratum of the Shi (men of letters) – who were believed to command both the "science of Heaven" and "science of Earth" (Needham 1981) – gained a considerable amount of power. They were given the authority to not only theorize cosmographies but also "manage ceremonies" (Yu 2003). Among the Shi, there were many advocates of the political line of "rule of rites". These were those who had absorbed the wisdom of Zhou's founding father King Wen and become devoted to the enterprise of the Great Unity (datong). However, King Wen's invention was not always effective. Although rule of rites – as practiced in what we may call tributary diplomacy between the court and the fiefs – created a temporary "harmonious society", they were easily challenged. Certain feudatory states often tried to become kings, and thus did not listen to the Son of Heaven's callings (Yang 1999: 62-103). Within the court of Zhou, one of the major political lines was affiliated with King Wen's name, and it saw the rule of rites as orthodox. But the Zhou "orthopraxy" (Watson 1988) was constantly devalued by more forceful actions, like military expeditions, which were made possible by the counter-arguments of some Shi advisers that worked for the kings.

After King Pingwang moved his capital East and located it in the region of modern-day Luoyang of Henan Province, Zhou entered a period of radical feudalization. The period is known in history as Eastern Zhou (Dong Zhou).

Eastern Zhou was a true confederation; it brought together the overlords of varied importance, connecting them less by the force of political relations than by a certain "community of civilization". While the fiefs or states which boasted of their own authenticity and civilization were those near the capital, the others around about were supposed to have a less pure civilization. Around 900 BCE, the fiefs, engaging in the contests of expansion perceived by traditional historians as resulting in the so-called "collapse of rites and destruction of music" (libeng yuehuai), began to take on the model of Zhou royalty, and map it onto their own regimes.

In the process, a system of aristocratic cities, known as guo (cities enclosed by walls and later, states), replaced the form of archaic royalty. The organization of the fiefs mirrored that of the royal palace. In each fief, the chief bore the title of lord (gong). He grouped different sorts of
the Shi into his own palace and monopolized military power in his own domains. Meanwhile, the Zhou court was faced with invasions from chiefdoms surrounding it. The incoming "barbarians" were a serious issue. In fact, by the spring and autumn period (770-476 BCE), the Zhou court had lost the power to defend itself against the barbarians. To survive, the royal family depended on several major principalities – especially Qin and Jin – to fend off the barbarian invasion. In so doing, the Zhou court also rendered an excuse for territorial expansion.

Both Qin and Jin launched campaigns to "respect the king and resist the barbarians" (zunwang rangyi). This resulted in many "barbarian kingdoms" being incorporated into the fiefs. To rule the extending countries, the lords of the principalities invented the prefecture and county system (junxian), whereby Zhou's official zones of relationship were turned into what was merely ceremonially useful. As a result, the system of the nine prefectures (jiu zhou), which probably already existed in early Zhou, was redefined and deployed to cover the new territories of the loosely united "Central Kingdom" (Gu and Shi 2000: 53).

However, a radical change in ideology did not come along with all the changes. While competing expansions of the overlords' resulted in the "collapse of rites and destruction of music", what may be termed as "feudal religion" (Granet 1932; 1975) continued to place the level of Heaven as outside and beyond the realms of the fiefs or states.

Meanwhile, the role of the Shi had changed. In the earlier phase of Zhou, the Shi were selected from aristocratic families. By the spring and autumn period, they could come from lower classes including the commoners (shumin). In the past, the Shi were chiefly concerned with the construction and recording of ceremonial rules and did not make distinctions between rites, law, and politics. The Shi in the spring and autumn period re-emerged as classical historians who also orchestrated civilities; and they became those who made historical judgments, took on political service, and served the management of government.

Some of the Shi "reduced religious life to a collection of symbolic practices which, in their mind, intended to govern social relationship in a manner consistent with the common demands of tradition and reason" (Granet 1975: 107). One of the examples was Confucius, who argued in his influential essay entitled "Ceremonial usages" (Li yun) the following:
Thus it was that when the sages would make rules (for men), they felt it necessary to find the origin (of all things) in heaven and earth; to make the two forces (of nature) the commencement (of all); to use the four seasons as the handle (of their arrangements); to adopt the sun and stars as the recorders (of time), the moon as the measurer (of work to be done), the spirits breathing (in nature) as associates, the five elements as giving substance (to things), rules of propriety and righteousness as (their) instruments, the feelings of men as the field (to be cultivated), and the four intelligent creatures as domestic animals (to be reared). (Legge 1885: 383)

The origin of all things being found in heaven and earth, they could be taken in hand, one after the other. The commencement of these being found in the two forces (of nature), their character and tendencies could be observed. The four seasons being used as a handle, (the people) could be stimulated to the business (of each). The sun and stars being constituted the measures of time that business could be laid out in order. The moon being taken as the measure (of work to be done), that work could be accomplished successfully. The spirits breathing (in nature) being considered as associates, what is done will be maintained permanently. The five elements being considered as giving substance (to things), what has been done could be repeated. Rules of propriety and righteousness being viewed as the instruments, whatever was done would be completed. The feelings of men being the field to be cultivated, men would look up (to the sages) as to their lords. The four intelligent creatures being made to become domestic animals, there would be constant sources of food and drink (Legge 1885: 383).

However, another contesting part of the "axial age" Chinese cosmological thinking derived their critiques of the "sociologics" of ritual and divination characteristic of both Shang and Zhou. These critiques were made by such figures as those who opposed themselves to ritual specialists. Countering the ritual specialists' insistence on operating by working from the recently deceased and less powerful local spirits toward more distant and more powerful deities, the new intellectuals advocated the One, to integrate all spirits, all natural phenomena, and all humans, and to claim direct access to the One – the full power and knowledge over the cosmos (Puett 2000: 318). One fine example was
Zhuangzi, who, as Fung Yu-lan describes, endeavoured to become a "philosophical king" by means of cultivating "the perfect man", the virtual model of the absolutely free person who "in identity with the universe and 'goes up and down with evolution'" (Fung 1989: 16-17).

Meanwhile, the Shi's scope of knowledge extended from the pursuit of ceremonial order into the fields of law, politics, and ethics. In turn, the Shi themselves became divided into schools of thought; many of these schools carried with them regional cultural elements, just like the contesting kingdoms: the Lu produced Confucius, and the Chu and the Qi Taoists.

However, "mental attitudes inherited from the archaic periods continue to operate more or less beneath the surface" (Gernet and Vernant 1996: 83). Prior to the coming of the age of separation, especially in Zhou, the Chinese had already naturalized the divine, and thus closed the way to developing any form of transcendental thought. Consequentially, neither Daoism nor Confucianism derived their philosophies from the radical separation between the world of men and the world of the gods. While Confucian thinkers sought to derive principles for social order from the regularities of the universe, Daoist philosophers saw the oneness between personalities and things as essential. In "axial age" Greece, the first necessary step toward the birth of rationality was the distinction between subject and object. In China, at a similar stage, philosophical thought both fell short of and went beyond such a distinction, and it was never concerned with separating the ritual sphere from the positivist or the cosmic from the human (Gernet and Vernant 1996: 86-7).

CONCLUSION

The transformations considered above were not only historical but also geographical. While the pentologies active in the pre-historic kingdoms located in areas later known as fang may be seen as different versions of each other, the Bronze Age alternations can be seen as the transformation from the Yi system originating in the eastern fang to the Xia or Zhou system originating in the western fang (e.g., Fu 1999 [1933]: 168). In both Shang and Zhou, the seasons and directions were treated as beyond Earth and under Heaven, and were seen as where the celestial Powers
were from. Associated with the seasons and directions, the fang-kingdoms of both Shang and Zhou were also perceived as where the others (ta) resided with their own local Powers. However, comparatively speaking, the world of Zhou was, compared to Shang, more oriented towards the principle of virtue, which was related to the larger cosmic-geographic system of Tianxia, the whole world under Heaven.

When Wudi of Han and his advisers were making their synthetic theory, they first resorted to the books most compiled in the Warring States period (Gu 2003 [1920]) during which the "hundred schools" derived their intellectual energies from different fang. Though the schools were many, the theoretical choices were limited, being the contests between the absolute, pragmatic, self-divinizational Shang model and the relational (relative), civilizational, and rite-centric Zhou model (the former, characterized with its way of verticality, the latter, that of horizontality), or their prior counterparts.

Wudi, who resituated his Mandate of Heaven in the geo-cosmic cycle of the previous kingdoms, saw the sovereignty of Han as deriving from the earth virtue (tude). He narrated the history from the late tribal world to the end of Qin (the first empire) into a full cycle of the five virtues (de): the earth virtue of Yellow Emperor, the water virtue of Xia, the metal virtue of Shang, the fire virtue of Zhou, and the water virtue of Qin (Gu 1996: 67-71; 1998 [1955]). In so doing, he also re-located himself in a new cycle, and in the world belonging to the earth virtue, surrounded by the four sides, each of which, with its own intermediate advantages in the making of the seasons, directions and sacred linkages (holy mountains and rivers as well as astrological situations) of Earth (Han) played a special role in the making of the Han world. The Han world, represented in the synthetic theory as comprised of the mixture of the verticality of high and low and the flexible horizontality of inner and outer fang, became the outcome of the "accumulation of transformations". Being such, it was at once similar to and different from other cosmologies in other parts of Eurasia, including the Trinity of Power in the Greek, Persian, and Roman worlds (Dumézil 1970; Vernant 1990), and Mandala in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Tibet (Tambiah 1976; 1985). The type worked as an indigenous model in the "Sinification" of other religions when they began to arrive in China to join the contests of civilizations in a slightly later period than Wudi's reign. It has survived all the turmoil of history as a structure of
relationship, a system of systems, constantly informing the official calendars, the non-official almanacs, and folk annual festivals that have all honoured the hybrids of verticality and horizontality, unity of diversity, and order and chaos.

Wang Mingming is a Professor of Anthropology at the Peking University, China; wangmm2006@gmail.com

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Notes

1. For a good outline and illustration of the guardians of the four directional palaces, see Walters 1992: 85-7.

2. Around the circumference of the celestial equator or the ideal circle of Heaven, there are points where the equator is crossed by the ecliptic. These points are in the northeast and the southwest, and they mark the spring and autumn equinoxes. In the southeast and the southwest, there are two other points where the ecliptic and the equator are of the maximum distance from each other. These mark the summer and winter solstices (Major 1993: 32-3).

3. Thus, in the oldest Chinese medical book, The Medical Classic of the Yellow Emperor, supposedly compiled in the 4th century BCE, it is argued that: "The Heaven has the four seasons and the five elements that cause the cycle of generation, growth, reaping, and storage; and cold, summer heat, dryness, dampness and wind are produced. A man has five zang-organs to generate the qi of the five zang-organs, so that joy, anger, sorrow, melancholy and fear are produced. Hence, excessive joy and
anger injure the *qi*, and cold and summer heat injure the body form." (Zhu 2001: 9)

4. The sacrificial enclosures are mostly located in or near the mountains and beside rivers situated at some distance from human settlements. It is possible that they served as the destinations of pilgrimages.

5. In a burial belonging to Yangshao culture (5,000-3,000 BCE) centred in the northwest, it has been found that shells are used in creating the images of the four mythic animals commanding the four celestial palaces of the twenty-eight lodges (Li 1994: 142-8).

6. In the northeast, where the ancestors of Shang were supposedly from and during the centuries that they likely lived more jade artefacts were shaped as miniatures of shamans and animals, unlike the southeast and northwest "corners" of the Chinese world.

7. The archaeologist Xia Nai (1985: 79-106) has suggested that in the period equivalent to Xia, the unitary civilization had not yet developed; there were instead several contesting late Neolithic cultural areas.

8. In the Shang ritual universe, ancestors were transformed deceased humans, forming a bureaucracy-like hierarchy, serving to pacify the more powerful, non-ancestral powers, including Di, or Supremacy. Thus, "there was no unshakable conviction that everything was the will of Fate which could not be avoided, as, for example, is expressed in the Oedipus dramas of Sophocles; nor on the other hand, was it believed that all circumstances were the result of one's choice of action – the view strikingly portrayed in Shakespeare's King Lear" (Walters 1992: 15).

9. According to Confucius, even by King Wu's time, Zhou held two parts of three of All under Heaven, and it still used its realms of rule in submissive service to the dynasty of Shang, waiting for its own Heaven's Fate. Zhou overthrew Shang with an "absolutely perfect moral power." (Waley 1998:103).

10. King Wen prepared all the principles for civilization; but it was his son, the warrior king – King Wu – that declared the end of Shang's Heavenly Fate (*tianming*) and secured a material victory (Yang 1999: 62-103). As the story goes, after the defeat of Shang, prince Jizi, followed by 3,000 Shang people, fled to the north; eventually, they reached America and became the ancestors of American Indians (Qiao 2004: 3-4).

11. Thus, he "is charged with a civilizing mission whose effects extend over things as over men" (Granet 1975: 102).
12. Its basic framework was the pentology of quarters around the centre, whose model, as I pointed out earlier, began to exist at least six millennia ago in the late Neolithic age. That being the case, it is not surprising to see that Shang had deployed the framework in its own way. As Keightley (2000: 61-71) has shown, the domain of the Shang state and its allies was conceived in cosmological terms as a square world, oriented to the cardinal points. The square shape in the Shang cosmos can be seen in the four-sidedness of the Shang city walls and in the directional concepts of tu and fang.

13. The first systematic description of Wufu as a "world map" appeared as late as the fifth century B.C., but histories written during the pre-Qin period traced its origin back to the inventions of the founders of Zhou institutions. Although the issue of origin remains debatable, it is certain that a preliminary cosmo-geographic system close to Wufu was in use. The basic framework of Zhou's rites and styles was constructed on the basis of the system.

14. The zones denoted no more than a few square Chinese miles within the Zhou's territory. Nevertheless, they were also modelled on the squared Earth, "a disc-shaped world" with cosmological constituencies of the Earth (Needham 1981: 238-9).

15. The inner domain of the capital was defined as dianfu, the outer domain as the princes' domains (houfu). The princely domains were protected by the zone of pacification (binfu), which was in turn surrounded by allied barbarians of the Yi which formed a semi-cultured zone (yaofu), along with the Rong and Di which formed a deserted zone (huangfu) of savagery. The five zones were concentric squares radiating from the Capital of the King.

16. The different ceremonial patterns were named and characterized hierarchically – ji for royal domains, si for princely domains, xiang for the zone of pacification, gong for the semi-cultured zone, and wang for the zone of cultureless savagery (Gu and Shi 1999: 56-7).

17. Systematic presentations of the cosmology of change are recorded in I Ching, the Classic of Changes, one of the oldest of the Chinese classic texts. I Ching contains presentations of a divinatory system. The origin of the divinatory system was legendarily traced back to the age of the "three Augusts". Most likely, however, it was developed in Zhou, from 1,000 B.C or before, and thus was known as Zhouyi, the Zhou Book of Change.
18. As Granet continues: "There were three procedures of enumerating the Elements. The first of the procedures seems to have derived from the lay-out of the templum; the Elements (which were Directions) were arranged in a cross, the N-S branch being drawn first and begun from the bottom (North), the horizontal branch E-W drawn second, being started from the left (East). That produced the following numbering and order: 1(=6=North) Water; 2(=7=South) Fire; 3 (=8=East) Wood; 4 (=9=West) Metal; 5 (Centre) Earth. The second procedure appears to derive from the Calendar's order of movement round the square mansion; the Elements were in the following sequence: Wood (=Spring, beginning of the year); Fire (=Summer); Earth (=Centre-pivot of the year); Metal (=Autumn); Water (=Winter). The Elements being enumerated in the order of the sequence of the Seasons they symbolized, theory had it that the order must be that of a regular succession in a cyclic form. According to this theory, called the mutual production of the elements, Wood (the Virtue of Wood) endangered Fire (the Virtue of Fire), Fire engendered Earth..., Water engendered Wood. A third arrangement opposed the Elements direction by direction in the order W-E-N-S Centre=Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, Earth. The corresponding theory was that the elements conquer one another in the opposite order to that in which they are enumerated (…)" (1975: 106)

19. Legendarily, Mingtang was established in the archaic time by the inventor of agriculture – the sage-king named Shen Nong. Realized as a temple or palace in the eleventh century B.C. in Zhou (Zhang Yibing 2005: 441-62), it was surrounded by a circular pool and covered with a round roof and it was the place where the cyclic work of the calendar was supposed to be consummated.

20. As Granet puts it, "The circulation of the Son of Heaven about the Ming T'ang is assimilated by tradition to the circulation of the mythical sovereigns of the Empire. Both ought to be carried out in such a way that the king, placed at the east, promulgates the times and ordinances of spring; at the south, the times and ordinances of summer, etc." (1930: 381).

21. It does not mean that there was no continuity between Shang and Zhou. In fact, in both dynasties, the supreme political leaders were known as wang or king. The characters Huang ("august one" or "god-king") and Di ("sage king" or "sovereigns") were used separately to refer to the "Three August Ones" and "Five Sovereigns" (Sanhuang Wudi). These were the mythological rulers. Attributing supreme authority (Huang and Di) to the legendary sage kings and fusing them with cosmic
supremacies, both Shang and Zhou conceptualized their own kingships as the intermediaries between Heaven and Earth. In other words, unlike the early imperial dynasties, neither Shang nor Zhou equalized the "king" with the "august".

22. Hence, when King Wen laid down the foundation of Zhou kingdom in the Western region, he delivered announcements and cautions to the princes of various regions, and to all his high officers, with their assistants, and the managers of affairs, saying, morning and evening "At sacrifices spirits should be employed". He said, "When Heaven was sending down its favouring decree, and laying the foundations of (the eminence of) our people, (spirits) were used only at the great sacrifices. When Heaven sends down its terrors, and our people are thereby greatly disorganized and lose their virtue, this may be traced invariably to their indulgence in spirits" (tr. Legge 1889: 176).

23. The reform was aimed at strictly controlling the expansion of the pride of the kings, princes, and aristocrats. As Li Ji tells us, in conducting Li, "Pride should not be allowed to grow; the desires should not be indulged; the will should not be gratified to the full; pleasure should not be carried to excess". Rather, Li should be organized to create desired socializing effects: "Men of talents and virtue can be familiar with others and yes respect them; can stand in awe of others and yet love them." (tr. Legge 1885: 62)

24. Archaic Shi simply refers to adult members of any particular clan. In Shang, Shi came to connote noble members of the clan who combined the roles of warriors, diviners, historians, and officials. In Zhou, the Shi relied heavily on lineage regulations (zongfa) to gain their social statuses and were keenly involved in political affairs of the state. They asserted their distinction by way of "channelling the family and the country" (zhiguo yu zhijia). In the court, they were assigned to deal with state affairs. As authors and bearers of civilization, they were also known as junzi or gentlemen who wrote both rites (li) and customs (su), and as a result inscribed their distinction into history. Operating on the levels of state, lineage, morality, and intellectual capability, the Shi promoted ideas of "respecting the respectable, loving the beloved, and recognizing the virtuous and capable" (zunzun, qinqin, xianxian). They inscribed into the text-ritual, three categories of men – Jun (King), Fu (Father), and Shi (Teacher) (Yang 1999: 475-80).

25. The Eastern Zhou period started in the first year of the reign of Pingwang, 770 B.C. Traditional historiography divides Eastern Zhou
into two periods, the Chun Qiu (Springs and Autumns) and the Zhan Guo (Warring States). The end of the Eastern Zhou period is either placed at the death of Nanwang of Zhou in 256 B.C. or extended to the unification of China under Qin at 221 B.C.

26. The connection rested either on genealogical tie, implying identity of family name, or on a political tradition of intermarriages. Though connections of the kind were always represented as existing from time immemorial, they became somewhat different now. During the Eastern Zhou, for instance, "The house of Wu (Kiang-su) is supposed to have issued from the same ancestors as the royal house of the Chou [Zhou]; but Wu is an outlying overlordship, and one of its ambassadors calls the central overlordships (Chong Kuo [Zhongguo]) which he visits, 'superior' overlordships (Shang Kuo) He qualifies as hsia [Xia] – the name of the first dynasty, but this word signifies civilized – the music which is used in them." (Granet 1930: 76)

27. Curiously, the period coincided with the time when the Zhou chronology began to be accurate.

28. Prior to the expansion of the fiefs, Zhou society relied on systemic hierarchies of worship or rites to ensure the cohesion of the vast country and the pre-eminence of the royal line. By then, the monarchy declined along with the localization of the royal geographical dispersal of principalities which were thinly held together by way of rites. The fiefs' tendency to compete over the extensions of territories impaired the balance between the cities – in fact they had become city-centred states (Gernet 1982: 53-61).

29. The Jin took seventeen such kingdoms by military action and made thirty-eight surrenders. The Chu and the Qin annexed thirty-nine and twenty respectively (Gu and Shi 2000: 44-5).

30. During Zhou, astrological and topographical correspondences had been made to constitute the star-fields (xingye) for the external areas, and these correspondences have also been applied to define the cosmic situations of the administrative "prefectures" (zhou) (Lin 1993 [1934]: 832-5).

31. Historian Simian Lu (1985 [1938]: 448-50) has compared the polities of Shang and Zhou. Lu points out that while Shang was more heavenly, Zhou and Xia were comparatively more "down to earth". Lu, adopting much of Han historical interpretations, implies a contrast of polities: while Shang's polity was kingly, Zhou's world was deeply embedded in
kinship and ceremonies. Each of the dynasties had its own paradox. Shang's cosmology was kingly, but it relied on the queen's brothers to organize the army and the court. Zhou's kingship was based on the principle of alliance, its cosmology being more "horizontal", but it was also Zhou that first established the Chinese hereditary system (1985 [1938]: 449).

References


Directions, Seasons, and Alterities: Early Chinese Political Cosmology 57


Pieter Bruegel and Carlo Ginzburg: The Debatable Land of Renaissance Dreams

LOUISE S. MILNE

ABSTRACT. Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s pictures of witches and dreams are discussed in relation to Carlo Ginzburg’s studies of the benandanti (do-gooders, good walkers) and the mythology of the witches’ Sabbath. The shared context for these is dream-culture as a "debatable land" – a socially contested territory. The visions of the benandanti were based on traditional structures of dreaming and carnivalesque imagery; Bruegel’s innovative visual rhetoric for this material demonstrates how these traditions about fantasy and the spirit world could decompose, condense and undergo category-shifts under the pressure of religious and cultural reformation; in the case of night-walking, effectively nocturnalisation and demonization. Ginzburg’s account of these changes can be updated to consider them as part of a wider redefinition of dream-culture, carried out through the reconfiguration of composite motifs in existing traditions and templates for representing dreams and the folk imaginary in the Renaissance.

KEYWORDS: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, dreams, nightmares, witches, witches’ Sabbath, carnival, benandanti, Carlo Ginzburg

My Lords there is a grounde called the Debatable grounde, lyeing betwene the [two] realme[s] wherein there is no strife for the boundes of the same...from the sonne rising to the sonne setting, [but] it is and always has bene at the likkes of the Wardenis, lieutenants and subjects of ayther realme, to brenne, destroye, waiste, take and drive awey all suche...as there shal be founde, so wilfully kept under cover of night. (Lord Dacre, English Warden of the Marches, letter to the Scots Privy Council, 6th July 1517; cf. Pease 1913: 58-9)

Zou ar be cum neutral men, lyik to the ridars that dueillis on the debatabil landis...
(Robert Wedderburn, The Complaynt of Scotland 1872 [1549])

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The Reformation signalled a great rearrangement of otherworldly beliefs, involving orthodox and folk views on dreams (Gell 1974: 17-26; Le Goff 1988: Part 5; Muchembled 1993: 140-2). Urgent political, religious, and magico-scientific concerns impelled warring rulers, scholars, merchants and priests to scrutinise anew what the folk said, thought and believed about the world. The dream-culture of the West thus comes into view in the sixteenth century as a debatable land, an arena of cultural struggle for the hearts and minds of the people. This essay examines representations of dream-imagery and rhetoric – from folk-culture, visual art and trial records – which both document aspects of such struggles, and reveal how they were carried out; for conflicts in dream-discourse, as we will see, make visible the complex structure of its constituent parts.

The most famous proponents of Renaissance dream-culture – and almost its only peasants – were the benandanti ("good walkers" or "do-gooders"), Friulian villagers with a tradition of shared seasonal visions about fighting witches during sleep. Their mythos has connections with other Europe-wide traditions about night-riding – such as the Sicilian donne di fuori (Sicilian dialect: donnì di forì = Ladies from Outside; Henningsen 1993; 2009), the Scottish seely wights (celly vichtys = blessed ones; Goodare 2012), the Hungarian tündéres (fairy magicians; Pócs 2009) – and the ability of the spirit to leave the body during sleep, to visit otherworldly destinations and magical beings. The benandanti came to the attention of the religious authorities between 1580 and 16301; catalysing the assimilation of their belief-system into the powerful ruling narrative of the witches’ Sabbath. They came to our attention in 1966, through Carlo Ginzburg’s ground-breaking study, Night Battles (1985 [1966]; hereafter NB). Among other things, their trial records provide important data about a dream-culture (Schmitt 1999: 274-5; Milne 2006: 66-7), caught in the act of decomposing and hardening into new shapes.

Ginzburg’s book points out that the clerical and civil inquisitors were not the only group to have trouble comprehending the accounts of the benandanti. As interest rose in witchcraft, jobbing artists given the task of producing woodcuts to illustrate refurbished old texts about legendary night-travellers made no attempt to depict these activities directly, despite detailed descriptions in the accompanying texts. Instead, in these printed editions, we see printers repeatedly choosing standard Classical and carnivalesque imagery (figs. 1a-d), recycling stock woodcuts they
had to hand. The question of how to represent night-riders visually evidently presented some difficulty. These difficulties were solved, after
a fashion, some twenty years before the benandanti enter the historical record, and about 800 miles to the north. From c. 1560, the Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1529-69) pioneered the representation of folk culture in fine art. While most of his peers wanted folk culture repressed, reformed or put to new ends (cf. Burke 1978; Scribner 1981; Muchembled 1993), Bruegel was professionally interested in how it worked as a semiotic system: how folk images, practices and beliefs are structured and what happens to these structures if their components are taken apart. Bruegel’s approach was deconstructive: he derived comic, surreal and uncanny effects from folkloric imagery (Milne 2013: Ch. 1-4). In one strange masterpiece in particular, his Dulle Griet (c. 1562; fig. 2), Bruegel painted a martial giant female peasant, veiled as if in trance, sleep-walking before the gates of hell, attended by a crowd of carnivalesque women and monsters, inside a phantasmagoric landscape (Milne 2013: Ch. 2). Bruegel’s sources here include nursery stories, proverbial imagery and carnival customs, but he cast the whole scene in recognisably dream-like terms, using stylistic conventions originating in Humanist mythography, itself deeply preoccupied with dreams and nightmares. Bruegel’s folkloric material was also experiencing the pressures of religious and cultural reform; and his art is a type of literate scrutiny, locating certain elements of folk culture firmly in the world of dreams.

Taken together, these three cases illuminate a web of beliefs connecting dreams, carnivals, witches and popular psychology: a rough map of the debatable land. Inquisitors, printers and artists were interested in broadly similar areas of dream-culture for different reasons. They faced both the standard issues of translation between oral and literate cultures, and more specialised problems arising from the clash of folk and orthodox belief systems. However, the "puzzles" which result in each case are puzzling in analogous ways. In the benandanti testimonies, woodcut illustrations and in Bruegel’s art, certain elements are emphasised and others skewed or repressed in translation from one frame of reference to another. It is important to note that Ginzburg’s group of "witches" – whose media are solely oral – express variations on their folk mythos. The benandanti move the stress from one element to another, inconsistent and dream-like, in the course of their testimony.

Through the process of interrogation, the inquisitors worked to remove this variability. The woodcut illustrators replace it with an
Figure 2. Pieter Bruegel, *Dulle Griet*, c. 1562, Oil on wood, 117 x 162 cm. Musée Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp (photograph © 2006. Austrian Archive / SCALA, Florence).
Figure 2a. Pieter Bruegel, *Dulle Griet*, detail: Griet and women overcoming devils. Figure 2b. Pieter Bruegel, *Dulle Griet*, detail: woman pulls breeches from a bending male.
orthodox iconography. Bruegel’s *Griet*, however, addresses the issue of variability directly. The painting renders its elusive subject matter in a manner that is deconstructive as well as constructive, and thus provides us, despite the distances in time and space, with the tools to unpack the other groups of evidence. So let us start with the discourses of dream-culture as Bruegel shaped them in this picture.

**BRUEGEL’S SUBJECTS**

The *Dulle Griet* was produced – undoubtedly for a private home – in Antwerp around 1563\(^4\). As a young man, Bruegel travelled and worked in Italy (c. 1552-4), settling in Antwerp and Brussels in the 1550s and 60s. Bruegel's cosmopolitan cities of printers and scholars were directly engaged in the quarrels of the Reformation; his known patrons were merchants and high government officials (Gibson 2006: 73-6)\(^5\). A greater contrast could not be imagined with the rural backwater of the Friulian villagers.

In this *milieu*, Bruegel engineered a change in representational practice, decisively turning the focus of Western art away from the depiction of gods and saints. His position in the mainstream canon rests on the two new genres he defined: landscape and peasant life (both foundational for the *Griet*). Previous generations constructed landscapes effectively by "cutting and pasting" stock parts – for mountains, trees, rivers etc. – using templates from pattern books. Bruegel devised a different jigsaw: interlocking irregular parallelograms set along a horizontal axis, so that the resulting pattern generates illusory space (cf. fig. 3)\(^6\). His renowned series of *Seasons* (1565; *Hunters in the Snow*;
Figure 3. Joannes and Lucas van Doetecum, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Large Alpine Landscape*, 1555-6. Etching with engraving, 36.8 x 46.8 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum, BM 1933,1209.16.

Figure 4. Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, *Luxuria*, 1558. Left, middle ground: a charivari procession. Engraving, 22.5 x 29.6 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum, BM 1880,0710.636

*The Return of the Herd*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, etc.) sets peasant activities at the centre of panoramic landscapes, elevating their significance. He thus presented both peasant life and cosmos as
appropriate subjects for monumental art. These concerns are plainly related: the earth itself, as a living, co-extensive body, the folk who live and work on the land, and their (apparently) age-old seasonal pursuits and pastimes.

Bruegel innovated, in other words, by breaking his subjects down into component parts, then altering their scale and relations to each other. This deconstructive approach was essential to Bruegel’s interest in dream-culture. He revived and reinvented the oneiric imagery developed by Jerome (Hieronymous) Bosch, using it to illuminate earthy psychological folk metaphor and idiom. He conceived a series of *Vices* as dreamscapes – another visual predecessor for the *Griet – Luxuria*, for instance, with a swarm of monstrous manikins, some of whom enact a charivari procession (fig. 4), the folk punishment for an unequal marriage. Ethnography, landscape and the world of the folk imagination converged in the *theatrum mundi* paintings: *The Battle between Carnival & Lent* (fig. 5; 1559), *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559; Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), and *Children's Games* (1560; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). *Fall of the Rebel Angels* (1562; Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels) turns Boschian imagery into a tongue-in-cheek visual riddle: the rebel angels (wingless, insectoid and egg-laying) are formal mutations of good angels (sexless winged humans) (Milne 2013: Ch 1). Contemporary with this, came his *Griet* (fig. 2): a fully dreamlike theatrum mundi picture; a folkloric subject, set in a panoramic landscape, visualised through the oneiric Boschian register and presented in monumental form.

**THE BENANDANTI**

Bruegel's capacity to perceive folk culture as in some sense surreal brings us to Ginzburg's work on the situation of otherworldly folkloric beliefs at the end of the 16C. These are set out mainly in *Night Battles* (1985 [1966]), and in his later *Ecstasies* (1990 [1989]; hereafter *Ecs.*). In *Night Battles*, a group of peasants, living in Friulian villages, share a collective fantasy. Those born with the caul (that is, with a piece of the amniotic sac over their eyes) are gifted with a kind of second sight. As adults, they can meet in their dreams, to "go forth at night" in spirit, to battle witches in the skies above their fields. They fight with fennel
stalks (or iron rods, for scraping out ovens); the witches fight with sticks of sorghum (a cereal crop). These people called themselves the benandanti. Though witches and benandanti could be male or female, the male benandanti saw themselves as a kind of militia. They said they engaged in these nocturnal excursions four times a year, during the Ember Days, at the changes of the seasons (equivalent to the old Rogation ceremonies; Mershman 1909) for the good of the harvest. Their evidence was not consistent on this point; some seemed actually to "go forth" more often than this, for various purposes. First noted by the authorities in 1570, the peculiar beliefs of the benandanti were largely ignored, on and off, for almost fifty years, by a series of baffled local inquisitors. Eventually some of them were caught up in the tide of witch-hunting fever rising over Europe, and brought to trial for heresy in the 1620s. From the records of their various interrogations and trials, Ginzburg reconstructed their stories.

Subsequent scrutiny of Early Modern records revealed many other night-walking groups and individuals sharing key *topoi* with the

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**Figure 5.** Pieter Bruegel, *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, 1559. Oil on panel, 118 x 164.5 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien oder KHM, Vienna. Inv GG 1016.
benandanti, almost always brought to light through witchcraft prosecutions. This evidence is often fragmentary (e.g. the seely wights); it may concern individual as opposed to collective dream experiences (the "Shaman" of Obersdorf acted alone, albeit clearly drawing on communal traditions – cf. Behringer 1998; cf. Thies the werewolf – De Blécourt 2007a), or involve nocturnal carnivalesque behaviour rather than dreams and the supernatural (e.g. the Guernsey "werewolves"; Ogier 1998). But in general the imagery of carnivals and dreams is the link here to Bruegel's art, at the opposite end of Germanic Europe, and a decade or so earlier.

CARNIVAL AND THE CARNIVALESQUE

The most straightforward shared context for painter and night-walker is Carnival itself – the most visible of the seasonal festivals – with its feasting, sports, reversals and masquerade. In medieval Europe, this rite of passage was often represented as an allegorical battle between Old Man Winter and Lady Summer or Spring (NB: 24-5); Ginzburg saw this as a foundational myth for the benandante scenario. Bruegel put a version at the centre of his Carnival and Lent (fig. 5); his Prince Carnival is a fat butcher, jousting with Lady Lent, a scrawny old woman (cf. fig. 12c). The skyline changes from Winter to Spring; bare trees at left, green budding trees at right. In the town square, small groups enact a calendar of secular and religious festivals. These spiral around two small peasants in the centre (Everyman and his wife?), who head into the picture plane, following a fool with a dark lantern. The painting has a cartographic quality which has led many viewers to see it as a kind of document.

But the Carnival and Lent is not a record of the traditional seasonal calendar. By Bruegel's day, Carnival in the towns had been long since taken over by urban professionals, in the countryside, Imperial Catholic forces and Protestant agitators tried to rein in traditional public media of feasts and games. We must "give the common man something better [to think about] than Eilenspiegel's tricks and suchlike knavery", remarked the Humanist Cornelis van Ghistele (Gibson 1981: 430; Weevers, 67-87; Eringa, 25-50, 69-73). Bruegel represents an imaginary Carnival, of amateurish innocence, with handmade costumes and foods, interweaving
Christian and profane festivities\textsuperscript{12}. His \textit{personae} of Carnival and Lent inhabit an idealised harmonic space between pub and church. The benandante vision is similarly syncretic: they fight for Jesus, against witches; they enact a pagan struggle for the harvest; they also partake in carnivalesque revels.

Excess of any kind was central to real-life festivals\textsuperscript{13}. The inn sign of the Blue Boat in Bruegel’s picture obliquely refers to a prominent aspect of late medieval carnivals: the rampaging societies of young men, liveried or in motley, who often organised the celebrations\textsuperscript{14}. Bruegel’s \textit{Battle} is, by contrast, a muted and ordered place. But in two later designs, he transposed the hell-raising aspects of Carnival to a supernatural and dreamlike context, taking the legend of St James and the magician Hermogenes (1565; figs. 6a and 6b) as a pretext to explore carnivalesque commotion. Thus, heaps of unruly demons drink and perform acrobatics and fairground tricks in \textit{The Fall of the Magician} (fig. 6a; cf. Milne 2013: Ch.2).

There is an interesting classificatory divide between the serious heart of a formalised allegorical battle (the narrative or legible part of Carnival), and its attendant frivolous privileges (the apparently marginal or non-legible practice of revelry). Carnival (and lesser carnivals throughout the year, such as St John’s Eve in colder climates) often centres on a simple drama or story – a struggle between Winter and Summer, the crowning of a May Queen or Carnival King – which the participants themselves point to as the \textit{raison d’être} of the event. But it is also characterised by the exercise of license. License is presented as less important, but was of course quite as central to the experience and meaning of any kind of Carnival as any core narrative; indeed, on its own, it could constitute a kind of ritual enactment. Calvinist authorities in Jersey railed against those who "run by night '\textit{en resnerie}' [i.e. in harness or livery], masked and with cudgels...from which issue an infinity of debauchery and scandals, and also those who dance in public" (Ogier 1998:55). In the Channel Islands, \textit{vouarouverie} (werewolfery), referred to young men on the rampage, sometimes dressed in horse skins; in the Netherlands similarly it carried a connotation of sexual deviancy (cf. De Blécourt 2007c). The Livonian werewolf, Thies of Kaltenbrun – whose trial is cited by Ginzburg as a parallel to those of the benandanti (NB: 29-31) – interrogated in 1691, told the judges that he
Figure 6a. Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, *The Fall of the Magician*, 1565. Engraving, 22.2 x 28.8 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum, BM 1866,0407.11.

Figure 6b. Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, *St. James and the Magician Hermogenes*, 1565. Engraving, 22.2 x 29 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum, BM 1851,1213.90.

Figure 6c. Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel, *St. James and the Magician Hermogenes*, detail: witches mounted on monsters and broomsticks.
"could pass on his ability by toasting someone... breathing three times into the jug, and saying 'you will become like me.' If the other person took the jug, the ability to become a werewolf would pass to him" (De Blécourt 2007a: 50).

The accounts of the benandanti follow this pattern of narrative-plus-license when, in progressive interrogations, they supplement their core story of seasonal struggles against witches for the crops, with tales of swoops on local cellars and revelry on the way back from the battle in the air. Other types of folk night-traveller do the same. In his sleep, the Alpine horse-wrangler Chonrad Stoeckhlin of Oberstdorf (1549-87) joined the joyous society of the Nachtschar (night phantoms), at whose feasts there were dancing and wonderful music (Behringer 1998: 35-8, 41-2). So strong is this motif of the party that Henningsen (1991/2; 2009) suggests we call these dream-gatherings white Sabbaths.

It is clear that the revelry imagery naturally borrows its forms from the daylight culture, and most visibly from Carnival. Women’s carnivals – in Northern Europe, Women's Thursday, or Old Woman's Shrovetide –
Vrowkens-Avond (Brussels, January 19th), Vrowkens zaterdag (Bruges, Saturday before Mardi Gras) – are described (by male commentators) entirely in terms of revelry and masquerade (Milne 1996: 207-30; 2013: Ch. 2). These occasions were often the fête of the local midwives’ guild, whose mandate, of course, was to bring souls successfully from one world to the next (cf. Greilsammer 1991: 285-323). In the Palatinate, midwives were believed to "fetch the children’s souls from a cave, the 'devil’s kitchen,' home of the 'evil woman''" (Duerr 1985 [1978]: 23, 192-3). Women in general acted as domestic psychopomps, presiding over birth and death, waking and sleeping. Women benandanti were accused of sighting processions of the dead and mediating with ghosts (NB: II).

Male carnival practices – traditional or urban, sober or drunken – show signs of age-set structuring. Age-set systems are still visible and elaborate in African societies (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1969 [1940]: Ch. VI); late medieval European society bore traces of this kind of organisation (Davis 1975: 107-14). By analogy with the Masai, Lyle (1997: 63-71) relates such systems to wider cosmological structures with Indo-European roots. The association of Carnival as a rite of passage with age-set organisation is clear (cf. van Gennep 1960 [1908]: VI). Such groups kept unmarried young men out of trouble, harnessing their energies to useful or harmless employments such as archery or art, regulating their "license" to a few occasions. Diverse types of such fraternities developed in the bigger towns, among which were elite carnival societies such as the Netherlandish Company of the Blue Boat (Enklaar 1933; Minnaert 1943: 9), referred to in Bruegel’s inn-sign (fig. 5)

Among the male benandanti too, age-set formulae framed their activities: it was when they came of age that those born with a caul over the face were "called" at night to join the fights, as the benandante Monduco testified:

One enters at the age of twenty and is freed at forty, if he wishes.... [at] the age of twenty they are summoned by means of a drum the same as soldiers, and they are obliged to respond. (NB: 6)

However, the fact that the arena of this seasonal drama was not day but night shaped the ways in which the experience could be conceptualised.
The benandanti were forbidden to discuss their activities, on pain of receiving a beating from their fellows during the night (physically or in a dream; NB: 66, 68, 85, 87-8, 91, etc). Remembering separately, and interrogated separately, individuals had to fill in the details of the experience from their own memories and imaginations. Each then told the "same" story with a mass of contradictory details and a sense of shifting visuality. In 1575, the benandante Gasparutto produced this account:

[we] fought, played, leaped about, and rode different animals... the women beat the men who were with them with sorghum stalks, while the men had only bunches of fennel... [that night] they crossed several great bodies of water in a boat, and... one of the companions became afraid because a fierce wind had come up, and the waters were rough, and he remained behind the others... [and] they were in the countryside not far away, and they jousted, and busied themselves with their usual pastimes (NB: 1-2)

(N.B. the significance of women beating their men is an oddity we shall return to).

Five years later, Monduco added his own details: the gatherings involved "a great multitude, at times five thousand and more... some who belong to the village know each other and others do, however not". Their captain, he said, was a married man from Cologne, aged about twenty-eight, "very tall, red-bearded, pale complexioned, of noble birth." Monduco described the various flags carried by each side: the banner of the benandanti was white silk, gilded, with a lion, that of the witches, "red silk with four black devils, gilded". Gasparutto, questioned again the day after Monduco, stated that their captain was from Verona, a plump peasant of average height, with a red beard. According to him, the "company" numbered six, their banner was white and gilded; that of the witches, yellow, with four devils on it (NB: 8-9). Describing the leader, Gasparo says, "I do not know him, but when we are all together, we hear people say, 'This is the captain,' and almost in a dream we see a man larger than the others" (NB: 84). Judging by these accounts, male benandante experience expressed itself in terms of recognisable forms of
male adolescent activities: sports, jousts, battles, flags, captains and regiments.

The similarities of these accounts, as Ginzburg recognised, are striking; but the differences are interesting too. The characteristics of the banners, and of the captain, shift around: the flag is either red or yellow; the captain is from Cologne or Verona, tall or middling, fat or thin, noble or peasant. What the travellers saw when they got there varied, as did their numbering and description of activities. Some spoke of a great field, others of crossing a wide river, or fighting in front of local churches or countryside. The central activity might be described as jousting, or beating each other with sticks: "We fought, we pulled each other’s hair, we punched each other, we threw each other to the ground and fought with fennel stalks" (Menichino, NB: 75). Revelry at the gathering – eating; dancing; and the making of "marriages" – appears in some accounts. Revelry afterwards was more consistently described:

[we] congregate in certain places to perform marriages, to dance and eat and drink; and on their way home the evil-doers go into the cellars to drink, and then urinate in the casks. If the benandanti did not go along, the wine would be spilt.

on our way home, I wish I had a scudo for every time we drank in the wine cellars, entering through the cracks and getting on the casks. We drank with a pipe, as did the witches; but after they had drunk, they pissed in the casks. (Monduco; NB: 2, 13)

when the warlocks and witches set out it is to do evil and they must be pursued by the benandanti to thwart them, and also to stop them from entering the houses, because if they do not find clear water in the pails they go into the cellar and spoil the wine with certain things, throwing filth in the bungholes. (Gasparutto; NB: 2)

This germ of the party – especially the "making of marriages" – was, of course, what the inquisitors seized on as analogous to the Sabbath; thirty years later this element had swollen to fill the whole account (NB: IV).

This kind of play had recognisable tropes and structures, like the frolics among the wine-casks. According to Olaus Magnus (the exiled
Catholic bishop of Uppsala), writing in 1555, Baltic werewolves also, "go into beer cellars, and there they drink out some tuns of beer… When finished, they piled the empty barrels on top of each other in the middle of the cellar" (De Blécourt 2007a: 61). Scottish witches similarly repeat the same trope; thus Isobel Gowdie:

> q[uhe]n we goe to any hous we tak meat and drink, and we fill wp the barrellis w[i]th owr oven pish again [when we go to any house we take meat and drink and fill up the barrels with our own piss]

(1662; Goodare 2012: 210; cf. on fairy feasting Pócs 2009: 383-4; on the motif of barrels-cellars/caves, Ostorero 2008: 20-1)

In a festival context, this could be a game played by members of a drinking club; in a household tale, it could be an action (typically performed at night) by a Puck, changeling, or goblin.

Detail varies in the "main" story, and remains more consistent in the home-coming revelry. Though he does not directly say so, Ginzburg in 1966 evidently felt that such variations could be accounted for either through the kind of discrepancies to be expected in any eye-witness narratives of the same phenomena, or by assuming that the institution was in breakdown. While these may indeed be contributory factors, the shifting imagery of the central narrative, combined with the relative fixity of its entrances and exits, deserves more attention in its own right. This structure is a constant stylistic marker, characteristic in many ways of the prevailing constitution of dream narratives. It resembles, for instance, a more dispersed arrangement of the elements of the traditional nightmare: an encounter during sleep with a demon who has a chaotic or flexible "interior" (a shape-shifting body), and fixed extremities or points of attack (teeth and claws) (Milne 2008: 177-83).

The converse of this, a structural inversion of the same elements, concerns people whose birth during liminal time means that they themselves become active monstrous attackers:

in the Dutch provinces of Frisia and Groningen, one of seven sons would become a werewolf, whereas one of seven girls would become a nightmare. In northern Germany, children born during the week of the feast of St Gallus (mid-October, equivalent to the
start of winter), or during other liminal periods like Twelfth Night or St John’s Day, would either become nightmares if they were girls, or werewolves if they were boys.
(De Blécourt 2007c: 35)

In Slavic and Germanic cultures, such mora creatures derived their power of night-travelling from being born with a caul (Pócs 1999: 31-6).17

THE BENANDANTI AND DREAMS

Consider the first of these fixed points in the benandante narrative: the method of travel. Here motifs familiar from folk tradition enter the picture. All witnesses asserted that the spirit left the body sleeping. In 1591, the benandante Menichino said that he went out at night in the form of smoke. Chonrad Stoeckhlin had no choice about going with die Nachtschar; his body stayed wherever it was when his spirit took off, mainly at night, and, if he left it lying on its side, sometimes he could only re-enter with great pain (Behringer 1998: 22-3). Monduco mentioned travelling "on the backs of animals"; several women spoke of the spirit leaving in the form of an animal (NB: 17). According to Gaspurutto’s wife Maria, testifying in October 1580, "These benandanti say that when they leave their bodies their spirit resembles a little mouse." Crezia of Pieve San Paolo, interrogated in 1589, described "a witch called Gianna. One day she fell asleep and I saw a rat come out of her mouth. It was her spirit leaving for I know not where" (cf. Lecouteux, 2003: 91). This means of astral locomotion seems to start in European folklore with the famous story of King Guntram (Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards 3.34), where the king’s soul in the form of a "small animal" leaves his sleeping body:

It slithered to the tiny stream flowing nearby [and] wanted to cross. The king’s companion... drew his sword from its sheath and laid it across the brook. The little animal then crossed the water on the sword and crawled into a hole in the hillside and fell asleep. After a bit, it returned, ran across the sword-bridge and back into the king’s mouth. The king woke, and said to his
companion: "I must tell thee my dream and the wondrous vision I had. I saw a wide, wide river, and across it an iron bridge. I crossed the bridge and entered a cave in the side of a towering mountain. Inside, there were unheard of treasures, and the hoards of our ancestors." (German Legends of the Brothers Grimm 1981: 58)

The benandanti also speak of crossing water (naming the rivers Iudri, Cormor and Isonzo (NB: 2, 96, 129, 130); the Livonian werewolves (according to Thies) go "to the end of the sea" (De Blécourt 2007a: 49; cf. NB: 29). The change of scale (as we will see, a classic oneiric marker), the journey over water and the treasure all make their way into the Griet.

Bremmer (1983: 133-4) gives Danish and Dutch versions of this "wandering soul" story. The Danish one is set "in the haytime", when a group of people share an afternoon sleep; it includes the change of scale and treasure motifs. The Dutch one starts with a young couple courting in the evening (i.e. probably at midsummer). The "wandering soul" and "revels in cellars" are thus standard topoi – liminal in different ways – attached as prologue and epilogue, or entrance and exit, to the more mobile central benandanti dream-story (cf. Behringer 1998: 146-51, on bricolage and the recombination of "mythical fragments" in Stoeckhlin’s visions).

How exactly could the collective dream-experience of the benandanti be inculcated? What social and psychological mechanisms maintained and supported the tradition? This is not a question much addressed in Night Battles 18. Ginzburg, even in 1966, thought that he was looking at the remnants of a prehistoric cult; at one point he speaks of the benandanti as being "prisoners of their own myth" (NB: 83). The main thrust of his book is to show that this "cult" enters the historical record and is assimilated into the stronger narrative of the Sabbath, under pressure from the Inquisition and clerical authorities. Leaving aside for a moment the tricky nomenclature of "cult", there are aspects of the benandante scenario which become clearer if we think about them in relation to dreamculture.

Consider the testimony on initiation. Like much else in folk cultural transmission, the ground is laid in infancy. When an infant is born with the caul, the women of the family publicise the fact. Some preserve the caul as a talisman. Whether they do this or not, the child’s potential for
visionary experience is publically established. Later on, as the child comes of age, an uncle or older man tells the candidate to expect the summons: "One of my uncles, Olivo della Nota, who is dead now, told me that I was born with the caul, but even though I never had one I went as in a dream into the woods, over meadows and fields to pasture animals, and into briar patches" (Menichino; NB: 75). A child called Tin is born with the caul, and the women of his family keep it. He testifies that Gasparo told him: "Tin, I have been calling you, and you have not come; and if you do not come this first time, you will never be able to again." Others commented, "Perhaps... it is only because he is still a boy that he is not yet gone out." (NB: 83). The future benandante is thus prepared by friends and relatives to expect the dream at puberty.

Further acculturation is accomplished through other means. The cowherd Menichino described the circumstances of his induction into the group, around 1580, by one Tamburlino, as the two walk together, "in single file, on the way to Tisanotta [a neighbouring village] where we were going to have some fun, and it was winter, on the road at night after supper. He added, he had talked about these things with many people, discussing them like that at night, walking single file, as was customary" (NB: 76-7). Does he mean that it was customary to discuss things of this kind, when walking in this way, or merely that it was customary to walk in this way at night? The paths between villages, of course, were probably so narrow as to make single file natural. But it is interesting that such conversations happened in such a context – at night, in the middle of nowhere, listening to a faceless voice from behind or in front – and that the topic of nocturnal spirit-walking would be deemed suitable for this situation. Menichino continues:

I went on these three days because others told me to... the first one to tell me to go was Giambattista Tamburlino... he informed me that he and I were benandanti, and that I had to go with him. And when I replied that I would not go, he said "when you have to come, you will come." And to this I declared, "You will not be able to make me". And he, in turn, insisted "You will have to come anyway, one goes as though in a smoky haze, we do not go physically," and said that we had to go and fight for the faith, even though I kept saying I did not want to go. And a year after these conversations I dreamed that I was in Josaphat's field [Joel
3.2, the field of Judgment - LM], and the first time was the eve of St Matthias, during the Ember days; and I was afraid, and it felt as if I was in a field, wide, large and beautiful: and it had a scent, that is it emitted a good odour, and then there appeared to be flowers and roses in abundance (NB: 75)

The benandante visionary capacity thus seems to be inculcated culturally and unconsciously on so many levels that the subject ends up experiencing it even against his conscious wishes. In this sense, the scenario is what the Navajo would call a "strong dream" (Morgan 1932: 390-406; D'Andrade 1961: 296-332); that is, a memorable dream with true mythic content. The Christian elements of the benandanti scenario – the saint’s days, the Old Testament location – may be more important than they seem in stabilising the vision.

Ekirch’s research on early modern sleeping patterns identified a lost category of experience relevant to the timing and construction of benandanti visions:

Until the modern era, up to an hour or more of quiet wakefulness midway through the night interrupted the rest of most Western Europeans... Families rose from their beds [even] to visit close neighbors. Remaining abed, many persons also made love, prayed, and, most important, reflected on the dreams that typically preceded waking from their "first sleep." Not only were these visions unusually vivid, but their images would have intruded far less on conscious thought had sleepers not stirred until dawn... segmented slumber afforded the unconscious an expanded avenue to the waking world that has remained closed for most of the Industrial Age. (Ekirch 2001: 344)

According to the neurological studies of Wehr (1996: 319-40), "The intervening period [of] wakefulness possessed an endocrinology all its own [resembling] an altered state of consciousness not unlike meditation" (cf. Ekirch 2006: 304, n. 17). Ekirch comments, "the habit of awakening... allowed many to absorb fresh visions before returning to unconsciousness... their impact intensified by elevated levels of the hormone prolactin... there also would have been ample time for a dream to 'acquire its structure' from the initial 'chaos of disjointed images'"
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(Ekirch 2006: 322). And indeed Gasparutto explicitly says that he received his summons to the fight about the fourth hour of the night, at first sleep [*primo sonno*] (NB: 8, 156). This timing suggests that the ability to go forth was further boosted by the altered brain chemistry of this sleeping pattern.

The benandante vision may also be a kind of "lucid dreaming". This somewhat misleading term has been adopted to describe the condition wherein the dreamer subjectively feels that he or she can control the content of the dream (Domhoff 1985: 88-9; Green and McCreery 1994: Ch.1). In fact, as Domhoff (1985: 93) notes, reviewing the experimental evidence, it has proved difficult to get people to dream to order:

> These principles [for controlling dream-content – L.M.] work only when they are imbedded [*sic*] in a group context and advocated by social authorities who are in some way... trusted leaders or role models for those learning the principles.

Such conditions are indeed present in benandante acculturation. It helps also if we cease to think of the dream as happening actually during sleep, and recognise that it is constructed retroactively, as one wakes up, as a kind of virtual memory (Milne 2008: 198-9). If lucid dreaming is what is meant by this facility, people can indeed be trained to control the assemblage of dream content at this point (e.g. Green and McCreery 1994: 95-105), and it becomes much clearer how cultural expectations, motifs, imagery could be incorporated into the resulting dream-memory, according to local templates.

**DREAMS AND DREAM IMAGERY IN THE RENAISSANCE**

This brings us to the phenomena of dreaming and how these were conceptualised in the 16C, up to the point of the *Griet’s* composition and the benandanti interrogations. As I have discussed elsewhere (Milne 2013: Ch. 1), throughout the Middle Ages, meaningful dreams were thought of as originating from outside the dreamer, and ranked by the status of their occult source. So the purest and most trustworthy dreams came from God. Lower dreams of physical origin (*somnium naturale*) emanated from inside the dreamer, due to anxiety or illness, and
signified an excess of one of the humours (Milne 2007: Ch 1). In this class, we find the *phantasma* (nightmare), defined by Macrobius in his *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* (1952 [c. 400-30]: I.3):

[The dreamer – L.M.] seems to see crowding in on him strangely moving or swimming forms, distorted in appearance and out of all natural proportions in size, or he may experience the rushing in of tumultuously whirling kaleidoscopically changing things, either delightful or disturbing\(^{19}\).

These details appear in the folk narratives seen so far. The change of scale occurs in the mouse-soul dream stories, and in some benandante accounts (recall how Gasparo can identify the captain because he is huge, much larger than the others). The "tumultuously whirling" and "strangely moving or swimming forms" fit the different modes of transport to the field; also the commotion and the "delightful or disturbing things" when they get there. Menichino cannot quite see the flowers of the field of Jesophat, or his companions; he senses them:

I did not see the roses, because there was a sort of cloud and mist, I could only smell these flowers... I had the impression there were many of us together as though in a haze but we did not know one another, and it felt as if we moved through the air like smoke and that we crossed over water like smoke; and the entrance to the field seemed to be open, and I did not know anyone within, because there no-one knows anyone else. (NB: 75)

The vagueness here might be accounted for by differences in personality; Menichino may simply have had a less vivid – or less visual – imagination than, say, Gasparutto, and so be less skilled at construing his memory of the dream. Also, as he says, he doesn’t have his caul (NB: 75). The things he is clearest about are the fact that there was fighting, and that he was afraid.

Dreams involving fear – nightmares – were also regarded as a symptom of mental disturbance (disease), or demonic attack. The form of the attack-dream – by an incubus or *mara* – is relevant here. The ingredients of the traditional nightmare were: a violent supernatural
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attack, imagery of penetration, intense fear or emotional arousal (Milne 2008: 177-83, 195-9). This constellation appears, rearranged, in the benandanti dream-narratives: fear at the start, fighting in the middle, and commotion (revelry/arousal/"marriages") at the end. The references to being beaten if one speaks also evoke this pattern; as Gasparutto explained: he feared the witches, who would have attacked me in bed (NB: 8). And the benandanti eat garlic and fennel because they repel witches (NB: 24); more commonly, these smelly plants deter nightmares (Milne 2008: 178-9).

In Early Modern medical discourse, the phantasma, as a type of somnium naturale, was caused by an imbalance of humours. Depending on which humour was in surfeit, stereotyped visions of one kind or another could be expected. The early seventeenth-century poet Francis Hubert (in a long poem about the biblical dreamer, Joseph) repeats what everybody knows when he writes, "sanguine constitutions / will dreame of maskes, playes, revels, melody" (Egypt's Favourite. The History of Joseph... Hubert 1631, cf Ekirch 2006: 312). This fits the carnivalesque aspect of night-walkers' visions quite well. However, it was surfeits of black bile rather than blood that Renaissance doctors credited as having the most significant impact on dreams. "When it is all said", wrote Thomas Nashe, "melancholy is the mother of dreams, and of all terrors of the night" (1904-10 [1594]: 11). As a physical cause of diseased visions, melancholia acquired an influential repertoire of imagery (Klibansky et al. 1964; Milne 2013: Ch.1). Stock illustrations for melancholic visions\(^{20}\) were transmitted, on the Classical authority of Galen and others, into the 18C (Bundy 1927: 183-472; Durling 1961: 230-86; Jackson 1969: 365-84; Siegel 1971: 10-20):

The principal signs of melancholia in the blood are: fear without cause... dread... a kind of apprehension on account of things which are or are not... some... imagine themselves being crowned kings, or transformed into wolves, or into demons, or birds... (Avicenna 1969 [1546]: 3.18)

Excessive black choler causes dreams in which appear terrible monsters, apparitions, incubi and such (Villanova 1524: 14; Curry 1960: 222-3)
This melancholic repertoire evokes aspects of benandanti testimony: fear, smoke, attack in the night, ghosts. The same tradition, still alive in 1894, shaped an auctioneer’s description of Bruegel’s *Griet* as a *Phantastische Darstellung, Landschaft mit einer grossen Menge Spukgestalten* [fantastic landscape with a great host of ghosts] (De Coo 1966: 30). Dreams, continued Francis Hubert, "of dead bones, and gastly apparitions... are the true effects of melancholy" (Ekirch 2006: 312).

By the early sixteenth century, melancholic visions had interest and significance from a number of different viewpoints. Saturn, ruler of melancholia, became the presiding star of creative thought, following Marsilio Ficino (1989 [1489]: 1.3-7; Milne 2013: Introduction, Ch. 1). Melancholia was also implicated in the fantasies of women and witches. Northern artists developed the imagery in both these directions. For Dürer, Lady Melancholy was a gloomy Muse, under the sign of bat and star (fig. 7); for Lucas Cranach she was a patron of witch-like night travellers. Cranach depicts them inside a smoky cloud, equipped with rods and banners, riding goats and cats through the sky, in the corner of his great painting in Edinburgh (1532; figs. 8a and 8b). By the early 17C, such Sabbath-like details appear in the benandanti accounts of the next
generation. Thus in 1649, the herdsman Michele testified that he arrived on a goat to bring Bastiano Menos, not to fight, but to dance:

I asked him in the pasture if he wanted to come with me and the witches to the dance; he said yes, he would come... I said to him, "I shall come to call you at night, don’t be afraid, we shall go together." And so I did: the following Thursday I mounted my goat and went to find Bastiano who was in bed; I called him by name...: "Bastiano, do you want to come with me to the dance of the witches?" And he replied, "Yes, I do." I had another goat with me, and Bastiano mounted it and together we rode off to the dance of the witches in Santa Catarina’s field beyond the Cormor. (NB: 131-2)

Questioned separately, Menos said Michele was riding a cock and himself a hare (NB: 131); another case of dream-like blurring in the details. The two men evidently discussed the forthcoming ride over many conversations out in the pasture, alone and isolated with their animals.

As an artist, Bruegel could hardly have escaped knowing that melancholy was both the reigning humour of inspiration, and the physical cause of stereotyped surreal fantasies. We see this knowledge informing the Dulle Griet; a notably black, wet and fiery picture. By this time, everyone also knew what nightmares looked like, thanks to the enormous popularity of Boschian imagery. Designed to convey the atmosphere of places and events at the edges of time, this imagery was linked to dream fantasy in many areas of Humanist thinking (Milne 2013; Ch. 1): Lucretius (recently rediscovered; see e.g. Greenblatt 2011: Introduction) talks about the hybrid composition of dream creatures; Pico della Mirandola took Proteus as emblematic of the inner human landscape. This interest in dreams produced both a general rhetoric and an aesthetic. The rhetoric comes from the Neo-Platonic writers’ habit of regarding animal-human metamorphosis, and the forms of hybrid gods, as visual riddles (or rebuses) to be unfolded through the rhetorical techniques of explicatio and complicatio. The image of Venus, for instance, could be unfolded to produce the Three Graces (Wind 1968: 204-14). The methodology of "unfolding" more clearly "infolded" hybrid images, such as a siren, or mermaid, results in an infinitely expandable
sequence of linked images (see e.g. Milne 2006: 70-2). This helps explain, among other things, the drive towards visual proliferation in Boschian imagery. The aesthetic derives from Synesius of Cyrene, whose *De insomniis* Ficino translated in 1489. Synesius praises:

> visions in which these things which are united in nature are separated, and things separated in nature are united... It is no mean achievement to pass on to another something of a strange nature that has stirred in one's own soul, for [by] this phantasy things which are expelled from the order of being, and things which never in any possible way existed, are brought instead into being - nay, even things which have not a nature capable of existence... (1930 [c. 373-414]: 355)

This marked a sea-change in attitudes to dream-imagery. A century after Ficino, we sense that the benandanti are in accord with their times, in this if in nothing else, when they describe the wonder of their dream-visions: the brightly coloured banners, the fields filled with the smell of roses.

Sixteenth-century people, then, whatever their own views about witches or melancholics, had a varied repertoire for visualising dream-imagery, and a rationale for its exploration. The Macrobian dictum of "kaleidoscopically changing things, distorted and out of all natural proportions in size", was commonly used to represent oneiric matters (hence, for instance, the huge cat among Cranach’s choice of animal-steeds; fig. 8b; cf. fig. 12b)\(^2\). This resonated with folkloric rhetorics for representing the relationship between dream and reality as a dimensional shift – as in the tales of the mouse, the river and the treasure. So in fine art, in folklore, and in benandanti testimonies, we find the motif of humans riding animals normally too small to be used as steeds, such as hares or cats (NB: 3, 69, 80, 87, 89, 92, 101-2, 106, 131-2).

**SEEING THE DEAD IN THE NIGHT**

Protestants openly cast doubt on the efficacy and authority of the rituals which provided access to the dead. In outbreaks of mass iconoclasm, for instance, in Antwerp in 1566, images and relics of the saints – conduits
of occult power – were singled out and destroyed as non-efficacious (Crew 1978; Eire 1979, 1989; Milne 2013: Ch. 5); a visible symptom of widespread destabilisation of the occult cosmos. It became harder to say for certain where exactly the dead might have their being (cf. Rothkrug 2006; Milne 2013: Ch. 5). This wider common context connects Bruegel's *Griet* to the visions of the benandanti.

The dead, Ginzburg reminds us, featured largely in these visions (NB: 33-68). Why? If the benandanti were supposed to be concerned with fighting witches four times a year, why did sightings of traditional Processions of the Dead crop up in their testimony? If the benandanti "saw" these processions as part of the scenery of the otherworld, this implies that the dead were conceived of as patrolling the same ambiguous territory seen in dreams. We infer that a person born with the caul could in theory see any aspect of the invisible world, whether or not she or he participated in the (largely male) collective fantasy of the battle. The testimonies of women accused of being benandanti (evidently less likely to regard themselves as organised in terms of a militia), are peppered with references to seeing the dead – often recently deceased neighbours – in procession. In many cases it was the fact that bereaved neighbours were approaching these women for news about the dead that first set the Inquisitors on their trail. Ginzburg (Ecst.: II.1; II.4) eventually concluded that the Procession of the Dead was a key element in the wider benandanti mythos, a genuine pre-Christian survival. However, sticking with the Renaissance evidence for the moment, sightings of the dead do seem to multiply in the trial records over the course of thirty years. Though Friuli was far from the epicentres of Reformation, we can perhaps discern here some acceleration in the blurring of boundaries between different territories of the twilight world.

The clergy, the doctors and the peasantry agreed on certain aspects of dream experience. Everyone, for instance, accepted the idea that heaven and hell could be visited in dreams; a copious literature describes such journeys (Milne 2013: Ch 2; Bremmer 1983: 28; cf. Palmer & Speckenhach 1990; Kruger 1992). The well-known vision of the peasant Thurkill, experienced in Essex in 1206, anticipates in microcosm the trajectory of benandanti narratives (imitators of Bosch were especially keen on this story; cf. Unverfehrt 1980: 221ff). The layman, Thurkill, falls into a coma, and when he awakes, tells the Abbot and his men about his visit to hell. They write it down, and so tailor the vision to the
orthodoxy of previous versions (Schmidt 1978a: 50-64; 1978b). In folk accounts, however, the place where dreams happened was part of a wider spirit world, co-extensive with this one, where two great landmarks, heaven and hell, were easily accessible for saints, witches, nightwalkers, and other favoured mortals. "'How did you reach hell?' the judges asked Thies [the Livonian werewolf – L.M.]. 'Where was it located?' 'The werewolves went on foot..."' he replied. Hell, it transpired, was 'at the end of the sea,' that is to say, in a swamp near Lemburg.” (De Blécourt 2007a: 49).

For people to share a mental cultural theatre of this kind, there must be substantial unconscious as well as conscious agreement on its reality (cf. Le Goff 1985; Milne 2013: Ch. 5). Once the framework of Catholic penitential ritual – the transportation system for getting people and information in and out of Heaven and Purgatory – began to dissolve, the
dreamworld was no longer clearly under the rule of God and his saints, and the status of its other visitors, the night travellers, was up for review. Of course, seen as an effect of Reformation, such consequences were not intentional; no one wanted to get rid of the other world entirely. But equally we might argue that changes in dream-culture propelled the Reformation, rather than the other way round. Recall that folk-culture was the home of the largest class of non-occult dreams (somnium naturale). As "personal" types of dream grew in importance, occult causes of dreams became harder to identify securely, and this affected conceptions of the nightmare, where physical and occult causes were both implicated. At the same time, substantial efforts towards cultural reform– a conscious war on manners, beliefs and behaviour – worked to demonise otherworldly excursions, along with carnivalesque misrule, in the minds of sixteenth-century people (cf. Burke 1978: 207-43). Pócs (2009: 383) speaks of the Sabbath casting a "witchy hue" over the fairy world. One way of doing this was to relocate aspects of folk-culture from day to night. Any motif cast in a nocturnal light immediately began to look more sinister and threatening (cf. Muchembled 1993; Ogier 1998).

It is a sign of the times that both the battles and the gambols of the benandanti took place in sleep, while the arena of the Sabbath was unquestionably the night. Henningsen (2009: 70) suggests we should think in terms of "two dream complexes – the nightmare of the black sabbath and the delights of the white Sabbath – coexisting in several regions of Europe"; and we may note that emotional commotion (fear or joy) lie at the heart of both. Girolamo Cardano – magician, doctor and dream-specialist – argued that the Sabbath itself originated in women’s carnivals: "Without a doubt these things took their start from the old orgies where the women behaved in a wild and senseless manner in public. When this was forbidden by law, they gathered in secret. When this was also forbidden, they assembled only in thought." (Cardano 1559). Long after the witch-craze was over, folkloric complexes that had been redefined more or less exclusively in nocturnal terms were well on the way to being understood as internal and psychological.
THE QUESTION OF CULT

Ginzburg focussed initially on the historical situation of the benandanti and their inquisitors, and attended to the effects on an individual's beliefs of repeated inquisition by hostile minds, filled with a different cosmological view. His later research changed the mise-en-scène from the 16C to Eurasian world history. Ginzburg had already opened some deep time vistas on benandante beliefs in Night Battles. He cited, for example, the warning in Regino of Prüm’s De ecclesiasticis disciplinis (aka the Canon Episcopi) (2001 [c. 906]: 62), regarding:

wicked women... seduced by the illusions and phantasms of demons [who] believe [that] in the hours of the night, they ride upon certain beasts with Diana [and] an innumerable multitude of women, and in the silence of the dead of night traverse great spaces of the earth... summoned to her service on certain nights.\(^{24}\)

Emphasising these are false beliefs, Regino explicitly compared them to dreams:

Who is there that is not led out of himself in dreams and nocturnal visions and sees much when sleeping that he has never seen waking? Who is so stupid and foolish as to think that all these things which are only done in spirit happen to the body?\(^{25}\)

The description of night-riders, however, was taken up through later centuries by people interested in asserting that witches could indeed do such things; such as Johannes Nider (1481), Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger (1928 [1486]: 2.1.iii); it is in this context that William Hay, lecturing at Aberdeen in the 1530s, mentions his own local seely wights\(^{26}\). It seems also to inform the decision of a fifteenth-century illuminator to label his drawing of women riding brooms and sticks (fig. 6d) as Vaudosi (i.e. Waldensian heretics; Behringer 2005: 161-5).

These key elements – rods, fighting, nightmare and terror – were strongly linked in the popular imagination. Consider for instance, this Old English Journey Charm (Ic me on þisse gyrde beluce..):
I lock unto me this stave and entrust
[myself] in God’s protection;
Against the stab of the pains, against the blow of the pains,
Against the terror of the grim ones,
Against the great horror that is hateful to everyone,
And against all loath [things] that fare in upon the land.
I sing a victory chant, I bear a victory-stave…
May the mare [night-mare] not mar me…
Or ever be fearful against my life…

How exactly we are to envisage the action of "locking" with regard to
"gyrd" (rod or stave) is a matter of some debate. Hill thinks that gyrd
here carries a Christian apotropaic sense (i.e. the symbolic power of the
stave = God's protection; cf. Latin uirga; Hill 2012: 153-4), so the
meaning would be metaphorical: "I gird myself". However, whether the
speaker locks hand or spirit, subsequent lines build on the visual imagery
of stave and blows, thus concretising a variety of magical and
psychological referents (cf. Milne 2013: Ch. 3). In a similar way, we can
understand the significance of the staff for the benandanti, who do not,
after all, literally take fennel stalks or kitchen rods into their dream-battles. Rather, their dream-culture furnishes them with imaginary
weapons of appropriate visual shape, narrative sense and symbolic
meaning. As a dream-weapon, the rod thus condenses several levels, so
to speak, of gyrd: Christ's protection, the form of a stick, and the stick's
typical activities (journey, fight, attack).

Ginzburg addressed the questions of the age and geographical
distribution of benandante-like beliefs in Ecstasies (1989), subtitled
Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath (see also his short summary, Ginzburg
1993). The book argues for the distribution across great ranges of time
and space of a set of interconnected motifs and types of ritual play, most
of which are present in – or hinted at – in Regino’s text and its
descendants. Ginzburg tries to marshal this evidence to support two
main points. He wants to show that folk-culture keeps alive iconic
patterns of the type he thinks of as "fragments" of an old religion – an
agrarian cult with an ecstatic or shamanic component – constituting a
"shamanic substratum" from one end of "Celtic" Europe to the other (cf.
Klaniczay 1990; Pócs 1999). It is this substratum, he thinks, which
eventually surfaces in the benandanti trials, and which also contributes the nucleus for the full-blown scenario of the witches’ Sabbath. This thesis has been criticised on several grounds: for taking data from too widely disparate times and places; for building too much on too few pieces of evidence (Muchembled 1993: 140-2; De Blécourt 2007a: 52-67, 2007b; Monter 2006: 222-6), and for starting a search for European shamanism based on Eliade’s misconstrual of the term as involving "archaic techniques of ecstasy" (cf. Kehoe 1996: 377-92; Hutton 2006: 209-13; Goodare 2012: 210-13). To this we might add efforts to query the validity of ethnic characterisations (such as "Celtic") in antiquity and folk culture (e.g. James 1999). The current consensus is rather that we should envisage a wide spectrum of occult specialists – healers, diviners, blessers – among whom we find the benandanti, the seely wights, the donne di fuori, some kinds of werewolf, the Alpine "shaman" etc. (e.g. De Blécourt 2007a: 52-67).

Ginzburg posits that his group of motifs were once all combined more closely together, through myth and ritual, across a particular swathe of Old Europe, in the pre-Classical era. Evidently some of the many possible combinations and recombinations he examines, from Classical antiquity on, do indeed delineate persistent cults of "Diana" in her many aspects (Ecst.: 89-121). Different kinds of problems arise with this thesis. How useful is it to consider the internal structural congruence of groups of constituent materials over a millennium in terms of "cult"? Ginzburg recognises that the recurring use of "Diana" for the night-riders’ leader, from Regino on, is probably an interpretatio romana on the part of classically educated clerics writing these accounts. In the cases of two women tried in the diocese of Milan, the late 14C interrogators substituted the name of Diana or put it into the mouths of the accused, who themselves called her Madona Horiente (Ecst.: 91-2). In these (fragmentary) Italian trial records, the accused women speak rather of the "Game of Diana" or "Society of Oriente" (e.g. Ecst.: 91-6, 102-3). In Sicily, one had to be born into the donne di fuori. Members claimed to have sangre dulce [sweet blood] which obliged them to "rush out in spirit" [in espíritu] three nights a week to participate in the nocturnal doings of the Company (Henningsen 1993: 195-215). Does the persistence of such constellations, through many changes of context, in itself constitute a cult? And how might shamanistic traditions have
been maintained over centuries, in largely illiterate populations, and against the grain of an official religion? As a frame for interpreting variable material, a focus on origins is problematic, because it judges any manifestations of the chosen set of motifs in terms of distance from a putative starting point. Drawn into positing lost originals, we are forced to view any evidence – from any era – as fragmentary and somehow lacking in authenticity and wholeness. Since all Eurasian cultures ultimately descend from the same post-Classical populations, the search for an "ur-shamanism" – the putative "origin" for the forms of a benandante-style folk religion – cannot stop with the ancients; it stretches back through the traumas of agriculture, to the cultures of the cave-artists and beyond. To see the motifs as jigsaw pieces of a lost religion is to undervalue their independent significance; it is equally likely (though just as undemonstrable) that they pre-date any formal religion on record.

In any case, ritual forms regularly outlive their contexts and are put to new purposes. Merrifield (1987: 1-21) distinguishes among:

- **religion** (belief in supernatural or spiritual beings),
- **magic** (practices intended to control occult forces), and
- **ritual** (prescribed or customary behaviour that may be religious, magical or social in intent)...

He comments:

Something of all three functions may be found in a single act of ritual, or the act may remain the same while one function is increasingly dominated by another, which may eventually survive alone... some ritual acts are remarkably tenacious, and may continue to be performed in much the same way for quite new purposes.

In this sense, folk culture is and always has been a massive palimpsest, within which the oldest forms must always have appeared fragmentary, as if part of a lost mystery. One might speculate that enigmatic, tightly woven forms – such as the Procession of the Dead – were treated as keystones in emerging organised religions, and outlasted these religions, precisely because they already carried a heavy load of *manna*, or, to put
it another way, they were deeply infolded. The adaptability as well as the conservatism of such constellations is important. To survive, they have to be incarnated through living people, whose conscious memories of how things are done and what they mean are maximally four generations thick. For specialists in modern radically oral societies, far from being something that lasts for millennia, "cult" is a flexible and adaptable phenomenon: an affiliation of customs, stories, scenarios rituals and imagery, capable of drastic readjustment over quite short periods of time (cf. Goody 2010: 41-57). Witchcraft beliefs in particular are demonstrably fluid and can change very rapidly (Monter 1972: 450). However, we should bear in mind that none of our ethnographic data, even the earliest evidence, in fact comes from purely oral societies; ideas and images constantly percolate in and out from the literate world. Siberian shamanism, for example, was evidently syncretic well before the 16C (Hutton 2001: 19-22).

CLASS DIFFERENTIALS

It is time to consider some other factors governing the divergence – and convergence – of folk and elite constellations of the same materials. The movement against folk culture, like the witch craze generally, was complexly intertwined with misogyny (see e.g. Bailey 2002; De Blécourt 2000; Muchembled 1993; Harley 1990). In Bruegel's parents' time, for instance, the term "old wives' tales" – used in all the main language groups as a synonym for folk knowledge – took on its modern (derogatory) connotation of nonsense and impossibility (Jeay and Garay 2006: 11-19). This in turn was part of a wider set of class antagonisms and differentials. Ginzburg speaks of the "disgusted contempt" of the inquisitors for the "crazy populace"; an example of the "age-old tradition of satire against the 'villain' [as] thieving, dirty, cunning, cheating, [and] superstitious" (NB: 90). On the other side, we have what Scott (1990: 416) calls "the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: footdragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage etc.". Some of these we can recognise in the attitudes of the benandanti, who (understandably) try to stymie the proceedings by saying what they think the inquisitors want them to say, pleading ignorance, or simply not showing up. Ginzburg attends to the
The patent explosive annoyance of the priests and lawyers, faced with this incalculitance, who often suspect they are being led down the garden-path, and say so.

Some literate people in this period collected folk sayings and customs in an antiquarian spirit; some studied folk magic in order to learn from it (Thomas 1971: 178-211), but the most common elite attitudes to peasant culture were derogatory: from ironic dismissal to reforming zeal to furious exasperation (Milne 2013: Ch. 3). Though he believed in devils and spirits, Bruegel’s contemporary, the Swiss clergyman, Loys Lavater (1527-86), thought the folk staged and abused otherworldly imagery:

> It is a common custome in many places.. that at a certain time of the yeare, one with a nette or visarde on his face maketh children afrayde, to the ende that ever after they shoulde laboure and be obedient to their Parents, afterward they tel them that those which they saw, were Bugs, Witches, and Hagges.

Beating children, he argued, is preferable to telling them "they shal be deuoured of Bugges, Hags of the night, and such lyke monsters" (1929 [1572]: 21). This deceptive or theatrical connotation of a nette or visarde may explain why Bruegel's Griet figure wears a veil.

Folk beliefs were thus increasingly seen as nonsensical or fantastic – or indeed as dream-like. A fourteenth-century clerical parody recommends mixing:

> the bile and entrails of a magnet, the lungs of a piece of marble... blood from sand [then] drink it in one breath; and know that if you do this you will find yourself, [if] not lost, healthy... which was tried one candleless night, in a dream; and we know not by whom... in the month of August, Christmas Day, in the morning of nones, three hours after twilight, by a lusty, merry fellow...

(Muchembled 1985: 156-7)

We see this tendency especially in attitudes to peasant women’s culture. Thus old wives' tales acquire their canonical comic form in the hugely popular and much translated Distaff Gospels (1510; from the late 15C Les Évangiles des Quenouilles), wherein the male misogynist narrator transcribes the gossipy discourse of ugly old women with shady pasts (as
procuress, healer, midwife, priest’s concubine, heretic etc) (Jeay and Garay 2006: 16-7). In true subaltern fashion (cf. Spivak 1988: 271-313), the inquisitor’s attitude to the villain is replicated in the attitude of both to the villain’s wife. Among the female benandanti, we find Florida Basili commenting "I am not afraid of anything [now] except my husband" (NB: 64). Disdain for "gossiping women" is prominent (NB: 80) among all the Friulian informants. Female benandanti were more likely to be seen as mad – "We think she’s crazy" (NB: 65) – and at the same time to incur more severe penalties than the men; thus Maria Panzona in 1619 was sentenced to public abjuration, three years imprisonment and perpetual exile (NB: 99-108; Nardon 1999: 138; Monter 2006: 226). So, the standard rhetorical stance of the educated was to speak of folk beliefs as either nonsensical or incomprehensible; at the same time, women’s beliefs were increasingly regarded as even less rational and therefore more dangerous. Folk and elite accounts thus collude most visibly in sixteenth-century thinking about female witches.

WITCHES AND WOMEN’S DREAMS

Bruegel’s Dulle Griet (fig. 2) thus engages a long tradition of male fascination with the female imagination, stretching from Regino to the present day; it studies, as through a glass darkly, the state of male nightmares about women. The diversity of Bruegel’s images of witches itself testifies to the fast-moving nature of attitudes to witchcraft. His Witch of Malleghem (1559; fig. 9) presents a relatively harmless version of a witch, in a proverbial village of fools, healing the gullible by removing stones of folly from their heads. He adds a few oneiric signs of lunacy (a giant broken egg, dribbling stones) in the background. Six years later, St. James and the Magician Hermogenes (1565; fig. 6b) depicts more up-to-date witches, in the background of a hallucinatory contest between good and bad magic. A transformation in three moves is staged like a film strip in and around the shack at the right: below a woman riding a broomstick disappears into the fumes of a cauldron, her head cut off by the roof; above, her top half emerges from the chimney into a swirl of smoke; this smoke curls into a flourish to present her final version, now naked, mounted on a goat, hoisting the broomstick like a weapon. She heads towards the swirls from another cauldron, to joust an
opposite troupe of witches, riding to battle on hybrid monsters (fig. 6c). Between these extremes, in the early 1560s, we find the Griet, which places village witchery in the fashionable context of nightmares and madness, invoking the perception of female peasant culture as unreal and backwards (in every sense).

We have one near-contemporary description of the picture, from Karel Van Mander: "a Dulle Griet, who robs in front of hell, wears a vacant stare and is [cruel, or] strangely and weirdly dressed" (Van Mander 1936 [1604]: 155). She is a proverbial virago, who can "rob in front of hell"; that is, ferocious enough to fear neither hell nor the devil, and connected to the spirit world metaphorically or in reality. As an invention, she draws on a complex skein of traditions about various formidable Margarets (Grauls 1957: 6-15, 22-3, 35-8): peasant women who proverbially fight devils (Gibson 1977: 104-5); St. Griet (Margaret of Antioch), patron of midwives and their festivals, who grabs Beelzebub by the hair (Drewer 1993: 11-15), or hits him with a hammer (fig. 10a; Lafontaine-Dosogne 1962: 252), and bursts from a dragon’s belly (fig. 10b; Albert 1988: 19-31) – hence her association with midwives; and also the Wife-Who-Wears-the-Trousers, shown beating her husband (figs. 11a & b), and her more specific daughter-motif, the Battle of the Breeches, a World-Upside-Down topos in art from the 13C on, appearing on misericords, in popular prints (cf. fig. 11c; Gibson 1977: 104-5), and in comic drama, achieving its apotheosis in Shakespeare’s Taming of the Shrew (1595).
Bruegel mixes up these ideas, gives them monumental form, and sets them in a nocturnal melancholic landscape, made eerie with out-of-scale objects. This is a *Dulle* (stupid) Griet: the veil over her eyes marks her as deluded and beset by visions (recall Lavater’s strictures about dressing up as a bogey "with a nette or visarde on his face. Her sword and armour characterises her as a cross-dresser, another carnivalesque marker of the Topsy-Turvy World. This semi-comic giant virago, like a nursery version of Diana, or Frau Hollla, is followed by an army of small women. They enact versions of the key proverb, "she could tie the devil to a pillow" (Dundes and Stibbe 1981; Milne 2013: Ch. 2, 3), referring to women beating devils, "looting before hell", and behaving immoderately. The devils flee before Griet and the women, and the hellmouth itself bears an expression of consternation. This is the satirical folk hell of mystery plays, dream-poems and ballads. We are outside the gates of hell, in the spirit-lands where the peasants do their dreaming.

Is there enough evidence for Griet to be read as a kind of night-walker? It would be more accurate to say that Bruegel’s concept as a whole – the dream-landscape, the hellmouth, the attributes and actions of Griet and her women – draws on the same complex of imagery which informed the experiences and institutions of night-walking. In the Netherlands as elsewhere, children born with the caul see "spirits,
nightmares, and such monstrosities," according to an anonymous Dutch poet (c. 1600; Roodenburg 1985: 520). A 14C Ghent poem lists together "fence demons, travelling women, spirit children, hobgoblins, elves and mares" (Hansen 1963 [1901]: 636). The village witch was a *hagazussa*; a creature of both worlds, one who sits on the boundary, the "hag, the fence or hedge which passed behind the gardens" (Duerr 1985 [1978]: 46). Her vision-work might include night-travelling, fortune-telling, relaying information about the dead, locating treasure or lost property.

We find trance techniques for the latter in Brabant and other Flemish and northern French provinces. The *tündéres* also see treasures, or can lead people to them by "waving a red key", which suggests dowsing (Pócs 2009: 388); as does Griet’s locket (fig. 2a), dangling from her breastplate (i.e. not worn as a necklace). We read of women during the Ember days – the times of the benandante battles – falling into swoons "insensible to pricks or scoldings. When they revived, they... declared that they had been in heaven, hell or purgatory, and spoke of stolen or hidden objects" (NB: 8, n. 32, 43ff).

Griet’s frying pan and sword make her, among other things, a variant of a constellation that has recurring in all the contexts we have looked at: benandanti testimony, virago and witch imagery, carnival and dream representations. This constellation is basically: woman armed with household tool, engaged in supernatural combat. Several late medieval variants existed of the woman-plus-domestic tool-plus-demon; comic, nonsensical or fantastic in tone, and sometimes all at once. A woman saw the head off a small devil (Corbeil; fig. 12a); a housewife with distaff rides a giant cat (Winchester; fig. 12b; Wright 1968 [1865]: 120, 124-31); a couple joust with broomstick and flail, she mounted on a goose, he on a pig (Bristol; fig. 12c). Even as this topos mutated towards more sinister forms, still Cranach’s night-riders hold rods and a pitchfork (fig. 8b), while in the early "Vaudois" illuminations, the women ride both broom and stick (fig. 6d). The women flanking Griet use hooked rods to fight their devils (fig. 2a); their iron rods and staves for scraping out ovens (NB 29: 92, 103, 109 n. 6) were among the weapons used by the benandanti (alongside the more evidently archaic fennel stalks).

One variant came to eclipse the others: woman-broomstick-demonic familiar. The relation of woman to devil changed its import; she moves from fighting it, to overpowering it, to being in league with it. At the same time, this composite (woman-devil-tool) merged with another
topos about uppity women: the *Battle of the Breeches*. Recall that odd detail in Gasparutto’s account: "the women beat the men who were with them with sorghum stalks, while the men had only bunches of fennel" (NB: 1). Now these attacking women could conceivably be the witches on the opposite side of the combat: the enemies of the (male)
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Figure 12a. Anon., *Housewife, demon and saw*, stall carving at Corbeil. After Wright 1865.

Figure 12b. Anon., *Housewife with distaff rides giant cat*, Winchester. After Wright 1865.

Figure 12c. Anon., *Couple jousting, woman on goose with broomstick, man on pig with rod*, 16C Bristol Cathedral.

benandanti. Elsewhere, the sorghum stalks are described as the weapons of these witches. But then why does Gasparutto specify that the victims are the men who were with them; that is, the women’s own companions? In either case, this is a telling indicator that, on some level, the imagery of the battle of the sexes could elide itself into the benandanti dream-accounts.

The original Battles were broadly comic, with no otherworldly
The wives overcoming demons, or hitting husbands, in misericords and MS illumination are similarly funny; Reversed World personae, like Chaucer’s Wife of Bath. But in the 16C, we start finding more sinister versions; for instance, in this print attributed to Van Meckenem (fig. 11d; early 16C; Maeterlinck 1907: 198-9), the woman threatens the husband with a broomstick, egged on by a devil; the breeches lie in a corner, and the scene takes place in deep shadow. Here the virago-breeches and housewife-tool-demon motifs are condensed together, nocturnalised and psychologised.

Bruegel treats this constellation to a penetrating exercise in complicatio et explicatio in the lower right corner of the Griet (fig. 2b). On the bridge, a small woman pulls breeches from a bending male; an ineffectual devil clings to her apron between her legs. The old, homely devil of the pillow-proverb is here the pivot for a linked chain of visual transformations cascading into the dark water below. From the woman "unbreeching" the man, through progressive stages of male decapitation and dismemberment, to the patently castratory leg-eating and sausage-chopping fish, the first term metamorphoses into the last in a circle looping from bridge to water.

There are precedents in 16C culture for this kind of rhetoric. Since antiquity, dream-imagery was seen as a kind of puzzle, in need of decoding (cf. Milne 2011: 95-5). Freud himself conceived of the dream as a type of rebus:

> The dream-content is, as it were, presented in hieroglyphics, whose symbols must be translated, one by one, into the language of the dream-thoughts... a dream is a picture-puzzle (rebus)... As such, of course, it appears nonsensical... (1900: VI.381-419)

All ranks of Bruegel’s society relished the nonsense-form of the rebus. An Antwerp street protest used a rebus to satirise Henry VIII of England as "abused by diabolic illusions" (Wegg 1916: 126, 272). Some clue as to the form of Henry’s illusions, presumably linked to his marital difficulties, is supplied by the Malleus Maleficarum, which describes "Remedies... for those who by Prestigintatory Art have lost their Virile Members or have seemingly been transformed into the shapes of Beasts" (Kramer and Sprenger 1928 [1486]: II.2.4). Bruegel’s castrating fish-
monster is a rebus of this kind: an explicatio of the complicatio of the virago-breeches-devil constellation.

This riddling movement works on many levels. In a sense, the whole painting is a vast explicatio of the imagery embedded in "tying a devil to a pillow". This central proverb is treated like a rebus or visual riddle, unfolded to yield the idea of a combat in sleep. The pillow is a metonym for bed; the domain of woman on a number of levels: a liminal place of birth, death, sex, and, of course, dreams. Applied to this plainly psychological material, Bruegel’s use of complicatio et explicatio anticipates the Freudian dream-processes of condensation and displacement (cf. Milne 2013: Introduction). The arc of figuration progressively unfolds (or unmask) the castratory fear driving the changes in the rebellious woman topoi; at the same time it displaces and concentrates this kernel of fear in progressively more extreme surreal imagery. The explicatio is itself a form of complicatio.

UNEASY LAUGHTER

The oddity of tone – comic, uncanny and frightening – in Bruegel's Griet is linked to a moment of clashing cultures, marked by a kind of fearful laughter. Ginzburg's documents show us the benandanti, the churchmen and the local community grappling with such paradoxes. In several cases, one of the first responses of a benandante, when questioned about his or her supernatural activities, was to go into gales of inexplicable laughter:

Gasparutto... in the face of incessant questioning by the inquisitor, who reminded him of details from conversations he had held five years before... repeated his denials between peals of laughter. The friar finally asked: Why do you laugh so much? Unexpectedly, Gasparutto replied: Because these are not things to inquire about, because they are against the will of God. (NB: 5)

It is as though such laughter was the involuntary response to the experience of having what had been previously thought of as two quite separate sets of ideas, forcibly brought together in the questions and assumptions of the inquisitor. The peasantry had never been asked to
think about the faculty of nightwalking in this way. The benandanti assumed that they battled in the name of Christ. They had not previously concerned themselves about the orthodoxy of their visions.

This incommensurability of narratives and experiences was perceived by both sides in terms of bafflement, puzzlement, a pervading sense of the absurdity of having the "wrong" things put together, and a sense that there remained "more to be said". The effect of tantalising mystery, in semiotic and psychoanalytic terms, is generated when parts from recognisably distinct classificatory groups are brought together (see e.g. Milne 2006: 78-82). Faced with a condensed, or infolded, or surreal image – such as any one of Bruegel’s hybrid creations in isolation – the viewer seeks a third term to explain why these incongruous parts have been brought together. Finding this link missing, we assume not simply that it is hidden, but that it has been hidden, by someone or something (in fact, of course, by the author of the rebus, the artist), and hence experience a sense of hidden agency, and an uncanny effect. In some sense, the inquisitors were also seeking a hidden agency that would make sense for them of the benandante accounts: the presence of Satan.

The *Griet’s* peculiar style of complicatio et explicatio is thus a response to a wider crisis of competing representations in the folk perceptual world, evident both in the Friulian data, and in the cultural transformations pulling constellations such as the woman-tool-demon into the framework of the Sabbath. Useful here is the poet Giorgos Seferis's definition of style as "the difficulty which a person encounters in trying to express something" (Stewart 1991: 122). Bruegel's *Griet* is essentially a success with (and for) its style: an expert's recognition that potential affinities exist among Humanist visual rhetorics, carnivalesque reversals, and moves of rearrangement and re-emphasis within folkloric constellations; affinities which are primarily matters of representation. This becomes clear in comparison with other, less skilled, 16C efforts at visualising this material, which foundered precisely on difficulties of style and expression.

Ginzburg discusses illustrations for two editions of Geiler von Kaisersberg's collected Strasbourg sermons, *Die Emeis* (NB: 8, n. 32, 43ff). Geiler dealt with several beliefs which appear in the benandanti testimony and elsewhere: he repeats the tales of women night-travellers who visit hell and purgatory, looking for treasure and lost objects during
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The Ember days, leaving the body asleep, and the Furious Horde or Procession of the Dead.

The people given the task of illustrating this unusual subject for the 1516 edition had, as Ginzburg points out, "no iconographic tradition to fall back on" (NB: 46). It was standard practice to pirate illustrations from other people's books, and this solution was adopted here. The image chosen was an illustration from an edition of Virgil (NB: 46): Bacchus in a Triumphal cart, being pulled through a wood, accompanied by Silenus and a satyr playing the bagpipes. The printer of De Emeis removed the figure of Virgil from the edge of the image but otherwise changed nothing. He left in, for example, the bagpiper and the labels which identify Bacchus and Silenus (compare figs. 1a & b). Ginzburg thinks this demonstrates that Geiler's material was effectively incommensurable with any available image: so the Bacchus image is a genuinely incongruous and inappropriate choice, of interest because its employment marks a failure of the imagination; ultimately a failure to conceptualise. He presents this as evidence of the strong difficulty in visualising benandanti-style beliefs at all (within the relatively literate world of the printers).

However, the illustration looks less arbitrary, considered against the background outlined here, of how the literate classes thought about peasant dreaming, visions and revelry. To select this image as an "illustration" was the action of a mind used to thinking about visual relationships with text in terms of allegorical personifications, rather than mimesis. But the choice of the Bacchus cart may not in fact have been so wide of the mark. It was intended, after all, to accompany a sermon which described beliefs about sightings of the Procession of the Dead, in order to assert the lack of truth in them. Since the Bacchus cart and bag-piper allude in general terms to drunken revelry, it was a reasonable choice to represent the "meaningless" visions of the benandanti.

Those in charge of producing the next edition, a year later, must still have been dissatisfied with this relation between text and image, because this was one of the illustrations they changed. The replacement for Bacchus's cart was another pastiche, this time based on a picture from the Latin version of Brant's Ship of Fools (Basel 1497; fig. 1d). Two figures in motley - one standing with two animals, pushing a cart the wrong way round; the other upside-down in the cart – were clipped from
the original illustration and superimposed on a generic landscape background (fig. 1c). Ginzburg comments:

Obviously, Brant's wagon-load of fools seemed more suitable than a group of Bacchus's followers to express the aura of mystery and terror surrounding the myth of the Furious Horde... The substitution tells us something about the difficulty of attempting to translate into visual imagery a popular belief which... lacked points of reference in the world of the educated classes. (NB: 46-7)

In fact, the two images tell us more still about the kind of mental difficulties involved here. The people publishing Geiler were used to dealing with ready-made images; they were skilled in pirating and adapting this repertoire to suit the needs of any text. Neither Bacchus nor the upside-down fool worked particularly well as an illustration of the content of the folk-idea; but they did succeed in connoting, as it were, the outer edges, or context, of such visions: their outward "containers" of drunkenness and carnivalesque license. The second effort simply replaced the coded language of stock Classical forms with more modern shorthands for fools and madness. In other words, these anonymous illustrators were groping mentally in the same direction as Bruegel, reaching towards Ships of Fools, carnivalesque revelry, and the World-Turned-Upside-Down. This implies a recognition of some connection between the visions described in the text and the carnivalesque imagery.

Compared to the sophistication of Bruegel's approach, the anonymous illustrators of Geiler could not more closely approximate the visual demands of their subject, because they could not deconstruct their available repertoire of received images sufficiently well. Similarly, the priests, who heard at first hand the testimonies of the benandanti, could not understand accounts which "lacked points of reference in the world of the educated classes" (NB: 47). Their response, like that of the printers, was to substitute a ready-made constellation from their own world; this did indeed have "points of reference" to the original, but suppressed elements which clashed. Bruegel, by contrast, was peculiarly skilled at breaking apart old combinations of forms and putting them together in new ways. His agenda was neither to erase the forms of folk-culture with a Classical equivalent, nor to impose on them a Satanic
reading (at least, not in any simple sense). Unlike Geiler's printers, and
the Friulian inquisitors, his interest in the forms and meanings of dream-
culture was ethnographic and aesthetic. He could come closer to
illustrating the themes and thought processes of this culture, while still
casting the central action in terms of nonsense and commotion.

These forays into Renaissance representation raise the question of
endpoints, or limits, in the decomposition and recomposition of hybrid or
composite constellations characteristic to dream-culture and dream-
imagery. Thinking about how complicatio et explicatio work in
Humanist creative mythography, Wind (1968: 206) reasoned that:

> when *complication* reaches its height [and] opposites become
> indistinguishable, all multiplicity vanishes... It follows that all
> mystical images... retain a certain [potential for] articulation...
> [they] belong to an intermediate state, which invites further
> *complication* above, and further *explication* below.

They are never final in the sense of a literal statement... Rather
they keep the mind in continued suspense by presenting the
paradox of an *inherent transcenden*ce; they persistently hint at
more than they say.

This fits both the *Dulle Griet* and the benandante experience in different
ways. The benandanti found that no amount of *explication* would satisfy
the inquisitors, who carried on their interrogations precisely until
"multiplicity vanished"; to be replaced with their own stock narrative of
the Sabbath. The witchy imagery of the *Griet* presents a further kind of
unfolding, the results complicated again and again, but retaining always
a composite nature, and so working as emblems of liminality. The
difficulty of terminating this chain of signification may explain why
Bruegel shifts ground, so to speak, abandoning his rebus-chains for the
much bleaker scenes in the deep background of the picture: the frieze of
naked figures scrabbling in the dirt of a deserted rocky landscape (fig.
2c). The viewer's eye moves from the carnivalesque centre, to a far
horizon where a qualitative different kind of dream logic resides, no
longer clothed in the direct Synesian appeal to intelligence and
imagination implicit in Boschian fantasy. Here is another example of
what happens when "complication reaches its height", and "all
CONCLUSIONS

Sixteenth-century dream-culture, I suggest, can be regarded as an "infolded" mass, undergoing "explication" in various directions. We have considered three cases of this. The night-walking dream-scenario is a central struggle similar to the nightmare, with fixed portals bracketing a struggle similar to the "proto-aesthetic" character; it is "partially connected" (cf. Milne 2008: 200-201; Gell 1999: 206) to folk art forms such as story-telling and the visual culture of Carnival. The Sabbath scenario we have explored primarily through the case-study of the "woman and the broomstick"; a minor topos, appearing also in night-walker accounts, caught in act of merging with the "virago-wife" and thus generating a more demonic kind of witch. This in turn is an example of a wider cultural push to nocturnalise – and hence demonise – aspects of carnivalesque popular culture – also underpinning the solutions the printers found to the problem of how to illustrate Geller. Then there is an aesthetic deconstruction of similar source-materials, from the point of view of someone who treats all this as fully imaginary, in Bruegel's painting.

The study of dream-cultures opened by Ginzburg's researches supplies crucial perspectives for understanding both the cultural grounding of these representations and their capacity for rapid evolution. The evidence can be interpreted more satisfactorily if we set aside the parallels between night-walkers and shamanism (cf. Goodare 2012: 212-3). Shamanic traditions, however loosely defined, presuppose apprenticeship for practitioners: mechanisms for such training seem to be exactly what is lacking in Early Modern Europe. But no one requires any special training to dream. The benandanti were inculcated into their dream-culture in the same way anyone might be, through acculturation starting in infancy, supported by age-set structures, enhanced by peer pressure and the special qualities of first sleep.

Ginzburg was correct – as were the inquisitors – to see a family resemblance between benandante beliefs and the Sabbath. In each case, multiplicity vanishes" into the "absolutely unfamiliar."
we find the same set of complex mythemes – night-flights, sensory commotion, carnivalesque revelry etc. – enfolded and contextualised differently. The key point is to recognise that, while the constituent elements themselves may be relatively fixed, the constellations in which they appear are open to constant re-emphasis, re-positioning and re-tailoring. Thus we find elements of the benandante vision elsewhere in folk-culture (the militia-age-set structure and revelry motifs in Carnival) while the overall scenario (fixed points of exit and entry, commotion and kaleidoscopic imagery in the middle) resembles that of the archaic nightmare.

Dream-culture changes, in relation to other aspects of folk culture, as users adapt inherited constellations of motifs, altering their meaning through shifts of emphasis and arrangement, and thus steer apparently conservative institutions (Carnival, witchcraft, nightmares or night-battles) in particular directions. Most of the time, each successive rejigging conserves the parent-constellation in toto, as a source of potential energy – to be unfolded or infolded – for use in later contexts. There do seem to be limiting cases, as Wind noted, where over-folding or -infolding results in a loss of multiplicity, and individual topoi lose their character as permutable constellations. Thus, in the debatable lands of Renaissance dreams, witch and broomstick fuse inextricably together, the benandante vision dissipates and loses cohesion, and Dulle Griet wanders in delusion.

But we may not yet be done with the imagery of night-walkers; I give the last word to a dreamer of the 21C:

My mother sees shadow people or walkers of the night. They put you in a state of mind [in] which there is no time to think or breath[e] they hover above you like hawks over dead prey they have no face but you can see their outline. When you wake up from this state you could be scared – don't be – they are the keepers of the earth. ("Terra": 2002)

Dr Louise S. Milne is a lecturer in Visual Culture in the School of Art, University of Edinburgh, and in the School of Arts and Creative Industries, Edinburgh Napier University; louise.milne@ed.ac.uk
This essay is dedicated, with great affection and respect, to Emily Lyle, on the occasion of her 80th birthday.

Notes

1 Monter (2006: 224): "Eighty-five people were denounced to the Holy Office as benandanti in inquisitorial sources... few of them were tried and only a handful received formal sentences, beginning with two men in 1581 and ending with two more men in 1698–1705; between them came six men and six women from 1585 to 1662. In the 17C, the introduction of the witches’ Sabbath into Friulian popular culture produced a large number of mostly-female defendants charged with diabolical witchcraft (110 women against 20 men); meanwhile, during the period 1611–70, men were overwhelmingly accused as benandanti (48 against 4 women).

2 Milne 2007; 2013 on Bruegel’s art and folklorical sources. Milne 2013, a revised and expanded edition, is in press at time of writing, subsequently cited by chapter numbers as pagination for the new edition is not confirmed. Much relevant data not cited here for reasons of space can be found there: Introduction for Bruegel’s career, oeuvre and scholarly literature; Ch. 1 for history of dream theory and Neo-Platonism; Ch. 2 for the Dulle Griet; Ch. 3 for proverbs; Ch. 4 for Carnival and the carnivalesque; Ch. 5 for beliefs about the dead. The present essay is part of a project on the history of dreams and nightmares, and so is related to an ongoing series of articles for Cosmos (Milne 2006; 2008; 2011). In the interests of clarity, some essential references on the history of dream-theory necessarily reappear here (notably Macrobius and Synesius). Note also that here I use Carnival to mean the institution of Carnival in the wider sense; carnival / carnivals to refer to traditional calendrical feasts and fêtes which are strongly carnivalesque in character, though they may not take place at Shrovetide; Sabbath is capitalised throughout for the same reason.

3 On sixteenth-century educated interest in folk thought, Thomas writes: "The intellectual magician..was stimulated by the activities of the cunning man into a search for the occult influences which he believed must have underlain them. The period saw a serious attempt to study long-established folk procedures with a view to discovering the principles on which they rested..." (1971: 229; cf. also 178-211). Burke
(1978) coined the term *The Triumph of Lent* to describe elite efforts to take over and remake folk culture in this period; Scribner (1998) provides copious visual evidence for the co-option of folk imagery by Protestant artists, printers and scholars; see Klaniczay 2012 [2010] for a historiographical summary of the term "popular" culture in our period.

Two short studies set out early ideas about this very complex painting (Milne 1996: 207-29; 1997-8: 21-30; some materials on witches are reproduced in the present essay. For a detailed account of key aspects of the *Griet* imagery not discussed here (especially the *Dukatenschüssler* and the hellmouth) see Milne 2013: Ch. 2.

On Antwerp as a centre of printers and scholars, Voet 1969; on their relations with artists, Veldman 1977.

This typically Bruegelian procedure is analogous to the ruling Mannerist aesthetic: choosing the "most beautiful" parts and combining them into an idealised whole.


Trial summaries and some inquisitorial correspondence survive for the donne di fuori (Henningsen 2009: 63); material on the seely wights – who may have both fairy and human members – is fascinating but so far slender (Goodare 2012); for the extensive literature on Slavic and Hungarian fairy witches see e.g. Klaniczay 1990: 129-50; Pócs 1999, 2009; Čiča 2002. The donne di fuori represent one of the best-attested parallels to the benandanti; organised in regional companies, each centred on a supernatural hybrid, they meet in spirit several nights in the week; membership is orchestrated through kinship. Goodare (2012) gives a useful account of the differences between the two, arguing that his seely wights are more like the donne. However, they do not fight in their dreams, and the complexities of their evidence requires more detailed discussion than we have space for here; I hope to consider them at more length in the longer work of which this is a part.


Their confrontation alludes to *Plenty v. Famine*, as well as the collision between profane and Christian festive time.
The City and Guilds celebrated Carnival with elaborate floats and parades, with drama contests, banquets, masked balls, and tournaments (Williams and Jacquot 1957); on the involvement of the artists' guild, Veldman (1977), passim, Gibson (1981: 430-3), Milne (2012: Ch. 4). Ginzburg himself revisited the benandanti in the course of an fascinating essay on Freud and his famous patient, the Wolfman (1986; trans. 1989); but I limit the discussion here to the boundaries of the late Renaissance.

On whether the genre of festive peasants scenes is celebratory or satirical see Carroll 1987: 301-2; Moxey 1989: 35-66. My summary: "a derogatory attitude to drinking peasants could co-exist quite easily in the sixteenth-century mind with a reliance on the same peasants to uphold customary freedoms... in Shakespeare, low-life characters are held up to ridicule yet display their yeoman mettle on the battlefield" (Milne 2013: Ch. 4).

Bruegel included such things as comic cameos in his other crowded festival pictures, the Kermess prints; Milne 2013: Ch 4.

Duerr (1985 [1978]: 233, n. 30-2; 234-6, n. 33-7; especially 236, n. 38): "the fools' associations had roots of this nature. St. Lieven's Guild, which had considerable political influence in Ghent, organised nightly processions during the height of the Middle Ages, where its members, the woestards, plundered and robbed." Cf. Stumpfl 1936: 343, 394. On the Blue Boat guilds, Enklaar 1933; Minnaert 1943: 9.

Clubs might have a religious component (doubling as a confraternity), and were often attached to craft or militia guilds such as the rederijkers, the amateur acting clubs of the Netherlandish Guilds, including Bruegel's own guild, St. Luke's (Moxey 1977: 149-50). On rederijker plays and festivals: Weevers 1960: 67-72, 102-19; on carnival dramas in general, Chambers 1963 [1903]: I, 380-3; Hoffmann von Fallersteben 1968: VI; Milne 2013: Ch. 4.

The converse of this, a structural inversion of the same elements, concerns people whose birth during liminal time means that they themselves become the active monstrous attacker(De Blécourt 2007c: 35); for an example of this configuration in modern dream-culture, see Milne 2008: 182-3.

Isabella de Moerloose (b. Ghent c. 1660/1-d. after 1712), for example, was born with a caul; suspected as a child of being possessed, she was prosecuted for publishing unorthodox views about spirits in her autobiography (1695), and finally incarcerated as insane (Roodenburg 1985: 520).
18 Henningsen at least discusses the issue of collective dreams at the end of his essay (2009: 71-2), pointing out that traces of what he calls an "archaic mentality" persist among modern women who experience night-travelling in late 20C Sicily.

19 There were 26 separate editions of the *Commentary*, printed between 1472 and 1565; for its history and interpretation, Milne 2013: Ch. 1.

20 For instance the belief that one has become an earthenware jar; in the *Griet*, Bruegel twists this old saw about earthenware jars, so the jar becomes a sign of this drunken world: jars form the eyebrows of the hellmouth; an outsize jar looms dreamlike in the landscape at top left; jars dangle from bits of wall like inn-signs; monkeys toast each other in the oculus at bottom right.

21 Bosch also dealt with dream matter which was folkloric in the benandanti sense; as in his complicatio et explicatio of the motif of the Fountain of Life, in his *Garden of Earthly Delights* (Prado), where the pink and blue mountains of the Creation evolve, reading from left to right, exploding into life across the centre panel (Milne 2013: Ch. 1).

22 Belief in hell weakened noticeably in the generation after Bruegel (cf. Walker 1964), who himself clearly felt free to employ hell imagery satirically (Milne 2013: Ch. 2).

23 Cf. Foucault (1978 [1976]: I.12), on reading Western cultural history in terms of discursive production: "I would like to... search... for instances of discursive production (which also administer silences...), of the production of power (which sometimes have the function of prohibiting), of the propagation of knowledge (which often cause mistaken beliefs or systematic misconceptions to circulate)."


26 Kramer was probably the sole author of the *Malleus* (cf. Hansen 1963 [1901]: 404-7).
An opinion shared e.g. by Hutton, who comments, "the Greeks and Romans are just Celts who have learned to build cities" (2010; p.c).

See n. 8 above.

Ginzburg was, of course, highly conscious of the methodological and historiographical challenges he confronted; among many passages discussing these, see e.g. Ecst.: 8-24; 95-6.

Bharati (1976: 2) clarifies the issue: "the origin of religion cannot be studied, not because some theories may be false, but because all theories may be correct... [for] a statement to be scientific (as opposed to poetical, metaphysical, etc.) [it] has to be FALSIFIABLE IN THEORY. Because no theories of the origin of religion, or shamanism, or any of the many fundamental themes of religious behaviour are falsifiable in theory, they are not scientific... the origin of any specific, localized theme of religious behaviour... can and should [be studied] if valid evidence, falsifiable in theory and practice, can be adduced (archaeological, linguistic, and other empirical evidence supplying the data for verification-falsification)."

On compendia of popular magic and superstitions, Van Gennep 1935: v. 2; Van Heurck and Boekenoogen 1930; selections in Van Heurck 1931: 118-20.

Een dulle Griet, die een roof voor de Helle doet, die seer verbijstert siet, en vreemt op zijn schots toeghemaekte... Marijnissen and Seidel (1984: 55-6, n. 10) give the text; Grauls (1957: 48) and de Coo (1966: 31) discuss the variant readings vreemt and vreet in the 1604 and 1618 editions (cf. Milne 2013: Ch. 2.).

On other saints and their dragons (though not, alas, Margaret) see Le Goff 1988: 159-88.

Cf. Van Mander (1969 [1604]: 233v): een dulle Griet, die een roof voor de Helle doet, die seer verbijstert siet, en vreemt op zijn schots toeghemaekt is... The phrase, "She could plunder in front of hell and return unscathed", appears in a proverb collection published at Kampen in 1551 (Gibson 1977: 102-8). In 1561, rederijkers referred in a farce to Griet die den roof haelt voorde helle (Griet who fetches the loot from hell) as the sort of woman only a fool would send to market (Marijnissen and Seidel 1984: 56, n. 9). On early comedies in general, see Chambers (1963 [1903]) and Hoffman von Fallersleben 1968 [1838] as in n. 15 above; many farces deal with the theme of the domineering wife and the hen-pecked husband.

As Davis (1975: 124-51) explains, men might cross-dress as women to avail themselves of the protection of carnivalesque license, while making political protests; cross-dressed women were treated less
lightly; thus, for example, in 1619, Jersey's Royal Court convicted Katherine wife of Estienne le Saulteur of "having worn male attire, namely trunk hose, and [so] disguised to have been en resnerie by night, is condemned to be punished today in the [town's] public stocks, and Sunday next in the stocks of the parish of Saint Pierre, the trunk hose beside her" (Ogier 1998: 56). Breeches were used in Antwerp in the 1550s to "cover" condemned women, thus symbolically cross-dressing them (Milne 2013: Ch. 2; Wegg 1916: 316-7).

36 The image of the fence as an occult boundary is used in the proverb Hij smit zijn kap over de haag (which appears in Bruegel's Netherlandish Proverbs): "He throws his cowl over the hedge", about quitting a religious order (Dundes and Stibbe 1981: 39).

37 Trance techniques imply dowsing (Van Gennep 1935: 2.598, 690-4). On popular books pleine de conjurations ... pour decouvrir des trésors, Van Heurck 1931: 140-1. Treasure-seeking is a popular motif in peasant comic dream-anecdotes (Milne 2013: Ch. 2).

38 Geiler von Kaisersberg, Die Emeis... (1516: ff. XLIIv-XLIIr; see our figs. 1a & b), and Johannes Nider, Praeceptorium divinae legis (2012 [1481]: I.x & xi) were reprinted together at Rome in 1559; often excerpted in seventeenth-century witchcraft manuals.

39 The popularity of the rebus is in itself a large subject, worthy of further study from the point of view of changing mentalités, encompassing the theatre, popular speech, art, literature, paremiologies, encyclopedias, hermetic and didactic works. Emblem books, for instance, such as Paradin's Devises Héroïques (1561), were at the height of their popularity in the second half of the century. See e.g. Ong 1976: 91-126; Milne 2013: Ch. 3.

40 Lévi-Strauss (1977: 210-11) defines mythemes as the irreducible "gross constituent units" of mythological narrative, always found as "bundles of relations". Muchembled (1985: 80) discusses how the meaning of folkloric material changes with context: "In other regions the general signs of good and bad fortune differ from or even contradict the examples we have chosen here, and relatively seldom are animals and things connected with one quality alone, diabolical or beneficent ... Signs did not have fixed meanings in peasant thought because the forces that they helped to interpret were themselves not fixed. Every detail was important to interpretation: time, place, and circumstances coloured positively or negatively what seems to us to be the same phenomenon."
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The "Master of Animals" Concept of the Ainu

HITOSHI YAMADA

ABSTRACT. Some Ainu yukar (divine songs) tell of the starvation caused by the shortage of deer and salmon. The reason for the event is told as mistreatment of these animals on the side of human beings (the Ainu). When people begin to hunt and fish them in a respectful way, masters of the respective animals supply them again. Interestingly, the animals are often said to multiply from bristles, scales or bones, and to have been kept in a storehouse or a bag. These features are common to the master of animals concepts of some northern ethnic groups (Neghidal, Nivkhi, Labrador Eskimo and Naskapi) compared in the present paper. The Ainu masters appear almost always in pairs (deer and salmon), which is comparable with the Eskimo masters of land and sea animals. Further parallels should be explored in future studies, for it is already known that the circumpolar societies share such cultural traits as cult sticks and fish-striking clubs in common.

KEYWORDS: Ainu, master of animals, deer, salmon, hunting, fishing, worldview, god concept

INTRODUCTION: THE MASTER OF ANIMALS CONCEPT

The master (or lord) of animals (Herr der Tiere) is a religious-ethnological term that stands for the "concept of a special type of deity or spirit that reigns over the animal kingdom" (Zerries 2005: 5512–6). It is a god concept of hunting-fishing peoples. The master of animals controls and represents wild animals, while it hands over the individual animals under its command to the humans: the hunters. There are masters that reign over the whole of the wild kingdom, and also those of each species, such as the master of reindeers, or the master of wild boars. Sometimes they are called the master of the mountain or the forest according to their dominant spheres. Some masters appear in theriomorphic forms, and others in anthropomorphic forms. Some masters are regarded as male, others as female, in which case they are called the "lady of animals"
The endeavours of generations of ethnologists and religious scholars have led to the discovery of such primitive god concepts in many cultures; in Africa (Baumann 1938), South America (Zerries 1954), Northern Eurasia (Paulson 1961), and Southeast Asia (Ōbayashi 1970) among others.

On the one hand, this concept is very interesting in that it might be seen as the oldest mythological-religious god concept in all of the history of mankind. On the other, however, we need now to compare such concepts in more detail, paying attention to regional differences as well as similarities. Having these thoughts in mind, I would like to focus on the master of animals among the Ainu in the present paper.

THE AINU

The Ainu¹ are sometimes called "the aborigines of Japan". In former times they inhabited not only Hokkaidō but also the Island of Sakhalin, the Kuril Archipelago and Northern Honshū. They were compelled to move to Hokkaidō, and were gradually assimilated by the neighbouring Japanese especially after the Meiji Restoration (beginning in 1868), and lost their cultural characteristics as well as their own language. The Ainu language is often grouped in the Paleo-Asiatic languages (including the Chukchi, Itelmen, Koryak etc.), but their linguistic affinity is yet to be clarified. Some linguists are of the opinion that the Ainu, together with the Korean and the Japanese constituted the Proto-Far-Eastern languages, while others emphasize such parallel traits as noun incorporation which appears in both the Ainu and the Eskimo.

Among archaeologists and physical anthropologists there are arguments that the Ainu culture has succeeded features of the Jōmon (Japanese band ceramic) culture (ca. 10,000–500 BCE). André Leroi-Gourhan compared parallel patterns in Ainu and Jōmon ornaments, and Kazurō Hanihara proposed his dual structure model of the Japanese, which stresses the genetic relationship between Jōmon and Ainu populations. This is the background for the frequent reference to the Ainu as the Japanese aborigines.
Nowadays the language as well as the culture of the Ainu is seriously endangered. Statistics (as of 2009) indicate that there are only fifteen native Ainu speakers. There are however more and more Ainu language courses in local communities, TV programs in the Ainu language, reliable dictionaries and textbooks, and revivals of festivities (Satō 2009), and the once lost cultural identity of the Ainu is being revived along with ethnic pride.

The traditional subsistence activities of the Ainu were hunting, fishing and gathering, although it is true that they conducted horticulture of several kinds of millet. Therefore we can expect that the Ainu have had some similar notions to the master of animals in their mythology and folklore. In fact, Paulson, Ōbayashi and Takashima have already attempted to address this topic. In the following I would like to add new material to earlier studies of the concept of the Ainu master of animals. Below is a rather preliminary report of my ongoing studies on this problem.

**AINU ORAL TRADITIONS ON THE MASTER OF ANIMALS: CLASSIFICATION OF AINU ORAL TRADITIONS**

According to Ainu scholars such as Kyōsuke Kindaichi, Mashiho Chiri, Itsuhiko Kubodera (1977b) and Hiroshi Nakagawa (1997), oral traditions of the Ainu can be classified into three genres:

32. divine songs (*kamuy yukar* or *oyna*)
33. prose stories (*uwepeker* or *tuytak*)
34. hero epics (*yukar, sakorpe* or *hawki*)

In kamuy yukar songs, various deities (animals, plants and inanimate objects) speak in the first person form. All of the instances of the master of animal's tales that I am going to deal with in this article belong to this genre.

**Kamuy yukar: Konkuwa** (Chiri 1978 [1923])
The first story is one published by Yukie Chiri (b. 1903–d. 1922). She was born to a native Ainu family in West Hokkaidō. Inspired and encouraged by the linguist Kindaichi, she began to write down kamuy yukar of the Ainu in their original language with Japanese translations.
However, shortly after the final proof reading of her book, *Divine Songs of the Ainu* (Chiri 1978 [1923]), which appeared posthumously, she died of heart disease at the age of only nineteen.

This book became the most popular among many works on and by the Ainu. It has been reprinted till this day and recently we have commentaries, an English translation, and even CDs of the songs in it. As a matter of fact, it is not known exactly how the songs were sung. Therefore the songs in these CDs are reconstructions by a native Ainu woman of the possible ways in which they may have been performed. One example of the master of animal tales is "Song Sung by the Owl God 'Konkuwa'."

The word *konkuwa*, the meaning of which is not clear, belongs to a different refrain of words or phrases (*sakehe*) that never fail to appear in every kamuy yukar song. The contents of this song can be summarized as follows:

The owl god, i.e. the guardian god of each Ainu village, wants someone to deliver a message to the deities in heaven. But the first candidate, which was a young crow man, and the second, a mountain jay, were disqualified because of their absent-mindedness. The third candidate was a water ouzel. It passed the trial of competency and went to heaven. Then it told the deities there that the Ainu were on the verge of starvation because of a shortage of their staple food: deer and salmon. The water ouzel realized that the deer god (*yuk kor kamuy*) and the fish god (*cep kor kamuy*) did not send deer and fish, because the Ainu had not treated the animals in the appropriate manner. The original song says:

The reason that the deer god and the fish god did not send any deer or fish down from heaven was that when the humans hunted the deer, they beat them over their heads with a stick, and when they skinned the deer, they abandoned their heads in the forest, and when the humans caught the fish, they hit the fish over their heads with rotten sticks, so the deer had gone naked and crying back to the deer god, and the fish had gone back to the fish god holding rotten sticks
in their mouths. The deer god and the fish god had become angry, and after conferring, they had decided not to send down any more deer or fish.

Hearing this, the owl god let the Ainu people know it in dreams. The Ainu then mended their ways and:

from that day on they made beautiful sticks such as inau for beating the heads of the fish and catching them, and when they hunted deer, they decorated the deer beautifully with inau. The fish happily put the beautiful inau in their mouths and went back to the fish god, and the deer happily went back to the deer god with their newly decorated heads. Pleased with this, the deer god and the fish god sent down plenty of fish and plenty of deer.

This song tells us of the Ainu notions of the proper ways in which they should treat hunted deer and caught fish (especially salmon). According to their ideas, deer should be decorated with inau, a shaved stick that was thought to please gods by its beauty. In the case of fish (salmon), they should be killed by beating their heads with a beautifully decorated club, not with a rotten stick. This was the etiquette with which the Ainu behaved with regards to their main sources of nourishment: deer and salmon. If people ceased to obey these prescriptions, it was thought that the masters of deer and salmon would get angry and would not supply them anymore.

The native expressions of these masters are yuk kor kamuy and cep kor kamuy respectively. In these expressions, yuk means deer, cep means fish, and kamuy means god. The word kor can be used either as a transitive verb meaning have, control or reign or as a word for of. In this case both usages are possible. If we take the first interpretation, the meanings are, deer-having-god and fish-having-god, while with the latter interpretation, their meanings are deer's god and fish's god respectively.

**Variant A** (Kindaichi 1993 [1923]: 137–55)
The Konkuwa song tells us that deer and salmon are sent out by their masters and, after being hunted and properly treated, they then come back to the masters. However the song does not tell us how they are
living with their masters. This we can know from our first variant, which was written down by Kindaichi in 1915 from a native Ainu woman also in West Hokkaidō and published in 1923.

In this variant, it is interesting that there is a mediator between the Ainu and the masters of animals. This mediator is a goddess in heaven who is informed of the famine among the humans and holds a banquet where she amuses both masters by dancing in order to persuade them to send their animals out again. The masters' reason for not supplying deer and fish is very similar to the reasons revealed in our Konkuwa song.

After the goddess succeeds in persuading them, however, the masters smile. Then the master of deer (yuk kor kamuy) opens his big bag, letting the deer inside go out and run in the fields. The master of fish (cep atte kamuy) does the same. As a result, the salmon fill the rivers in so great a number that "the fins beneath rub the ground stones of the river, and the fins above are burnt by the sunrays". This is a common way of expressing the abundance of salmon in the rivers.

A puzzle remains after reading variant A. Who is this goddess that mediates between mankind and the masters of animals? This will be made apparent in our next examples.

**Variant B, C and D (Kubodera 1977a)**

In 1977, a voluminous book was published. It contained 124 kamuy yukar and oina in the original Ainu language, together with Japanese translations and detailed annotations. The author is the linguist Itsuhiko Kubodera, a pupil of Kindaichi. Kubodera conducted intensive field research in the 1930s and collected valuable material from native Ainu informants in West Hokkaidō. The book was the result of his research.

Songs no. 74, 75 and 81 can be seen as our variants. In the former two songs, it is the goddess of hunting (hasinaw kor kamuy or hasinaw uk kamuy) that plays the mediator's role between humans and the masters, while in the latter the same role is played by the goddess of water (pet or us mat or wakka us kamuy). Just as in our variant A, these goddesses amuse the masters of deer and fish by their dance, and persuade them to send their animals once again to the Ainu people.

Interestingly, deer appear from bristles and fish from scales in songs no.74 and 75. In no. 74, we are told that the goddess of hunting dances so well that the master of the deer and fish laughs. She picks up the scales dropping out from his mouth, and blows them onto the river,
where schools of bigger and smaller fish appear. The same happens with bristles and herds of deer when she blows them onto the mountain fields. No. 75 repeats almost the same procedure, the only difference being that the masters of deer and fish (yuk atte kamuy and cep atte kamuy) do it by themselves.

The divine song no. 81 has some unique points. When the masters of deer and fish are asked about the reason for not sending out the animals, they reply as follows:

According to the master of the deer, when his fellow deer (a=utaripo) visit the humans, they are badly treated, given no inau and thrown away. Thus they come back crying. The master thinks it is a pity and conceals the deer in his storehouse (pu). As the reason for this maltreatment, the Ainu gave the fact that the spring deer are poor in flavor to eat — Kubodera notes that the deer meat seems to taste less flavoursome in spring after losing weight in winter.

Then according to the master of the fish, when his fellow fish go out to make a profit (by gaining inau and wine from the humans), the Ainu hit the fish with a rotten stick and throw them away, saying "Who would dare to eat an exhausted fish after having spawned?" Thus the fish come back crying. Therefore the master encloses them likewise in his storehouse. Hearing this, the soul of the hunting goddess goes out of her own body, opens the doors of the storehouses, and releases the deer and fish that were kept there by their respective masters. Interestingly, it is said too that the fish were kept in a bag (sarnip).

Other variants
We have more variants of the same story line. Some of them are worth special notice, as they tell that the deer and fish crowds emerge not from bristles or scales, but from their respective bones (Inada and Ozawa 1989: 11, 35). This might be a reflection of the idea that the game animals can be revived from their bones if they are treated properly by humans. This is a widespread idea found among hunting peoples.
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AINU MASTER OF THE ANIMALS

From the above examples we could summarize some general characteristics of the Ainu animal masters as follows:

- The Ainu have held notions of the "master (god) of deer" (yuk kor kamuy) and "master (god) of fish" (cep kor kamuy) – specifically salmon in the latter case. Deer and salmon have been great suppliers of meat for the Ainu, but they seldom are themselves the kamuy who recite in the first person form in divine songs (Nakagawa 1997: 60–61).  
- It is not explicitly known if these masters are thought to be male or female. The description, however, that the hunting goddess tries to amuse them by dance, seems to favour the first possibility.
- The masters take command of their respective animals. They can send out the animals if they are treated in a proper fashion, and can conceal them however if they are mistreated.
- The right treatment of deer includes their being killed with respect and decorating their bodies with inau. In the case of salmon, to kill the fish with a neat stick (club) is crucial.
- The place where the masters keep their animals in command are in a storehouse or a bag, where the animals sometimes exist in forms of bristles, scales or bones.

These considerations have not yet revealed who the goddess of hunting is. Having this question in mind, I would now like to turn to some comparative material from neighbouring areas.

COMPARATIVE MATERIAL OF THE AINU MYTHS

Kalgam of the Neghidal

A Neghidal man went hunting and met a male stranger, with whom he wrestled. The Neghidal man grasped the bag of the stranger, who ran away. In the bag he found many different kinds of hairs. He kept the bag as his amulet. After this event, he always heard the voice of the master of the forest Kalgam saying "Give me back my amulet!". After seven years the voice ceased to be heard. Then the man began to have better hunting
luck with game animals, especially the marten. It is said that Kalgam is
the master of animals in the forest, whose bag contains different kinds of
hairs that change into the respective animals (Tsintsius 1982, cited in

**Tairnards of the Nivkhi (Gilyak)**
The god of the sea, Tairnards of the Nivkhi lives on the seabed of the
Okhotsk Sea. He is an old man with an ice-gray beard and lives in a yurt
with his old wife. In the yurt there are lots of boxes which are filled with
different kinds of roe, of which he, from time to time, throws handfuls
into the sea. In this way he sends countless runs of salmon, without
which the Nivkhi would not survive. It is he too who sends out killer
whales, keeps order in the sea, and drives all possible sea animals to the
Nivkhi (Sternberg 1905: 253).

**King of the caribou of the Labrador Eskimo**
There was once a great shaman (*angekok*) who felt it his duty to the
people to find out the place where the caribou went to when they passed
in great numbers into the interior. His guardian spirit (*torngak*) led him
there in a journey which took two months. After sunset, the shaman saw
a very large house made of turf and rock. Standing across the door was a
very big deer. It was the king of the caribou. He was so big that the other
caribou could walk in under him without touching him. The caribou
came up in big bands, and all passed under the king into the house. When
the last one had passed in, he lay down and kept guard over the others
(Hawkes 1916: 154).

It is also told that there are two deities: a female deity
(*Supergu'ksoak*) who presides over the land animals, especially the
reindeer, and a male deity (*Tornga'rsoak*), who presides over the sea
animals. The male deity is the husband of the female deity, and on their
help, for which the shaman asks, depends the outcome of the hunt
(Hawkes 1916: 124).

**Master of the caribou of the Naskapi**
The master of the caribou of the Naskapi has a human shape, white skin,
and wears black clothing. In a big cave-house live thousands of reindeer
in an enclosure into which the master allows no one to enter. The
conjurer of a group of hunters asks the master of the caribou for game.
The rules of the hunt which are given to him must be followed exactly. The master of the caribou grants the hunter only a specified number of animals as prey. Beyond that number, all hunting is in vain (Speck 1935: 82–8).

**COMPARISON OF SOME RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS**

Besides master of animal stories themselves, some religious concepts and implements of the Ainu have been compared with those of northern peoples. The inau, for instance, is thought to have a historical-genetic relation with North Eurasian cult sticks and ritual trees/poles. The points of resemblance between them and the inau are (Ōbayashi 1960):

- Function as mediator between man and god (Orokko, Gilyak, Tungus, Yugur, Buryat, Yenissei-Ostyak).
- Locus or image of god, sometimes almost taking the place of god (Gilyak, Kamchadal, Reindeer-Tungus in Manchuria, Soyot, Ostyak).
- Guardian spirit (Kamchadal, Koryak, Orokko, Gilyak).
- Looked upon as a human being or anthropomorphous in shape (Orokko, Gilyak, Kamchadal, Koryak, Transbaikal Tungus, Samoyed, Ostyak).
- A bird, or in the shape of a bird (Gilyak, Transbaikal Tungus, Yakut, Ostyak).
- Furnished with curled shavings or their equivalents (Orokko, Gilyak — shavings; Kamchadal, Koryak — grass; Yukaghir, Olcha, Lapps — twigs; Transbaikal Tungus — fur, hair; Yakut — grass, hair; Yugur — cloth, hair; Teleut, Soyot — ribbons; Buryat — bark, fur, twigs; Samoyed, Wogul, Magyat — cloth).
- Cult sticks and ritual poles are preferably made of willow wood (Orokko, Yugur, Teleut).

The so-called fishhead-striking-club has also been found among the Ainu, Northern Japanese, Northwest Coast peoples and North Eurasian peoples. It has been pointed out that not only such implements but also the religious concepts and the worldview behind them have been very similar among these people (Suga 1994–95).
One such concept is the idea of being revived from bones. That the game animals can become revived from their own bones if they are handled with care is a widespread idea among hunting-fishing peoples. The platform disposal of bear bones by the Orokko (Sakhalin) is well known. They believed that the bear could be revived and come back to them if its bones were disposed "in anatomically proper order" (Meuli 1975 [1946]: 907–1021).

Similar ideas prevailed in fishing rituals. The Sanitch of British Columbia, Canada, held a ritual for the first salmon every year. Their elder told the salmon that they would treat them with respect. After cooking and eating the salmon, their bones were carefully collected and sent back to the sea. As long as they respectfully treated the salmon, it was believed, they would repeatedly come back to the Sanitch (Atsumi 1998).

The Ainu myths of revived deer and fish from bones clearly reflect the same idea. And the multiplying of the same animals from bristles and scales is based also on the same *pars pro toto* principle.

**CONCLUSION**

The Ainu concept of master of animals seems to focus on deer and salmon masters. The mediator, the goddess of hunting, also appears in some variants. But her place is not always clear. We might regard her as a new addition which emerged as the Ainu pantheon became more complex and elaborate. This assumption is based on the fact that the Ainu mythology and worldview had been more or less influenced by Japanese counterparts. An example is the Ainu legend of the origin of millet, which is no doubt a variant of the legends on the origin of barley widespread in Honshū (Ōbayashi 1964). It is perhaps possible to find in the Ainu hunting goddess a reflection of Ame-no-uzume, the goddess in classical Japanese mythology, who by dancing and amusing other gods in heaven attracted the attention of the sun-goddess Amaterasu who had hidden herself in a rock-dwelling.

In the above comparison, the Neghidal, Nivkhi, Eskimo and Naskapi masters all control the hunting/fishing luck of the people, a feature also common to Ainu masters of animals. One point worth mentioning is that in Ainu oral tradition the masters of salmon and deer appear in pairs.
This feature is comparable with the paired deities of the Labrador Eskimo, one responsible for land animals, and the other for sea animals.

The Ainu concept of a bag or a storehouse as the place where concealed animals find themselves can be compared with similar ideas of Northern peoples both in Eurasia and in America. Other religious notions and implements such as inau cult sticks and fish-striking-clubs also have equivalents among the neighbouring peoples, suggesting that these belong to an old stratum of hunting-fishing cultures in the Northern Hemisphere.

Our future tasks should be to further progress such comparisons in this region. Whether, and if positive, how far such concepts can go back in historical depth would depend on material from South American, Australian, and African hunting cultures among others.

Hitoshi Yamada is an Associate Professor at Tōhoku University, Japan; yamadahi@sal.tohoku.ac.jp

Notes

1. For the state of art of the Ainu studies in Japan, compare Yamada (2003).
2. A beautifully shaved stick used as a religious artefact.
3. The word atte means "let crowd", "multiply".

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The Snooty Baba in the Landscape of Karst, Slovenia: About a Slavic Ambivalent Female Mythical Figure

KATJA HROBAT VIRLOGET

ABSTRACT. This article about stone Babas (hags) arises from the Karst folklore which has its origins in Slovenia. The stone Babas are linked to a grotesque children’s folklore of kissing the stone, snooty Baba on the first visit to a town, piece of land or forest. Stone Babas are included in certain yearly rituals. Traditions about the Baba are present throughout the Slavic world where kissing the old woman and forecasting the weather according to hills named after her can be compared to other European traditions like harvest rituals. In pre-Christian beliefs of some Karst villages, duality of female mythical characters is noted and corresponds to the ambivalence of traditions and the meaning of Baba. The duality of young and fertile as opposed to old and destructive can be interpreted as different rites of passage of a woman that could correspond to the dualism of winter and summer. In children's folklore about Baba, we can find a reminiscence of a female mythical creature in the form of a hag connected to initiation upon first entrance to a specific area, which was used as a powerful element of social control of children.

KEYWORDS: Baba, old woman, hag, Slavic mythology, Slavic goddess, Mokoš, landscape, monolith, corn spirit, Slovenia

KISSING THE SNOOTY BABA AND OTHER RITUALS

This article arises from the traditions connected to monolith Babas (Eng. hags¹, old women) which have their origins in the Karst folklore in Western-Southern Slovenia. The analysis is part of a wider interdisciplinary research combining archaeology and ethnology on the conceptualisation of space and time as reflected in the oral tradition about the landscape (Hrobat 2010).

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Fig. 1. Baba monolith from Rodik, Slovenia drawn by Majda Peršolja as she remembers it from her childhood (8 February 2004). Children saw in the stone monolith a shape of buttocks, woman’s, and breasts (Hrobat 2007: 41–3; Hrobat 2008a, b; Hrobat 2010: 183–96.

There are two known monolith Babas in the researched area: one in Rodik (Figure 1) and one in Opicine above Trieste, the latter being particularly linked to a number of traditions from across the Karst area (Hrobat 2007: 41–3; 2008a, b; Hrobat Virloget 2012). People of Karst recognised Baba from Trieste in different ways: from a fountain to a place by the "sacred rock" (Škala šanta) to its primary form in the stone monolith. Parents from Karst, the Vipava Valley, and Croatian Istria and Kvarner told frightening legends about Baba to their children: namely, that they would have to kiss or puff up the buttocks of the ugly old Baba or swallow her snot on their first visit to a neighbouring town (for example, to Trieste or Grobnik) (Hrobat 2010: 183–96). As stated in one of Rodik narratives, the novice "has to fondle and smooch her snotty face /.../ has to puff up Baba’s buttocks" (Peršolja 2000: 27). Examples of spitting at or beating a stone Baba with a stick on traversing a certain piece of land (Vipava Valley; Hrobat 2010: 198) or kissing the snotty
Baba in the form of a hive upon entering the forest for the first time (Jasen; Pugelj 2012: 107) indicate that this kind of tradition was not meant just for entering a nearby town but also for entering other territories for the first time. Throughout the area, stone Babas were represented as personifications of a woman; a repulsive old woman. In Sežana and everywhere where children feared Baba from a nearby town, Baba was imagined as "an ugly and snotty woman with large warts, a nose dripping of snot, and ugly, ugly as hell." Children saw in the stone monolith in Rodik "a shape of a woman’s buttocks and breasts" (Hrobat 2007: 41–3; 2008a, b; 2010: 183–96). Baba with a large head and pronounced hips and breasts, carved in rock at the entrance to the old town of Grobnik in Croatian Istria, stands as proof that the stone monoliths represented the personification of a woman (Vince-Pallua 1995–96).

In some parts, rituals are recorded in connection to Babas. Every year after finishing outdoor pasture, herdsmen made a bonfire by the stone Babji zob (Baba’s tooth) above Puštale under Črni vrh. Babji zob was one of three stones called Trizob (Three teeth), which according to local beliefs had a special significance on equinoxes (Medvešček 2006: 199; Kuret 1997b: 72; Hrobat 2008a, b). At the rock Stara Baba (Old Baba) above Ajdovščina, people from the neighbouring villages gathered before the sunrise on St George’s day (the village holiday), fried eggs and danced (Figure 2; Möderndorfer 1948: 221). In Babja jama (Baba’s Cave) in the Soča Valley, fertility and divination rituals were performed (Medvešček 2006: 43–8, 136–7). On Velebit in Croatia, herdswomen were bringing fruits to the stone Baba on a specific day to express their thanks for the safety and fertility of the cattle (Marković 1980: 126–7; Pleterski 2009: 41–3). According to another source, in the period between World War I and II, after a priest had blessed the stone Baba, women prayed to the stone Baba during the time of bigger feasts, and kissed her to conceive and give birth to a healthy baby (Trošelj 2011: 354–3, 364). On Velika Planina in Northern Slovenia, herdsmen made an offering of loose of coins or a loaf of bread to the imaginary Baba on their first approach to pasture wishing to avoid hail (Cevc 2006: 132–3). In Plave by the Soča River, a monolith called Črna Baba (Black Baba) was rubbed three times a year (firstly, on the first day of September’s waning moon, secondly, on the fifth day and thirdly, on the ninth day, on
Fig. 2. At the Stara Baba ("Old Baba") above Ajdovščina, people from the neighbouring villages gathered before the sunrise on St. George’s Day, the village holiday, and fried eggs and danced (Möderndorfer 1948: 221). The tradition of lightning bonfires is still nowadays alive (photograph: K. Hrobat Virloget).

a new moon) with nut husks to keep her black. On the day, offerings were made to her and the future was predicted based on her (Medvešček 2013; for other see Hrobat 2010: 198–204). In Golac in Čičarija, a three day offering ritual to Baba called tridan (three day) was performed. On the day before Midsummer Day, water was offered to the monolith Baba before it was taken to the top of a nearby hill. On Midsummer Day, ashes and charcoal were given to the monolith Baba and to another hill before coming back to light a bonfire next to the Baba. On the third day soil from the family field was taken to the Baba as well as to another significant hill (Medvešček 2013; Hrobat 2010: 302–4)².
SLAVIC BABAS AND THEIR CONNECTION TO RAIN, WIND AND SUN

Drawing on the tradition about Baba in the region of Karst in Slovenia, I found an omnipresence of the tradition in all Slavic languages. In Slavic folk tradition, Baba refers to a female creature, a demon associated with atmospheric phenomena. She is characterised by atmospheric precipitations (rain, hail), rain clouds, sudden frost, and drought. Further, she is associated with celestial objects like the moon or constellations, the rainbow, to days and periods (Baba Marta in Macedonian, Bulgarian folklore as a personification of the month of March; Indian summer is in the majority of Slavic languages called Baba’s summer; Baba’s winter). She is the corn spirit, the last sheaf in harvest rituals, the name for disease, a wicked old woman, a water demon, ceremonial bread in Serbia and Slovenia etc. (Ternovskaja and Tolstoj 1995: 122–3; Tolstoj 1995: 38–9; Kuret 1997a: 80; 1997b: 72; Petrović 2000: 150–78; Vražinovski 2000: 44–5; Šmitek 2004: 238; Ravnik, Šega and Ložar-Podlogar 2007: 18). She is also associated with spinning and together with the image of an old man, she presents an image for ritual masquerade (Ternovskaja, Tolstoj 1995: 122). The name Baba was given to monoliths, hills, and other parts of landscape throughout the Slavic world (Kuret 1997b: 72; Badjura 1953: 132–3; Veselovskij 1906: 1–19; Hrobat 2010: 215–9 etc.). In Macedonia, bread or animals were offered to stone Babas for protection from disease and storms, thyme was burned around them, candles were lit and people walked around the stones carrying pine branches (Vražinovski 2000: 218–9).

Baba is most frequently associated with water, either through names for different types of precipitation, e.g. babje pšeno (snow pellets), or through forecasting rain or stormy weather (clouds above the hills, mountains with the name Baba), or through adjectives describing her (snotty, muddy) (Hrobat Virloget 2012). A legend from the village of Rodik says that Baba’s urine turns to rain, her fart to wind, and when she raises her skirt, this brings nice weather (Peršolja 2000: 27). In Macedonian tradition, Baba Marta who is a personification of the month of March and associated with changeable weather, turned an old woman to a stone
Baba because her farting\(^5\) insulted her (Risteski 2005: 362; Čausidis 2008: 280; Hrobat 2008a, b; 2010: 210)\(^6\).

Bringing clear weather by lifting Baba’s skirt, known from the above mentioned legend and a saying from Rodik, though it is also spread throughout the Primorska region\(^7\), is reminiscent of an obscene lifting of a gown by the old woman Baubó from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, which brought the goddess Demeter back to life\(^8\). The same act, which is interpreted as an exhibition of the vulva by Georges Devereux, is known to be made by other goddesses, for instance in Japanese and Egyptian myths (cf. Devereux 1990: 21–2, 27, 34–6, 59–61, 68–9, 73–4). In the wedding ritual in Macedonia, the bride and groom crawled under the skirt of baba (the oldest woman in the village), whilst she was saying the words of a ritual formula for fertility (Risteski 1962: 36). Familiar to some of the Balkan nations, especially the Serbs and Vlachs is a ritual or protection against evil supernatural beings and the plague, which consisted of crawling under the baba’s skirt which was woven by nine naked babas (Vukanović 2000: 16–22).

**BABA IN THE TOPONYMS AND SLAVIC MYTHIC TEXTS**

In toponyms from Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia, the celestial male deity appears in close vicinity to baba as a chthonic evil female aspect. For example, in Macedonia above Prilep, a stone Baba which was turned to stone as a punishment (figure 3), is part of the Babuna mountain (the name derived from the word Baba) and stands opposite to a place of male deity, or the hill Treskavec (the name derived from the verb treskati; eng. "to slam") with the monastery, also an important pilgrimage centre, which is among other traditions associated with the tale about a thunder strike which killed the monastery monster; see below (Čausidis 2008; for other mythic toponyms see also Šmitek 2004: 238–40; Belaj 2006; Katičić 2008: 293–9, 312; Hrobat 2010: 217). Several researchers connect a female figure in the landscape, which is called either Baba or other female saint names, to the tripartite scheme with the proto-Slavic chthonic deity Veles and the god of thunder Perun (Pleterski 1996; 2009; Belaj 2006: 17–35; Đermek 2009: 223–47). These conclusions lean on analyses of Russian philologists Vyacheslav V. Ivanov and Vladimir N. Toporov, in which they reconstructed excerpts from sacred pagan Slavic
mythical texts which touch upon the three principal deities Mokoš, Veles, and Perun, and thus showed how deeply they are rooted in the proto-indo-european tradition (Toporov 2002; Ivanov, Toporov 1974; 1983; Belaj 1998: 43). The tripartite character of the ideological system, supposedly based on the functions of the sacred, physical force, and fertility, was at the Indo-European level demonstrated by Georges Dumézil's (1987).
AMBIVALENCE OF BABA AND OTHER FEMALE MYTHICAL FIGURES IN CERTAIN KARST VILLAGES

Baba
Baba is connected with the landscape also in the tradition from Lokev referring to the hill called Železna Babica (Eng. Iron granny/midwife). We are dealing with first-hand records of oral tradition from Prelože, Lokev, and Bazovica in the Karst region, which includes pre-Christian beliefs and rituals that were performed until the 19th century (Čok 2012). Two etiological legends explain why lightning often strikes at the above mentioned hill. According to the first legend, the lightning strikes are caused by a lost iron babca, a scythe sharpening tool. The second legend says that one of the three fates called Rojenica, Sojenica, and Babica from the Vilenica Cave fled into the cave on the hill and was transformed from a midwife (in Slovenian called babica) to the evil Baba. The villagers wanted to regain the assistance of Babica for their birthing mothers. To achieve that, they had to bury iron pokers from the oven at Železna Babica during a thunderstorm, when three ninth children were born. The pokers attracted lightning, which caused Babica to run away and return to Vilenica Cave, to help birthing mothers again. Since then, a black cloud above Železna Babica indicates that a thunderstorm is coming (Čok 2012: 64). In the case of Železna Babica, it is possible to recognise the contrast between the benevolent midwife Babica which assists at childbirth and the Baba from the hill Železna Babica which the legend describes as evil.

Deva and Mora
The same type of good, fertile / evil, destructive contrast can be discerned in female mythical characters of two nearby villages of Prelože and Bazovica. In the Triglavca Cave (literally: Three-headed cave) ritual which was performed after the last grain had been harvested, people of Prelože asked Deva, the goddess of fertility, to bear crops so that Mora, the hag, would not harm them (Čok 2012: 22). In all Slavic languages, *deva stands for a girl, a virgin, which is also the origin of the Slovene word for a virgin, devica, a diminutive of deva (Snoj 1997: 88; Šmitek 2008: 15). The names of two opposing female characters, Deva and Mora, resemble the names Dzievana and Marzana, mentioned by the
Archbishop of Lviv in 1450 AD, who interpreted the fasting custom of carrying a doll as a memory of the destruction of Pagan idols of Slavic goddesses *Dzievana* and *Marzana* (Długosz 1873: X-116 d; Belaj 1998: 322). *Deva* also left traces in toponyms. Czech historian Jan Peisker was the first to call attention to the toponyms containing the word Devin (derived from *deva*), which in his opinion derives from the Slavic *daeva*, "evil demon" (1928: 1–36). In the opinion of the late France Bezlaj, a Slovene etymologist, a motif from the Slavic mythical tradition could indeed be recognised in the toponyms Devin skok (literally: "a girl’s jump", "deva's jump"), several of which he found in Slovenia (2003: 548–54). Slovene ethnologist Zmago Šmitek demonstrated that toponyms deriving from the word *deva* or toponyms or the motifs of devin skok are relatively frequent in the Slavic area. The toponym Devin (Duino) near Trieste in the Italian Karst is, for instance, related to the folk motif of "a girl’s jump". The petrified Baba on a cliff above the sea in Devin is supposed to be reminiscent of a girl who jumped to the sea from the castle. Besides the motif of "deva's jump" and the petrified Baba from Devin (Duino), the possibility of connecting Baba and Deva is indicated also by certain other toponyms in the Slovene area: Device (literally: Virgins) in the North West wall of Planjava / Baba Mountain (Šmitek 2008: 33; Badjura 1953: 133); fallows called Babice and Devinec by Repentabor in Trieste Karst (see Map of fallow names Trieste territory 1977); the snotty Baba in the Jasen village (in the form of a hive) and the hill Devin in the area of Ilirska Bistrica (Hrobat Virloget – in print).

**Mora and Makurška**

Mora, as the antithesis of the female mythical being, is also known in the tradition of Bazovica in the Italian Karst, where she is the opposite of Makurška. In the tradition of Bazovica, Mora is a mythical being related to winter, darkness and infertility. Makurška teases her by making leaves in spring, while Mora teases Makurška in autumn by taking the leaves away. The tradition that Mora transforms into the winter-time Pust (the name of the masked figure), who ravages nature and whom people burn at the beginning of spring (Čok 2012: 47), reminds us of the already mentioned (mostly) early spring Lent customs of the Western and Eastern Slavs, where a straw doll, represented as an old woman, is thrown out of the village or is burnt. Medieval church sources call the
imagines in figura mortis, imaginem, quam mortem vocant (Poznań 1423; cf. Długosz 1873: X-116 d; Belaj 1998: 322). The Czech know her as Smrt (literally: death), Smrtolka, Smrtka, Smrtholka (derivations from "death") as well as Mařena, Mařoška, Mařena-Čaramura, Mařena krásná (derivations from Mora / Mara) and Nevěsta (literally: bride). This custom was performed on a Sunday, in the middle of the forty days of fasting before Easter, on Dominica Judica, and was called nedele smrtečná (deadly Sunday). In Slovakia, we can find the names Morena, Marmuriena, Murienda, Mamurienda, Najmariena in songs related to the custom of throwing out the doll which speak about "death being carried out of the village" (Belaj 1998: 321–3). Based on extensive Slavic folklore material, Croatian philologist Radoslav Katičić has reconstructed a Proto-Slavic female mythical figure with the names Morana / Morena / Marena / Mora / Mara. What connects these names is the Proto-Slavic lexical prefix mer- "die". The basic Proto-Slavic verb is merti, mביר: moriti "make sth dead", "murder", "kill" stem out of it, also morŭb "killing", "dying" (Katičić 2010: 310). Mora is, according to Slovene beliefs, a human or animal-like creature which suffocates and bleeds dry a human or an animal at night. It can also be a human soul (Kropej 2008: 302–10; Katičić 2010: 310). In Slavic representations, Mora and Mara are also evil spirits, personifications of death, which harm people. As nouns, the Russian and Ukrainian mara mean "apparition", "illusion", the Belarus mara means "impure", etc. Proto-Slovenian mora means "bad, disturbing dream, nightmare" and "niggling worry". This can also be a legacy of the Indo-European lexicon. The Celtic Old Irish MÓrrígan, "queen of ghosts" or "queen of war and death" belongs to the same set of Indo-European words, also the Old Nordic and Swedish mara "nightmare", the English nightmare, the German Mahr "monster", "nightmare". The listed Slavic names appear as general nouns, as synonyms of words stemming from the Proto-Slavic съмъртъ, meaning "death" (Katičić 2010: 311). According to interpretations by Croat ethnologist Vitomir Belaj and Radoslav Katičić, the folklore being Mara originates from a goddess with the same name who played an important role in a Slavic vegetation myth. According to the reconstruction she is the one who commits incest with her divine brother Jurij – Ivan (George) in spring and at the end of the year turns from a young merry maiden into a cruel murderous woman, Mora or

The duality – on the one hand, the young, merry Mara, associated with fertility, and on the other the dangerous old Morana, a symbol of death – echoes the antithesis of the fertile Makurška and the deadly Mora in the tradition of Bazovica, the Deva / Mora opposition in Prelože, and the ambivalence of the female folklore figure from Lokev, comprising on the one hand the helpful Babica as midwife and the evil Baba at Železná Babica.

The fertility / death contrast of the female characters corresponds to the duality of meaning of the word baba. Milena Piškur (1965) noted that, on the one hand, the word baba denotes exhausted and infertile and on the other hand vital, fertile, key features. Appellations of most diverse concepts and things, too many to be listed here, arise from the basic contrast between baba meaning old woman with pejorative connotations (gossipy, ugly, slovenly, etc.) and baba in the sense of a young woman with healthy life appetites, strengths, appeal, fertility, etc.

The same ambivalence could be discerned in the wider traditions of Baba. On the one hand, her degraded aspect can be recognised when children are told to beware of the old, ugly, snotty Baba, in her connections with sudden chills, stormy weather, with the cruel Baba Marta who turns old women to stone in Prilep, Macedonia, with "the old snotty Baba" from the Škocjan Caves who gets hold of dead children (Štrukelj 2005: 125; Peršolja 2006: 25, 27, 33–5). In Croatian and Serbian folklore, winter was defined as a malevolent and annihilating old hag (Nodilo 1981 (1885–1890): 142–3; Marjanić 2003: 198). Similarly, in Bazovica, the winter part of the year is in the domain of the destructive mythical character Mora. The same can be concluded from the ritual formula in Triglavca Cave, where people asked Deva to bear crops and protect them from Mora (Čok 2012: 22). On the other hand, Baba symbolises fertility and vitality, especially in relation to her emphasised female attributes, her power over water – rain, wind and sun, her association with the three basic elements of nature (water, fire, soil in the three day ritual in Golac), etc.
Ambivalent attributes of the female mythic character are recognised also in near toponyms and oral traditions of the already mentioned mountain massive Babuna by Prilep in Macedonia, from Baba and Mukoš, reminiscent of the proto-Slavic goddess Mokoš, to Pali Baba (derived from a verb paliti: setting fire) and Besna Baba (literally: Furious Baba; derived from the word bes: rage, a demon), denoting her destructive hypostasis (in the vicinity, the hills Perunike (reminiscent of the name of the Slavic thunder god Perun) and Treskavec (related to verb treskati: to strike, slam. Striking is related to Perun) (Čausidis 2008: 280–2).

Radoslav Katičić discerns an ambivalence, a duality, a connection with both the celestial and the chthonic world, in the principal Proto-Slavic mythical goddess Mokoš, who in Latvian women's songs (daine) is called "Mistress at the Door", "Mother Earth", "Mother of the Deceased" (Katičić 2011).

In the discussed tradition, it is not possible to ignore connections of Baba / Mukoš / Makurška with the early Slavic goddess Mokoš. As already mentioned, in the Slavic world, the toponym Baba often appears besides toponyms associated with one or two Proto-Slavic male gods, Perun and Veles / Volos (see the above mentioned case near Prilep, Macedonia) (cf. Čausidis 2008; Šmitek 2004: 238–40; Belaj 2006: 17–35; Katičić 2008: 293–9, 312; Hrobat 2010: 217; Pleterski 1996; 2009). The situation corresponds to reconstructed Slavic mythological texts where Mokoš is closely related to the two Slavic gods (cf. Toporov 2002; Ivanov, Toporov 1974; Katičić 2012).

In Bazovica, the name Makurška is similar to the name Mokoš. In the legend about Železna Babica in Lokev, we can find the motif of helping at childbirths, which is, according to Toporov's interpretation, a characteristic of Mokoš (Toporov 2002: 49). The legend of Železna Babica also contains the motif of lightning strikes, which is reminiscent of the motif of punishing Baba with (god's) lightning and of being turned to stone by Velika and Mala Baba (Eng. "Big and Small Baba") in Resia Valley in Northeast Italy (Hrobat 2010: 221). The motif of Baba's petrifaction or petrifaction of wedding guests linked to stone structures (with or without lightning) is widely present in Southern Slavic folklore, though it can be found also in Western Slavic traditions, in Lithuania and...
Germany. Andelko Đermek (2009: 224) connects them to the Slavic mythical themes about the incestuous wedding of Mara and Jurij (George), the divine twins, according to the above mentioned theory of Vitomir Belaj (1998) and Radoslav Katičić (2010). Based on Slavic and Baltic folklore traditions, Toporov's analyses suggest a certain Proto-Slavic mythical motif of the punishment of a female figure (2002: 49‒50). And based on this motif, Šmitek points to the possible connections between Deva and Mokoš in the toponyms and legends of Devin skok ("a girl’s jump") (2008: 21–3). According to existent interpretations, slamming, striking with lightning and thunder is connected with the Proto-Slavic god of thunder, Perun (Toporov 2002: 30–1; Katičić 2008: 240–2).

In the legend of Želena Babica, another motif that implies a connection of Baba to Perun is burying iron pokers in the fireplace (i.e. fire) at the birth of the ninth son in a family. Now, according to the reconstructed Slavic vegetation myth, Perun’s son Jurij (George) was actually supposed to be the ninth or the tenth son who was kidnapped by the god of the underworld, Veles / Volos (cf. Belaj 1998: 206) on the day of his birth.

Also the lasciviousness of all traditions about Baba can be compared to what we know about Mokoš. Etymologically, the name Mokoš refers to "mucous, wet" (Toporov 2002: 47‒8), an adjective that is most frequently used in reference to Baba, i.e. snotty, muddy. Mokoš was predominantly linked to debauchery, her image displaying pronounced sexual traits (big breasts and long, loose hair, etc.). In Russian Christian confession questions from the 16th century, the question posed to a woman whether she had visited Mokoš meant if she had sinned in a debauched way. The appellation mokoš’ja means a woman of immoral behaviour (Toporov 2002: 47‒9). Lasciviousness and debauchery can be found in traditions of kissing the snotty Baba or the behind of the old Baba from Trieste, as well as in the tradition about Baba from Rodik, which lifts her skirt, breaks wind, and urinates.
ANALOGIES FROM EUROPEAN FOLKLORE

Mountain – earth – a kiss of a hag etc.

Throughout the Slavic world, Baba is most commonly linked to mountains, which according to Nikos Čausidis could indicate representations of the mountain as the earth and woman / mother. Among others, toponyms equate parts of Baba’s or grandmother’s body with mountain’s elements (Baba’s hip, knee, head, tooth, nose, belly, and Baba’s cave) (Čausidis 2008). Toponyms for parts of a mountain (especially for ‘avalanche’, ‘snow slide’, ‘landslide’, and ‘lava’) in Italy and France (Benozzo 2011) named after old woman confirm the connection between the mountain and the old woman also outside the Slavic world.

Personification of earth as mother and grandmother can be compared to a Russian folklore, where the earth is identified by the epithet "mother moist earth" (Rus. mat syra zemlia) (Johns 1998: 32). In the Greek mythology, Gaïa represented the earth as a whole. In a Homeric Hymn, she was praised as "mother of all, foundation of all, the oldest one", who nourishes all living creatures (Baring, Cashford 1993: 303; Howatson 1998: 183; Hard 2004: 31‒2).

In addition, the Karst tradition of a person who falls, kisses the snotty Baba could lead us to conclude that the snotty Baba can be nothing but the earth itself (Hробat 2010: 220). The same type of saying was known in North-East Italy, in Cinque terre, Serra di Leric, and Val di Vara (Lunigiana) in Liguria. If a child fell, people said that "it went to kiss the buttocks of Maimunna"\(^{18}\), in the village Serra di Leric (Caprione) "it went to kiss the buttocks of the Old Woman (La vecchia)"\(^{19}\). In Liguria, a similar threat of kissing the Old Woman, or in other cases Maimunna, when passing by (somewhere for the first time) is recorded. In the Ada and Mera Valleys in North Italy, to kiss the Old Woman or to kiss the buttocks of the Old Woman meant to go somewhere for the first time or to enter somebody’s house for the first time. Similar is the tradition of paying tribute to an invisible Old Woman from a cave by one of the many toponyms named after the Old Woman, or to kiss the stone named "Old Woman" (La vecchia, La veglia) (Bracchi 2009: 335‒8). According to information by Davide Ermacora, a threat was made to children from Sauris/Zahre, Friuli, North-Eastern Italy, namely that on their first exit from the valley they had to kiss the big buttocks of the old witch Belin,
dirty of excrements and associated with a certain part of the territory. Similar sayings are recorded also in other parts of Italy, even in Benevento, South Italy (kissing the buttocks of the oldest witch).

When children went to Fouras, Saintes in St. Thomas de Conac, France for the first time, they were told to kiss the dirty buttocks of the Old woman (La vieille) at the city’s gate. In Étaules in French Brittany, oyster farmers had to kiss the buttocks of the Old woman every time they entered an oyster field for the first time. A similar tradition was registered in Wallonia, South Belgium, where "La vieille" was used as a bogeywoman for children. The same kind of saying, "aller a Brion bijer le cul de la vieille" or "bijer ou biser le fond de la vieille" was used for those who lost in a certain game of balls (boule de Fort) or in a card game (Delavigne 1982: 111–5). The tradition of paying a tribute to the old woman, grandmother (Slovene: babica) is recorded on the Yeu Island in French Brittany. When passing by the megalith, children offered two small stones saying: "Grandma, here there is bread and bacon for you!" (Sebillot 1990: 210). In the Swiss Alps, the tradition of kissing "the stone brides", Brautstein, is known (see Meier 1996).

The motif of kissing the old hag is known in the Celtic tradition of Ireland and Scotland. The chosen king had to kiss or have intercourse with the Cailleach in her hag form, before she revealed herself as a splendid young woman and bestowed upon him the highest sovereignty. The emergence of natural and cultural phenomena, such as lakes, islands, cairns, was attributed to the Cailleach. In Ireland, the Cailleach or Old Woman of Beare was associated with the Munster region (Beare is a peninsula of West Munster), which was associated with the dead and with female supernatural personages (Rees and Rees 1989: 134‒6; Davidson 1998: 74; Monaghan 2004: 68‒70, 237‒8, 424). A comparison with Baba can be substantiated also through her powers over wild nature, as the Hag of Beare is closely associated with winter storms, storm clouds, and the boiling winter sea (Ó Crullaóich 1988: 154; Davidson 1998: 74).

**Forecasting bad weather, storms**
The custom originating from Velika Planina about bread offerings made by herdsmen upon their first seasonal departure to a mountain so that Baba would not send hail upon them (Cevc 2006: 132–3) can be compared with the herdsmen custom from Northern Spain. Upon
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returning from mountain pasture, the herdsmen from the Améscoa Valley gave left-over pieces of bread to children saying "Take the bread of the Old Woman (from) the mountain", while in the Artaza area they said "Take the bread of Grandmother (from) the mountain" (Lapuente Martínez 1971: 116).

Like the Slovene tradition, tradition from Italian Ada and Mera Valleys speaks about forecasting bad weather based on changes in a territory on the horizon named after the Old Woman/Lady/Baba. For instance, in Nova (Lovero), *Al bóc' de la véśgia* (and similar dialect variants in the surroundings) spoke about the place on the horizon between the Orobie mountains above Corona, according to which bad weather was predicted when the mountains became obscured because of the clouds (Bracchi 2009: 337). In Slovenia, for instance, bad weather was forecast if black clouds appeared above the Matajur Mountain or Vedrna Baba or above the hill named Železna Babica ("Iron granny/midwife") in Lokev in the Karst region (Hrobat 2010: 207; Čok 2012: 64; Medvešček – in print). In Czech, Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian, the word "Baba's corner" denotes the place where storm clouds roll over the hill (Piškur 1965: 10; Šmitek 2004, 192, 238).

Connection between storm and female figures is present also in the Slavic, Germanic and Scandinavian tradition. In Northern Norway, the female folklore figure called *Skaði* was associated with wild nature and icy mountains. In the German tradition from the Lucerne area, the sound of thunder was interpreted as *Percht* releasing her flax (Waschnitius 1913: 34; Davidson 1998: 104). Connection with stormy weather is also implied in the case of the female figure *Hřimbaba* in the Czech lands, which Niko Kuret interprets as "Baba of thunder", because her name contains the verb *hřimati* ("to thunder") (Kuret 1997b: 83).

**The last sheaf**

In Slovene tradition (Kostanjevica ob Krki), when the last sheaf, called *Baba*, was thrashed at the thrashing, they said they "killed the Baba" (Ravnik, Šega, Ložar–Podlogar 2007: 18), whilst in Karst, the last sheaf of grain, Baba was burnt, which was accompanied with the words, "Thank you God, again next year" (Hrobat 2010: 192). In contrast to associating the grain Baba with death stands another Slovenian tradition, which has it that the last grain sheaf called Baba was filled with food, cigarettes, also pears, and Baba's thrashing was accompanied with the
words, "Go ahead and thrash her (Baba), you'll see what she bears..." (Piškur 1965: 12).

Association of the last sheaf with Baba and birth can be detected in Slavic folklore, in which the woman tying the last sheaf was called Baba and was thought to give birth later that year. In Poland, the man cutting the last sheaf was told, "You have cut the navel-string". In Prussia, the last sheaf supposedly represented a child called Bastard. The woman who bound it cried out like a woman in labour, and an old woman came to act as midwife. Also in Brittany, the last grain sheaf called Mother Sheaf was associated with a baby (Davidson 1998: 73, 77; Frazer 1912: 150–1, 209; Mannhardt 1868: 28; Sébillot 1886: 306). The last grain sheaf is called Baba in many Slavic nations (Tolstoj 1995: 38–9; Ternovskaja, Tolstoj 1995: 122–3; Frazer 1912: 144–5). Supported by extensive material from Great Britain, Germany, and the neighbouring countries, Wilhelm Mannhardt has shown that the last sheaf of grain, which he interprets as an animated spirit of the corn, was killed by the reapers, or it lived on in the farmhouse until spring, when it was transferred to the new seed by some symbolic rite (Mannhardt 1884: 29). A certain spirit running through the grain or the last grain sheaf can also be called after animals (goose, quail, cock, fox, etc.), another widespread name was Old Man, Corn Mother, Mother Sheaf, in Scotland and Ireland, it is Gwrach, meaning "hag" or "old hag" and the already mentioned Callieach, etc. Besides Hag and Corn Mother, the last sheaf doll can also represent a Maiden, for example, in the name The Shorn Maiden in the Highlands. It can also represent a bride, whereby a young woman called Wheat Bride in Moravia who tied the sheaf was thought to get married in the year to come (Davidson 1998: 67–77; see Frazer 1912; Mannhardt 1865; 1868; 1875–77).

Hilda Ellis Davison discerns three generations of women, the Old Hag, the Daughter or Maiden (who may become a bride), and the Baby in harvest rituals throughout Europe. She traces the idea of twin female deities, seen as Mother and Daughter, or a trio consisting of "aged woman, hag or matriarch, her daughter who has borne children and perhaps her daughter in turn, the young virgin or bride" since the first centuries AD of the Roman occupation of Gaul, Britain, and part of Germany. The group of female powers seems to represent the different phases in a woman’s life linked to successive turning-points: menstruation, marriage, childbirth, and finally menopause. This may be
viewed as the goddess in her several aspects or as a group consisting of three generations of women. She links *rites de passage* for a woman: puberty, marriage, bearing of children, and old age, reflected in the range of goddess figures, to the waxing and waning of the moon (Davidson 1998: 77‒90, 185‒6).

**CONCLUSION: BABA AS AN ELEMENT OF CONTROLLING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR, LINKED TO RITE DE PASSAGE IN THE LANDSCAPE**

In the Slavic traditions about Baba and in the above analysed traditions about female mythical creatures from the three villages, among them also Železna Babica, we can, at best, recognise duality. An old, barren, dark aspect of a Baba on the one hand and a young, fertile aspect on the other. The same idea is implied by the meaning of the word baba in the Slovene and Slavic world, a contrast between old woman with pejorative characteristics and young, fertile woman (Piškur 1965). Considering the association of winter with *Stara baba* (Eng. old hag) in the Croatian and Serbian tradition (Marjanić 2003: 198) and *Mora* in the case of Slovene tradition from Bazovica (Čok 2012: 47) and with regard to the fact that in the Prelože tradition Mora acts as a creature that can damage the crops, in opposition to Deva (who bears crops) and Makurška, it seems that the two female aspects could be linked to the fertile and infertile halves of the year.

Marija Gimbutas' work also supports this ambivalence of female folklore figures across Europe (for example, Russian *Baba Iaga*, Polish *Baba Jedza*, Bask *Mari*, German *Frau Holle* etc.), in which she argues for a hypothesis on the existence of an ambivalent supreme Mother Goddess since the Neolithic age (Gimbutas 1989: 208–11). The Jungian idea of the Great Goddess is also founded on the assumption of continuous transmission of female images from Neolithic goddess down to Mary throughout history (Baring and Cashford 1993: xi‒xiv). However, these ideas of one and the same archetype, common prehistorical heritage, or a religious structure shared by all humanity are severely criticised for over-simplifying different cultural contexts and ignoring the specificities of time and place (Borgeaud 1996: 9‒18).

The figure of old snooty Baba lived until recently, mainly in children's folklore. In adult memories, it remains a hideous figure from
their childhood, which made them fear going for daily chores with their parents to a nearby town, for example, Trieste. According to John B. Smith, such childhood adventures of straying into the unknown, profoundly exciting but potentially terrifying, are almost always connected to these kind of threatening figures. He interprets *Perchta* from Austria and South Germany, an analogy to the Slovene *Pehtra Baba*, as an effective element of social control. Her figure was used as a threat to children, as slovenliness, sloth, and disobedience was something *Perchta* punished, while at the same time she controlled feasting and fasting. Until the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, *Perchta* controlled when people worked or didn’t work, though she was mostly associated with women's work, and with yarn. When yarn had lost its meaning, *Perchta*’s control expanded to all work, to work ethics, and general behaviour norms. Tales and sayings about Perchta remained locked in memory forms without adjusting to the changes in her social role (Smith 2004: 167‒86). In psychological frames, Andreas Johns interprets the figure of a similar, ambivalent *Baba Iaga* from Russian fairytales in Russian society as mediator of negative emotions experienced by children toward their mother figures (Johns 1998: 33). Psychologically, the terrifying and hideously snooty, muddy Baba, who had to be kissed, puffed at, or have her snot eaten, presented an effective element of children's social control, effective in controlling and restricting their movements in the local environment. Because they feared kissing the old snooty Baba, children remained quietly at home when their parents went to a nearby town to do their daily chores.

Kissing the old woman or her genitals upon the first exit/entry could, in Mirjam Mencej’s view\textsuperscript{24}, also suggest a connection with birth. As a child came out of the woman and her genitals when it was born (coming from the other world; cf. Radenković 1996: 47‒54), he must kiss and touch her genitals every time he enters a new place or house, like he did when he was born.

On the other hand, many researchers argue that children's folklore can be quite conservative, as it is susceptible to include traditions which have at certain times lost their meanings and sense (Delavigne 1982: 132; Kuret 1997b: 82; Vince Pallua 1995-96: 285). In children's folklore and other traditions about Baba and similar female figures, a certain archaic female mythical figure with both vital, fertile and degraded, old traits can
probably be discerned. As suggested by Raymond Delavigne in the case of the French tradition of kissing *La vieille* on entering a specific area, we could here also recognise a remnant of a certain initiation rite (Delavigne 1982: 422). Forms of intimidation with the old, snooty Baba from children's folklore and Baba's personifications in the landscape probably bear a locked memory of a female mythical figure in the form of an old woman. This mythical figure, also evident in Italy and France, is associated with a certain territory (town, forest, piece of land, or mountain pasture) and thus also to a specific first entrance initiation ritual.

*Katja Hrobat Virloget, PhD, is Assistant Professor at the Institute for Mediterranean Heritage, University of Primorska, Science and Research Centre, Garibaldijeva 1, 6000 Koper, Slovenia; Katja.HrobatVirloget@zrs.upr.si*

**Notes**

1. In the anglophone folklore, a "hag" was a nightmare spirit, which sends nightmares and paralysis to sleepers. However, many tales about hags do not describe them well enough to distinguish between an old woman who knows magic or a supernatural being (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hag; 17 April 2013). In the present text, the word "hag" is used in the former sense, namely as "old, ugly woman". The same word is used also in interpretations of the Celtic folklore figure the Cailleach, Hag of Beare (Rees and Rees 1989: 134–6; Davidson 1998: 74; Monaghan 2004: 68–70, 237–8, 424), with which Baba also shares distinctly ambivalent characteristics.

2. This tripartite structure of the offering is reminiscent of a tradition about the spatial concept of tročan from the village Police in the Western parts of Slovenia, a reflection of old beliefs in the three primary forces of nature, which includes also three stones Štribabe (literally: Three Babas). According to beliefs, every human creation in the landscape (farm, granary, orchard....) should be set up in a balanced way and in consideration of the elements of fire, water, and earth, which were symbolically denoted by specific stones or plants (Pleterski 2006).

3. The legend indicates a relation between micro- and macro-cosmos, which is
present in Indo-European mythical traditions (Lincoln 1986: 17, 57). A clear connection between Baba as monolith in the surroundings of the village Rodik and Baba in the folk tales of Rodik was never made.

4 An opposite analogy can be found in other narratives about Babas from Primorska, where children are told frightening stories before their first visit to nearby Trieste in Italy, namely they will have "to smooch the snotty Baba and blow up her behind" (Hrobat 2010: 188).

5 The main cause for the punishment (in the form of freezing or turning to stone) of baba (and her goats or children by another story) by Baba Marta, or according to other stories by her brother Sečko (the personification of February) or God, is the motif of not respecting the folk restrictions concerning the weather. Baba was too impatient or cheeky, according to another story, so she went to the mountain with her goats although the weather conditions were not yet ready for that (because of the unsettled weather conditions at the end of February and March) (Risteski 2005: 362; Hrobat 2010: 210; Čausidis 2008). In the recorded narrative from Prilep, on her way to the mountain, baba said: "Cic, young goats, to the mountain, to fart to Marta's chin" (Hrobat 2010: 210).

6 In her discussion on Slavic, European, and wider Indo-European representations of the soul as the air substance in the wind, Mirjam Mencej calls attention to parallels between the cosmic respiratory system – the wind and human breathing on one hand and bodily winds on the other. The wind, considered the bearer of souls, also of the newly born, in Slavic and European traditions, was connected to conception, birth, new souls. (Children's) souls could be drowned by blowing and whistling. Both linguistically (etymological parallels) and in folk beliefs, blowing is closely connected with breath, soul, and wind. There is a common etymology of the words breath, soul (at a microcosmic level), and wind, which represented their parallel at a macrocosmic level (Mencej 2008).

7 In the Vipava Valley Furlanka assumes this role in the saying "when Furlanka raises her skirt, this brings nice weather" (Hrobat 2010: 211).

8 In Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the old wet nurse called Baubó obscenely lifted up her gown, which cheered the saddened Demeter, who was searching for her kidnapped daughter (Slapšak 2004: 15–21; Devereux 1990: 27, 35; Kerény 1988, 244). Baubó's gesture is not entirely clear. There are many discussions about what were her visually obscene pranks and what Demeter saw underneath her gown, from genitals, bare womb, womb with Iakchos' head, etc. (see Slapšak 2004: 16; Devereux 1990: 27–40; http://www.ethnopsychiatrie.net/baubo.htm 1. March 2008). According
to Kerény "here we already touch upon the ineffable part of the Mysteries" (note Eleusinian) (Kerény 1988, 244).

9 In Slovene folk tradition, a child's destiny was tailored and foretold by three fairy-like creatures called 'sojenice' or 'rojenice' (Fates) (Kropej 2008: 237–40).

10 The author of Prelože, Lokve, and Bazovica traditions says that the last pre-Christian ritual in the cave of Triglavca was performed in the end of the 1930s. The ritual was described to him by his great-grandmother as it had been told to her by her great-grandmother, the last to have witnessed the ritual itself. In the cave of Triglavca beside the three heads in the form of stalactites, there are two ritual stones, a stalagmite and a stalactite. According to tradition, the top of the stalagmite was in the form of female genitals, representing the goddess of fertility Deva, into which water from the stalactite in the form of male genitals, representing her groom Devač, dropped (Čok 2012: 21–5; Čok 2010). According to the great-grandmother, "the water dripping from Devač depicts that they are like bride and groom, always getting married, the old said that they mated" (Čok 2012: 23).

11 In Trieste Karst in Italy, Slavic toponyms are present because of the Slovene minority living there.

12 Zmago Šmitek linked both the toponym and the legend about Deva's jump to the reconstructed Slavic myth of the thunder god Perun punishing his wife, fertility goddess Mokoš, for her infidelity (Šmitek 2008: 21–3; about Slavic triangle of deities see Toporov 2002: 48–51; Mikhailov 2002: 35). Mokoš is the only early Slavic female deity from the pantheon of the Russian prince Vladimir (year 980; only eight years before he accepted Christianity, destroying all the idols), described in the Nestor's chronicle, written at the end of 11th and the beginning of the 12th century (Mikhailov 2002: 30; Toporov 2002: 39). However, Radoslav Katičić has recently questioned Ivanov and Toporov's hypothesis about infidelity as the cause for Mokoš punishment (Ivanov, Toporov 1983: 185; Toporov 2002: 49–51). In his opinion, their assumption was not based on appropriate folklore material (Katičić 2011: 209–10, note 15).

13 For example: "Now we carry death out of the village / New Year into the village (Již nesem smrt' ze vsi / Nové léto do vsi) (Zibrt 1889: 50): We carry death out of the village / to the pond behind the village / Babas, rejoice / for we have taken death away from you (Smrt nesem ze vsi, / Do rybnika za vsi, / Bud’te, baby, vesely / Že jsme vám smrt odnesly.) (Zibrt 1950: 216); We took Maržana out of the village / brought green woods (branches) to the village (Wyniosłyśmy Marzaneczke ze wsi, / Przyniosłyśmy zielony gaj do
In folk architecture, Baba similarly appears as base, a structure-bearing element (Hrobat 2010: 192–5). For example, in buildings and hayracks, baba is the base of the frame, the base of hayrack's pillars, the building's corner stone. In Karst, baba is the finishing stone that closed off the firebox in the lime kiln; in Golac village, baba was the component part of the portal at the entrance to the stable; in the ice house, it was a piece of ice, gravel over which larger pieces of ice were thrown so they didn't break (Hrobat 2010: 192–5).

Latvian daïne, short songs with mythic contents, are part of the Baltic tradition. Experts commonly use the term "Baltic-Slavic" mythology, which is as a "terminus technicus" used primarily for reconstruction. It originates in a highly probable theory on the existence of the Baltic-Slavic ethnical and language community before the emergence of individual Baltic and Slavic groups. (Mikhailov 2002: 19–20, 25).

In the Resia Valley as in the wider region of Friuli Venezia Giulia in northeast Italy, Slavic toponyms are present because of the Slovene minority living there.

Nine brothers is a frequent motif in mythical traditions about the arrival of the young god Jurij / Jaryl / Jarovit back from the underworld in spring (see Katičić 2010), and according to Vitomir Belaj, Perun was supposedly worshipped on nine successive days, which coincides with nine altars in Perun’s sanctuary in Novgorod (Belaj 1998: 116). Furthermore, a Latvian song also mentions nine sons of Perkun (Belaj 1998: 62).

In Italian folklore tradition, Maimunna is a folklore figure surprisingly similar to the Baba tradition from Karst in the sense of her hideousness. Descriptions at http://www.paleoastronomia.com/articoli/shopexd.asp?id=90 (6.2.2012), http://leggendelocali.blogspot.com (27.3. 2013).

In Italian: "sei andato a baciare il culo alla maimona", in the local dialect: "tei anetu a bají u có aa maimunna" (http://www.paleoastronomia.com/articoli/shopexd.asp?id=90 (27.3. 2013)). I would like to thank the student Davide Ermacora from the Venice University for the analogies from France and Italy.

Besides the information given by Davide Ermacora, the tradition is recorded at: http://www.italia-eventi.com/2010/12/der-orsh-vander-belin-il-sedere-della.html (2.2.2012).

22 "Toma pan de la Vieja del monte"; in Artaza: «Toma pan de la Abuelica del monte (Lapuente Martínez 1971: 116)."

23 A similar figure but bearing the name Frau Holle supposedly withdrew to the interior of the mountains in winter time to make snow (Smith 2004: 168), just as her Slovene variant Pehtra baba did. This female demonic figure appears twelve days after Christmas; in Slovenia, she appears on the evening of 5th January, so does the Italian Befana, and is predominantly associated with control over people's abiding by certain norms, and with yarn (Kuret 1997a; b; Smith 2004). Niko Kuret argues that she may even have left her traces in geographical names (Kuret 1997b: 72), in the priorly mentioned Babas. Besides the already mentioned Germanic analogies, the Slovene winter lady Pehtra Baba can be compared to Iaga Baba in the Slavic East (Russia, Belarus), Jedz Baba in Poland, Ježi Baba in Slovakia, Jedu Baba in the Czech lands.

24 Personal communication, 15 April 2013.

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Parallel Worlds: Magical Practice and Cosmology among Modern Witches in Denmark

ANNE MIA STENO

ABSTRACT. The purpose of the present article is to make a contribution to an understanding of what it means to be a witch in Denmark today. The article thus reviews the extent of magical circles in Denmark and highlights special characteristics of the modern witch. The magical practice of witches is elucidated and analyzed through a ritual case, since the very magical practice appears to be characteristic of the witches and defines them in contrast to other similar new religious groups and communities. The article advocates for an analytical approach to magic; rather than studying magic merely as a symbol of something else, for instance as a way of handling uncertainty in difficult times, magical practice should also be seen as an emic concept. In this context, understanding the existence of two parallel universes, the profane and the magic, is important because the witches’ movements across the two make that magic possible according to the witches. In continuation of this understanding the following questions are raised: for what purposes do witches use magic, and how is magical practice meaningful in a wider social context? The article argues that the motivations and subtlety of magical practice are overlooked if the analysis does not include the above questions and approach, and it underlines the importance of physicality in the magical practice.

KEYWORDS: Modern witchcraft, Denmark, rituals, folklore

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that many people believe witches to be a thing of the past, an emerging witch environment exists in Denmark and calls for attention since this area constitutes an empirical void in Denmark. To be a witch in Denmark in 2012 is very distant from the historical scapegoats who were burned at the stake and the terrifying and stooped ladies from the world of fairytales. Being a modern witch in Denmark involves bearing a special moral responsibility towards nature and their fellow
men, and it gives the individual an opportunity to influence his or her own life through magic. The following empirical extracts are examples of a ritual in which this author partakes as a participant observer, along with two rituals of which practicing witches have informed the author in tape-recorded interviews. The empirical extracts illustrate the diversity traceable in the witch environment in Denmark and elements that unite witches (i.e. nature’s dominant role and the different magical practices).

In the southern woods of Denmark, a witch on a horse is riding around and around an ancient burial mound while quietly chanting. The sounds from the horse's steps and the song echoes in the forest opening, while the witch is moving further and deeper into an underworld of forest creatures and magical beings. Old Icelandic characters hang off the horse’s mane for protection and spells in case anyone should steal it.

Outside a forest cottage, three witches prepare for a ritual celebration of the witches' Sabbath Mabon. It is midnight and the moon is full. The cold from the fallen autumn leaves and black mould penetrates their bare feet as they wrap themselves in seven pieces of ritual jewelry, sewn with needle and thread from the forest flowers, branches and berries: rings, bracelets, loin clothes, wreaths and necklaces. On their foreheads, a crescent moon is painted with black kohl, a symbol of the moon Goddess. Their cheeks and eyes are shining expectantly and anxiously. The witches move slowly through seven gates to the land of the dead, symbolized by seven sets of small jars with candles and a small area with a large wooden pentagram that consists of black and white candles and a circle marked with fallen branches.

At a small hill in rural Denmark, a witch invokes the Goddess Freya. Her voice is so strong that it almost trembles the earth and resonates in the small crowd gathered around her. A large cow's horn with mead circulates among the gathered and in celebration of Samhain - the day and night when the veil between the mundane world and the land of the dead is transparent - greetings to deceased relatives are announced. They have drawn a circle within which they are protected if unexpected evil spirits
are attracted, and they have invoked the four elements of fire, earth, water and air to gather energy for the ritual\(^3\).

The popularization and spread of witches is not exceptional for Denmark; according to the American anthropologist Tanya Marie Luhrmann, there are "many thousands" of practicing witches in England – a number Luhrmann largely based on registration of sale of magical artifacts, books, and posters in stores where witches are seeking other like-minded people (Luhrmann 1989: 3-7). As Luhrmann’s research was carried out in the 1980s, the numbers of practicing witches have most likely grown since then. In the United States, self-proclaimed supporters of Wicca\(^4\) are upward towards 80,000 (Luhrmann 1989: 5). Helen Berger’s national survey of Neo-Pagans religious life in America is a more recent example of an extensive study with more than two thousand respondents (Berger et al. 2003). Internet forums all over the world are buzzing with activity and witch "circles" (also known as Covens) upload YouTube video recordings of rituals, write books about modern witchcraft and participate in "witch camps" and collective rituals across the world.

This article contributes to the identification of what it means to be a witch in Denmark in 2012, based on witches’ descriptions. I analyze the witch environment\(^5\) and delineate key common traits. In addition, there will be a special focus on the witches’ practice of magic and their relation to nature. The reason why magical practice has been chosen as a catalyst here is that it seems to be one of the most important defining axes for the witches in comparison to similar groups and communities such as other nature-religions and new religious communities. Magic is, in this context, both an emic conception and an analytical grip: witches are talking about and relating to magical practices and a specific magical world that has the power to act and cause changes. Along with the magical practice comes the concept of ritual practice\(^6\), as many witches describe the ritual as an entrance to the magical world. Therefore, the ritual practices appear interwoven with the magical practices, as understood as by the witches in this study.

The article is based on empirical findings collected through participant observation at different national witch camps, during witch circle rituals, and through digital participant observation in Internet forums over a period of six months from July to December 2011.
Additionally, I conducted 17 in-depth interviews with witches, which were tape-recorded. Participants were recruited via snowball sampling from a national witch camp where I made a short presentation about my project. The research project stemmed from the Danish Folklore Archives, which focus on belief and magic in everyday life in Denmark.

**ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

In anthropological studies of magic, the practice of magic has, with few exceptions (e.g. Stoller and Olkes 1987; Greenwood 2000), been conceptualized as a symbolic action of something else: magic has been analyzed as a way to manage uncertainty and to understand and accommodate accidents that occur apparently without reason (Malinowski 1948; Sjørslev 2010). Furthermore, magic has been viewed as an explanatory framework with its own inner logic and as protection against incomprehensible dangers from the outside (Evans-Pritchard 1976). In recent times, especially, it has been analyzed as a matter of self-technology, a way to take action in situations where nothing else seems possible; it is a tool or a metaphor with which the modern man fills his mental toolbox in order to create an awareness and feeling that all unexplainable events can be addressed and overcome (Steffen and Tjørnhøj Thomsen 2004). While all these perspectives on magic are useful in different contexts, I believe that they are not sufficient on their own with regards to understanding magical practice among modern witches in Denmark. This is because they do not contain the nuances of the motivations behind magical practices and they overlook the meaning of the body in magic. The purpose of this article is to create a portrait of the contemporary Danish witch community primarily by drawing on the notions of nature and magic practices. I will begin by outlining a context for understanding the witch community in Denmark today and highlight several special features of modern witches.
THE ORGANIZATION AND SPREAD OF THE WITCH ENVIRONMENT

The witch environment in Denmark is characterized by a revolt against any "truth" dictated in singular and many witches argue unanimously for each individual’s right to form his or her own worldview. Hence, there are a myriad of different directions and trends in the witch environment (as also noted by Berger et al. 2003: xvi). Among the major directions are Pagan witches, eclectic witches, herb & garden witches and Wicca witches. Some make a distinction between religious beliefs and magical practice. For others, they are inextricably linked.

Most of the witches in Denmark primarily practice independently, but many are organized in circles or Covens. A witch circle is dependent upon which tradition the members belong to, more or less hierarchical or loosely organized. Wicca Covens are, for example, organized around a priest or priestess. Masculine and feminine energies are key elements, which are supported by the worship of a Goddess as well as a God. There are three degrees into which a witch can be initiated, and rituals at these initiations are held in secret. Before initiating at the first degree, you are a neophyte, an apprentice; one undergoes this status and period so that both the apprentice and the group ensures that the neophyte will truly and in all aspects be a part of the circle. Central to the work of the Wicca circle and magical practice is the law of "Perfect Love and Perfect Trust" which means that ideally everyone in the circle must rely completely on each other and cherish unconditional love for each other. Eclectic witch circles and others are more freely organized and typically include two to six members that meet once a month to celebrate Sabbaths and the seasons of nature. Circles may be exclusively females, but there may also be male members.

BACKGROUND

The term "witch" has many connotations. In a historical context, the witch is the social scapegoat held responsible when the milk turned sour or accidents occurred. In some cases, the witch is approached when health fails (Henningsen 1984: 118-9). In fairy tales and contemporary fiction, the witch is the epitome of an old stooping hag who lures children into depravity and brews suspicious tinctures in black kettles.
the name of feminism, the witch became a symbol for the nude and dancing hedonist who challenges everything and is independent (see, for example, Brøgger 1976). Despite these different meanings and notions of the term, my informants have a tendency to identify strongly with this term. This was also noted in Berger's National Survey in the United States (Berger et al. 2003: 196).

Additionally, few modern witches believe that what they practice has a direct connection to the historical witches and magicians. For most, one witch explains that it is a question of modernization and a way of "paraphrasing" the old times. Rene Dybdahl Pedersen, a sociologist of religion, argues that modern witches and Pagans represent a contemporary polytheistic religion which "revitalizes pre-Christian European religion such as Celtic, Germanic and Norse religion and ethnic nature religion" (Pedersen 2005: 133). Hence, Pedersen argues that the cultural rebellions of the 1960s, which revolted against the established social values, capitalism, materialism and traditional views on gender roles, have had a decisive impact on the field of religion in Denmark and have been a breeding ground for a growing interest in alternative spirituality, including New Age and nature religion (2005: 124-5). As such, modern witches represent a response to, if not a revolt against Christianity's monotheism, authority and hierarchical organization. They form a community where ideas about past human values and respect for nature flourish and they think of themselves as an alternative to the contemporary vanity, superficiality, and the fast pace of the society. As a Pagan garden witch puts it:

You need like, something to believe in... because you might feel a little let down by science. Because ever since the Age of Enlightenment, they have had such a hurry to abandon everything that cannot be measured and weighed as superstition. But people still want to believe. And coupled with that there has been a youth rebellion, where it was all about revolting against the parental authority... and the rise of Biodynamic and ecology in the 1970s ... it's very logical that someone will choose a religion that cultivates nature and wholeness. Really in today's society status quo is the equal of decline. We must have growth, growth, growth. Personally, I think it is very problematic that the Bible says... is it in Genesis? Where God says to Adam that man shall
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reign over the earth and the animals and plants. Because in my view that is the greatest problem of the western world; that we have taken that way of thinking a little too literally: we think we have the right to pull oil out of the ground and burn coal and pollute with C02 in the atmosphere... In that respect, becoming a witch or Pagan can be viewed as backlash. Not because we all want to live in self-built burrows [...] but just to have respect for nature as we have also seen some primitive persons have, instead of having the attitude: 'We have the right to go out and take everything'.

(Withy, Pagan witch. Female, 27 years old, history student at the University. Recorded interview (05.08.2011) available at The Danish Folklore Archives, The Royal Library of Denmark: "DFS 2012/003 Moderne Hekse")

Central themes in the quote above are a respect for nature, a desire to return to times in the past with an emphasis on togetherness, and the need to believe in a time where science and rationalization may not seem sufficient in understanding the world. Precisely, the latter perspective is an example of a tendency that the American sociologist Richard Jenkins and the Danish anthropologist Inger Sjørslev have pointed out: in spite of the technological and rational development in the modern world, magical thinking is increasing and the world is becoming "re-enchanted". Their explanation for this is that people seek magic when they cannot find an answer to why certain things happen (Jenkins 2000; Sjørslev 2010: 13).

Pedersen's point about witches' revitalization of the ethnic nature religion is evident in the above quote, and ethnic indigenous people in this context are synonymous with values such as nature, balance and serenity (2005).

In several connections, the religious and spiritual landscape of today has been described as an "existential supermarket" where modern man goes shopping and pieces together his own religion and philosophy of life according to need and convenience (Pedersen 2005: 227). A quick glance at the modern witch culture and environment may support this idea as modern witches seem to be characterized by the notion that each creates his or her own world and individuals are encouraged to do what "feels right" But it is important to note that while religion for most people in Denmark is a matter of tradition rather than of faith – meaning that if one is born a Christian, then there is high probability that one
continues to be a Christian – most witches and Pagans are active and informed about their beliefs and lifestyle. Many witches have a broad knowledge of other religions and faiths, and they base their witch belief or lifestyle as some define it, on that knowledge. This means that being a witch is an active choice and an identity that may not be opposed to following the flow but is certainly not equal to the *laissez faire* mentality associated with shopping around. Being a witch is a way to relate to the world, although it seems broadly defined with its inclusive focus across many different directions and interpretations. An identity as a witch contains a cosmology and set of beliefs that has an inner core and symbolism and is comparable to other faith communities (Pedersen 2005: 19).

In Denmark, a three-day trade exhibition called "Mystical Universe" is held every year and it has over 2,500 visitors per day. At the fair are healers, clairvoyants, hand readers, crystal stalls, talks about guardian angels, new religious groups and witches. At this exhibition, I personally experienced the ways in which the concept of Witchcraft is still controversial and even feared. Discussion of my research project on the topic of modern witches in the stands triggered spontaneous prayer, frightened faces and wild eyes. Several people begged me to seek guidance from God before I continued my studies, and they explained how they saw black, evil spirits swirling around me that seemed to them to be keeping me from seeing the Holy Spirit and the light. It is not my purpose to describe these groups' fear and motivations for approaching me in this article, but simply to point out that witches represent a group that evoke interest, fear and radical skepticism (see also Berger et al. 2003: 172 about the fear of wearing a visible pentagram). Being a witch cannot be written off simply as a manifestation of modern man's self-realization; there is more at stake. Being a witch is a position and a role in society that is ridiculed by some and feared by others.

But then what does it mean to be a witch? What are the common overall traits, and what do the witches emphasize?
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN DANISH WITCH

Modern witches are a difficult category to identify and define according to current standards such as gender, age, occupation and residence, but I believe that the following description may be comprehensive for the vast majority: in recent times, a witch is one who reads signs in nature and its surroundings and to whom nature is animated, magical and inhabited by natural creatures, magical animals and spirits. A modern witch can be a woman or man who believes that by understanding one's inner self, one achieves not only knowledge about oneself and the outside world, but also the power to control and manipulate it. Although there are men represented in my study, as well as other studies show (see for example Berger et al. 2003: 27), the majority are women. With regards to age range, it is not possible to categorize a "typical modern Danish witch" as young, old, or somewhere in between since age is so variable. They can be employed in such diverse occupations as a carpenter, nurse, consultant, historian, numerologist and gardener (as reflected in my study). This diversity in occupation is also reflected in Helen Berger’s National study of Neo-Pagans (Berger et al. 2003: 33, table 7). A crucial difference between witches in a historical context and modern witches is that while the witches in the 1600s were labeled as such by others, modern witches in Denmark elect to self-identity. In the modern scenario, being a witch is no longer associated with allegations and accusations, but is synonymous with an individual option - a lifestyle and, in some cases, a religion. There is no right model or template that indicates what it means to be a witch and the rules and norms one often encounters in older descriptions of magic is not a premise in modern magical practices. Instead, it is the individual's imagination, creativity and sentiment that determine how a ritual is performed or an incantation is uttered (Alver 2008: 41). As I will later discuss, there are some rules, but magic derives inspiration from different places and even different worlds of the Gods. Thus, one can invoke the Indian Goddess Kali while wearing Thor's hammer on one’s neck. Personal experiences and impressions are mixed together into a colorful patchwork that makes sense for the individual.

Witches nowadays are people who pay attention to the cycles of nature and who honor, respect and use nature for magical purposes. Precisely because nature itself is considered a sacred and animated place,
modern witches in Denmark have no temples or houses they go to when conducting rituals or calling upon deities. Rituals can instead take place by a bog, a clearing in the forest, or by an ancient burial mound, as described in the initial empirical excerpts. A circle is often drawn in nature, thus creating a space within which the four elements (i.e., water, fire, earth and air) are invoked and it is possible to call upon and bend energies with a special purpose. The circle is the setting for the ritual and the energy that is collected, but it is also a protection against unwanted intruders and negative energies. As an eclectic Wicca witch puts it:

I make a protection ring, a kind of a bubble around me. I always construct it in a way that allows good energy to enter, but not negative. It [the negative energy] will be bounced back so that it will not enter the circle and interfere with my magic.

(Terra, eclectic Wicca witch. Female, 24 years old, history student at the University. Tape-recorded interview (18.08.2011) available at The Danish Folklore Archives, The Royal Library of Denmark: "DFS 2012/003 Moderne Hekse")

The majority of witches have a small altar at home, in front of which small rituals and magical work can be performed. Altars are very individually decorated, but often contain so-called elemental invokers that can be a candle for fire, a silver cup with water representing the water element, a pentagram for earth and incense for air. There are often certain rocks or crystals lying on the altar to "charge" energy and there may be God and Goddess figures. Wicca-inspired witches often have an athame, a ritual knife among other things used to draw the circle, and a wand. The following quote illustrates how a personal ritual in front of a home altar can be done:

I prefer to have my altar in front of me. There, I have a light for the four elements and one for the God and Goddess... and then I invoke them ... and I have obviously thrown my circle. [After that I say:] "East light sylphs, I ask you to enter and participate in this ritual, let the threefold law happen" [...] you have to raise some energy to be able to transmit it. I prefer to sit down and tap into the universal energy and then I have a special song that I use, it is a meditation song with a drum rhythm, and the drums rise
and rise. I can sense a field, a whirlwind of energy that whirls around me, and at one point there is so much [...] Once I have done it [gathered energy], I set forth the purpose of the ritual, it often works better if you say "By this ritual, I will inaugurate this amulet or worship the full moon." Partly it helps you to become aware of the purpose and partly it makes one's little helpers, nymphs, aware what you are trying to achieve so that they are not doing anything counter efficient.

(Terra, eclectic Wicca witch. Female, 24 years old, history student at the University. Tape-recorded interview (18.08.2011) available at The Danish Folklore Archives, The Royal Library of Denmark: "DFS 2012/003 Moderne Hekse")

The belief in the existence of energy in everything is consistent in the above account. The effects of magic are based on the conviction that everything is comprised of energies and that there exist hidden relationships between these energies which can be affected and manipulated. Terra explains how she "taps" into a universal energy while raising energy herself. In that context, energy is both something you create and something that is already there. Terra, in the quotation, refers to "the threefold law" which seems to be a general doctrine among witches. The threefold law means that everything you do, and specifically magical work, comes back to you thrice. This means that if you are trying to harm others, then the energies will strike back at you with triple the strength according to the threefold law. The threefold law functions as a moral and karmic law that tries to call for calmness and reflection of long-term consequences of the actions that you take. The contents of the doctrine seem to be an immediate continuation of Christian commandments such as "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" and "Do as you would be done by; do unto others as you would they should do unto you." However, as a Pagan witch explained, there is a big difference between the threefold law and the aforementioned Christian commandments because it is far from all who respect and love themselves in today's society and as a result of this, the doctrine according to her, is not current. While the above commandments are based on love and a self-loving image of man, the doctrines that exist in the Danish witch environment are based on the point of view that one should merely not harm others or oneself. Witches do not share the same
view on what is right and therefore they have no moral doctrine in this regard. But they share attitudes in the matter of what not to do, which is to avoid hurting others and themselves and that forms a moral imperative, on which there is broad agreement.

PARALLEL WORLDS

I have now briefly described some key elements of being a witch and will continue by describing how witches’ magical practices can be understood on their own terms. I will do that by taking a ritual, a celebration of witches' Sabbath Mabon, as a point of departure to analyze how magical practices are meaningful to the witches. The following empirical section is an excerpt from my field diary notes, as I followed the witch Circle *Moonsisters* in their celebration of the Sabbath Mabon during September 9th through 11th in 2011. The Moonsisters consists of four female members, Hexe Hedenlil, Linea FairyLight, Nanna StoneChild and Maja Calendula, each representing an element of water, air, earth and fire. They are influenced by both Wicca, Pagan and herbal sects and are aged around 40. Besides their witchcraft, they respectively work with salesmanship, gardening and conducting meditation and yoga courses.

It's a windy afternoon and we have just returned to the cottage after a long walk in the woods. The Moonsisters have gathered leaves, twigs and berries in purple, red and green colors. The rest of the day they use needle and thread to sew ornaments of the gathered materials. They make rings, necklaces, garlands for the head, ankle chains and bracelets. Seven different kinds of jewelry each. Hexe Hedenlil says that they will wear the jewellery and sacrifice an ornament at each of the seven gates to the land of the dead which is symbolized in the ritual as a circle of dead branches. She explains: "Nature is also going down into what we call the land of the dead - for a period of rest. Humans, like nature, need to rest now: you search inside of yourself, to calm down. It may sound intense and violent when we say the land of the dead, but the truth is that we live and we die, we live and we die, we live and we die. And so
does nature. We believe that all people need that period of quietness and calmness, and therefore it is a really powerful time to do a Vision Quest. The meaning and purpose of our ritual is that we follow the sun to the land of the dead. Just around Mabon or equinox, we get shorter hours from day to day, the sun is traveling to the land of the dead and we follow him. And actually that is what part of our ritual is going to be about: that we undress mentally and physically to go down to the land of the dead with the sun and with nature. Nature goes into hibernation in the wintertime, the leaves fall from the trees, everything is covered with frost and snow[...]. Nature is covered with a pillow of white, and our ritual is about us doing the same thing. In that way, in our whole winter period, we can be relaxed and leave all the things we otherwise struggle with so that we can be ready for spring. Our spiritual and our mental flow follows nature, that is, the physical nature: when is the sky clear? And when does everything burst into bloom?"

The Moonsisters explain that tonight's ritual is a combination of a full moon ritual and celebration of the witches' Sabbath Mabon. Mabon is the last Sabbath, and is normally held on September 21st. It is the celebration of the completion of harvest, which began at Lammas. Day and night are in balance, and it is a time when the God is preparing to go
to the land of the dead. At this time, nature quietly pulls back and gets ready for the winter's rest. It is a time for balance and reflection and a time to enjoy the harvest of the year's work. It is a day and a night which is perfect for prediction, just like it is a good time for spells of protection, luck and safety. Nanna StoneChild explains that, while they make jewelry, they weave those things, feelings and memories they would like to get rid of into the jewelry and thus symbolically leaving it in the land of the dead. As the full moon rises high in the sky, we wander in silence to a small hill near the woods where the Moonsisters earlier in the day had prepared a ritual space. It is quite dark; a cloud covers the moon when we arrive. I can feel small stones, twigs and damp earth under my bare feet. The witches light up a collection of herbs and plants, which are bound together. It gives off a lot of smoke and contributes with its scent and smoke to create a mist. We each have an incense stick in our hand. Slowly we walk down through the passage marked with candles, seven on each side. We undress and leave the jewelry, one at each of the seven gates, and we end up in the land of the dead which is marked with a ring of dead branches, a pentagram in the middle and a black and a white candle. Nanna StoneChild and Maja Calendula are playing on their drums and
we start dancing around the candles and pentagram while chanting a song about God's journey to the land of the dead. After some time we move up towards the point on the hill again. The Moonsisters gather in a row, in a place where there is a full view of the moon, which is still wrapped in a cloud. They begin to howl like wolves against the moon. It's a very intimate sound, and their aim is to get the moon to appear. We stand like that for a while and then we put on the cloaks we brought along and go back to the cottage. There is an almost intoxicating mood and the air is filled with bubbling laughter.

(Field notes from my participation in a ritual weekend with the Moonsisters in Sweden the 9-11th September 2011).

Numerous themes are present in the above excerpt, but I will focus on the different elements that are characteristic for a ritual. As Luhrmann and Greenwood have pointed out, witches and magicians create another time and space in their rituals (Greenwood 2000: 2-3; Luhrmann 1986: 140). The separation and line of demarcation of this second space is not only imagined, but physical and tangible in the sense that it is marked by, for example, leaves or a robe. Furthermore, it is general practice to take off wristwatches, leave cell phones behind and sometimes wear special ritualistic clothes or simply be naked. The Moonsisters mark the ritual as a special space through some of these mentioned methods: the ritual is performed "skyclad" which means that everybody is naked. The purpose of the nudity is to sense and perceive nature more intensely and to highlight the occurrence of another world. In this Other World, doing an activity in public nudity is neither associated with sexual taboo or embarrassment, but is rather a way to cease being a definite subject and instead be a part of nature and a spiritual community. As Luhrmann also emphasizes, different rules apply in this community and one is allowed to be crazy, wild and vulnerable; it even reinforces one’s position in the group. The demarcation of the ritual excludes the external world, Luhrmann writes, and that supports the notion of secrecy which among other things requires that you must not tell outsiders what happens inside the circle (1986: 140). In that respect, secrecy is not important to the Moonsisters, who recorded the prelude and preparation for the ritual and later uploaded to YouTube to inspire other witches. The ritual itself, however, is not recorded since that part is reserved for the initiated
members. The self-representation and staging in the recording points towards a social dimension of the ritual and makes visible the relationships that exist in relation to other witches in the environment: the Moonsisters' activities relate to a network of relationships and connections in the witch environment. In Luhrmann’s study of modern witches in England, she found that the witches in her study all had other names in the circle and even had second identities, which according to her, further illustrates that they live in two worlds. Within their shared, closed and intimate world there exists a reciprocal trust, where the focus is on both giving and taking (ibid: 141-58). Hence, the Moonsisters do have "witch names" related to their practice, an example being "Nanna StoneChild," who represents the earth element in the group. But these names complement their "worldly" names and do not constitute a completely different identity. Others are named after their magical animals, as the Pagan witch who calls herself "Little wolf" because her magical animal is a wolf. Yet, some witches simply go by their worldly name in all contexts. The indication of the witches entering another world in the ritual must therefore be understood through the role they assume; for example, playing a part in a ritual scene or as the representative of an element rather than what they call themselves.

Central to the analysis of what happens in the above ritual is the understanding of the underlying cosmology: the idea of the Other World (Greenwood 2000). There are two parallel worlds in the cosmology of the witches, the mundane and the magic one, and witches constantly maneuver between the two. As the British anthropologist Edmund Leach points out, the secular world is inhabited by mortals who live in a time where incidents occur linearly and where accidents can occur. The Other World is, in contrast, inhabited by immortal, powerful beings that exist in the past, present and future, and they possess the strength and power to overcome any challenges'. The purpose of a ritual is to establish a connection to the Other World through which these beings and their energy and power can be made available for humans (Leach 1976: 81-2). Through a ritual that takes place in another time and another space, the Other World is mirrored and the rules applied there can be transferred into the mundane world. In that perspective, it becomes meaningful to craft jewelry that symbolize worry and stress and leave them in the woods along a clearing. It is meaningful because the glade is not just any place but a reflection of the gate to the land of the dead. Otherwise
difficult and complex feelings and thoughts are made tangible and presented as physical objects, and distances from these emotions are marked as they are left, symbolically, in the Other World. Luhrmann goes even further and concludes that rituals serve as therapy in the sense that the individual identifies with the grief of, for example, a God or Goddess: if the Goddess is undergoing a transformation after the sorrow, it is easier to imagine that you yourself will undergo a similar change, Luhrmann argues. That way you have the opportunity to confront your feelings through others and through a physical ritual, where you act on it and, at the same time, externalizing the problem so that it is easier to contemplate and discuss the problem from the outside (Luhrmann 1986: 156). Luhrmann’s idea of the therapeutic element in the ritual is interesting, especially the process of externalization in the ritual; however, it is my argument that the context of the ritual is too quickly written off as a symbol for therapy rather than maintaining a focus on how the magic is meaningful in its own frame. In this context, it is important to emphasize that it is neither my purpose to justify or dismiss the existence of magic, but to describe the context in which magical practices are meaningful to the individual.

The two classic ritual anthropologists Emile Durkheim and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown have argued that rituals reinforce the collective and social integration, while Victor Turner has pointed out that rituals can be collective and contain private and unconscious meanings (Keesing and Strathern 1998: 319; Grimes 1990: 143-5). In rituals such as the Moonsisters’ celebration of Mabon, a great kinship - as Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown emphasise as important in rituals - is not integrated or strengthened outwardly, but the unity and fellowship within is strengthened. A community and a sisterhood, as the Moonsisters refer to it, are confirmed and a confidence with each other is fortified. Many symbols are brought into play in the above ritual and going in line with Turner's point about multivocal symbols, these symbols have several meanings (Turner 1966: 52). The smoke and haze from the thick incense sticks can both represent the veil between two worlds being unsealed in the ritual. It can symbolize the Other World or simply create a "desirable atmosphere" as one of the witches explained. The black and white candles in the middle of the circle can be a symbol of the God and Goddess, the feminine and masculine, but it can also be a more general symbol of balance between good and evil, night and day. The seven
jewels made by the Moonsisters each have their own personal significance and two relatively similar head wreaths can symbolize two different feelings such as having problems saying "no" and being stressed. The Moonsisters’ celebration of Mabon thus contains elements of collectively strengthening the circle, fortifying internal confidence, personal desires and symbols.

The American anthropologists Roger Keesing and Andrew Strathern have argued that religion primarily explains, validates and reinforces (1998: 304-5). It explains in the sense that it provides answers to essential questions as to why certain unpleasant things are happening, and it validates because it contains a notion of a controlling universal power that maintains moral order and thereby offers meaning to otherwise incomprehensible events. Finally, religion reinforces a sense of hope and security in the individual that crises and illness happen for a reason. It is far from all the witches who call witchcraft a religion, but these three characteristics of religion – explanation, validation and reinforcement – are relevant in understanding what is at issue in a ritual as the one above. As the witch Hexe explains in the above field notes with "the leaves falling off the trees and everything going into hibernation" it is a way of understanding life and the passing of time. People need periods of rest, and nature offers an explanation as to why one sometimes feels tired and unfocused. In this context, it is not incomprehensible or strange to be tired and without energy, but simply a natural thing and a part of a greater cycle. Unison with nature reinforces the witches' belief that everything happens for a reason. Nature is thus a defining factor for witches at two levels; first of all, it is because the witches believe in an access to a "Parallel World" through nature as a gate. A Parallel World is where strength and energy can be attained, for example, through contact to power animals and or intensive work with the elements. Secondly, for witches, the close relationship to nature constitutes a rebellion with the fast-paced and "buy and throw out" culture - as many witches characterize their surroundings and today’s society. But why not be an environmentalist then? An organic farmer? Or be a hippie in a natural collective? Many people, witches or not, wish to live in coexistence with nature and believe in living with a focus on balance. Many witches are active environmentalists, but the linkage between living in balance with nature and practicing magic is something
that separates witches from other groups such as organic farmers.

MAGIC - MOVEMENTS ACROSS

I have attempted to create a framework for understanding the magical practice of modern Danish witches in its own framework and terms. The emerging image is that magic is the ability to manipulate or "bend" energy with the aim of changing and influencing one’s surroundings. In other words, it is the art of causing change in accordance with one’s will. The basic premise is that "mind can affect matter, according to desired ends" as Luhrmann writes (1986: 132, 139). In this context, the notion of time in magic is important to note; the achievement of a magical desire requires a strong commitment before, during and long after the ritual itself. Therefore, magical work rests on the assumption that thought can affect action. Additionally, everything in the universe consists of energies that have hidden internal relations that may be affected. As a Pagan witch notes:

I believe everything is composed of energies: we are all made of different combinations of energies. You can compare it with the fact that everything in our surroundings is built by different atoms, which are then put together in different chemical structures. And all of that is energy and it's all around us. Stones are made of it; the air is made of it.

(Monika, Pagan witch. Female, 34 years old, nurse. Recorded interview (24.09.2011) available at The Danish Folklore Archives, The Royal Library of Denmark: "DFS 2012/003 Moderne Hekse")

The notion that everything consists of energy and that these energies can act and interact with each other at a distance can be understood by the concept of sympathetic magic, which according to the anthropologist Sir James Frazer is a common term for what he calls homeopathic magic and contagious magic. Homeopathic magic, or the law of similarity, is a term for magic that works through something it resembles. One example is to create a doll that looks like a person you want to affect. Contagious magic, or the law of contact, works by using things that have been in contact with the person you want to affect. This could be a piece of
clothing or a lock of hair. Both of these forms of magic are based on the assumption that the things we surround ourselves with, or rather the energies in these things, have a hidden relation and may influence each other (Frazer 1993 [1922]: 10-14).

Frazer was an "armchair anthropologist" who based his assumptions on literary sources collected from around the world. One of his main arguments was that man's mental and cultural state evolves evolutionarily over three stages: from magic, to religion, and to science, and that magic is an erroneous practice which is conducted only by the backwards and naïve, primitive people. Homeopathic magic is, Frazer wrote, based on a mistaken belief, to assume that things that resemble each other are the same. He further stated that contagious magic makes the erroneous assumption that things that have been in contact with each other will always be in contact with each other (Frazer 1993 [1922]: 12). Although Frazer may rightly be criticized for his one-sided and simplistic project to place magical practice in an evolutionary development, his descriptions of the various forms of magic remain current. The notion that everything in the universe can interact is central to the cosmological understanding of many witches today, and practices based on the law of similarity as well as the law of contact are still exercised in Denmark today. Unlike Frazer's examples, very few modern witches in Denmark have evil intentions with the magic they practice. The energy mentioned in the quote above is in itself neither good nor bad, but neutral. To mention magic as either black or white is not meaningful to most witches. The energy in itself is just an existing neutral; it is the witch's intent of manipulating the energies that can have a harmful or beneficial effect. As a witch explains:

I do not work in this universe of light, where people refer to light magic and dark magic, good and evil... that I don't do. I’d rather like to think of it as grey areas: as soon as you manipulate something, then whatever your intentions are, it will not only have an effect on yourself, it will also affect your world in one way or another.

(Monika, Pagan witch. Female, 34 years old, nurse. Recorded interview (24.09.201) available at The Danish Folklore Archives, The Royal Library of Denmark: "DFS 2012/003 Moderne Hekse").
Monika points out that magical work takes place in a grey area and her perspective covers the opinion of many witches. Precisely because of this grey area, all the witches I have talked to highlight the importance of formulating one’s magical purpose in a very particular and nuanced way. Hence the magical "method" consisting of transferring oneself into a particular form of consciousness through various means such as monotonous song, dance, and dress in particular clothing. Arranging a physical circle around oneself, mentally sharpening one’s awareness, and formulating a focused will also need to be strived for and maintained after the ritual.

The underlying cosmological understanding of magic is based on the assumption that reality consists of various energy fields that make up a large whole. In this context, objects and artifacts such as amulets, athames, wands and elemental invokers hold energy or can be "charged" with energy by lying on an altar during a full moon or by a witch transferring energy from herself to that specific object.

CONCLUSION: DANISH WITCHCRAFT TODAY

The examples mentioned above regarding magical practice have been analyzed in their own terms and placed in a contextual framework. That perspective hopes to have guaranteed that the reader has acquired an understanding of how magic can be meaningful in itself and how magic also exists as an embodiment: a tingling and quivering in the body and a heartfelt primordial force; a whirlwind of energy and meeting between the elements of nature and the individual’s body.

At a practical level, it cannot be denied that magic can be used in cases of insecurity and anxiety for the future - a view Malinowski and others point out. It is when the uncertainty is greatest that most people resort to magic, Malinowski wrote (1948: 33-4), and that perspective is relevant in understanding the use of magical practices in specific situations such as "Will I have enough money to pay my rent?" or "Will I get the job opportunity I desire?" While Malinowski primarily sees magic as a backlash, magical practice among modern witches is often initiated from an individual’s desire or spontaneous requirement. Witches do not necessarily use spells of magic as a response to their surroundings, but rather as something that is acting on itself and has its
own life and reasoning. In that frame of reference, the motivations for using magic are to seek (a more powerful version of) oneself or to "become who you really are." Several witches expressed that being a witch is like "coming home" and many of them stress personal freedom and the opportunity to "be themselves" as strong factors in the witch environment. It is therefore my argument that the motivations for many witches doing magic are strongly linked with the desire to construct a reality where one is allowed to be the kind of person one wants to be: a desirable "I" in desirable conditions. In continuation of Malinowski's argument, the Danish anthropologists Vibeke Steffen and Tine Tjørnhøj-Thomsen have pointed out that magic in a modern context works instrumentally and therefore can be understood as a particular form of an instrumental metaphor and a way of uncertainty management in the world's variability (Steffen 2010: 59; Steffen and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2004). That perspective is relevant in conjunction with the view that magic in the witch environment explains the inexplicable; it becomes possible to change and influence all aspects of life – as the Moonsisters equate a ritual jewelry with the feeling of being stressed. In that sense the intangible is made tangible.

Magic, however, is far from only being something related to uncertainty and far from an always understandable and simple instrumental metaphor. Magical performance not only clarifies and corrects, but it can also cause confusion, chaos and frustration. What is intended can go wrong and have opposite effects. Several witches have told me about how they have experienced the presence of evil spirits around them after a failed ritual and were thrown downstairs, for example.

Danish anthropologist Inger Sjørslev has questioned what we really know about anything in the world, since few have the time and skills to investigate the Big Bang theory and really understand what a germ is (2010: 13). Her argument is that our rational reality should be regarded as much a matter of faith as is magic. People need explanations as to why life treats them like it does and, in that context, magic can offer an explanatory framework when the rational explanations are no longer sufficient. It is true that magic in the witch community makes sense for the individual and that is a way to understand and perceive the world. However, to modern witches, it is more than merely a means of action in times of uncertainty and a way to understand the incomprehensible. It is
a cosmology; it is a world of energy that can be bent and affected. The conception of time in the Other World and the opportunities that a cyclic time offers also seem to be important motivations for practicing magic. Witch communities can accommodate other depths and nuances because there may be an understanding that the people involved also have lived past lives together (and will again in future lives). Hence, one can conclude that modern witchcraft in Denmark is very distant from historical accusations of witches riding on broomsticks and popular literary descriptions of fireballs flying in the air. As I have shown, magic is to the modern witches rather a collection of energies that pervades everything and creates links between otherwise separate things and phenomena. To be a witch today is something an individual self-identifies as and it is therefore, in contrast to earlier perceptions, perceived as a positive choice rather than a stigma that the environment imposes. Being a witch is closely related to having a sincere connection with nature, for example, by performing rituals in forest openings. It provides the individual witch with a feeling that through magical practices, one is able to influence and change both oneself and the outside world.

Anne Mia Steno is cand. scient. anth. and PhD Fellow at the Department of Psychology and Educational Studies, Roskilde University, Denmark; asteno@ruc.dk.

Notes
1 Tape-recorded interview (19.10.2011) with Urteheksen (Pagan Witch. Female, 40 years old. Nurse). Interview available at The Danish Folklore Archives, The Royal Library of Denmark: "DFS 2012/003 Moderne Hekse".
2 Field notes from the 09.09.2011. ritual celebration with the Witch circle Moonsisters.
3 Tape-recorded interview (20.10.2011) with Loke (Pagan Witch. Male, 41 years old, carpenter) and Freya (Pagan witch, Female, 43 years old, museum employee). Interview available at The Danish Folklore Archives, The Royal Library of Denmark: "DFS 2012/003 Moderne Hekse".
Wicca is one of the sects related to witchcraft, which will be described later on.

Environment in this context means organization, common traits and everyday conducts of the Danish Witches.

The difference between the two being that a ritual may take place without the practicing of magic – and magic may be practiced without a complete ritual is performed.

The Danish Folklore Archives is the Danish archive of folkways and popular traditions. The archive preserves ordinary people's perception of life, memories, traditions, singing, music and everyday stories for posterity. The Everyday life is here immortalized to the benefit of future generations. The Danish Folklore Archives does research in the culture of all communities, and the archive holds several hundred years' of documentation of the people and the society forming the background of Denmark as it is today.

Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard have conducted their studies in different settings and with other purposes and it is therefore not my intention to make a comparative analysis here, but only to relate the concept of magic to a broader anthropological context.

Pagan witches in the Danish context are, as the name suggests, witches who believe in the Norse Gods. Many but not all of these witches are members of Forn Sidr which is a Danish community for believers in the Norse Gods. Forn Sidr has, since 2003, been approved as a religious community in Denmark by the Ministry of Church Affairs.

Eclectic witch is an emic term for witches, who draw inspiration from a number of various areas and traditions.

Herb and garden witch is a common term for "kitchen witches", "nature witches" and certain "Pagan witches" and refers to witches who are primarily concerned with herbs and plants in nature for the use in healing and magical work.

Wicca was in the manner it exists today founded by the Englishman Gerald Gardner who in the books "Witchcraft Today" (1966 [1954]) and "The Meaning of Witchcraft" (1971 [1959]) describes his own initiation into the New Forest Coven, an alleged ancient witch coven. In his books he lifted the veil on some of the secrets of initiation. The magic spells and rituals revealed have according to Gardner survived in different witch covens from pre-Christian times. Later on, Gardner created his own Coven which was inspired by the things he had learned in New Forest, and he thereby founded the path "Gardnerian Wicca", which along with Alexandrian Wicca are
today two of the most influential traditions. The above two Gardner’s publications are constructed as anthropological monographs, where Gardner as a self-proclaimed anthropologist goes native among witches and seeks to uncover their community, rites and motivations in order to document a bygone and "primitive culture" (Gardner 1954: 18-20). There are doubts whether Gardner’s descriptions and records are really reflections of empirical observations or mainly based on his own ideas and thoughts. The thesis of the historical anchoring Gardner attains by referring to the anthropologist and Egyptologist Margaret Murray's work: "Witch Cult in Western Europe" (1963 [1921]). Through a comparison of literary sources and reports from a multitude of different countries and time spans, Murray tries to prove the historical roots of Witchcraft, or what she refers to as the "ancient religion" (Murray 1963 [1921]: 19, 71-6, 161). Murray's thesis has been refuted by several historians, primarily because of her choice of data and material that has been criticized for being highly selective, only staging the evidence that supported her thesis and in that manner putting forward a coherent image (Blécourt, Hutton and Fontaine 1999: 31-6). Regardless of the origin and historical accuracy of Gardner's publications – and thereby indirectly the work of Murray – both have had a great influence in the Witchcraft environment and the above publications are central and important works in the environment today.

13 Most witches have a magical animal, in Danish called a "Kraftdyr" which literally translates to "power animal". A magical animal is an animal belonging to the underworld that can also follow the witch into the "secular world" and offer help and guidance. The animal may symbolize something a person is missing, or it may resemble the individual it belongs to. Some witches have one magical animal and others have several. They are typically very strong and powerful animals such as bears, lions and eagles, but they can also be such animals as rabbits and dragonflies. Most witches come in contact with their magical animals through drum journeys, which is a way of guided meditation. The notion of "magical animals" or "totem animals" draws on concepts recognizable from shamanism and Native American traditions.

14 The social acknowledgment from other witches that is required to be included in witch circles will not be discussed further here, but is relevant in understanding the dynamics that exist in relation to inclusion and exclusion in circles and groups in the witch environment.

15 Vision Quest (in Danish: Udesidning) is a kind of meditation technique that entails that one is perched for example on a rock in a forest for a longer period of time – it could be from sunset to sunrise. One "sinks" into the wild
and meditates on the images that appear. Interpretations are given to the
different phenomena and shapes one sees in the surroundings and later on
used to predict what will happen in the future, or what one will have to
work with – on a mental level – in the time to come. Vision quest is as the
above "totem animals" a concept borrowed or "revitalized" from shamanism
and Native American traditions.

16 Although the ritual takes place in Sweden, the witch circle is constituted of
Danish witches, who in this specific case have travelled to Sweden.

17 The circle may in some cases, especially for solitary practitioners, be
imaginary and simply drawn in the air.

18 See, for example: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmZZp9E3vYs

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Gyldendal.
Magical Practice and Cosmology among Modern Witches in Denmark


*This article is a revised version of a Danish article called: "Parallelle verdener" that has been published in the Danish peer reviewed magazine "Kulturstudier", May 2012. Context has been added and the article has been modified to fit a broader readership outside of Denmark.*
On August the 19th of 2008, 22 scholars from five continents gathered at the former convent of Soeterbeeck in Ravenstein, the Netherlands, for a three-day conference on comparative mythology. 18 of the 22 papers originally delivered have been compiled in the proceedings I am reviewing here. The "new perspectives on myth" promised in the title are reflected by four parts in the edited volume, each with a different understanding what constitutes "new". Firstly, "new perspectives" can be understood as the current research programs of the two conveners: Eric Venbrux and Wim van Binsbergen, here fleshed out as two sessions called "The mythology of death and dying" and "mythological continuities between Africa and other continents" respectively. Secondly, with "new perspectives" referring to method and theory, a session with the name "Theoretical and methodological advances" has been included. Thirdly, with "new perspectives" perhaps best interpreted as the views of fresh pairs of eyes, PhD and MA students in the field have been offered a forum. For reasons of brevity, I cannot discuss all the papers, but will cherry pick a few from the first three sessions to briefly outline and offer links between them.

The section on the mythology of death and dying is represented by five papers. Eric Venbrux's opening paper deals with the identification of three additional myths on the moon-death relationship in Australian aboriginal mythology to the seven singled out by P. Waterman. The moon narrative, Venbrux argues, not only embodies an explanation of death, but also informs rites of passage as a model for death and rebirth. Van Beek's paper, in contrast, shows that in African traditional religions, myths are less etiological, but have a rather hands-on approach to death, either by focusing on the avoidance of narratives of death and dying, or waging war against it. What struck me in the picture Van Beek painted is how remarkably 'modern' these existentialistic tendencies in African myth are. In the next paper, called "The Journey to the Netherworld", Boris Oguibéné and Nataliya Yankevskaya cast their net far and wide, drawing similarities between Baltic, Slavic and Buddhist mythologies of death and their funeral rites, to reach the conclusion that accidental convergences between these are not plausible, thereby implying the inheritance of common features, and perhaps opening the door to the neurobiological approach offered in the third part. The first session is completed with contributions by Victoria Kryukova on death as defilement as observed in
Zoroastrianism, and an overview of his work on the Rök stone's mythology and beliefs on the subject of death by Joseph Harris.

The second part, "Mythological continuities between Africa and other continents", has a clear centrepiece in the form of Wim van Binsbergen's lengthy contribution. By taking an unusual perspective in comparing the continuities between sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the Old World, Van Binsbergen endeavours to ground his Diachronic Model of World Mythology. In this approach Van Binsbergen argues for the existence of what he calls 'Pandora's Box': the eventually transformed, developed, and embellished cultural heritage with which Homo Sapiens populated the globe from the African continent. Interestingly, Van Binsbergen identified his position by making specific reference to the work of Michael Witzel, whose paper on Pan-Gaean flood myths is also included in the book. In it, Witzel reconsiders his earlier assumption that flood myths are rare in Africa and Australia. In addition, he argues that even if the Laurasian mythology is based on a Gondwanan prototype, leaving open the question whether in turn, the motive of floods can ultimately be traced back to the very cradle of mankind with African Eve. Other papers in the second panel deal with cosmogonic myth ("The emergence of the first people of the underworld" by Yuri Bereszkin), the politics of historicizing myth as observed in the Ife-Modakeke conflict ("Myth, indigenous culture, and traditions as tools in reconstructing contested histories" by Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniyi), a discussion of the etymology of the Greek theonym Hepaestus as related to the Egyptian god Ptah, by Václav Blažek, and Kazuo Matsumura's "Can Japanese mythology contribute to comparative Eurasian mythology?"

In "Theoretical and methodological advances", the third section, we encounter a diverse array of approaches to mythology. Emily Lyle offers a brief update on her work on her cosmological theory of myth. Drawing on the notion of a cosmology based on the tripartite structure of society as developed by Georges Dumézil, Lyle is advancing theory by seeking out new axes of polarity across both time and space, and putting discovered ones to the test. Whereas Lyle focuses on the latent structures of cosmology in culture, Steve Farmer, whose paper is the second of this part, emphasizes the neurobiological aspects of mythology. Farmer's take on the matter is sympathetic to a scientific (as opposed to a scholarly) approach of the matter, and builds on the work of e.g. Stewart Guthrie, Daniel Dennett and Pascal Boyer. Emphasizing cognitive development and an inherited tendency of anthropomorphisation as utter determinants of religious – and in effect mythological – material, Farmer ultimately argues that the biologisation of the discipline would emancipate it from its obsolete assumptions. Robert Segal's "Postmodernism and the comparative method", the third offering, is perhaps (but unwittingly) useful with regard to Farmer's paper. Segal offers an overview of four different takes on
comparison that exist with the field of mythology: postmodernism, controlled, new, and old comparativism. Interestingly, the latter, which is vehemently defended by Segal, most resembles the neurobiological perspective on myth, but obviously in terms of assumptions of universality rather than method. The session is completed by Willem Dupré's "Myth – a challenge to philosophy", and "Hephaestus and Agni", offered by Nick Allen, and which can be contrasted with Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniyi’s paper.

All in all, the proceedings of the second annual conference of the IACM make for an interesting read. The emphasis placed on new ways to look at comparative mythology has rendered the volume a unity, regardless of the differences in regional expertise, and perhaps even the differences in academic background. Most of the compiled papers are clearly interlinked, or show yet-to-be-realized opportunities for cross-fertilization. The fact that the proceedings are only lightly edited makes it understandable that not all the language is as clear and well-phrased as one would have hoped (especially in some papers by non-native speakers). Yet, that initiatives have been promised to enable some papers to be published in a more definite (peer-reviewed) format, and the opportunity to sample ideas in-the-making has been had, more than make up for this minor flaw, in what may be considered a worthwhile addition to the literature on comparative mythology.

(Léon A. van Gulik)


The early Irish word *echtrae* (plural *echtrai*) means simply an 'outing' or 'adventure'. When used in the title of a tale, it generally denotes an excursion in which there is interaction with the Otherworld or the people thereof. In the introduction to her book *The Echtrae as an Early Irish Literary Genre*, Leonie Duignan states that "the echtrai have yet to be subjected to detailed overall scrutiny geared to broad similarities and particular variants upon them." If she does not exactly achieve this aim, she has certainly laid the foundation for further investigation on the subject for the future.

Duignan very logically begins with the problem of definition. There were a variety of tale types recognized in early Ireland; we know this because of two 'tale lists' that have come to us through the manuscript tradition. The two lists – denoted 'A' and 'B' – are not identical. They list differing numbers and types of genres, which sometimes seem to overlap in subject matter or even to have specific tales in common, making them difficult to differentiate for modern
scholars. The echtrae is one of the thirteen genres common to both lists; for various reasons, its definition has been the most contentious problem relating to tale-types in the whole of medieval Irish studies. While discussing differing opinions, Duignan points out that of the three stories identified as echtrai that occur in both medieval tale lists, we only have one extant. Others appear only in one tale list, or do not occur in the tale lists at all though they are identified as echtrai in the manuscripts in which they are found. Others still have characteristics that would seem to indicate that they belong to the genre, but are given other titles or have no title. In order to determine which tales would have been considered echtrai in the pre-Norman period, Duignan sets out three criteria to identify what she calls echtrai 'proper', and to distinguish these from 'thematically similar tales'; manuscript authority for an echtrae title, an internal reference to the action of the tale as echtrae, or correspondence to a title in one of the tale lists. Next, she gives a summary discussion of the 'lost' echtrai in the tale lists and also of those extant, whether in the tale lists or not, to determine which qualify under these criteria. She concludes that seven tales – *Echtrae Neraí, Echtrae Chonnlai, Echtrae Airt, Echtrae mac nEchach Mugmedóin, Baile in Scáil* and *'The Five Lugaids'* – constitute 'proper' echtrai, while *Immram Brain, Tochmarc Emire, Serglige Con Culainn* and *Slaburchapart Con Culaind* and the so-called *Echtrae Lóegairí* can be identified as 'thematically similar tales'.

Following this assessment, Duignan undertakes to propose a 'preliminary taxonomy' of the echtrai 'proper' using what she considers to be their significant features, these being; the spatial and temporal context of the invitation to the Otherworld, the identity of the person(s) invited, the identity of the person issuing the invitation, the purpose of the invitation, the location of the Otherworld and the nature of the journey to it, the description(s) of the Otherworld, the nature of the hero's intervention there; the hero's relationship with Otherworld figures, objects acquired from the Otherworld and the aftermath of the visit. She concludes from her analysis that the pervading theme of the echtrae genre is sovereignty. She then goes on to assess the 'thematically similar tales' in the same fashion, concluding that of these only *Echtrae Lóegairí* contains sufficient sovereignty concerns to be associated with the echtrai proper. In a further chapter she discusses various aspects of sovereignty itself, and reiterates how each of these aspects figures in the tales she has chosen. The sixth and seventh chapters involve textual analysis of the individual tales, those regarding Cú Chulainn being given a chapter to themselves; while an eighth chapter presents the author's conclusions. Overall, Duignan's opinion is that true echtrai are intimately connected with sovereignty issues, and that the results of the adventure must have a direct effect on kingship in this world, the Otherworld, or both.
This is fine so far as it goes. Duignan's introductory material is excellent both in content and in clarity. Two of her three criteria for separating the tales into two groups provide a solid basis for her further treatment of the tales. Also, she provides a broad range of criteria for the analysis of the stories themselves. But while this exercise in mapping an important area in the early literature is timely and stimulating, some of Duignan's arguments have left me unconvinced. Her second criterion for dividing tales into groups – "an internal reference to the action of the tale as echtrae" – is not as sound as the other two for the simple reason that the word echtrae can, as noted at the outset of this review, denote an 'outing' of any kind. It is when it is used as the title or definition of a tale that it acquires an Otherworldly connotation. Inclusion of a tale on this criterion would have to be made on a case by case basis, and Duignan makes that case well in terms of including Baile in Scáil. But I am less persuaded by her inclusion of 'The Five Lugaid' in the primary list by virtue of its resemblance to Echtrae mac nEchach Mugmedóin, and the use of the word echtrae at the end of the tale, given that it need not have an Otherworldly connotation there: 'they related their stories and their adventure [a sgēla γ a n-echtra] to the men of Ireland.' In addition, 'The Five Lugaid' does not exist as a free-standing story. It is, as Duignan notes, a part of Cói Anmann (The Fitness of Names), which has derived it from the Dindshenchas (place-name lore). Duignan also simply enumerates the criteria she uses to determine the 'taxonomy' of the echtrae, but does not explain her choices or leave room for other relevant considerations to enter the discussion. In some cases, these criteria even seem to pre-suppose her conclusions concerning sovereignty. For example, her second question is initially formulated as "the identity of the person(s) invited". At the end of each section she lists the results of her analysis in a table. In the table relevant to this question, instead of identifying each character on his own terms, she labels it as 'king's son' with the answer being yes, no or question mark. More obvious is the question of relationship with Otherworld figures. This question has two parts, the second of which is: "(b) key male figures such as a king or kings". Again, her answers only reflect interactions with royal characters, rather than taking account of the full range of characters in a given tale. In addition, outside of her introduction, Duignan has very little discussion of relevant secondary literature. While it is understandable that she might wish her claims to stand on the evidence of the primary sources alone, there are places where such additional analysis cannot – and should not – be avoided. In determining whether Immram Brain should be associated with the Echtrae Brain of the tale list B, Carney's discussion of the subject in "The Earliest Bran Material" would have been

useful. That article, too, might have provided insight for her in her conclusions about the difference between Cú Chulainn’s Otherworld adventures and those she regards as 'proper' echtrae. Her difficulties with _Echtrae Nerai_ and its seeming lack of sovereignty issues according to her criteria might have been remedied if analysed in concert with Watson's "A Structural Analysis of Echtrae Nerai".²

All in all, the book is a good starting point for the study of the echtrae genre. As Duignan herself observes, it can be seen as "a prelude to a tentative sketch of subsequent further developments of the _echtrae_ in the course of the pre-Norman period".

(Heather Key)

_Perun's Spear (Perunovo koplje),_ ed. Tomo Vinšćak and Andrej Pleterski


At the end of 2010, in the framework of the project: Religious interpretation of the landscape, supported by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, a symposium was held under the name _Perun's Grindstone and St. George's Spear_. The symposium was held in Žrnovnica and Podstrana near Split. This area was chosen because of the mountain that rises above these places, where the three peaks contain in their name the name of the Slavic god Perun: _Perunško, Perun and Perunić_. Today (2011) in Žrnovnica we can also find the remains of a "snake stone" (Zmiž kamik) mentioned in a document from 1172. Radoslav Katičić connects the stone with Perun's rival from Proto-Slavic mythology, the god Volos (a serpent or a dragon). This collection of articles is the result of that meeting. In it you will find ten scientific articles and two contributions by local enthusiasts who were co-organizers of the symposium.

Since there are so many articles dealing with different topics I have decided to group them in four sections. The first group consists of two articles in which the authors analyze stone reliefs. Vedran Barbarić analyzes a relief of Silvanus from Nugal-Barbarići. This stone relief was found in the part of the village called Barbarići. The relief is built into the wall of a 20th century private house as _spolia_. The scene on the relief shows the local Illyrian deity known as

Silvanus. This god was the god of vegetation, flocks and fertility. Ante Milošević, wrote the article: "Divine Battle Pictured: Visual and Iconographic View of the Horseman Relief from Žrnovnica in Dalmatia". Because the main motif is a horseman killing some kind of animal, it was assumed that the relief shows St. George or St. Michael. This article introduces the view that the Žrnovnica relief may show, in a kind of pagan-Christian syncretism, the illustration of the old Slavic heavenly god Perun, whose lance is coming out of a cloud as a thunderbolt, attacking a bear, respectively the personification of Veles, the god of the underworld.

The second group of articles discusses the motifs and elements from Slavic mythology. Vitomir Belaj in his article: "Juraj's steps on Žminjača", has tried to grasp the meaning of the word Žminjača which is today a name for a piece of land in Podstrana, by the river, under the coastal slopes of the Perun mountain. In two short contributions: "St. George's spear and sword", and: "Perun's shrine in Vareš", Radoslav Katičić summarizes evidence for (a cult of) St George, the titular of many churches in Croatia, and the Christian substitute for the god Perun. In the second appendix Katičić gives feedback on toponymy and legends of Vareš, in neighbouring Bosnia, which also indicates the remains of Proto-Slavic mythology. Mislav Ježić in his article: "Krsna Lifts up Mount Govardhana: Does Vele Defeat Perun in the Indian Puranic Tradition?" analyzes the mythic story of Krsna's lifting up of Mount Govardhana. Ježić has noticed a striking correlation between the Indian myth and the Balto-Slavic central mythic view. Suzana Marjanić writes about: "The Mythological and Myth-forming Story of the Perunika Flower (the Iris) and Perun, the Thunder God". She assumes that this flower that blooms in April and May had a specific role in the Perun cult in the Southern Slavic context. In "Mythical Topography of Župa Dubrovačka", Ivica Kipre writes about traces of Slavic pagan rites prior to the advent of Christianity in the toponymy and topography of the Župa Dubrovačka area, near Dubrovnik.

The third group of articles does not have a common line. In the article: "Stone and Soul", that I wrote, I researched the possibility of connecting, in traditional worldview and beliefs, a stone-material which itself is classified as dead with the essence of human life—and the soul. Vladimir P. Goss wrote: "A Pannonian's Hommage to Don Ante Škobalj". Don Ante Škobalj was a priest who wrote a book Obredne gomile (Ritual Heaps) in 1970. In "Technocratic Monoculturalism – Evolutionary Force", Bozidar Bruce Yerkovich asks a question: Why are we trying to resurrect the spirit of old Slavic mythology?

The last group consists of two contributions by the local organisers Ivica Lolić and Ivan Aljinović. Ivica Lolić wrote about the possibilities of using scientific research for the benefit of a local community by creating educational paths, suitable tourist guides, topographic maps and a documentation centre.
accompanied by a variety of events related to this cultural heritage. Ivan Aljinović reflects on the symposium and what will happen in Žrnovnica after the conference, under the title: "Perun's Thunder or just a Spark?"

This collection promotes an interdisciplinary approach to complex topics such as Slavic mythology. In it you can find contributions from art historians, an archaeologist, an ethnologist, a filologist and an indologist all dealing with segments of Slavic mythology, trying to give answers to old questions and to ask new ones. An additional value of this collection is perhaps its unique approach of giving space to non-scientific contributions. In these contributions the authors are trying to make the scientific knowledge "useful" in everyday life and prevent this book from becoming just one more on the shelf.

Personally, I consider the Ante Milošević's article the most important one in this collection. His analysis of the stone relief with the "horseman in hunting scene" has been known in literature for almost 150 years. Milošević gives a completely new interpretation of this relief placing it, due to its artistic features and interesting iconographic contents, at a high rank among early mediaeval monuments not only in Croatia, but surely also among significant monuments of that kind in Europe.

(Mario Katić)


I opened this book full of anticipation – at last some real focus on skaldic poetry, one of Europe's most under-appreciated literary treasures, and with the added spice of female sensibilities weaving new intricacies into the patterns of this most masculine-seeming genre. It is handsomely produced, a slim hardback, with 45 pages making up foreword, introduction, a time line of Old Norse literature, glossary of personal names, bibliography and index, 100 pages of poetry and concise commentary on it.

I dipped into the poetry and translations – and was filled with misgivings. Each poem has two translations, one in prose, one in verse – why? Like most poetry lovers I read translations of poetry from dead languages, living languages, languages with entirely different sounds and alphabets from English, languages in which word order and, indeed, the direction of reading on the page bears no relation to English, but no prose is required to help me relate to it. What is it about Old Norse scholars that requires them to reduce poetry to its literal semantic sense – which they term its 'meaning' as if the poetry itself did
not carry the sound-values, referential layering and imaginative reach which combine with the many semantic senses of its words and word-patterns to create its true significance. How many students have been put off skaldic poetry for life by this reductive approach? How tempted readers of this book will be to regard the literal prose versions as the 'correct' ones, the poems as florid, inaccurate versions of the 'truth'.

I looked at the foreword, and my unease increased. There is a summary from Laxdæla Saga of Auðr of Hóll's attack on her ex-husband Þorðr after he has left her for Guðrún – and then a statement about the editor of this anthology's intentions: "This volume is intended to give voice to Auðr and her sisters, namely, real and legendary early Nordic women whose exploits, poetic and otherwise, were considered memorable enough to record in the Middle Ages, and who deserve to be considered as equally memorable now." (My italics) The Introduction then informs us that, after presenting poetry from the nine skaldkónur (women poets) whom most scholars agree were actual people and whose poems are likely to have been composed by them, the rest of the book presents poetry spoken by fictional women in a range of texts. The Contents page spells it out, listing the chapter headings: Real People, Real Poetry; Quasi-Historical People and Poetry; Visionary Women: Women's Dream-Verse; Legendary Heroines; Magic-Workers, Prophetesses, and Alien Maidens; Trollwomen. So, the book's title might be seen as misleading to anyone familiar with the poetry collected on the Skaldic Project website, for instance, all of which is believed to be the product of real poets.

That said, we are still presented with pages of skaldic poetry and whether or not it derives from named skalds, or unknown scribes and storytellers putting it in the mouths of female characters, may not affect its quality or every readers' response to it. What I puzzled over more, and wanted some guidance with, was whether the fact that it is purported to have been composed by women, or at least be some authors' understanding of what women skaldic poetry might sound like, results in it displaying any distinctively feminine characteristics. Is female-composed (or uttered) skaldic poetry different from the more familiar poetry composed – or uttered – by men? To answer that the reader would need a thorough knowledge of skaldic poetry composed by men – this book offers nothing in the way of an analysis of any similarities or difference between the two, and so is of no great assistance to the scholar seeking enlightenment about that issue, or to the general reader who is simply curious about it.

What it does offer is the sense that skaldic poetry has a wide range of subject matter, and in these translations is vivid and direct in expression, lively and sometimes humorous. The editor revels in alliteration, sometimes to the point of overload ("Wicked wise-women/ welcomed her always." Völuspá 22 p. 72) and, when faced with complex kennings, she works hard to include their colour and
suggestiveness. For example, Bragi Boddasson's trollwoman responding to his description of himself as a skald (p. 102):

\[
\begin{align*}
Troll & \text{ kalla mik} \quad \text{You skalds say I'm a troll:} \\
tungl & \text{ sjöt-Kungen,} \quad \text{I'm Hrungrir's moon-looney.} \\
audosg & \text{ jötuns} \quad \text{I suck gold from giants.} \\
élsólar & \text{ ból} \quad \text{I slay the storm-sun.} \\
vílsinn & \text{ vólu,} \quad \text{I work woe for the witch-wife.} \\
vörð & \text{ náfarðar} \quad \text{I'm warden of the Death Fjord.} \\
hvélsvél & \text{ himins.} \quad \text{I swallow the sky-wheel.} \\
\text{Hvat er troll, nema Pat?} & \quad \text{What's a troll but that?}
\end{align*}
\]

Given that these are recent translations there are some instances of unnecessary use of archaisms – "goodly cloaks" (p. 28) – and old fashioned grammatical inversions – "uncle I'll go there/the graves to see" (p. 57). Mixed in with them are occasional examples of incongruous sounding modern slang – Unnr Marðardóttir, confessing her sexual difficulties with her husband and her wish to be divorced from him says: But I'd still like to split/ from this skilfull ship-master, and I laughed out loud at the Disney sounding "Mister Bug-eyes" in Þórhildr skáldkona's epigram on manners (p.17), particularly as the introduction to her work describes her epigrams as "typically uttered at times of heightened emotional tension, and are clearly meant to be remembered for their poignancy".

Finally, one other consequence of giving a prose version with the poetry is that the prose may prove more satisfactory than the poetry – there are a few examples here of the prose versions being both shorter and pithier than the translator can make the poems.

Given the reservations I've noted, this book is still one I would want on my shelf, but I would put three health warnings on it:

- Historians, you will have to suspend much of your critical judgement to get the best from this book – some of the lines make it worth it.
- Scholars interested in gender, you will have to read much of the corpus of skaldic poetry composed by men to increase your understanding of whether or not women skalds offer any significant differences of tone, approach and subject matter from men – this book does not offer that kind of analysis.
- Poetry-lovers, beware – read the poems to get a distant feel of the power and possibilities of skaldic poetry, but don't imagine their reductions to literal prose have much to do with what they actually signify.

(Ian Crockatt)

This is a wide-ranging book which covers epic from its beginnings up to contemporary literary productions and treats of compositions in so many different languages that, as the author points out, it would be impossible for anyone to know them all. Accordingly, the works that were not composed in English are handled in English translation and a special bibliography of the epics cited offers guidance to the reader who would like to locate the epics referred to, some of which are quite obscure. The reader is likely to want to take up the invitation to browse further since the author offers a number of tantalizing snippets from epics from around the world. His definition of "epic" is in some ways open and he is concerned rather more with content than with form in selecting his materials. He does, however, convey a very firm sense of epic as an evolutionary force which often contains myth but incorporates it into a larger framework that includes human history as well as stories concerning gods or primeval monsters. Turner is very interested in science as well as literature and makes many links between them as he explores the theme of biological and cultural evolution.

Humans, as Turner describes vividly (p. 211-212), have two contradictory urges – to stay safe and warm at home and to set out on journeys which may lead to discomfort and danger. The hero in epics allows us to participate imaginatively in the adventures and also offers the comforting sense of belonging to an in-group as we identify with him while he undertakes his quest. Turner finds quest an essential element in epic and the quest may go beyond the bounds of human experience and take the heroes into the land of the dead, from which they can (sometimes quite suddenly) return. In the Quiché Maya Popol Vuh (trans. D. Tedlock, 1996), which Turner takes to typify both myth and epic, after the twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque have spoken with their dead father, the text continues (p. 205): "And then the two boys ascended this way, here into the middle of the light, and they ascended straight on into the sky, and the sun belongs to one and the moon to the other." The Popol Vuh is one of the epics which recount a number of "false starts" before human beings and their world can be created, and Turner argues (p. 63) that the false starts "play the same role in traditional cosmologies that extinction plays in Darwinian evolution; they prepare the ground, they reveal creation as a process not a single act, and they open up the conceptual world to revision and narrative."

The book is crammed with ideas and images, and I can only mention some of them. One is that epics from the past form an archive which can be drawn on as we move into the future; they are not outdated but have a perennial use (p. 102). Another is that we might adopt the term "meso" to complement the term
"meta", to convey the reality of a thing in itself as opposed to knowledge and discussion about it (p. 271-273). Another is that there is value in the metaphor of the hero (or artist or scientist) cutting a blaze at the edge of the articulated to open the way to perception of the new (p. 75-78).

Many epics are brought in to the discussion, from the most established in the scholarship, such as those of Homer, to little known ones that have an oral currency today, such as the *Sundiata* of Mali (45, 49, 166) which tells how the buffalo/lion king, Sundiata, had gone on all fours like an animal until he took up an iron staff forged for him which no one else could lift and went on to accomplish great deeds. Turner shows great affection for a wide variety of literature, and quite often finds it illuminating to quote Shakespeare. He sees beauty as a core value and finds it in the biological and cultural shaping of form (p. 251-252). He is a poet himself who speaks out of his own experience in creating the epics entitled "The New World" and "Genesis" (p. 33-34, 208, 298, 319-320), which are futuristic and have overlaps with science fiction.

Epic typically took its rise when orality was giving way to literacy. It "betrises the boundary between prehistory and history" (p. 287) and is a genre of such magnitude that it embraces the whole of its culture. Turner encourages us to enter into this vast epic space and imaginatively make ourselves at home there since "time and familiarity themselves ingrain a thing into memory" and "we must live in epic country for a while for it to work its transformation on us" (341).

(Emily Lyle)