

Burchard's *strigae*, the Witches' Sabbath, and Shamanistic Cannibalism in Early Modern Europe

EMMA WILBY
University of Exeter

I

Scholars have long recognized that when elite thinkers constructed the core stereotype of the witches' sabbath (as it emerged, in various guises, in demonological manuals from the fifteenth century onward), they drew, in part, upon folkloric beliefs that had filtered into the elite sphere via both general cultural dissemination and the witch trials themselves. While research in this area is ongoing, to date it has crystallized into a thesis that seems to be accepted by most scholars: that from as early as the twelfth century many churchmen and demonologists fused folkloric ideas about beneficent nocturnal spirit hosts with folkloric beliefs about maleficent spirits and spirit hordes.

This "sabbath-conflation" thesis, as we term it here, is underpinned by three early passages, all of which, owing to their importance, have often been quoted by historians of witchcraft. The first is found in the canon *Episcopi*, a text that makes its initial appearance in a disciplinary guide written around 906 by Regino, formerly abbot of Prüm:

It must not be omitted indeed that certain criminal women, who have turned back to Satan and are seduced by illusions of demons and by phantasms, believe and avow openly that during the night hours they ride on certain beasts together with the goddess of the pagans Diana and an uncounted host of women; that they pass over many lands in the silent dead of night; that they obey her orders as those of a mistress, and that on certain nights they are summoned to her service.¹

1. Bernadette Filotas, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures in Early Medieval Pastoral Literature* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2005), 313–14.

One century later, Burchard of Worms repeated this text twice in his *Decretum* (1008–12), including the important elaboration that the women could travel in the company of “Diana or of Herodias” and identifying “the popular local name of the leader of the Ride as the *striga* Holda.”² These references point to a vigorous and influential corpus of pan-European beliefs, visible from the medieval period through to the twentieth century, concerning groups of female spirits strongly associated with fairies and fates (termed variously the “good women,” “good people,” “good society” and so on) who travel about the countryside at night and are associated with joy, good fortune, and healing.³ In some sources, the gatherings of these women were termed the “good game” or the “game of Diana.”⁴

The second relevant passage is also found in Burchard's *Decretum*. Like the canon *Episcopi*, it describes a group of women who travel great distances at night, although in this case the goddess is not mentioned and the timbre is rather different. Here, Burchard condemns the women who “maintain and firmly believe” that:

in the silence of the quiet night, when you have settled down in bed, and your husband lies in your bosom, you are able, while still in your body, to go out through the closed doors and travel through the spaces of the world, together with others who are similarly deceived; and that without visible weapons, you kill people who have been baptized and redeemed by Christ's blood, and together cook and devour their flesh; and that where the heart was, you put straw or wood or something of the sort; and that after eating these people, you bring them alive again and grant them a brief spell of life? If you have believed this, you shall do penance on bread and water for fifty days, and likewise in each of the seven years following.⁵

Burchard does not name these women but scholars have linked them to beliefs about *strigae*—cannibalistic witches that appear in European sources from the classical period onward and were believed to kill men by consuming them from the inside. The sixth-century *Salic Law*, for example, states that

2. *Ibid.*, 314–15.

3. This thesis was pioneered by Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London: Penguin, 1991), 89–152. For a slightly more recent treatment, see Wolfgang Behringer, *Shaman of Oberstdorf: Chonrad Stoeckhlin and the Phantoms of the Night*, trans. Erik Midelfort (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 35–71.

4. Behringer, *Shaman*, 59; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 93.

5. Filotas, *Pagan*, 315. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom* (London: Pimlico, 1993), 165.

“if a *stiria* or *stria* eats a man and is put on trial, she shall be sentenced and condemned to pay eight thousand *denarii*,” while the seventh-century *Edict of Rotharius* admonished that it “was impossible for a Christian mind to believe that a woman could eat the viscera of a living man.”⁶

The third relevant passage appears over a century after Burchard’s text, in John of Salisbury’s *Policratus*, written between 1156 and 1159. John, who was partly educated in France, claims that:

The evil spirit with God’s permission uses his powers to make some people believe that things really happen to their bodies which they imagine (through their own error) to occur. These people claim that a Noctiluca or Herodiade, acting as Queen of the Night, summons nocturnal gatherings at which feasting and all kinds of riotous exercises take place. Those who attend are punished or rewarded according to their deserts. The same people also believe that children are sacrificed to *lamiae*, being cut up into small pieces and greedily devoured. Subsequently they are vomited up and the presiding deity takes pity on them and returns them to the cradles from which they were snatched.⁷

For many scholars, John’s passage represents an early conflation of the benign goddess-related beliefs described in the canon *Episcopi*, and the malign cannibalistic beliefs described in Burchard’s *Decretum*. Norman Cohn, one of the first historians to study the folkloric origins of the sabbath, noted that “here the two ideas—of the ‘ladies of the night’ and of night-witches who steal and devour babies—are ingeniously combined: both are commanded by the moon-goddess or by Herodias, and the image of the nocturnal banquet merges into that of the cannibalistic orgy.”⁸ This is echoed in Behringer’s more recent claim that “no later than the time of John of Salisbury (1120–1180), the false belief in these [beneficent] nighttime travels was connected to the idea of common banquets and the notion of *lamiae*, creatures who kidnapped children and ate them.”⁹ Scholars have noted similar fusions in later texts, and indeed, references to Diana’s “good game” are still found in demonological tracts from the height of the witch craze, long after the queen of the night mythology had metamorphosed into a notion of witches participating in a baby-sacrificing, devil-worshipping orgiastic sect.¹⁰

6. Julio Caro Baroja, *World of the Witches*, trans. Nigel Glendinning (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 60; Filotas, *Pagan*, 311.

7. Baroja, *World*, 62.

8. Cohn, *Europe’s*, 175.

9. Behringer, *Shaman*, 50.

10. Baroja, *World*, 119. This said, we find the witch as cannibal and cannibalistic killer seamlessly fused into demonological stereotypes in most of the major demono-

Although we shall not be focusing on it in any detail here, it is important to point out that in several medieval and early modern texts the dark component of the sabbath-conflation is not Burchard's cannibalistic *strigae*, but an incarnation of the popular "Wild Hunt": the cavalcade of dead souls believed to roam the countryside at night in search of animal and human prey.¹¹ As will become clear, many of the conclusions reached with regard to Burchard's *strigae* also enhance our understanding of the role that these dark folkloric troops played in the witches' sabbath.¹²

logical works, including works by Nider, the anonymous author of the *Errores Gazariorum*, Sprenger, and (in the later period) Bodin, Del Rio, Boguet, and Remy. However, while all these authors draw attention to the witch's killing abilities and her desire to use dead bodies for magical purposes, emphasis on specifically cannibalistic practices is more intermittent: Nider, for example, describes them in detail, while Remy and Bodin barely mention them at all. With regard to the witch trials themselves, the mention of cannibalism is similarly inconsistent. While scattered references appear—at one time or another—in trials from most parts of Europe, they emerge most prominently in specific trials or trial clusters from the Western mainland. To cite just a few examples, we have well-known cases from Germany (Nördlingen 1589–94), Switzerland (Laussane and adjacent areas 1438–98), France (Provins, 1452), Italy (Todi, 1428; Perugia 1455–56), and the Basque regions (Labourd and Navarre, 1609–14). The unequal distribution of cannibalistic themes—as they emerge in both demonological works and trial records—is likely to have many causes and merits further research, as does the fact that the cannibalism that emerges in these cases is not uniform. It ranges on a spectrum from the simple sucking of blood, to disinterment, to elaborate nocturnal feasts involving the cooking and sharing of flesh. For a good treatment of cannibalism in demonology and witch persecution, with specific reference to child victims, see Richard Kieckhefer, "Avenging the Blood of Children: Anxiety Over Child Victims and the Origins of the European Witch Trials," in *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Jeffrey B. Russell*, ed. Alberto Ferreiro (Leiden, 1998), 91–109.

11. For examples see Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 101; Fabrizio Conti, "Preachers and Confessors against 'Superstitions': Bernardino Busti and Sermon 16 of his *Rosarium Sermonum*," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, 1 (2011): 86, n. 95; Richard Kieckhefer, "Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1 (2006): 96–100.

12. Focusing on Burchard's *strigae*, we will only make reference here to those Wild-Hunt traditions that involve cannibalism. However the noncannibalistic Wild-Hunt traditions just as readily lend themselves to a dark-shamanistic interpretation (see note 65). Claude Lecouteux touches on the shamanic dimension of European Wild-Hunt traditions in *Phantom Armies of the Night: The Wild Hunt and the Ghostly Processions of the Undead*, trans. Jon. E. Graham (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2011) and I discuss it from a Scottish perspective in Emma Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), 309–81, *passim*.

II

We shall return to the sabbath–conflation theory later in this paper. What concerns us at present is the fact that Burchard’s “good” and “bad” component strands have been dealt with in very different ways by scholars analyzing early modern witchcraft in the context of shamanism. Since emerging in the second half of the twentieth century, this “shamanistic paradigm,” as we term it here, has been controversial, with recent debates among historians focusing on the problems surrounding the definition of shamanism, and consequently, the question of whether the paradigm is useful at all.¹³ These difficulties are rooted, in large part, in the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of “shaman”—or for that matter “sorcerer” or “witch”—even within the field of anthropology itself. Among anthropologists, this problem is increasingly negotiated through the deployment of “terms of convenience” (that is, terms that are useful to delimit the shape of an idea complex in a particular cultural context), as opposed to “ideal type definitions.”¹⁴ Following this, clearly defining the “terms of convenience” one wishes to use is arguably the most practical way forward when employing a term like “shaman” in the context of early modern Europe. In this paper, we shall be defining the shaman as “a magical practitioner who directly communicates with spirits and/or travels to spirit worlds in a dream or trance state in order to magically benefit his community.” This differentiates the shaman from the witch, who is defined here as “an individual who, with or without communication with spirits and with or without the facility of trance, magically harms others for purely personal gain.”¹⁵ According to these definitions, some forms of possession come under the definition of shamanism, and an act of sorcery can be performed by either a shaman or a witch.

The women described in the canon *Episcopi* have received much attention from researchers working in the shamanistic paradigm. Some scholars have

13. For a recent summarisation of work in this field see Gábor Klaniczay, “Shamanism and Witchcraft,” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1 (2006): 214–21. On problems of definition, see the roundtable discussion of Ginzburg’s work in *Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions*, ed. Gabor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 35–49, and Ronald Hutton, “Shamanism: Mapping the Boundaries,” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1 (2006): 209–13.

14. The need for “terms of convenience” in a similar context is discussed by P. Stewart and A. Strathern in “Feasting on my Enemy: Images of Violence and Change in the New Guinea Highlands,” *Ethnohistory* 46 (1999): 646–49.

15. Some scholars find general definitions of shamanism unhelpful, but their use here is defended on the grounds that it is difficult to find any other single word that so efficiently embraces this particular constellation of ritual belief and practice.

argued that those individuals who “avow openly” that “during the night hours they ride on certain beasts together with the goddess of the pagans” were the practitioners of largely beneficent shamanistic traditions rooted in devotion to goddess figures of pre-Christian origin that persisted in Europe through the medieval and into the early modern period. These traditions, which appear to have been predominantly visionary in orientation, involved shamanistic resurrection and the gaining of healing skills.¹⁶ Gustav Henningsen’s important study into the Sicilian fairy cult, the *donas de fuera*, whose members claimed to follow “the Ladies from Outside” in dreams in order to generate prosperity and gain healing skills, indicates these goddess traditions were active in at least one part of seventeenth-century Europe.¹⁷ Behringer’s work on sixteenth-century accounts of travel with the Swiss *säligen lütt* and “people of the night” is also suggestive of similar shamanistic rites. Further narratives scattered through the witchcraft records intimate the same experiential complex, although they cannot be so confidently linked to an ecstatic nexus: for example, the testimonials of the witches at Milan in 1384 and 1390, Bressanone in 1457, and the Dolomite Valleys in the early 1500s.¹⁸

16. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 89–152. Behringer, *Shaman*, 35–71.

17. Several scholars make a distinction between dream cults and shamanism. While this debate is important, the distinction is not necessary here. In many tribal cultures, the shaman’s relationship with the spirit world is conducted through more than one modality, with public ritual, private ritual, and dream states typically working together in different proportions and ways. Here, we work from the premise that the apparent prominence of dream rites in early modern Europe is likely to reflect the fact that shamanistic traditions adapt in response to social change. In any region where shamanistic rituals of folkloric provenance are repressed, it is logical to assume that any original emphasis—should there have been one—on waking invocation and public performance would give way to more private dream rites. The perceived distinction between shamanism and the dream cult is also exaggerated by the fact that historians currently underestimate the role that both dreams and compulsion play in world shamanism. For the *donas de fuera* see Gustav Henningsen, “The Ladies from Outside: An Archaic Pattern of the Witches’ Sabbath,” in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, ed. B. Ankarloo and G. Henningsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 191–215. For the distinction between dream cults and shamanism see Klaniczay and Pócs, *Witchcraft Mythologies*, 35–37; for a more general discussion of these issues see Ronald Hutton, *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination* (London: Hambledon and London, 2001), 129–50. For an example of shamanic adaptation in response to religious persecution see Kira Van Deusen, *Singing Story, Healing Drum: Shamans and Storytellers of Turkestan*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 10–12.

18. For the *säligen lütt* and “night people” see Behringer, *Shaman*, 47–9, 66–71, 12–38. For the Milan trials, see Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 91–93 and Behringer, *Shaman*,

By way of direct contrast, despite the fact that they “maintained and firmly believed” that they traveled long distances to perform their nocturnal rites, the experiences of the cannibalistic women from the *Decretum* have seldom been examined through a shamanistic paradigm. Although scholars have acknowledged that aggressive shamanistic rites persisted from archaic times into the early modern period, and some very fine work has been done in this area, the focus has been on beneficent warrior cults such as the *benandanti* and the *táltos* who fought enemy witches and sorcerers for the fertility of fields and safety of towns.¹⁹ The shamanistic dimension to the cannibalistic killings of the early *strigae* passages has been largely overlooked. Discussions of the witch-related cannibalism featured in demonological works and witch trial records has tended to focus on the fact that false accusations of cannibalism were a common propaganda tool, used against Jews, Christians, lepers, and various heretic groups since the classical period.²⁰ More importantly, we have an epistemological problem: it is very difficult to isolate any witch-confession-embedded reference to cannibalistic killing that does not immediately sound like a demonological stereotype and, as such, point away from popular belief and experience toward elite superimposition. In other words, if a suspect claims to have encountered the goddess or her fairy or fate-women variants in a witchcraft confession, her claim stands out by a mile, whereas if a woman claims to have acted like the flesh-eating *striga*, her claim does not.

Over the past few decades this lack of scholarly attention to cannibalistic shamanism has, by default, generated the impression that folkloric *striga* rites did not possess a shamanistic dimension. Although they do not state it outright, discussions of the witches’ sabbath and its origin imply that while the goddess rites first described in the canon *Episcopi* survived into the early modern period (and fused with the sabbath stereotype) on the level of both belief and experience, the cannibalistic-killing rites depicted in the *Decretum* survived into the period on the level of “beware-the-bogeyman” beliefs only. As a result, on those occasions when it seems clear that witchcraft suspects

53–59. For the Bressanone trials see Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 94–95. For the Dolomite trials see Behringer, *Shaman*, 58–60.

19. For the *benandanti*, see Carlo Ginzburg, *Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); and Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 153–81. For the *táltos* see Éva Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead: A Perspective on Witches and Seers in the Early Modern Age*, trans. Szilvia Rédey & Michael Webb (Budapest: Central University Press, 1999), 127–58.

20. Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons*, 1–15, 35–78. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 33–86.

willingly confessed—or at least confessed without torture—to having killed and eaten human beings either alone or at the witch's sabbath, their testimony is not seen as representative of shamanistic belief or experience, but generally attributed to suggestion, “mythomania,” narcissistic fantasies, false-memories, or “stereotyped dreams” brought about as a result of hysteria.²¹

III

However, recent developments in the field of anthropology invite us to re-evaluate this issue. In the last decade, a number of prominent anthropologists have suggested that most studies into shamanism have been overly biased toward the positive. Neil Whitehead and Robin Wright note that over the past thirty or so years anthropologists have emphasized the “therapeutic” and “socially integrative” aspects of shamanism. Against this, they argue that “the ethnographic experience of Amazonian dark shamanism pointedly contradicts this imagery,” and that “the shamans “power to destroy or inflict harm through sorcery and witchcraft . . . has received little in-depth attention.”²²

These recent studies, when taken in conjunction with relevant material from older fieldwork, clearly confirm that although cannibalistic rites are strongly associated with the witch figure in many indigenous cultures across the world, they are also central to many traditions classified as “shamanistic”, with the latter practices being defined, among anthropologists, as “shamanistic cannibalism.”²³ While these practices have been reported in all the world's habitable continents, fieldwork from Amazonia, Siberia, and South East Asia is especially rich in this regard, and shall be our focus here.²⁴ Beginning in Amazonia, we find Carlos Fausto asserting that “to be a shaman among the

21. Robin Briggs, *The Witches of Lorraine*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 150; Gustav Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents: Inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frias and Others on the Basque Witch Persecution* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 49–79; Gustav Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate: Basque Witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition (1609–1614)* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1980), 390. I discuss the role of false memory in witchcraft confession in Wilby, *Visions*, 59–61, 203–34.

22. Neil Whitehead and Robin Wright, eds., *In Darkness and Secrecy: The Anthropology of Assault Sorcery and Witchcraft in Amazonia*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 10.

23. For a discussion of the cannibalistic witch in a global context see Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 13.

24. Given that research into dark shamanism is in its infancy, we currently lack the studies to estimate the global incidence of this phenomenon, although the fact that we have extremely rich bodies of evidence from several geographically diverse cultures suggests that we may be dealing with a transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon. The reevaluation of some “witchcraft” traditions will be important in this

Asurini do Tocantins implies eating like the jaguar, and by our definition, to be a cannibal,” while “among the Parakanã, the main way for a man to develop his capacity for dreaming is to follow the road of the jaguar: that is, to be a predator (not only of animals, but above all of humans).”²⁵ Similarly, Johannes Wilbert has shown how Warao dark shamans stalk and kill individuals by sucking out their blood through a proboscis located in their chest, after which they carry the corpse to the underworld to feed their spirit familiars and master, the macaw god *Hoëbo*.²⁶ Neil Whitehead, meanwhile, illustrates how the *kanaimà* shamans of the Guyana Highlands kill and mutilate their victims and then return, several days later, to the burial place to suck the “juices of putrefaction” from the corpse.²⁷ Moving west across the Pacific Ocean to Papua New Guinea, we find members of the Melanesian *buai* cult behaving in a very similar way: Richard Eves describes how they “discarnate” their spirits, or *loroang*, from their bodies and enter that of an animal, usually the eagle, leaving their own body behind immobile and in a deathlike state. Using the host animal as a temporary vehicle to locate their prey, the *buai* sorcerer then enters the body of the victim “via the orifices that render the body vulnerable, particularly the mouth and anus.” Once inside, he cannibalizes the liver and internal organs, causing death.²⁸ Finally, moving west again to Siberia, we find the same narrative running through material from the heartland of classic shamanism. As

respect. Many of the cannibalistic practices attributed to non-European witches are in many ways indistinguishable from those attributed to shamans, with the differences between the two being not so much the structure or epistemological status of the acts themselves, but their experiential, motivational and social context. It is possible that, as Whitehead has demonstrated in relation to the Amazonian *kanaimà*, new interpretative paradigms may reveal that some practices traditionally defined by anthropologists as “witchcraft” in fact possess a shamanistic dimension. Similarly, some accounts of cannibalism historically interpreted as “real” may also, on closer examination, be found to have links with shamanism. A good illustration of the complex interrelation between accounts of “real” cannibalism, shamanistic cannibalism and witchcraft in West Africa can be found in Carol MacCormack, “Human Leopards and Crocodiles,” in *The Ethnography of Cannibalism*, ed. P. Brown & D. Tuzin (Washington: The Society for Psychological Anthropology, 1983), 51–60.

25. Carlos Fausto, “A Blend of Blood and Tobacco: Shamans and Jaguars among the Parakanã of Eastern Amazonia,” in Whitehead and Wright, *In Darkness*, 160–61.

26. Johannes Wilbert, “The Order of Dark Shamans among the Warao,” in Whitehead and Wright, *In Darkness*, 32–42.

27. Neil Whitehead, *Dark Shamans: Kanaimà and the Poetics of Violent Death* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 14–15.

28. Richard Eves, “Shamanism, Sorcery and Cannibalism: The Incorporation of Power in the Magical Cult of *Buai*,” *Oceania* 65 (1995): 224–28.

the result of a wide-ranging survey of anthropological literature from the region, Charles Stépanoff has recently noted that

In all of Siberia, as in many places where shamanism is usually identified, shamans are suspected of “devouring” other humans . . . Tuvans often told me that shamans can “bite and eat people.” These are not myths about a remote past: a shaman proudly claimed to me to have himself “eaten” several people, but not yet enough, he recognized, to be called a “great shaman.”²⁹

Stépanoff also notes similar beliefs among the Darkhats, ancient Buryats, Tungus, Chukchi, and Yakut, with the latter's traditions, for example, being “rich in shamans eating human hearts and livers and mutilating people.”³⁰

In all of these cases, the shaman's human victims can vary. In many instances, they are an enemy, such as a rival sorcerer, warrior, or tribesperson, who threatens the individual shaman or his community in some way. However, in Amazonia and Siberia, we also have examples of shamans killing and consuming in a more indiscriminate and opportunistic manner, as would the animal with which they often identify themselves. In this case, any human being that passes the shaman's path when he is out hunting is potential prey. With regard to the *kanaimà* shaman, for example, Whitehead notes that it is “critical to appreciate that the selection of victims is ultimately a matter of indifference, in the sense that anyone will do . . . as with any subsistence hunter, they will take the easiest opportunity.”³¹ As a consequence, just as a human or animal hunter will try to increase his success by isolating the vulnerable beasts from a herd, in some traditions the shaman will specifically target children or weakened adults. Of particular significance here, in relation to our cross-comparisons with early modern witch beliefs, is the fact that, as a direct result of this largely indiscriminate dimension to shamanic predation, in all of the cases cited here shamans were believed capable of attacking members of their own community and even their own children.³²

This bloodthirsty reputation makes the shaman deeply ambiguous, wherever in the world and in whatever culture he appears. Fausto argues that “to become a puissant shaman one must entertain a special relationship with ferocious beings, eaters of raw meat and blood. This relationship implies a

29. Charles Stépanoff, “Devouring Perspectives: On Cannibal Shamans in Siberia,” *Inner Asia* 11 (2009): 284, 286.

30. *Ibid.*, 287.

31. Whitehead, *Dark*, 90–91.

32. *Ibid.*, 117. Wilbert, “The Order,” 39.

sharing of perspectives. The shaman's ambivalence stems from his serving, in person, as a point of articulation between his perspective and that of his ferocious familiar spirits."³³ Similarly, Viveiros de Castro notes, in relation to the Tapirapé shaman, that "insofar as he is the friend of the enemies of the living, he is both a protector and a threat: his visits to demonic beings confer dangerous powers on him and, in a certain respect, transform him into one of them." As such, he is "the typical assassin, sorcerer, and kidnapper of souls." Hardly surprisingly, as Fausto emphasizes, "many Amazonian people do not clearly differentiate the shaman from the witch."³⁴

However, while the line between the dark shaman and the witch is very fine, anthropologists have observed that in all of our cited cultures he is tolerated, for a number of reasons. The first is linked to a nuanced understanding of ecstatic compulsion. It has long been recognized that psychophysical compulsion is a feature of most shamanistic traditions, typically emerging in the context of possession and initiation (in the latter case, acceptance of the shamanic vocation often being likened to profound surrender to an overwhelming force). Anthropologists studying dark shamanic traditions have noted that similarly compulsive urges underpin the shaman's need to journey in subtle body to hunt down and consume human flesh.³⁵ In this respect, with regard to his random killing sprees at least, the shaman is believed to be fundamentally innocent of the murders he commits. The intensity of these impulses is intimated in Wilbert's observation that Campa jaguar shamans (to whom, when hunting, humans appear "as peccary"):

travel long distances so as to avoid eating their friends and kin. Especially during the months of March through to June were-jaguars are on the prowl of children or in shamanic terms young "peccary," and again, as jaguars, shamans are unable to distinguish their own human children from others. Thus, when in the form of jaguars, shamans *are* jaguars: they see like them and they think like them.³⁶

33. Fausto, "A Blend," 171.

34. Viveiros de Castro, *From the Enemy's Point of View: Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society*, trans. Catherine Howard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 262–63; Fausto, "A Blend," 158.

35. Some scholars exclude possession from their definition of shamanism. See Fumiaki Nakanishi, "Possession: A Form of Shamanism?" *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1 (2006): 234–41. For initiation see Holger Kalweit, *Dreamtime and Inner Space: the World of the Shaman*, trans. W. Wünsche ((Boston & London: Shambhala, 1988), 75–110.

36. Fausto, "A Blend," 171.

Similarly, Fernando Santos-Granero notes that once an Amuesha shaman “has tasted human flesh he prefers it to any other kind of meat, and becomes thereafter a ‘man-eating’ shaman who cannot stop himself from preying on distant localities.”³⁷ Cognizant that he might be unable to stop himself consuming members of his own community, “the hungry [Amuesha] shaman roams instead through distant settlements, where he kills domestic animals—and any person he may find on his way.”³⁸ In other cases, the dark shaman does not hunt so far from home. When the Warao novice shaman is visited by the macaw god, “in his dream, requesting human flesh” the “intimidated” novice agrees to “snare . . . a vulnerable member of his own or of a neighbouring community.”³⁹ Alternatively, among the *kanaimà*, according to one of Whitehead’s informants, “If you learned to kill, then you must kill—they have the urge to kill and it might even be a brother or sister.”⁴⁰ The compulsive quality of the shaman’s activities is also reflected in the fact that in all of the cited cultures certain behaviors and physical features—such as evidence of “unusual perceptual capacities,” a “superfluous bone,” “a piercing gaze” or being born “in the caul”—indicate that an individual has an unavoidable shamanic destiny and will not be able to resist succumbing to the pressure of the spirits and becoming their ally.⁴¹

Compulsion is not the whole story, however. All forms of shamanism involve a reciprocal dialogue between submission and control, in which the shaman’s effectiveness is measured by his ability to negotiate with, if not command, the occult forces and beings with which he comes into contact. In the context of cannibalistic shamanism, this means that one of the shaman’s primary tasks is to mitigate his carnivorous impulses. As we have seen, the Amuesha and Campa jaguar shamans attempt to protect their own kin from their bloodlust by hunting away from home. Alternatively, when the Asurini do Tocantin shaman absorbs the *karowara* (a pathogenic, cannibalistic agent that causes disease) he has to “learn to control it and not be controlled by it” or he would attack those around him, such as menstruating women, who smelt of blood.⁴² But, however skilled the shaman, there is always the danger that the fine balance between compulsion and control will tip and his cannibalistic desires overwhelm him. Aparecida Vilaça notes of the Wari’ shaman

37. Fernando Santos-Granero, *The Power of Love: The Moral Use of Knowledge amongst the Amuesha of Central Peru* (London: Athlone, 1991), 279.

38. *Ibid.*, 279.

39. Wilbert “The Order,” 38–39.

40. Whitehead, *Dark*, 117.

41. For examples see Stépanoff, “Devouring,” 296–98.

42. Fausto, “A Blend,” 160.

that “the negative facet of shamanic agency concerns his capacity to turn into an enemy at any moment, attacking his own people, and possibly causing death. Such action is unintentional, almost a ‘technical failure’: the shaman’s vision becomes deficient and he starts to see his kin as enemies or animal prey.”⁴³ For similar reasons, the Amuesha shaman is approached cautiously:

not even the members of his own locality may fully trust a “man-eating” shaman. For this reason, such shamans are forced to introduce certain innovations into their curing techniques. . . . In these cases [of sucking out sickness,] shamans do not apply their mouths directly to their patients’ bodies, but use instead a hollow cane tube through which they blow their breath and suck out the intrusive objects. In this way cannibalistic shamans attempt to resist the temptation to eat their own patients in the process of curing them.⁴⁴

As they approached death, Tuvan shamans were equally untrustworthy, and could be bound and abandoned by their relatives because “in the last minutes of his life the shaman ‘becomes crazy’ and ‘devours all that fall under his gaze, he kills cattle and people, he does not recognize anybody any more.’”⁴⁵

Although important, however, evidence of these psychological dynamics is not enough, in itself, for a community to identify and tolerate an individual as a dark shaman. Anthropological sources suggest that compulsive episodes of envisioned killing and cannibalism occur spontaneously in non-shamanic contexts, where they can be condemned as witchcraft, madness, or possession.⁴⁶ Cannibalistic dreams and visions only become shamanistic, as opposed to just visionary, if the experiencer learns to manipulate his occult power for the benefit of the community.

Most notably, as we saw in the Amuesha case above, the dark shaman employs his skills to heal the sick, with Stépanoff noting that in Siberia

Healing rituals use the devouring capacities of the shaman by turning them in a convenient direction . . . a devouring power is required in shamans’ ritual practices against evil forces. Swallowing is a technique integrated in shamanic healings

43. *Ibid.*, 171.

44. Santos-Granero, *Power*, 280.

45. Stépanoff, “Devouring,” 300.

46. Cohn, *Europe’s*, 177–8. For another case see William Olsen, “Children for Death: Money, Wealth, and Witchcraft Suspicion in Colonial Asante,” in *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 167 (2002): 521–52.

throughout Siberia. A Tozhu shaman described the treatment he reserved for a spirit causing disease: "Your black liver, your bloody heart, I ate."⁴⁷

Siberian shamans also employ specifically cannibalistic spirits, such as the Chukchi *kély* and the Altaian *körmös*, in their healing rituals.⁴⁸ Similarly, in Amazonia, through feeding on human and animal flesh in jaguar form, the Asurini do Tocantin shaman is able to extract the animal's *karowara*, which, if he manages to control it, will be retained "in his mouth as the source of his curing power." Among the Warao, alternatively, the dark shaman's function as assassin for the god of the underworld, *Hoebo*, gives him unique skill to gain mastery over *hoa*, the "pneumatic agent of sickness and death."⁴⁹

In addition to facilitating cures, the shaman's predatory abilities can also be employed in a protective capacity. At their most abstract, the shaman's cannibalistic rites defend his community against the gods themselves. Through ritually feeding *Hoebo*, the god of the underworld, with human victims, the Warao dark shaman mitigates an appetite that, if left unattended, could consume and destroy the whole world. Similarly, the *kanaimà*'s shamanic predation is essentially an act of propitiation to the spirit "Makunaima, creator of plants and animals," with Whitehead noting that the "exchange of the mutilated human victims of *kanaimà* assault for the beneficence of Makunaima underlies the logic of *kanaimà* ritual practice."⁵⁰

On a more pragmatic level, the dark shaman is deployed as an assault sorcerer to defend his community against more tangible threats; most commonly enemy sorcerers or tribes. Santos-Granero observed that among the Amuesha:

Not infrequently shamans publicly proclaim their cannibalistic proclivities. This boasting of their cannibalistic tastes should be understood, I would suggest, as a public proclamation of supernatural power, ferocity and fearlessness. It constitutes both an assurance for the members of his local settlement of his extra-ordinary powers and a warning for his enemies of his mercilessness.⁵¹

47. Stépanoff, "Devouring," 300, 295.

48. For examples, see *ibid.*, 285.

49. Fausto, "A Blend," 160; Wilbert, "The Order," 38.

50. *Ibid.*, 32–42; Silvia Vidal and Neil Whitehead, "Dark Shamans and the Shamanic State: Sorcery and Witchcraft as Political Process in Guyana and the Venezuelan Amazon," in Whitehead and Wright eds., *In Darkness*, 61.

51. Santos-Granero, *Power*, 280.

In defence of their communities, Amuesha shamans assume jaguar form and (following authority figures known by terms such as “Master of all Jaguars” and “benevolent Cloud Jaguar”) engage the shamans from rival tribes “in mortal combat,” killing and consuming their victims—“cleaning the corpse of its bones” and eating “the earth soaked with the victim’s blood.”⁵² The dark shaman’s community-protecting role can also adapt in response to more unusual threats, with Whitehead suggesting that in the early nineteenth century the *kanaimàs*’ predations may have functioned as “a defensive magico-military technique to ward off the new and overwhelming gun violence and slave raiding” that accompanied colonial contact. By the end of the century they were “explicitly understood as a means to resist and reject the white man’s materiality and spirituality.”⁵³ On a more interpersonal level, dark shamans can use their predatory powers to resolve smaller-scale grievances, either attacking others at the behest of a client or in order to resolve a purely personal conflict. It is in this area of neighborly vendetta that the dark shaman’s activities most closely resemble those of the stereotypical witch—generating animosities that can easily degenerate into witch hunts.⁵⁴ As in his healing practice, the dark shaman often initiates these protective and defensive assaults through the deployment of cannibalistic familiar spirits.⁵⁵

In its animist context, the thinking that underpins shamanistic cannibalism is pragmatic. Any shamanistic tradition, whether white or dark, operates out of the belief that in order to make use of and mitigate the powers of the spirits, the shaman must become intimate with them. He must learn their language, travel to their worlds, participate in their activities, adopt them (in some cases) as magical allies, and, like the Amazonian Tapirapé shaman, be transformed “into one of them.” The logic informing the cannibalistic practices of Amazonian, Siberian, and South East Asian shamans becomes clearer when we consider this belief alongside the fact that these shamanistic cultures

52. *Ibid.*, 275.

53. Whitehead, *Dark*, 250; Vidal and Whitehead, “Dark,” 62.

54. *Ibid.*, 7.

55. Among the South American Wayäpi, the flesh-eating monster known as the *anhangar*, when controlled, becomes “one of the shamans’ offensive weapons,” while, in order to resolve community dispute, the Melanesian *buai* shaman can send either his own *loroang* [spirit] or the “life forces” of previously cannibalized victims to attack threatening parties. Similarly, the Warao dark shaman’s ability to “retaliate against outside attack” by engaging “pathogenic agents of supernatural origin” is so effective that he can even, opportunistically, achieve his goal by “muster[ing] the western god’s allied diseases.” (Fausto, “A Blend,” 160; Eves, “Shamanism,” 225–27; Wilbert, “The Order,” 45).

all possess what we might call “predation-cosmologies.” In a predation-cosmology, the cosmos is peopled by hungry spirits (of either the nonhuman or the dead) who desire to feed on human flesh and blood. In Warao mythology, the Macaw god of the underworld and his denizens have an insatiable appetite for human prey, dismembering and consuming the corpses brought to them by dark shamans in elaborate underworld banquets. Similarly, in Siberia spirits were endowed with huge appetites, with Stépanoff noting that the Koryak *kala* and the Chukchi *kély* were both particularly fond of human liver. In all of these cultures, this spirit hunger was believed to be the prime cause of sickness and death.⁵⁶ The Amazonian *karowara* were widely associated with “cannibal spirits, who cause diseases by eating, from the inside, the flesh of humans,” while according to Stépanoff, “at the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the diseases and deaths in Siberia were ascribed to the appetite of the spirits.”⁵⁷ In these cultures, the fact that spirits are destructive and cannibalistic does not mean that they should not be objects of interaction. Like all spiritual entities that possess power over the lives of men, they need to be negotiated with, by shamans, in order to benefit the community. And according to the essential logic of shamanism, this entails the shaman becoming intimate with them through transforming into “one of them.”⁵⁸ From this perspective, the shaman’s supernatural devouring function is simply a reflection or embodiment of the devouring function of the spirits and, as a corollary of this, the essential nature and dynamics of the cosmos itself. This ontological justification gives us a deeper insight into why the murderous activities of the dark shaman are often tolerated by his community. He is not only endured because his dark powers are deemed innocent or useful. It is also because the things he does mirrors the way things *are*. As a reflection of the predation-cosmology the shaman is neither “good” nor “bad,” with Stépanoff noting that

In Siberia, shamans’ cannibal practices are not seen as a bad habit of a particular category of “evil” or “black” shamans, or as a lapse contradicting their benevolent

56. *Ibid.*, 40–41. Stépanoff, “Devouring,” 285.

57. Fausto, “A Blend,” 160; Stépanoff, “Devouring,” 285.

58. As a result of this, the shaman gains a body that is believed to be inherently different from that of an ordinary man. Among the *Yakuts* a genuine shaman “had to be able to make a knife pass from one side to the other of his body” while, in Southern Siberia, we have stories of shamans who can survive fire without being burnt, with this bodily difference, as we saw earlier, being confirmed by certain physical signs at birth. In Melanesia, “by incorporating the substances of *Buai*, the normal body is refigured”, producing a powerful organism “which allows the boundaries of

mission of healing. Rather, it looks like an inevitable expression of what makes them shamans. Humans are just one of the numerous objects of their appetite, besides hostile spirits and simple presents of meat and alcohol . . . the shaman's body is from birth (as opposed to by will) an active channel, and that is why, traditionally, "devouring" is not precisely understood as a "bad action" from an ethical point of view.⁵⁹

Although many Amazonian cultures make stronger distinctions than the Siberian between "light" and "dark" categories of shaman, they share this core perspective, with Whitehead and Wright noting that "whatever the tragedy, distress and death that dark shamans and allied ritual specialists [in Amazonia] may perform on humanity, they are [believed to be] an inevitable, continuing and even a necessary part of the cosmos."⁶⁰ In this context, even when a shaman is lynched or ostracized the process may be strangely devoid of blame, with Stépanoff, noting that in Siberia, "Cannibal shamans are killed or abandoned in order to preserve lay people rather than as a kind of punishment."⁶¹ From this perspective, dark shamanistic traditions are sustained by the profound fatalism that thrives in any preindustrial culture required to endure a high incidence of sickness and death.

IV

We can use this recent anthropological research into dark shamanism to develop new perspectives on early modern witchcraft. The first thing to strike us is that, in the multilayered and diverse belief systems of medieval and early modern Europe, we find traces of structures similar to the predation cosmologies central to shamanistic cannibalism in a non-European context. In diverse parts of the continent, it was believed that officially "good" spirits of the popular supernatural pantheon, like God, the saints, or beneficent fairies, existed alongside spirits whose core purpose was to hunt, kill, and/or consume humans. Foremost, we have the figure of the cannibalistic Devil himself (and his demon companions) who takes center stage in demonological works and witchcraft records from the fourteenth century onward. However, we also have a number of human-eating spirit categories that emerge as distinct from demonological stereotypes, up to and beyond the period of the

the experiential world to be redefined." (Stépanoff, "Devouring," 298–300; Eves, "Shamanism," 222–25).

59. Stépanoff, "Devouring," 295, 300.

60. Whitehead and Wright, *In Darkness*, 7.

61. Stépanoff, "Devouring," 300.

witch hunts. Our first is that of the often solitary bloodsucking spirits, and includes the vampire, the *lamia*, some *mora* demons, and some incarnations of the *striga* whom we met earlier (which is linked to the classical *strix*).⁶² All of these spirits characteristically possess the ability to metamorphose into animals and creep into houses, kill people while they are sleeping, and consume their organs and/or suck their blood. Although more frequently depicted as part of a group, our second category, the werewolf, bears an “amazing kinship” with the vampire, being either a spirit of the dead or a human who roams the countryside, killing and consuming both animals and humans.⁶³ Moving on to our third category, we find cannibalism performed by some of the many troops of roaming dead that have been loosely grouped under the “Wild Hunt” umbrella; including the bloodsucking *sluagh*, the child-eating *Galerie Hunt*, and the grave-raiding *Chasse Proserpine*.⁶⁴ Fourthly, although they were associated with healing, in some parts of Europe the fairies also had a death-bringing, cannibalistic aspect, which at times made them indistinguishable from the spirit hosts of the Wild Hunt corpus. For some inhabitants of seventeenth-century Scotland, for example, there seems to have been no difference between the spirit host who feasted under hills with the fairy king and queen and the *sluagh* who sucked human blood and took to the skies, armed with elf-arrows, in search of human prey.⁶⁵ While only relevant to the extent that it is deemed to reflect active belief, the prominence of cannibalistic spirit beings (whether ogres, trolls, or female demons/witches) in traditional folktales throughout the European continent also reflects this predation cosmology. Marina Warner has noted recently that “only four stories by Perrault do not feature cannibalism as such. In the Grimm Brothers’

62. The Romanian *strigoi* and Russian *upyr* could be either living people or revenants and the classical *strix* was both a supernatural woman and mythological bird. See Claude Lecouteux, *The Secret History of Vampires: Their Multiple Forms and Hidden Purposes*, trans. Jon. E. Graham (Rochester & Toronto: Inner Traditions, 2010), 82–83; Linda Ivanits, *Russian Folk Belief* (London: M. E. Sharpe, Inc, 1989), 121–22, 196–98. Samuel Grant Oliphant, “The Story of the Strix: Ancient,” in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 44 (1913): 133–34.

63. Lecouteux, *The Secret History*, 78.

64. For the *sluagh* see Wilby, *Visions*, 91, 309–81 *passim*. For an introduction to the *Galerie Hunt* and *Chasse Harpine* see Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies*, 72, 260, 29–31; and W. Branch Johnson, *Folktales of Normandy* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1929), 122–27.

65. Wilby, *Visions*, 96. For fairies sucking blood, see Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 109–10.

later, seminal anthology, the tally can't be made, as stories of ogres and flesh-eating witches are so numerous, and many of them overlap."⁶⁶

Faced with predatory spirits characteristic of the cosmology that shamans normally inhabit, it is legitimate to look for evidence of the types of human interaction with and control over such spirits compatible with shamanistic cannibalism. Putting aside witchcraft records and demonological works for the moment, and just focusing on our folkloric spirit categories, a wide range of literature (from collections of myths, legends, ballads, and anecdotes to commentaries on "superstitious" belief and practice) dating from the early medieval period to the present contains suggestive motifs and themes. To a greater or lesser extent, and in different concentrations and combinations according to source-type and locality, we find vampiric spirits, werewolves, Wild-Hunt cavalcades, and fairies all associated with the belief that humans can participate in their killing and cannibalistic activities, that these activities can generate beneficent magical effects, and that they can be tolerated by their host communities. Similarly, accounts of this human participation are littered with the motifs and themes of shamanistic trance and compulsion, such as references to dreams, visions, irresistible impulses, spirit-coercion, physical catatonia, false bodies, subtle-body travel, animal metamorphosis, suprahuman capacities, physical signs of destiny at birth, and so on.⁶⁷ All of the spirit categories listed here call for deeper examination in the context of dark shamanism, but even this brief survey invites us to conclude that shamanistic rites developed in relation to these cannibalistic spirit categories and that cultural memories of these practices persisted into medieval and early modern Europe.

V

Given that the witchcraft stereotypes that emerged in demonological works from the fifteenth century onward drew on the folkloric *strigae* or Wild Hunt

66. Marina Warner, "Fee Fie Fo Fum: the Child in the Jaws of the Story" in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 160.

67. There are too many sources to quote here, but some good examples are collected in Éva Pócs, *Between*, 29–36, 44–57, 121–164; and Éva Pócs, "The Popular Foundation of the Witches' Sabbath and the Devil's Pact in Central and Southeastern Europe," *Acta Ethnographica* 37 (1991). For Western European examples see Claude Lecouteux, *Witches, Werewolves and Fairies: Shapeshifters and Astral Doubles in the Middle Ages*, trans. Clare Frock (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2003); and Campagne, *Witch*, 394–96. For Scottish examples see John G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1900), 52–154 *passim*.

belief complexes, it is hardly surprising to find the motifs and themes associated with cannibalistic shamanism appearing in witchcraft records from the medieval through to the early modern period. What is more unexpected, however, is that these motifs and themes emerge from the records in such a coherent, systematic, and comprehensive way. For example, although it may seem an obvious point, the first thing to emphasise is that witchcraft confessions and sentences all provide us with unanimous claims of human participation in cannibalistic events; after all, the witch's bloodsucking attack or baby-eating feast could not take place without a participating witch. We also have—in relation to both cannibalistic and noncannibalistic events—many references to the motifs associated with shamanistic trance.⁶⁸ Some suspects directly claimed that their malefic attacks and/or their attendance at the sabbath occurred in dream or while they traveled “in spirit” or “in the form of a soul”; while even those who maintained that their experience was bodily often littered their testimony with claims to have transformed into animals, left false bodies or some form of inanimate object in their beds when traveling, and reached their destinations through flight or squeezing into houses through keyholes and closed doors.⁶⁹ Equally significant is the fact that these claims were often corroborated by elite commentators. A substantial proportion of demonologists and interrogators maintained that the witches' killing sprees and sabbath experiences (whether cannibalistic or otherwise) were visionary ones, with even those who argued that they were “real” events usually conceding that it sometimes happened in the imagination only.⁷⁰ The Spanish inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frías (whose “strict insistence on empiricism” when investigating witches made him, according to Henningsen, “far ahead of his time”), persuasively claimed that:

68. It is important to note that the shamanistic motifs and themes listed in this section apply to both the cannibalistic and noncannibalistic killings/sabbaths described in witchcraft records. This is congruent with our non-European material. Shamanistic killing, as it emerges in the anthropological sources, does not need to involve cannibalism, and yet the psychological dynamic and rationale behind cannibalistic and noncannibalistic killings are in many ways the same. Although there is no space to go into this issue here, many parallels could be drawn between the noncannibalistic “killing shaman” and the noncannibalistic “killing witch,” as noted with regard to the Wild Hunt, n. 12.

69. These references are too numerous to reference, but some good eastern European examples are collected in Pócs, *Between*, 78–80; and Pócs, “Popular,” 329–30, 336. For the Iberian Peninsula, see Campagne, *Witch*, 381–410; for France, see Briggs, *Witches*, 120–52; for Britain, see Wilby, *Cunning*, 163–84.

70. Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 313. We even find this in the works of the great literalist, de Lancre. See Pierre de Lancre,

basing ourselves on the interview and lengthy debate held with her by all the friars in the chamber and in my presence, we all concluded that what this good woman was confessing about her witchcraft was, without doubt, nothing but a dream; and consequently all what she now adds in the case of her relapse may be taken as such. Many others made the same phenomenon clear, namely that their witchcraft had taken place in their dreams, as will be seen from the tenor of their confessions.⁷¹

The fact that interrogators could maintain the position that witches were dreaming even when trance-journeying suspects denied that this was the case suggests that the belief in the reality of visionary travel was present in popular culture, and not just an elite superimposition. Many demonological manuals contain accounts of instances where frustrated interrogators beat a witch while she lay in trance, in order to show her the bruises when she woke to prove that she did not travel to the sabbath bodily.⁷² Although this narrative was certainly a trope, it is likely to have been rooted in real exchanges; Salazar, for example, complained that despite his observations that “their witchcraft had taken place in their dreams” his suspects “claimed that they always participated [at the sabbath] personally and corporeally.”⁷³

Witchcraft narratives also contain—in relation to both cannibalistic and noncannibalistic killing—the same theme of compulsion that we identified in our anthropological material. The indiscriminate, out-of-control hunting sprees of the Warao, *kanaimà*, Campa, and Amuesha shamans can be likened, morphologically, to the significant minority of witch confessions that describe seemingly random, indiscriminate, and often multiple killings—which can sometimes include the suspect’s own children—that beggar the understanding because they seem so pointless, incriminatory, and without clear links to specific grievance.⁷⁴ Also relevant here is the fact that when indulging in her cannibalistic activities, the witch was generally unconcerned with the identity of the adult or infant being vampirized, disinterred, dismembered, or boiled down for fat; in effect, any “body” would do. Compulsion is also evident in the fact that throughout Europe—again in relation to both cannibalistic and

On the Inconstancy of Witches, trans. Harriet Stone and Gerhild Scholz Williams (Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 114, 123.

71. Henningsen, *Witches' Advocate*, 390; Henningsen, *Salazar*, 296.

72. I have argued that this confusion was attributable to conflicting ideas about spiritual doubles. See Wilby, *Visions*, 288–95.

73. Henningsen, *Salazar*, 25.

74. Wilby, *Visions*, 354–55. For other examples see Kieckhefer, “Mythologies,” 88–89.

noncannibalistic attacks—witchcraft suspects frequently told their interrogators that they were forced, against their will, to perform these harmful acts. In most witchcraft confessions, this coercive force is described as the Devil, with Boguet noting that “witches all unanimously confess that the Devil continually urges and incites them to do evil”; Bodin that the Devil commands his servants to “Take revenge, or you shall die!”; and de Lancre that witches pleaded that sabbath attendance did not merit a sentence of death because they were “deceived by the Devil” and made to “go there by force.”⁷⁵ The confessions themselves are filled with references as to how the Devil “exhorted [the witch] to make people languish and die” and “urged [her] to do harm and kill people.”⁷⁶ In addition to the Devil, many witches also identified their fellow coven members as the coercive factor, claiming that they were “summoned” to the sabbath by their neighbors and “beaten soundly” by them if they refused to appear.⁷⁷ Occasionally, the compulsion to kill was described as a force or principle as opposed to an entity, with Hungarian witch Catalin Szabó claiming that she performed her visionary killings according “to the will of destiny”—wondering “why had God allowed her to ‘carry out such evil deeds?’”⁷⁸ These claims, as they emerge in Spanish sources, recently led Fabián Campagne to conclude that “many witches declared that they were not able to control the impulsion to go out in the night and kill newborn babies,” and that in this respect, “the Spanish witch is the victim of a tragic destiny from which it is impossible to escape.”⁷⁹ We find similar assertions in narratives of possession, with the Spanish Benedictine Benito Feijoo stating that a person claiming to be possessed by the Devil “enjoys total freedom to commit as many crimes as he feels like. He can kill, take away honour, steal, burn down villages and cornfields. . . . He knows no one can touch a hair of his head because all is cloaked with the imagination that the Devil did it all.” This same logic also underpins the more prosaic belief, found in various parts of Europe, that those possessing the evil eye can cause “non-deliberate harming by watching without any bad

75. Henry Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, trans. Montague Summers (London: John Rodker, 1929) 209; Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, trans. Randy A. Scott (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995), 137; De Lancre, *Inconstancy*,

76. Briggs, *Witches*, 141.

77. Pócs, *Between*, 83–84.

78. Pócs, *Between*, 96.

79. Campagne, “Witch or Demon,” 386, 389.

intentions” because they are unfortunate enough to be born with “natal abilities predestined for evil eye.”⁸⁰ Jeanne Favret-Saada has shown that even as late as the twentieth century, French peasants believed that although a witch “has” magical force, the magical force also “has” the witch and “that it possesses him and obliges him to work [doing harm] constantly like a slave.”⁸¹

Obviously, with regard to witchcraft trials, we must take into account the fact that in a percentage of cases this coercion plea was likely to have been a bid for leniency. That this tactic may have been encouraged by some interrogators is suggested by Bodin’s chilling claim that “in order to get the truth from those who are accused” judges must “appear to have pity on them, and tell them that it is not they, but the Devil who forced and compelled them to cause peoples’ death.”⁸² But our anthropological comparisons suggest that the interrogators who pursued this line of questioning may have been exploiting beliefs surrounding the dynamics of visionary compulsion that already existed. Certainly, Wilbert’s claim that the Warao shaman’s macaw spirits’ “keep prodding him for sustenance [in his dreams]” so that “with compulsive intermittent regularity, the veteran dark shaman must continue carrying blood and corpses to the netherworld” suggests similar psychological tensions to those experienced by the Labourd witch Isaac de Queyran, who claimed to have reluctantly succumbed to the Devil’s extortions to climb down a chimney and poison his employer’s son as he slept. When de Queyran was asked, by his interrogators, “how the poor child had wronged him so that he should bring such misery upon him,” he answered that the child was innocent and that “He did what he did to obey the Evil Spirit, who was tormenting him incessantly to do so, day and night.”⁸³

Our dark shamanistic themes are also reflected in the fact that there was a perceived link between harmful magical activities and community benefit. Witches were usually brought to court in response to charges of directing harm—with or without a cannibalistic component—at specific individuals in response to personal grievance. These are the vengeance crimes that take center stage at any interrogation and reflect the global belief in the evil witch.

80. Maria Tausiet “From Illusion to Disenchantment: Feijoo versus the ‘falsely possessed’ in eighteenth-century Spain,” in *Beyond the Witch Trials*, ed. Owen Davies and Willem De Blecourt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 53; Éva Pócs, “Evil Eye in Hungary: Belief, Ritual, Incantation” in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. Jonathan Roper (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 207.

81. Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*, trans. Catherine Cullen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 203.

82. Bodin, *Demon-Mania*, 178.

83. Wilbert, “The Order,” 40; de Lancre, *Inconstancy*, 40, 165.

However, in a significant minority of cases there are hints that the resolving of personal quarrels was not the only use to which the suspect put her harm-bringing abilities. Some of the witches' vengeance killings were performed to benefit a family member, or a community subgroup (such as a clique of persecuted witches), or an oppressed client—and in this capacity the witch emulated the protective function of the dark shaman. Indeed, it is not in the fact that they describe vengeance killings that witch narratives differ from those of dark shamans, but only in the degree to which they do so. Moreover, the high levels of vengeance killing in witch testimonies are not necessarily a clear reflection of the witch's magical activities in general, because she was usually brought before the authorities when hostilities between herself and her neighbors had become so intense that they provoked sorcery accusations. To put it another way, if we did not have access to sensitive anthropological studies, and our only picture of *kanaimà* or Warao dark shamans were trial records, produced by governing officials, relating to those who had upset their communities by overstepping their remit and too-frequently using their dark powers for personal gain, we would be closer to the picture that emerges in our witch trials, but the picture would not be an accurate one.⁸⁴

That the activities of the witch could be associated with community benefit is also demonstrated in contemporary beliefs about magical healing. Despite the fact that they identified the witch with acts of *maleficium*, most early modern demonologists devoted at least one chapter of their works—and often more—to an analysis of her healing abilities.⁸⁵ Although these discussions often focus on largely beneficent healers or “cunning women” (whose activities were generally subsumed under the umbrella category of “witchcraft”) their relevance to the *maleficium*-performing witch is confirmed by ample evidence of widespread and deeply rooted contemporary beliefs surrounding the dual aspect of the healer. Briggs, for example, notes that in

84. The degree to which witches were employed as “assault sorcerers” by their communities is underresearched, with both historians of witchcraft and (until recently) anthropologists tending to focus on the community benefits of witchcraft and sorcery accusation as opposed to performance, with the former being rationalized as a means to resolve tension and reinforce social mores.

85. All early modern demonologists make reference—to a greater or lesser extent—to the healing powers of the witch. Among those who devote multiple chapters (or points of discussion) to the subject are Remy, Bodin, Boguet, de Lancre, and Guazzo. See Nicolas Remy, *Demonolatry*, trans. E. A. Ashwin (London: John Rodker, 1930), 142–61; Bodin, *Demon-Mania*, 152–54, 158–61; Boguet, *Examen*, 98–117; De Lancre, *Inconstancy*, 343–76; Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, trans. E. A. Ashwin (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 121–29.

Lorraine there was “an emphasis placed on the combination of powers to harm and to heal. This seems to reflect the exceptional degree to which the people of the duchy had integrated witchcraft within their therapeutic practices.”⁸⁶ Moving across to eastern Europe, in one of several similar examples, Pócs points out that a Hungarian witch claimed that spirits termed the “evil ones” helped her in healing because “they can also see the devils in fancy dresses,” or in other words, “communicate as spirit creatures and ‘see’ in the alternative world.”⁸⁷ Kieckhefer notes that in central Italian trials from the fifteenth-century women accused of being bloodsucking witches were “regularly if perhaps not professionally engaged in the mediation of supernatural powers”—mediations that could include love magic, assault sorcery, and healing.⁸⁸ This same duality is found in the Basque witch trials of 1609–14. Despite the fact that the Basque records give us “the most accomplished descriptions of the sabbath in all its history” and that, in these descriptions, rites surrounding cannibalistic killing and consumption attain a prominence unparalleled elsewhere in Europe, it is nonetheless clear that for some Basques, attendance at these events was associated with healing abilities.⁸⁹ Labourd witch Leger Riuisseau, for example, told his interrogators that he “had wagered half of his left foot [to the Devil] in return for the ability to heal and the permission simply to see the sabbath without being obliged to do anything else.”⁹⁰ Similarly, we find a healing ritual embedded deep in a summary of the Spanish sabbath from Pierre de Lancre:

Once the liquids, powders, and blood are assembled, they secretly dry them before the fire or in the sun, and they rub this on their arms, their spine, and their joints. Then they fly through the night like birds, together with their dressed-up toad. And when they perform a cure, they say and repeat these words: “Emen hetan, emen hetan,” which means “Here and there, here and there.”⁹¹

86. Briggs, *Witches*, 385.

87. Pócs, *Between*, 107–11. It is also interesting to note, and worth exploring further in this context, that more classic forms of demonic possession could be associated with supernatural powers. According to Feijoo, the inhabitants of the Spanish town of Oviedo believed that a local possessed woman “knew what was happening throughout the world” and “flew over the tallest treetops” (Tausiet, “From Illusion,” 50).

88. Kieckhefer, “Mythologies,” 88, 95.

89. Campagne, *Witch*, 383.

90. De Lancre, *Inconstancy*, 147.

91. *Ibid.*, 400–401.

It is also worth noting here that our anthropological perspectives on dark shamanism invite us to extend our definition of the “healing witch.” If, as we have argued, the cannibalistic witch was believed to be innocent, in the sense that, as Campagne puts it, she was “not able to control the impulsion to go out in the night and kill newborn babies” making her the “victim of a tragic destiny from which it is impossible to escape,” the fact that it was widely believed that “no disease could be cured except by the witch who had caused it” could be significant.⁹² Like the rites of the Warao shaman, who kills to feed the macaw god *Hoebo* but in return gains the ability to limit the deity’s destructive effects and heal *hoa* disease, the witch’s alleged participation in the death-bringing hunts of the spirits may have been rationalized as benefiting the community, on the grounds that it gave her an ability to mitigate and counteract the harmful effects of the predatory spirits and powers that her unique destiny forced her, against her will, to fraternize with.

That such perspectives existed sheds some light on a finding that continues to challenge historians of witchcraft. Despite the fact that trial records reveal the existence of fierce hostilities between witches and their accusers, and despite the fact that witches were usually accused of horrendous crimes, scholars have often noted that early modern communities seem to have possessed a “striking” capacity to tolerate the witch.⁹³ Witch trial records confirm that individuals could be defined as witches and remain integrated into their communities for many decades, with Briggs noting that “it is very hard to imagine how hundreds or thousands of suspects could have escaped prosecution. Yet in a sense they did, because for every one who ended up at the stake there were probably several with significant reputations who were never tried at all.”⁹⁴ The evidence suggests that in these cases, witchcraft disputes were resolved through a variety of conciliatory methods. Victims or their families often requested that the witch magically rectify the harm she was believed to have caused, and once the victim was successfully healed, they frequently let the matter drop. Despite the fact, for example, that Labourd witch Isaac de Queyran had confessed to poisoning his master’s son, the distraught father promised to not only “pardon” but also “forgive” him if he came back and healed the child.⁹⁵ Henningsen argues that contrition played an important role in northern Spain, saying of the accusations at Zugarramurdi (which sparked off the 1609 Basque witch craze) that “if the

92. Remy, *Demonolatry*, 158.

93. Briggs, *Witches*, 385.

94. *Ibid.*, 381.

95. De Lancre, *Inconstancy*, 166.

inquisition had not been alerted” the villagers “would undoubtedly” have resolved their witchcraft disputes in an “admirable manner” through compromises involving “reconciliation with the witches after they had confessed and asked for pardon.”⁹⁶ The motivations behind these conciliatory measures were clearly complex. As Briggs has argued, “the relative acceptance of witches who doubled as healers must be one partial explanation for the reluctance of families and individuals to press home what were effectively murder charges.” For some, the witch’s protective abilities may have been seen as a communal asset worth tolerating, while fear of the witch’s aggressive reprisal would also have acted as a strong deterrent in this respect.⁹⁷ But, on the basis of our examination of anthropological analyses of dark shamanism, we can also speculate that these conciliatory measures were rooted in deeply fatalistic conceptions surrounding the psychological dynamics of visionary compulsion and the “innocence” of those who fell prey to them.

VI

Although these anthropological comparisons have been brief, they suggest that it could be fruitful to analyze Burchard’s *strigae* in a shamanistic context. In the first instance, this perspective enables us to rearticulate a conventional view. Instead of asserting that “beliefs, motifs and themes surrounding cannibalistic spirits and humans survived into early modern Europe” we can, alternatively, assert that “beliefs, motifs and themes surrounding ‘shamanistic cannibalism’ survived into early modern Europe.” This rephrasing implies a qualitative difference. It suggests not only that beliefs about cannibalistic witches, vampires, werewolves, and troops of the dead possessed a “beware-the-bogeyman” charge and function, but also that they were woven into a cohesive and deeply rooted web of associations between the ecstatic compulsion to perform cannibalistic killing and the ability to both understand and combat sickness, death, and fate through access to the spirit world and the acquisition of magical power. Looking at European witchcraft through this lens could shed new light on old problems. For example, there is a general agreement among historians that the majority of confession-embedded narratives describing cannibalism and cannibalistic killing were fictions created in response to prosecutorial coercion and suggestion. However, there is less clarity and consensus concerning the reasons why, in response to these dark lines of questioning, it was not uncommon for suspects to provide their interrogators with a wealth of specific and often startlingly vivid detail. Despite our

96. Henningsen, *Witches’ Advocate*, 36.

97. Briggs, *Witches*, 171–73.

deepening understanding of the psychological dynamics behind false confession, the reasons why a suspect might confess, for example, “without being put to torture, that she had killed thirty children or thereabouts, by sucking their blood” still seem hard to grasp.⁹⁸ But if we recognize that in talking about participating in, or observing, a cannibalistic attack or feast, accused witches were not just reflecting elite demonological tropes, or randomly searching around for relevant bits of frightening folklore to satisfy their interrogators' need for detail, but were articulating a more coherent set of beliefs involving useful and necessary human interaction with the spirit world that carried considerable cultural resonance, then their participation in the construction of these narratives becomes more understandable.

These perspectives on shamanistic cannibalism also invite us to reappraise the sabbath-conflation theory outlined at the beginning of this paper. While scholars have observed that a distinction emerges, in the sources, between beneficent goddess-following beliefs and maleficent *strigae*/Wild Hunt beliefs, they have also observed that in many contexts this distinction is not at all clear. However good the “Mistress of the Good Game” may have been, the mythology indicates that like many archaic goddess figures, she possessed the same ambivalence seen so clearly in the tribal dark shaman and the spirits he emulates, with a witch from Val di Fiemme claiming, for example, that when her mistress “journeys through the air she has two patches around her eyes, one on each side, so that she cannot see anything: and if she were able to see everything she would do great harm to the world.”⁹⁹ Similarly, however beneficent the fairy-procession nexus, when scholars have attempted to separate it—at the level of myth and legend—from that of the Wild Hunt, they have been ultimately frustrated, finding the two matrices of belief “hard to distinguish” or “indistinguishable.”¹⁰⁰ Also relevant (and under-researched) in this context is the fact that the act of killing and consuming both humans and animals emerges as a core rite in several classic accounts of the “Good Game,” including those from Milan, Bressanone, and the Dolomite Valleys.¹⁰¹ Even Burchard's *Decretum*, which, as we saw earlier, showcases the two component mythologies of the sabbath conflation, also contains a third passage that—through associating fate-women with werewolves—brings these two oppositional themes together:

98. From a sermon by Bernardino of Siena, delivered in the 1420s. Kieckhefer, “Avenging the Blood of Children,” 95.

99. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 132.

100. Pócs, *Fairies*, 13. Behringer, *Shaman*, 28.

101. *Ibid.*, 58–60; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 92–95.

Have you believed what certain people are accustomed to believe, either that those women whom the people call *Parcae* exist, or that they have the power to do what they are thought to have done: that is, when any man is born, they are able to choose whatever they wish for him, so that whenever he wants, that man can transform himself into the wolf which is called werewolf in German, or into some other shape?¹⁰²

It is also relevant, given these perspectives, that the earliest mention of the *strix* in classical sources (pre–fourth century BC) identifies her human ancestor as the handmaiden of Artemis, an equivalent of the “witch goddess” Diana.¹⁰³ This mythological ambivalence, when considered alongside the argument that beliefs and narratives associated with dark shamanism survived into early modern Europe, leads us to wonder how far men such as John of Salisbury, who penned the earliest sabbath-conflation passages, may have been reflecting an ambiguity that was already there. On a popular level, it may have been the experiential response to existential ambivalence, as opposed to an elite intellectual equation, that gave the European stereotype of the cannibalistic witches’ sabbath its emotional impact.

VII

While our anthropological perspectives can deepen our understanding of the belief matrices that underpinned cannibalistic narratives, whether they can shed any light on the question of the experiential dimension is less clear. On the one hand, they do suggest that early modern culture possessed the conceptual infrastructure necessary to sustain dark shamanistic traditions. On the other, they cannot solve or alleviate the epistemological problems posed by the witchcraft records themselves. Even isolating an experiential dimension in relation to the folkloric narratives describing beneficent shamanism is problematic (however filled with references to dreams, false bodies, and spirit-flight they might be). Arguments for the visionary dimension of goddess-related traditions like that of the *donas de fuera* still remain persuasive hypotheses as opposed to fact. Contemporary descriptions of shamanistically themed practices involving killing and cannibalism are even more problematic, because these accounts fuse so readily with elite demonological stereotypes. Recently, Willem de Blécourt drew attention to the difficulties of determining the existence of ecstatic rites in relation to the werewolf complex, pointing again to the lack of firm evidence and arguing that scholars

102. Filotas, *Pagan*, 317.

103. Oliphant, “The Story of the Strix,” 133–34.

may be overreading the sources and interpreting physical rites as visionary ones.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, after exhaustive research into accounts of harm-bringing spirit journeys involving folkloric demon figures found in Hungarian witch trials, Éva Pócs cautioned that while the evidence of visionary trance is strongly suggestive in individual cases, in the absence of hard proof, when faced with the perplexing dilemma as to whether a given account represents “experience or narrative” all we can do is “assume a permanent duality and interrelationship between the two possibilities.”¹⁰⁵

The pool is further muddled by the fact that, even where evidence for some kind of experiential dimension is found, this does not necessarily imply shamanistic rites. In his detailed study of the Basque witch trials of 1609–14, Henningsen supports Salazar’s observation that “many” of the events described by witchcraft suspects “had taken place in their dreams,” but argues that these vivid and stereotypically demonological visionary experiences emerged spontaneously among the general population in response to the propaganda and ensuing hysteria surrounding witch persecutions.¹⁰⁶ We can reasonably assume that this process also occurred on a less dramatic scale, both in the Basque regions and in other parts of Europe, in response to smaller-scale witchcraft panics. As noted earlier, we find evidence pointing to this phenomenon in non-European cultures, where some of those accused of witchcraft seem to spontaneously experience compulsive, culture-patterned visionary experiences in which they perform stereotypically “witch-like” acts of killing and cannibalism—but with no obvious shamanistic dimension.¹⁰⁷

Given that early modern witchcraft records are so resistant to analysis of this sort, the only way forward is through microstudies. In order to assess whether any cannibalistic narratives may have crystallized around an experiential core and, more importantly, whether this core was linked to some kind of shamanistic, as opposed to just visionary, dream or trance experience, we need to examine trial clusters where cannibalism or cannibalistic killing emerges strongly and explore why, in these cases, these themes attained such prominence. To this end, the contribution of the suspect (and the popular beliefs, practices, and oral narratives that informed it) should be examined as carefully as any interrogatorial influence. In the absence of hard evidence, such analyses are unlikely to provide confirmation of dark shamanistic rites,

104. Willem de Blécourt, “A Journey to Hell: Reconsidering the ‘Livonian Were-wolf,’” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, 2 (2007): 49–67.

105. Pócs, *Between*, 96.

106. Henningsen, *Witches' Advocate*, 390; and Henningsen, *Salazar*, 49–79.

107. See note 46, above.

but could provide us with hypotheses whose primary value would lie not in their verifiability, but in their ability to deepen our historical understanding by challenging us to appraise and explore witchcraft belief, practice and persecution through a different lens.

Whether such attempts will bear fruit remains to be seen, but there is one body of evidence that suggests that it is an avenue worth exploring. In the last century, a number of folklorists recorded the existence of a dream cult termed the *mazzeri*, which was allegedly active in Corsica until at least the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰⁸ If the practices of this cult are superimposed upon the template of dark shamanistic practice we sketched out earlier in this paper, we find congruence on many levels. Mainly, but not exclusively women, the *mazzeri* were “called” by an irresistible force to go out in dreams in order to hunt down, kill, and consume animals. As they killed their prey, for a brief moment they glimpsed the human face of an individual known to them, revealing the animal to be another person traveling in subtle-body form. Having been killed on the visionary plane this individual would then physically die within a short space of time.¹⁰⁹ As it often was for the dark shaman, this predation was random and indiscriminate, to the extent that unfortunate *mazzere* could, on occasion, find themselves attacking a member of their own family or community. Like the Amuesha jaguar shamans, these Corsican dreamers also engaged in group battles. Once a year, the *mazzeri* of rival villages would organize each other into “*milizia*” and fight each other in the mountain passes, with Carrington noting that “the inhabitants of the villages were deeply concerned by these phantom battles” because “the village that lost most *mazzeri* would lose more lives in the coming year than the opposing village of the victorious *mazzeri*.”¹¹⁰ Although the *mazzeri* were feared by their communities, and although they were so dangerous that they could even kill “those they loved the most,” they were tolerated because they were believed to be fundamentally innocent of their crimes. Corsican villagers were aware that, as with our Amazonian and Siberian dark shamans, the *mazzeri* had “no animosity towards the animal they have to kill, nor towards the human being it represents” and that their hunts occurred because the “order [to kill] was absolute; [and] they could not even choose their victims.” Indeed, such convictions could generate anecdotes in which *mazzeri* visited neighbors, in all good conscience, in order to apologize for inadvertently

108. The best treatment available in English is Dorothy Carrington, *The Dream-Hunters of Corsica* (London: Phoenix, 1995).

109. *Ibid.*, 57–59.

110. *Ibid.*, 68–70.

killing their children in a dream the night before.¹¹¹ Again like their non-European counterparts, the *mazzeri* were tolerated, and even at times esteemed, because their battles acted as a form of community protection and, as Carrington has argued, their day-to-day killings functioned as a type of death-divination.¹¹² Although the detail and clarity of the source material makes the *mazzeri* tradition unique, other less scrupulously documented traditions display a surprisingly similar morphology.¹¹³

Although the Corsican dream cult appears on Europe's periphery, and as such cannot be seen as representative of the continent as a whole, it indicates that even as late as the mid-twentieth century, themes, motifs, and beliefs surrounding shamanistic cannibalism could cohere and function dynamically as an experiential tradition. Future research may reveal the *mazzeri* to have been an anomaly, but until this time, their existence means that we cannot dismiss the possibility that shamanistic traditions incorporating cannibalistic aggression may have operated in other parts of the continent several hundred years earlier.

111. Ibid., 88, 67, 107.

112. Ibid., 107.

113. See lore surrounding the Scottish *sluagh* in Wilby, *Visions*, 320–21, 328–52.

Copyright of Magic, Ritual & Witchcraft is the property of University of Pennsylvania Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.